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African National Congress Of South Africa
(WOMEN SECRETARIAT)

Observer Mission to the United Nations and Representation to the U.S.

801 Second Ave., Room 405, N.Y., N.Y. 10017

Tel: (212) 490-3487

TX 225602

AUGUST 9TH -PEAK OF RESISTANCE.

August 9th, 1956 - The 30th anniversary of which we are commemorating this year, signifies the height of the struggle of the South African women against **PASSES**.

A pass or refence book! This is a thick 48 page document with a hard black cover. Six and a half by three and a half inches. This document serves the ends of the Apartheid rulers in South Africa - to regulate the movement of Africans to restricted areas, to determine where an African can and may not be employed, where he can live, even determine who his wife or husband should be.

Every man or woman above the age of 16 can be stopped at anytime and anywhere by a policeman and is liable to arrest if he or she cannot produce a pass. Before 1913 passes had been issued only to African men. In 1913 the regime tried for the first time to extend these passes to African women, they were met with fierce resistance. In the little town of Winburg in the Orange Free State, women staged a demonstration to the office of the local administrator and made their point. **"WE WILL NEVER CARRY PASSES OR ANY DOCUMENT THAT PERPETUATES OUR OPPRESSION"**. (Nancy Van Vuuren, Women Against Apartheid: The fight for freedom in South Africa).

Sol Plaatjie, the then Secretary General of the **ANC** called these women "the first black suffragettes". In the same year Charlotte Maxeke, a founding member of the **ANC** in 1912 and the Head of the **BANTU WOMEN'S LEAGUE**, led the women in other parts of the Free State in anti-pass campaigns. Six hundred women carried their passes in a bag to the Bloemfontein Mayor's office and dumped them there after informing the Deputy Mayor that they would no longer carry them.

There was no significant move from those in power to indicate that the message carried by the women did not get through. However, the campaign continued. Another massive campaign was mounted by Charlotte Maxeke in Johannesburg in 1919 and resistance continued in the Free State, especially between 1920 and 1924. 2) IBID

The rapid industrialization of South Africa, which was a result of the discovery of Gold and Diamonds towards the end of the last century; the First and Second World wars, were accompanied by a flow of the African population from the rural to the Urban areas. Although industry needed cheap available manpower, there was to be a contradiction because of a large African urban population was incompatible with the designs of the separation of the races - the official policy of the minority white Nationalist Party.

Immediately after their ascension into power in 1948, the Nationalists enacted a number of Apartheid laws. The so-called "Abolition of passes and Co-ordination of documents" Act of 1952 had absolutely nothing to do with abolishing passes. Instead it was meant to extend the hated pass laws to affect African women. A large number of women had moved to the urban areas to seek employment to keep families together. This would disturb the evil designs of Apartheid, which does not seek a permanent labour force in the urban areas. The 1952 Act was therefore intended to allow only the neccessary labour for industrial (in the case of men) and domestic (in the case of women) work into the urban areas.

Fully aware of the mass resistance that this design would be met with, the regime did not announce this until in October 1955, they announced that passes would be issued from January 1956. 3/ (New Age, January, 1956)

FIRST SIGNS OF RESISTANCE :

A statement from the Native Affairs Department stated that the first passes would be issued to African women in the Orange Free State, the area that had been most active in the previous anti-pass campaigns. The successful introduction of passes in this area could have meant that the regime would not be faced with a lot of resistance in other areas. 4/ (IBID.)

The statement also threatened that if anybody, like the African National Congress, attempted to launch a campaign of resistance, the government will take the necessary steps. Three million books were ready and these were to be issued to all African men and women over the age of 16 years.

The Transvaler, the organ of the Nationalist Party, printed the official statement on posters. The same report carried references to "screaming headlines in which gall is spewed against the issue of reference books to women, which were appearing in periodicals and newspapers distributed

By October 1955, when this announcement was made, the African National Congress had issued directives to all its branches to take up and fiercely resist issuing of passes to African women.^{6/} (Karis, Carter, Gerhard: From Protest to Challenge: Documents of African Politics in S.A.)

