

The dramatic story of a people's struggle. A tale of tears, sweat, and joy in the...

# INDIAN'S 100-YEAR SAGA

Written and photographed by G. R. Naidoo

This is the story of a hundred years of Indian progress; a saga of a people. It tells of the lives of dozens of ordinary men and women whose courage and convictions made them rise to the ranks of heroes: How a people loved its country and yet struggled against the injustices and discriminations that were perpetrated in that country's name. This is the tale of the followers in the great tradition of Gandhi, and of their hopes for tomorrow.

THE hundred years since the arrival of Indians in South Africa is a story punctuated with hardship, tears and joy. We have had colourful heroes, both men and women, who have added a touch of romanticism to our history in South Africa. Some of them have been great political leaders; some simple folk dedicated to a cause; some business tycoons; some ordinary men and women whose stories have never been told, even some gangsters who have added their own sinister glamour.

A lot has happened during our first hundred years in South Africa. In spite of the immense setbacks we have had in our political struggles and the almost monotonous regularity with which anti-Indian laws have been passed, we can still look back with a sense of pride and achievement.

In practically all the different phases of our history, individuals stood out as martyrs and heroes. The world knows of the greatest of them all, Mahatma Gandhi, who gained his political inspiration in South Africa, and whose theory of passive resistance brought India its independence. But there were lesser heroes the present generation scarcely knows.

One of the most outstanding in our early history was a woman who gave her life for the cause of her people. She was Valliamah Mudaliar, the daughter of a Johannesburg labourer. Valliamah was a mere wisp of a woman who was imbued with the spirit of Gandhi and his passive resistance movement.

She served her first term of imprisonment at the age of sixteen and when she returned from her term of imprisonment, she contracted a fatal fever.

It was on February 22, 1914, that Gandhi was summoned to her bedside. He could not help but brush aside a tear when he saw the tall girl, her body emaciated beyond description. Though she was dying, she had a flicker of a smile on her girlish face. "Valliamah, you do not repent of your having gone to jail?" asked Gandhi.

"Repent? I am even now ready to go to jail again if I am arrested," replied the girl. Gandhi was deeply moved by the simple and sincere words of a girl dedicated to his faith. He later told friends that if he had only a dozen Valliamahs, the cause of the Indians would be won. Valliamah hovered between life and death after her last conversation with Gandhi. But within a few days, she died.

## Gandhi's disciple

Gandhi paid the following moving tribute to her: "She built her temple of service with her own hands and her glorious image has a niche even now reserved for it in many a heart. And the name of Valliamah will live in the history of South African Satyagraha (Passive Resistance) as long as India lives."

There were several others who stood out during the great political campaigns of

Gandhi. One other was Ahmad Muhamma Kachhalia of Johannesburg. Kachhalia was an unostentatious piece-goods trader from the Transvaal who rose to become a respected leader of his people through sheer honesty and his determination to do the Indians in South Africa a service, without any personal reward.

In some of the most difficult times in the Gandhian era, Kachhalia was elected a "captain" by Gandhi. He cheerfully accepted jail in the cause of his people. The greatness in Kachhalia became apparent when white creditors put the squeeze on him to dissuade him