The ANC Women's League in particular had, in close collaboration with the Federation of South African Women, begun organising for a massive Anti-pass campaign. This was the most important campaign to involve women in the post war era. The founding Conference of the Federation of South African Women on April 17th, 1954 had already adopted a petition on passes to be presented to the government.^{7/} Interview with Ray Simons, Lusaka, April 1981.)

During the whole of October 1955 vigorous preparations were made by the ANC Women's League in Johannesburg to stage a demonstration in Pretoria, the Administrative Capital of South Africa. The date set for the demonstration was Thursday, October 27th, 1955. Letters had been sent out to the Ministers of Interior, Labour and Justice requesting for appointment with them for the women to present their petitions. The pass-laws, the Population Registration Act, the classification of races procedures, the Group Areas Act, Restrictions of Civil Liberties and Trade Union Legislation were some of the issues to be raised with the relevant Ministers. The issue of passes however was the most urgent.^{8/} (IBID)

OCTOBER 27, 1955

The regime of Apartheid had banned the demonstration. They had cancelled busses that had been hired to transport the Women. Road blocks had been set along the roads leading to Pretoria. But nothing could stop these gallant fighters. Overcoming all obstacles, they went to Pretoria. Over 20,000 women filled the amphitheatre of the Union Buildings. They quietly stood there while the leaders of the demonstration went up to the offices of the three Ministers. But not one of them was to be found.^{9/} (New Age, November 3, 1955).

Verwoed the Minister of Native Affairs, had refused to meet the mixed delegation of Women. "Racially mixed deputations from racially mixed organisations are not received." This statement a clear example of the racial hatred inherent in Apartheid, was contained in a letter Verwoed had written to the women. The letter further stated: "The pass system has been abolished even for men. Bantu Education is welcome by the African people" and "African housing is a subject for praise and not protest".^{10/} (IBID.)

This he said at a time when hundreds of men were in prison because of pass-laws, when the boycott against Bantu Education was sweeping across

the country and Africans were living in shacks and shanty towns.

On that day the Union Buildings ceased to be the hive of activity it always was. Only an "unsuspecting (white) girl" was found in one of the offices. She was told that the piles of petitions would be left on the doormat of the deserted offices. Outside the silent, disciplined and dignified column listened as their leaders gave them a report of what happened. After giving the "Africa" salute, with fists raised high in the air, they dispersed and went home. Their point had been made! 11/ (IBID.)

A.N.C. TAKES UP WOMEN'S ANTI-PASS CAMPAIGN:

The Annual Conference of the ANC held in December, 1955 paid a great deal of attention to the Women's Anti-Pass struggle. The report of the National Executive had a special section:- Struggle against Passes:

"THE PASS LAWS ARE ONE OF THE MOST BURNING GRIEVANCES OF THE PEOPLE. WE WHO KNOW THE SUFFERING THE PASS LAWS HAVE BROUGHT TO US OVER THE DECADES WILL NOT TOLERATE THE EXTENTION OF THIS HATED SYSTEM TO OUR WOMENFOLK. WE WARN THE GOVERNMENT: MAKING WOMEN CARRY PASSES WILL BE LIKE TRAMPLING ON THE TAIL OF A PUFF ADDER". The Statement went on:

MUST OUR WOMEN ALSO BE HERDED INTO THE POLICE CELLS, DETAINED IN A LO K-UP BECAUSE THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN A PIECE OF PAPER WHILE THEIR CHILDREN ARE MOTHERLESS AT HOME? MUST OUR WIVES TOO WORK 14 or 21 DAYS OF HARD LABOUR BECAUSE SOME DETAIL HAS NOT BEEN ENTERED INTO THEIR IDENTIFICATION BOOKS? WE MUST FIGHT THE EXTENTION OF THESE LAWS TO AFRICAN WOMEN WITH EVERY BREATH IN OUR BODIES. 12/8 (Karis, Carter, Gerhart: From Protest to Challenge).

The National Consultative Committee was then give authority to launch a planned campaign against passes for women. An Action Committee was appointed to draw up the plan for the campaign. 13/ (IBID.)

At the Conference of the ANC Women's League held just before the main Conference, it had been resolved that African women will under no circumstances carry the humiliating passes. The women felt that if African women in the Free State could oppose pass laws 40 years before, they

could easily do so then.

FEARLESS RESISTANCE MOUNTS

No amount of intimidation was going to stop them. Lilian Ngoyi, the National President of the Women's League said: "If the Government deports women in the impending struggle against passes, they (the women) will bring new hope to those in whose midst they are thrown in their deportation; if they are sent to jail they will convert the jails into institutions of universal education." 15/ (New Age, January 1956).

The National Secretary of the Women's League spoke for the millions of women opposed to passes:

"We are not easily frightened and intimidated. We know that this government is ruthless and savage in its attacks on the African people and on their rights, and that this campaign, and others, will not be easy. African women know the burdens that their men have carried under the pass laws, and they speak as sufferers under these laws.... No African man or woman has ever welcomed the pass system, or will they ever consider the pass anything else but a BADGE OF SLAVERY." 16/ (IBID).

ANC CALLS ON ALL TO FIGHT PASSES FOR WOMEN:

On January 26, 1956 a call was made by the ANC. The National Executive Committee called on all the branches throughout the country to commence the campaign by calling meetings of the people in every area, as well as special meetings for women, to culminate in Regional Women's Conferences. Systematic house to house, yard to yard, location to location, factory to factory campaigning was called for. Women in the towns and countryside were to be mobilized. The starting point would be to rally every African and African organisation around the campaign. Then the alliance extended to all sections of the people of South Africa, Black and White. 17/ (New Age, February 1956).

"The men must play their part in this campaign"-
the call emphasised. Dates were set for some of the mass activities:

- (a) All-Regional Women's Conferences - February 25 or 26
- (b) By March 4th, ANC offices were to have received reports from every branch on the progress of the house to house campaign and local area meetings.
- (c) Regions should have prepared for a Special National Conference from March 31st to April 1st. The whole agenda would be the anti-pass campaign. 18/ (IBID).

RESPONSE TO THE CALL:

By February 9th, a massive demonstration was organised by the women in Port Elizabeth, headed by the local ANC Women's League. They drafted a memorandum and a petition, which were handed to the Native Commissioner, the Government representative in every African locality. The petition read in part:

"We are not asking for amendments or modifications of the books. We reject them in principle. The application of reference books to our menfolk is already intolerable, and in our experience of the administration of law in this country, we feel we shall inevitably share the fate of our menfolk." 19/ (IBID.)

Thirteen reasons were given why the women rejected passes, including the fact that these "badges of slavery" were responsible for braking up of families, causing unemployment if one does not satisfy certain requirements dictated by pass laws, and deportations if one does not qualify to live in a particular area.

"Impersonators of the police will be given glorious opportunity of stopping African women at will anywhere and thus criminal assaults will be rife."

The pass, the memorandum concluded, is "A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF ALL RECOGNISED CIVILISED CONCEPTS OF THE SANCTITY OF THE FEMALE PERSON" 20/ (New Age, February 9, 1956.)

The pattern of demonstrations was to sweep the country for the whole year. Meanwhile the application of Annie Silinga, prominent Women's Leader of Cape Town, for leave to appeal against her conviction under Section 10 of the Urban Areas Act had been dismissed by the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein. Annie was born in the Butterworth district of the Transkei, but had left the place very young and settled in Cape Town. Under heavy police escort she was removed from there and taken

"home" to another district in the Transkei. Her three children were left motherless. 21/IBID.

This act of cruelty motivated the women in Cape Town even more to resist passes. The ANC Women's League Conference held shortly afterwards in Cape Town passed a resolution declaring its "determined opposition to passes for women, which are a mark of slavery that cannot be tolerated in the 20th century."

It is not possible to record all the demonstrations, all the deputations and petitions to the Native Commissioners that were sent before August 9th. All the petitions had one message: "WE DO NOT WANT PASSES". A 500-strong demonstration of women from Germiston, Natalspruit, Alberton and Elsburg told the Native Commissioner in their petition: "We fear for our homes when we too are arrested under the pass laws, We fear for our children who will be left uncared for and helpless. What is to become of our tiny children, our babies dependent on their mothers' milk, if we are to be torn from them for failing to produce a pass?"