## A PIONEER BUSINESSMAN

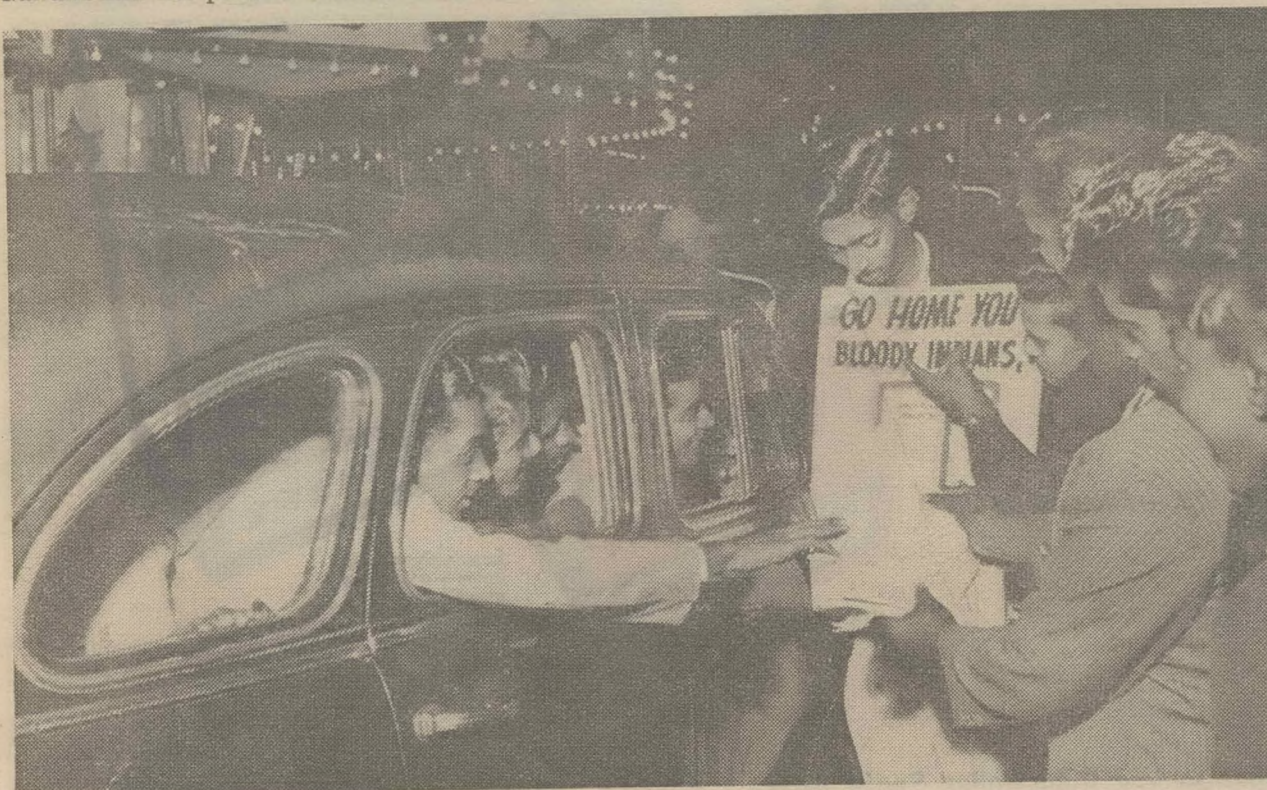
Mr. R. Bhugwan was the country's first professional photographer. Here he is with his son in a horse and trap.

from campaigning with the political firebrand Gandhi. Kachhalia owed large sums of money to white firms and, though his credit was the best in the country, the companies demanded that he meet his dues immediately. It was suspected that the white traders were instructed to start their campaign of persecution by the government of the day.

The affected firms told Kachhalia that they would not press for immediate payment if he left the Satyagraha movement. Kachhalia would have no truck with the suggestion that he give up politics. He told his creditors that his participation in the struggle was his personal affair. He considered that his religion, the honour of his country and his own self-respect were bound up with the struggle. He assured them, however, that their money was safe, and that as long as he was alive, he would repay them in full, at any cost.

## A man of principle

A meeting of creditors was held in the offices of Gandhi at the beginning of 1909. With the consent of Kachhalia, Gandhi invited the creditors to take over the business if they wished. If this did not satisfy them, the creditors could take over the stock at cost price and if any part of their dues still re-



## THE STRUGGLE FOR ACCEPTANCE

Throughout their hundred years in South Africa Indians have been struggling for rights. This placard bears the words of white prejudice. It is the kind of thing Indians have often suffered.





**TWO PICTURES SUM UP ALL OUR CHANGES**

These two girls of yesterday and today sum up the changes in our society. Left, the old-fashioned girl, beautifully bedecked, but uncomfortable, shy, a slave to household chores. Right, the girl of today, glowing with the beauty of freedom, confidence in herself, and her generation's future.

mained unpaid, they would be free to take over the book debts sufficient to cover the deficit. But the merchants were not out to seek justice. They were out to bend Kachhalia.