"WE DO NOT WANT TO CARRY ANY KIND OF PAPER OR PASS - EVEN IF IT IS WRITTEN IN LETTERS OF GOLD", the petition concluded. 22/IBID.

RESOLUTION TO MARCH TO PRETORIA:

On March 11th, 1956 the Transvaal Region of the ANC Women's Section organised a meeting to commemorate March 8th - International Women's Day. Prominent in the agenda of that meeting was the issue of passes. From the flock, moved by a woman from Natalspruit, came a suggestion that the meeting immediately snapped up: The Federation of South African Women should organise another huge mass women's deputation, this time to the Prime Minister Strijdom, to protest against passes for women. Without any visible excitement the mover had made the point! The over 2,000 delegates unanimously voted for the resolution. Lilian Ngoyi was on the chair and she twice repeated the proposition. "Do you want to go to Pretoria"? The Hall replied "WE WANT TO GO" Lilian Ngoyi of the ANC Women's League, Helen Joseph of the Congress of Democrats, Amin Asvat of the Indian Women's Movement and Sophie Williams of the Coloured People's Organisation, Bertha Mashaba who had led the demonstration of 500 women a few days before, Lily Diedericks,

Rachima Moosa, Ruth Matsoane, Winnie Mandela and Albertina Sisulu were among the gallant women present at that conference.

"WOMEN WILL NOT ACCEPT SLAVERY. WE WILL DO ALL IN OUR POWER AS THE MOTHERS OF THE NATION, AS THE WOMEN OF SOUTH AFRICA, UNTIL THE WHOLE DEGRADING PASS SYSTEM HAS BEEN ABOLISHED", their resolution concluded. 23/IBID.

WINBURG SETS THE COUNTRY ON FIRE:

Blitz methods of introducing passes were used - and Winburg was chosen as a starting point. In a move exposing the disregard that the regime has for the voice of protest, 1,429 passes were issued to the women. They had to pay some money for the books (3/6), and were supplied with a type of purse wallet with a double cord for the women to wear strung from the neck down the shoulders.

There were massive protests and an outcry throughout the country. In Winburg itself the few women who had already accepted the passes through government pressure put them in a bag. Some had the passes in their hands. They marched to the office of the local Native Commissioner and to his utter disbelief they poured petrol over the passes and set them alight!! 24/New Age April 9- 1956.

A deputation of the women from Klerksdorp handed a letter to Verwoerd. The message was clear: "If you force us to take pass books we shall burn them in front of your eyes.

The Coloured women issued a statement: "WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT THIS LOATHSOME FUTURE. THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLOURED WOMEN'S CONGRESS PROCLAIMS THAT WE REJECT THE PASS SYSTEM FOR OURSELVES, FOR THE AFRICAN WOMEN AND FOR ALL MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS, WHATEVER THEIR RACE". 25/New Age July, 1956

The Durban branch of the ANC Women's League invited Senator Cowley, the Native Representative for Natal, to their conference. They told him: "WHEN YOU GO BACK TO CAPE TOWN, TELL PARLIAMENT THAT WE AFRICAN WOMEN WILL NOT CARRY PASSES". They rejected outrightly his proposal that they should accept passes on a trial basis. 26/New Age-April 9-1956.

On Monday, May 14th over 1,200 women from Brakpan location walked to the offices of the Native Commissioner, a distance of about 10 kilometers. They had been refused permission to stage a demonstration, so they set off in batches of 10 to 15 and throughout the day groups of women moved from the location to town. Monday is a day when African women have to collect dirty washing from their white employers to wash it in their township homes. This is done to supplement the household income, in cases where the woman cannot find employment because of the same pass laws. The women chose Monday morning to show they were in dead earnest in this protest. They handed in their petition to the Native Commissioner. 27/New Age: May 21st 1956.

1,800 people signed the anti-pass petition and started off from the Johannesburg Western Townships, Newclare, Sophiatown and Martindale. Despite the attempt by the Native Commissioner to assure them that the books issued were not passes, the delegation chosen from among the protestors handed him their petition.

On Thursday June 14th, domestic workers from the suburbs surrounding Johannesburg went on a mass deputation to the Native Commissioner. The 12 spokeswomen of the 380-odd strong demonstrators were told by the Native Commissioner that the laws of the country would not be changed just because the women did not like them. Bertha Mashaba, the leader of this and the previous Germiston demonstration replied, briefly and to the point: "NO, BECAUSE SOUTH AFRICA IS NOT A DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY! IN ANY DEMOCRATIC COUNTRY THE LAW WOULD BE CHANGED JUST BECAUSE THE MAJORITY DOES NOT WANT IT". (28/New Age: June 27 1956)

In a display of arrogance, an Information Officer of the Native Affairs Department, a Mr. Coetzee who was present, produced his little identity card and that of his wife, together with a new argument from the government: "It is your chiefs who asked the government to give African women pass books. That was because young girls left their homes for towns where they lived with illegal husbands. So now your chiefs must shoulder the blame." (29/ IBID.)

But this was an obvious fabrication. Most of the African chiefs were themselves in sharp opposition to the regime's pass laws. Women in the Zeerust

and Tzaneen rural areas were fully supported by their chiefs in their anti-pass campaigns.

On June 21st, 200 women from the Orange Free State town of Bethlehem presented their anti-pass petition to the local government authority: "We wish to remind the government that we want freedom, not serfdom," they said. (30/ New Age. June 28, 1956.)

Women from other sections of the population had begun vigorously campaigning for the anti-pass struggle. Helen Joseph told the women in the Cape: "THAT AFFECTS ONE WOMAN AFFECTS ALL WOMEN. IF AN AFRICAN WOMAN CARRIES A PASS, THAT IS MY BUSINESS, BECAUSE I AM A WOMAN. IT IS MY DUTY TO STAND BESIDE HER. THE COLOURED WOMEN OF THE CAPE MUST REALISE THAT THE FIRST DAY THE AFRICAN WOMAN CARRIES THE REFERENCE BOOK PASS IS THE DAY THE FIRST COLOURED WILL HAVE TO FACE RECLASSIFICATION, WITH ALL ITS INDIGNITIES, SUFFERING AND HARDSHIPS OF THE AFRICAN WOMAN. WITH HER AFRICAN SISTER IN CHAINS, NOT EVEN THE WHITE WOMAN IS FREE". (31/ IBID)

On July 19th thousands of women from Port Elizabeth presented the Native Commissioner with a petition. By that time the campaign for the big demonstration was mounting. On July 25th Lilian Ngoyi issued a statement on behalf of the Federation of South African Women, calling on all branches of the ANC, Church Leaders, Advisory Boards, Cultural and Sporting bodies to assist to the best of their ability in the arrangement for the Women's Demonstration. The statement added that the Prime Minister will just have returned from the United Kingdom, where he boasted that South Africa was a democratic country. On behalf of millions of anti-pass registers, Lilian Ngoyi said that Strijdom "will have to prove his words by action and accede to the demands of the majority of the people in the country, otherwise he will stand exposed as a mere propagandist". (32/New Age. July, 1956).

By the 2nd of August, an official letter had been written by the Federation to the then Prime Minister to meet the National Protest at the Union Buildings on Thursday the 9th of August at 2.30pm.

On the 6th Strijdom replied to say that it was not possible to meet the demonstrators. When there was such evidence to the contrary he further said that it was "not true that pass laws were being extended to Bantu women". (33/New Age-August 9th, 1956.)

AUGUST 9th 1956:

The little town of Lady Selbourne, on the outskirts of Pretoria had been turned into an overnight transit place for the over 20,000 women who answered the call for the National Demonstration. Coming from every corner of South Africa, with delegations of as much as 500 from one area, they converged on the capital from as early as August 7th. Every participant in this demonstration signed the protest form, and signature collectors worked the whole night through collecting these signatures. The women were in high spirits. During the night preceeding August 9th Lady Selbourne's Town Hall was made into a make-shift concert hall. Different delegations presented songs, most of which were on the anti-pass campaigns in their areas. The hit song of the night was that presented by the Free State delegation, which related the story of the burning of passes by the women of Winburg. The women sang and danced the night through. (34/New Age-Aug 16, 1956)

The next morning, tired but determed, the women moved out of the houses in which they had been accomodated for the night, out of the churches and halls which had also been offered to accomodate foreign guests, and started the procession to the town centre. It took two and a half hours for the 20,000 women to file through the entrance of the Union Buildings Amphitheatre. (35/IBID).