When he would not waver from his stand, insolvency proceedings were instituted against him and he was declared insolvent. Bankruptcy amongst Muslims was considered an unpardonable sin, but his insolvency only enhanced Kachhalia's prestige among the community. Within a year after being declared insolvent, Kachhalia paid his creditors twenty shillings in the pound.

**Boer war hero**

A completely unknown indentured labourer played one of the most dramatic and dangerous roles during the Boer War. He was Parbhusingh of Ladysmith, who formed part of a small Indian settlement in the town. When the Boer War was at its height, the officer in command at Ladysmith assigned various duties to every resident of the place, irrespective of his race. A most dangerous and most responsible task was assigned to Parbhusingh.

The Boers had stationed a long-range gun, known in those days as the "pom pom," on a hill near Ladysmith. The gun was doing a great amount of damage, both to property and to lives. Because of the antiquity of the weapons used in those days, there was an interval of over a minute from the time the guns was fired to the time its shells hit the town. If the townspeople received warning immediately the gun was fired, they had the opportunity to take cover and save their lives.

PLEASE TURN OVER



**HOME TOWN IN THE OLD DAYS**

Durban's Victoria Street in the old days was an open-air market place. Crowds would throng the streets, in the heat and dust, arguing about prices and quality of the vegetables and fruit.



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# GREAT HEROES OF OUR EARLY DAYS



**THE GREATEST LEADER . . .**

Mahatma Gandhi, who led South Africa's Indians before spreading his principles through the world.

Gadu, left South Africa with his two sons and daughters to settle in India under the repatriation scheme. In terms of the scheme, an Indian who sought voluntary repatriation could return to South Africa within a three-year period.

When he arrived in India, he discovered that his relatives had left the district in which they lived and he was not able to trace them. He remained in India for a while, but decided to return to South Africa within the stipulated time of three years. The man found that the money in his possession could only purchase tickets for his family and himself to Dar-es-Salaam.

## Walked from Dar to Natal

This did not deter him. He bought tickets to Dar-es-Salaam, and from there wrote to the South African Ministry of Interior for financial assistance to enable him to proceed to Durban by ship. Financial help from the South African government was refused.

The father, two sons and daughter were bent on returning to Durban. This was the only home they knew. With no money in their possession, the family started their long trek from Dar-es-Salaam to Durban by foot.

The trip was hazardous. The man walked with his children through forests infested with wild animals, passed through areas of tropical disease without being immunised, and swam across the many rivers. They saved themselves from starvation by eating herbs and fruit.

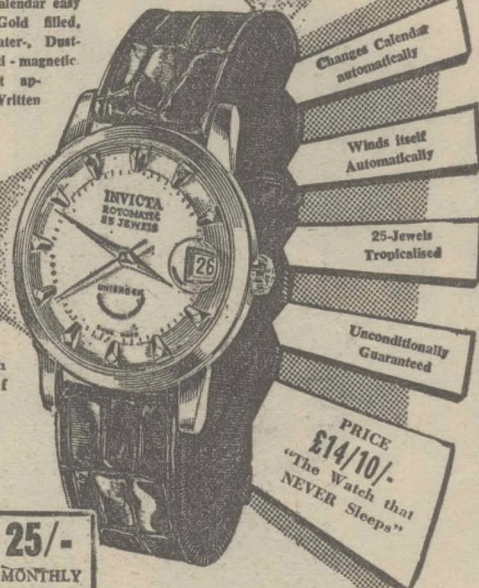
After several months of walking, they arrived at the Natal border. Instead of the welcome they expected, they were arrested. The distraught family who risked life to get back to what they thought was their home, were declared prohibited immigrants and put on board the next ship to India.

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**. . . AND ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES**  
Kachhalia resisted the pressure of his creditors. Stuck to his principles.

Parbhusingh was allotted the task of sitting on a huge tree and ringing a bell the moment he saw the flash of the gun on the hill. It was realised that the role given to him was a very dangerous one. He perched himself on the tree and without fail sounded the bell each time he saw the flash of light. A number of lives were saved because of his heroic devotion to duty.