After all had pass through, nine leaders selected from the different areas and carrying huge piles of protest forms, moved from the amphitheatre to enter the Union Buildings. They were stopped by a Commissionaire, who after consultation with the police, agreed to let only 5 out of the 9 women leaders through. (36/IBI .)

The Union Buildings has always been a hive of activity. Being racist South Africa's administrative Centre, it is remarkable that on that day the state machinery came to a halt, and not a single soul was to be seen inside the building. In spite of the "No Admission" sign that had been put up on the door leading to Strijdom's office, the gallant leaders Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Lily Diedricks, Rahima Moosa and Sophie Williams marched in and left the bulk of petition forms with his secretary. In all there were more

than 100,000 signatures attached to the petition. (see annexure 1).

Florence Mkhize, Anna Mocketsi, M.Motlhakwana, Ruth Matseoane, Katie White and Louisa Kellerman were some of the women who had been elected by their regions to present the petitions.

Meanwhile, outside the thrilling singing of a few national freedom songs chosen for the occasion continued. The most popular and expressive of these songs was the now famous:

"STRIJDOM, MATHINT' A BAFAZI
MATHINT' IMBOGODO,
UZAKUFA".

"STRIJDOM YOU HAVE TOUCHED THE WOMEN
YOU HAVE STRUCK A ROCK
YOU HAVE DISLODGED A BOULDER
YOU WILL DIE!"

The leaders of the delegation then stepped out, briefly reporting to the multitude of women about what happened. With their thumbs up in the Afrika salute, the women rose to observe a chilling half-hour of complete silence. Only the occasional sound of crying babies accentuated the tense stillness. After this gracious display of disciplined resolve, the 20,000 protesters dispersed. (37/IBID).

They had added a page in the glorious history of the struggle of not only the women of South Africa but the women of the world against oppression and subjugation.

The great August 9th demonstration was not only in Pretoria. For every woman demonstrator in Pretoria, there were many more in their homes and villages who were part of this snowballing protest movement.

The Women's anti-pass campaign had up to then been a model of patient and peaceful organisation.

An editorial in New Age of August 16th 1956 posed the question: "What more can they (the women) do than they have done to make it clear to the authorities what they want or rather what they don't want?" If this government has any common sense at all, it must bow to the democratically

expressed will of the people and abandon its plans to make the women carry passes. What does the government want? ARE THE PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE MUST BE VIOLENCE AND BLOODSHED BEFORE THEY CAN EXPECT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY"? The paper warned; "If the government persists in ignoring the peacefully expressed wish of the overwhelming majority of the people, it is not enough to adopt the normal democratic methods of protest however representative their character. That it is not enough to reason with authority, if authority will not listen". (38/IBID).

A wave of repression followed the anti-pass campaign. In 1956 the 4 years long Treason Trial began. 156 leaders of the Liberation Movement were arrested and charged with "High Treason". This was another attempt to break the people's resistance. The regime did not succeed. Instead the people's determination to fight against the pass laws and all other forms of oppression was redoubled.

In November 1956 when government officials arrived in the little town of Lichtenburg in the Western Transvaal to undertake the first step towards passes i.e. to register women, more than 1,200 women met them to protest. When the police made a baton charge, the women threw stones in retaliation. Police opened fire and two people were killed. (39/Muriel Horell-A Survey of Race Relations in S.A. 1957-57)

By May 1957 it was clear that the strategy of issuing passes to the women in the villages first was to be implemented. Thus women in Johannesburg were asked to carry only "permits of identification", which the police began to demand. (40/IBID).

On the 12th May, 3000 people attended an anti-permit meeting at Sophiatown. They requested an interview with the Mayor and on May 16th more than 20,000 again met to send off a seven-person deputation from Sophiatown. Six thousand people escorted them to the city hall where they met with the Mayor, who agreed to suspend police action and issue exemption certificates for women. (41/IBID).