The story of Parbhusingh's bravery was soon known in Natal. In his own simple way he typified the spirit of the ordinary indentured Indian labourer of his days. They were not cowards. The Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, sent a Kashmir robe for presentation to Parbhusingh and asked the Natal Government to carry out the presentation at a public ceremony. The unknown man from Ladysmith was given a civic presentation by the mayor of Durban.

To many of the early Indians, South Africa was a land of promise. And people were prepared to achieve their ambition even at the risk of their lives and the lives of their children.

An indentured Indian labourer, Muni



# IN SOUTH AFRICA

One of the pioneer teachers amongst Indians was Mr. Henry Nundoo. In 1886, he published a book titled "Light of Knowledge" in Hindu and English for use by Indians learning English. In the preface to the book, Mr. Nundoo said: "The reader will find this book an easy introduction to the English language, either with or without the aid of a teacher."

It was, however, not as easy as Mr. Nundoo made it seem. Six years after his book was published, an Education Commission was set up by the Government to go into the educational needs of Indians. This commission recommended that "the Protector of Indian Immigrants should correspond with the proper authorities in India with a view to securing for the Colony the services of efficiently trained teachers capable, not only of conducting a central school for "coolies," but also of preparing young men to become teachers at the schools on the plantations."

The first fully-qualified woman teacher was brought from India to Natal in 1889. She was Mrs. S. P. Vedamuthu, who was brought by the St. Aidan's Mission to teach in one of the two girls' schools then established.

The first contingent of fully qualified Indian teachers to lecture in a College was imported from India in 1904. They were Rev. D. Koilpillai, B.A. (Principal), Samuel Jesusdas, B.A., Gnanamuthu Thungasamy, B.A., and Samuel Joseph, F.A. And from these humble beginnings in the field of education, the community has produced men and women who have excelled themselves in all fields.

## Unknown Hero

Standing out amongst the hundreds of unknown and unsung heroes of our century was a young father who gave his life in saving others from certain death.

It happened during the great floods of the Umbilo River. After a deluge, the river was a mass of swirling water which took everything in its wake. Families living in the low-lying lands were swept out to sea. Some were rescued, but others met a watery grave. Help-



**THE TWO KAJEES**

Left, Ismail Kajee, popularly known as "Bhai Chacha." A pioneer of commerce. Right, his son, the famous A. I. Kajee, had a controversial career as an Indian leader. Led Congress through difficult times until 1946.



less men and women stood in silence on the hills overlooking the river, bearing witness to this tragedy. There were poignant scenes as mothers cried out for help and offered all their possessions as reward for their rescue as they clung to rooftops which were being tossed about like corks in the water.

A young father stood within reach of the edge of the water clasping his infant son, horrified at the sight. Not more than twenty yards away, a mother — with her own child held tightly to her bosom — was being swept away. The mother was quietly sobbing as she realised that nobody would dare undertake her rescue. Suddenly the man on the river bank set down his little son in safety, and dived into the water fully-clothed. He reached the near-drowning mother and child and brought them safely to shore. But before the hero could climb the bank to safety, he lost

his footing, slipped back into the river — and was swept away.

As was detailed in previous stories by DRUM on Indians in South Africa, a mass of laws restricting Indians in many ways were introduced from time to time by the different governments. While Gandhi was in South Africa, he led the struggle of the people as an undisputed leader. But after the withdrawal of Gandhi and the passing away of his co-workers, the community was in need of a new leader.

It was at this time that Abdulla Ismail Kajee filled the gap. There were many who did not agree with the politics of the late "A.I.," as he was popularly known, but he did make a significant contribution to the history of the Indians in South Africa. Some called him a "quisling" and a "seller-out" of