This temporary and partial victory was not always typical. Police brutality, the shooting of women and arrests became more frequent. In Nelspruit in the Eastern Transvaal, women attacked the car of the magistrate when he announced that passes would be distributed. 300 women marched to demand the release of their five colleagues arrested during the same incident in

which four people were hurt when the police opened fire. Within a day the women had organised a strike that was 95% successful. Again the police opened fire on the demonstrators and eight people were wounded. During the raids that followed 140 people were arrested. (42/IBID.)

On the day that passes were to be distributed in Sanderton in the south of Transvaal, all the 914 women who went to protest to the mayor were arrested for "taking part in an illegal procession".

2000 women stoned officials who came to register them in June 1957 at Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal. When the officials returned in July, 3000 women greeted them, again forcing their withdrawal. (43/IBID).

In July 1957 in Copane village in the rural Bafurutse reserve, women burned their passes. When 35 were arrested, 233 more volunteered to be arrested. When officials arrived in Motswedi and Braklaagte to register the women, the villages were deserted.

ZEERUST:

The most vigorous and sustained resistance, especially in Zeerust in the Western Transvaal, was a sign of the new level of tensions surrounding the passes. The local Chief Abraham Moilola was given 14 days to leave the area. When officials arrived, only a few women accepted. All the other women collected and destroyed most of the passes issued. An attempt was made on the life of the new pro-government chief and his three bodyguards. Police arrived and arrested many people, five of them were later convicted of attempted murder.

This gave rise to increased militancy. Those chiefs and individuals who cooperated with the officials were attacked by the people. In spite of the presence of a large number of police, the people were not intimidated and passes were burnt. A hearing was set up to investigate the unrest, eight low flying planes and a contingent of 40 policemen were used to set up road blocks to prevent the women from attending the hearing to voice out their grievances. In the ensuing clashes many were injured. They had to go to hospital in the then British Protectorate of Bechuanaland now Botswana. The local hospital had refused to treat them.

In the end, the anti-pass clashes with the police had escalated so much in the district of Zeerust, that the women chose to leave the area permanently for Botswana rather than accept passes. Some of the 2,000 women and children who fled then are still in neighbouring Botswana. (44/Charles Hooper Brief authority.London Collins 1962).

IMPOSITION OF PASSES:

By October 1957 women in Johannesburg were being forced to accept passes. Many thousands though continued to protest fiercely, and thousands were arrested during the week of 21 to 28 October 1957.

It became imperative to accept the pass. Without it one could not get a house, a job and could be thrown out of an urban area at any time. Without a pass one's children could not be registered, most ridiculous one was not even expected to die without a pass, because the family left behind would have problems burying the body.

SHARPEVILLE:

On the morning of March 21st 1969, hundreds of Africans gathered in every location around the country in anti-pass demonstrations. In Sharpeville, up to 20,000 came to the police station. Without a single warning to the huge crowd, police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing 67 and wounding 186 people, including 40 women and 8 children. More than 80% of the victims were ^{shot} in the back, a sign that they were fleeing police brutalities when they were shot at.

After Sharpeville, a period of more repression followed. A state of emergency was declared, and both the ANC and PAC banned.
(45/ Muriel Horrell)

Massive arrests were made under the new restrictive legislation. The fighting spirit of the women was however undaunted, and as Lilian Ngoyi had predicted at the height of the anti-pass campaign, the women converted the jails into institutions for universal education and re-organisation. They led hunger strikes to protest about the conditions in the jails. Many leaders had been arrested, and the stay-at-home planned for the last

for the last three days of May 1961 did not succeed because police had arrested more than 18,000 African men and women in large-scale raids.

The fact that so many leaders were either arrested, banned or banished weakened the organisational capabilities of the anti-pass resistors. Thus when Proclamation 268 and Government Notice 1722 of 26 October 1962 were announced, resistance was scattered and sporadic. These laws made it obligatory for African women to carry passes as beginning from February 1st 1963. 46/IBID)

After this it became imperative to accept passes, but resistance continued. Fresh deputations were sent to government authorities, and the women emphasised that the taking of passes did not mean their acceptance. That this was a temporary retreat. It was with bleeding hearts that we took out the passes, and we vowed that whenever another opportunity arose, we would fiercely take up the anti-pass campaign", Florence Mophosho, Head of the ANC Women's Section recalls.