PLEASE TURN OVER

## PIONEERS OF LIGHT AND LEARNING AMONG OUR INDIAN PEOPLE



**PIONEER AUTHOR** Henry Nundoo who wrote the first book in which Indians could learn English.

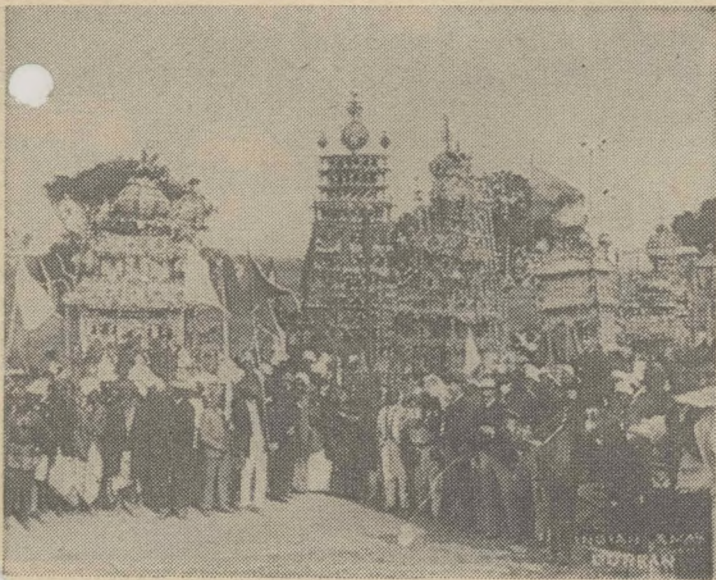


**FIRST WOMAN TEACHER** Mrs. S. P. Vedamuthu brought from India to Natal in 1899 to teach.



Right, Rev. D. Koilpillai, among the first qualified teachers to come from India.





**MUSLIM FESTIVAL** The festival of "Pagodas," which once attracted thousands. It is a tradition which is now dying out.

## Long struggles of the Indian Congresses

Indian interests, whilst some said he possessed rare qualities of statesmanship and that, had he been white, he would have been Prime Minister.

A.I. had a stormy political career and eventually managed to lead the Natal Indian Congress and its parent body, the South African Indian Congress. He concluded several agreements with the government of his day. But he was often accused by his opponents of looking after the interests of the rich at the expense of the poor.

He led Congress through difficult times until he was finally ousted from office together with his colleagues in 1946, when the "Progressives" took over. Kajee was an embittered man, but this did not lead him to forsake politics. He was too deeply engrossed in it and for some months acted as a freelance, still retaining his contact with members of the Government. During discussions with Mr. H. G. Lawrence of the Smuts Government, he collapsed, and died a few hours later.

A.I. was the stormy petrel of Indian politics in South Africa, but even his opponents admit that he was devoted to his cause, though that cause deviated from the policy of his opponents and the vast majority of the people he tried to represent.

For the first hundred years of our existence in South Africa, Indians can certainly boast of having produced men and women of outstanding quality and calibre. We have shown that we are not cowards in times of need. We did not allow running political battles with government of the country to overshadow a natural loyalty and patriotism to South Africa.

Indians have often been accused of being bad South Africans, but we have made our contribution in both the great wars. Indians fought alongside other South Africans on the battlefields of Africa and Europe.

The main criticism of Indians in South Africa, in the early years, that has some weight, is that we lived in a cultural vacuum. We had very few poets and authors, writers and musicians. Despite the fact that we struggled against racialism, it is also fair to say that for most of the early part of our hundred years of history of our existence we have been as racialist as other sections in this race-conscious country.

It has only been in the past few decades that we have seen signs of a revolution in our social life. There have been changes in our political outlook, our social outlook, our cultural outlook, and in every aspect of our lives. Indian society is now beginning to play its full part in the modern world of today.

NEXT MONTH:

Looking forward — what is the future of our people in the land which is now there home?