CONCLUSION:

The fact that it took the government 11 years to extend to African women their hated pass laws, shows the organisational talents of the women of South Africa.

The Apartheid Regime had to use all the repression they could command to force women to carry passes.

Today the predictions of the women of the 50's are coming true. Passes have been the cause for the breaking up of African homes. Pass laws have prevented African women from getting employment in urban areas, because they cannot be fitted into the Apartheid socio-economic system. Failure to produce passes has resulted in more than 50,000 African women being thrown into prison each year.

But the legacy of August 9th lives on, and no amount of repression will dampen it. Women inside South Africa continue to resist the imposition of passes and the effects of pass laws, the main one being mass removals of African people to the bantustans. The names of areas such as cross-roads and Batlokwa have been associated with the mass resistance of women to the uprooting of the African population to desolate areas.

Referring to the massive demonstration, Chief Albert Luthuli, former ANC President and Nobel Prize Winner later said:

"AMONG US AFRICANS, THE WEIGHT OF RESISTANCE HAS BEEN GREATLY INCREASED IN THE LAST FEW YEARS BY THE EMERGENCE OF OUR WOMEN. IT MAY EVEN BE TRUE THAT, HAD THE WOMEN HUNG BACK, RESISTANCE WOULD STILL HAVE BEEN FALTERING AND UNCERTAIN...THE DEMONSTRATION MADE A GREAT IMPACT, AND EVEN GAVE STRONG IMPETUS...FURTHERMORE, WOMEN OF ALL RACES HAVE HAD FAR LESS HESITATION THAN MEN IN MAKING COMMON CAUSE ABOUT THINGS BASIC TO THEM."

MALIBONGWE IGAMA LAMAKHOSIKAZI!

WE THANK THE WOMEN!

THE PETITION THAT THE WOMEN TOOK TO STRIJDOM:

We, the women of South Africa have come here today. We represent and we speak on behalf of hundreds of thousands of women who could not be with us. But all over the country, at this moment, women are watching and thinking of us. Their hearts are with us.

We are women from every part of South Africa. We are women of every race, we come from the cities and the towns, from the reserves and the villages. We come as women united in our purpose to save the African women from the degradation of passes.

For hundreds of years the African people have suffered under the most bitter law of all. The pass law which has brought untold suffering to every African Family.

Raids, arrests, loss of pay, long hours at the pass office, weeks in the cells awaiting trial, forced farm labour - this is what the pass laws have brought to African men. Punishment and misery not for a crime but for the lack of a pass.

We african women know too well the effects of this law upon our homes, our children.

Your government proclaims aloud at home and abroad that the pass laws have been abolished but WE KNOW THAT THIS IS NOT TRUE, for our husbands our brothers, our sons are still being arrested, thousands every day, under those pass laws. It is only the name which has changed. The reference book and the pass are one.

In March 1952, your Minister of Native Affairs denied in Parliament that a law would be introduced which would force African women to carry passes. But in 1956 your government is attempting to force passes upon the African women, and we are here today to protest against this insult to all women.

We want to tell you what the pass would mean to an African woman and we want you to know that whether you call it a reference book, or by any other disguising name, to us it is a pass. And it means just this:

- * That homes will be broken up when women are arrested under pass laws.
- * That children will be left uncared for, helpless, and mothers will be torn from their babies for failure to produce a pass.
- * That women and young girls will be exposed to humiliation and degradation at the hands of pass searching policemen.
- * The women will lose their right to move about freely.

In the name of women of South Africa we say to you, each one of us, African European, Indian, Coloured, that we are opposed to the pass system.

We voters and voteless, call upon your government not to issue passes to African women.

WE SHALL NOT REST UNTIL THE PASS LAWS AND ALL FORMS OF PERMITS RESTRICTING OUR FREEDOM HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED - WE SHALL NOT REST UNTIL WE HAVE WON FOR OUR CHILDREN THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND SECURITY.