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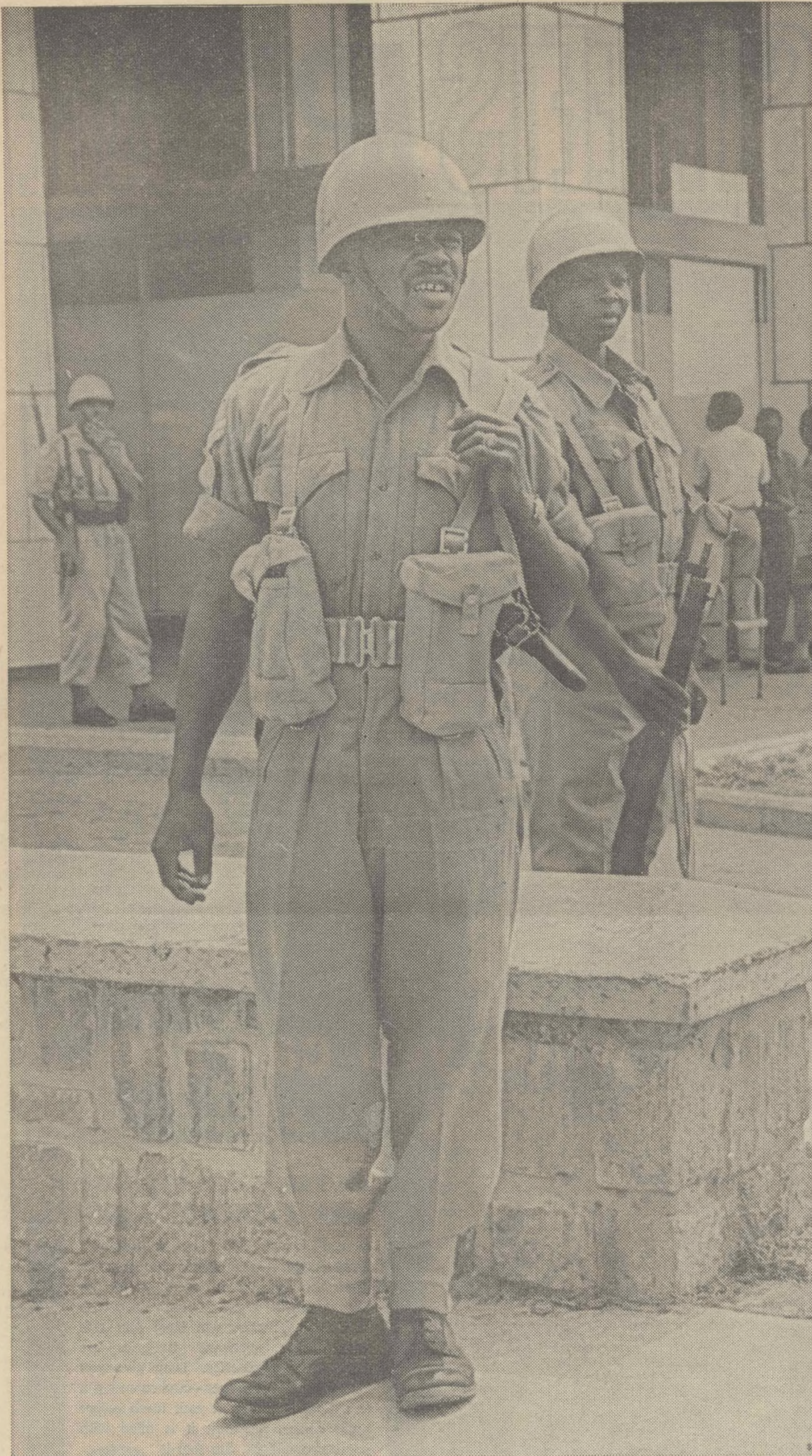
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**MEN LIKE THESE** It was the Ghana men who won the respect and admiration of the Congolese people. Corporal Djato Farafara and Pte. Adongo Farafara were on duty with 1st Btn. in Leopoldville.



**REPORTING TO THE ASST. COMMISSIONER**  
The Assistant Commissioner of Police, A. Cobbinah, listens to a report from a wireless patrol section.



**CONTINUAL POINT DUTY IN CAPITAL**  
All over Leopoldville Ghana troops were doing point duty. Here are Ptes. H. Busanga and C. Apaloo.



**THEY GUARDED A POWER STATION**  
Two soldiers of Ghana's third battalion guarded the approaches to a hydro-electric power station.

## CRACK AFRICAN TROOPS IN CONGO

The Ghana troops in the Congo soon established themselves as the backbone of the United Nations. The Congolese people saw them as protectors. A visiting team of DRUM journalists who went to the Congo found them efficient, honest, fair and, above all, polite.



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