Author : Govan Mbeki

The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa

Contents

Foreword: by Z. Pallo Jordan

The purpose of this book is to provide the general reader with a basic knowledge of the history of the national liberation struggle, its background and its relationship to other struggles in the world today. While it approaches its subject matter historically, there is a serious attempt to steer away from the mere cataloguing of historical facts. Its primary objective is to illustrate the growth and development of policy, relating this to changing conditions of struggle and the appearance of new challenges. It is written by someone who has been most intimately involved in the politics of national liberation since the 1930s, as an activist, an organiser, a journalist and a political leader. The privileged access the author enjoyed to the processes of policy formulation and strategising that shaped the

politics of struggle during two crucial decades, the 1950s and 1960s, makes it unique for its insights.

If this book assists readers in understanding the economic, social and political forces that have fashioned our present, and through such an understanding helps them grasp what forces can be marshalled to bring about change, it will have succeeded in its purpose.

1. The Roots of the Struggle

In the latter half of the nineteenth century a fertile ground was laid in which the struggle for national liberation took root. For during this period Boer and Briton set the foundations for the systematic oppression and exploitation of the indigenous people of South Africa, against which the liberatory forces have pitted themselves for more than a century.

Within a few years after the discovery of diamonds in the 1860s the British imperial government embarked on a policy of expansion in southern Africa. British and colonial troops engaged in war against a number of chiefdoms and overpowered one after the other in quick succession: the Hlubi in 1873; Gcaleka and Pedi in 1877; Ngqika, Thembu, Mpondo, Griqua and Rolong in 1878; Zulu in 1879; Sotho in 1880; and Ndebele in 1893.

As these Wars of Dispossession drew to an end, Africans embarked on new forms of struggle to achieve the same goals which their military struggle had failed to secure on the field of battle. During the second half of the nineteenth century Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican missionaries were establishing educational institutions in southern Africa which trained teachers, builders, carpenters, printers, ministers of religion and others. The young men who

qualified at these institutions in the Cape soon registered as voters, and entered a new arena to take up the struggle which was drawing to a close on the field of battle. This first-generation product of the mission schools threw themselves unreservedly into the task of recruiting and helping those who could fulfil the conditions for qualifying as voters. According to the Cape constitution, the franchise was open to any man - black or white - who occupied property worth at least ?25 or earned at least ?50 each year. It is not difficult to see that given the enthusiastic recruitment, the African voters would, in the course of time, have returned to parliament a significant number of MPs to play a decisive role in influencing legislation for the benefit of all the people of the Colony. They sought to use the constitution to ensure that its democratic mechanisms operated for the benefit of all, white as well as black. Their genuineness in this regard is shown by the fact they supported election candidates on the basis of their manifestos and never attempted to use an African bloc vote. This approach has long characterised the policies of the ANC.

Another significant development in the latter half of the nineteenth century was the mineral revolution. The discovery of diamonds and gold brought not only foreign capital - British capital - but also capital`s stablemate, labour. The immigrant skilled workers who flocked to the mines not only claimed the wage level they had already attained in the metropolitan country but demanded to be paid for the loss of amenities suffered by coming to work in colonial conditions. In addition, they had to assume the role of supervisors over the mass of the unskilled labour force, and had to maintain artificial standards that were expected of white men irrespective of their station. Thus, together with the employing class, the skilled workers created and maintained a social structure in which white men occupied a position of superiority. And from this developed

attitudes and their attendant practices which over the years were refined into the philosophy of white supremacy or baasskap.

To satisfy the need for a plentiful and inexhaustible supply of cheap labour for the developing economy Boer and Briton acted jointly to achieve a common purpose. While there were serious contradictions between them, on one question - the forging of a common policy that would ensure a regular flow of cheap labour from the African reserves to the white farms and mines there was agreement. In these circumstances it was obvious that the aspirations of black and white would be poles apart. The oppressor and exploiter would strive to be on top for all time, while the downtrodden would struggle to stand on their feet, to overthrow oppression, to enjoy to the full the product of their own labour, to share on a basis of equality the resources which nature has so liberally bestowed on this country.

Attack on African Franchise in the Cape

As we have seen, the granting of the franchise to the Africans in the Cape marked the beginning of a new era. The fight was no longer to be on the battlefield with lethal weapons of war that brought death and destruction. Instead it shifted to public platforms and the weapons became words, spoken and written. Those who had acquired education from the missionary institutions set about registering all who were in a position to qualify for the vote, particularly the substantial number of peasants who fulfilled the qualifications under the Cape constitution. As a result of such campaigns, Africans in some Eastern Cape constituencies began to form the majority of voters. This trend, however, alarmed the whites, who took steps to arrest it. In 1887 the Electoral Amendment Act, which was introduced by J. G. Sprigg, then prime minister, and the Parliamentary Voters Registration Act were passed. The Africans

called the latter Tung` umlomo (Sew up the mouth). These laws excluded tribal and community tenure as qualification for the franchise. The effect was to remove some 30 000 voters from the voters, roll. Africans reacted to the Tung` umlomo Act by intensifying their efforts to register. Consequently by 1891 the number of African voters was restored to the former level. As if this legislation had not done enough harm, Cecil Rhodes, premier of the Cape and arch-imperialist, joined hands with the Afrikaner Bond of Jan Hofmeyr, to pass in 1892 the Franchise and Ballot Act, which raised the qualification in respect of property from ?25 to ?75. In addition, an educational qualification was required, namely, that for purposes of registration as a voter one should be able to read and write. The intention of all these measures was to eliminate the African vote.

The attitude of the whites towards African political rights, and their determination to strip the Africans of the franchise, was explicitly stated by Cecil Rhodes, when he declared: `We [the Whites] are to be lords over them [the Africans]. These are my politics ... and these are the politics of South Africa. Yet in 1852 when some settlers expressed opposition to the introduction of a liberal franchise the Attorney-General of the Cape, William Porter, had the amazing foresight to declare: `Why should you fear the exercise of the franchise? This is a delicate question but it must be touched upon. I do not hesitate to say that I would rather meet the Hottentot at the hustings voting for his representative than meet him in the wilds with his gun on his shoulder. Is it not better to disarm them by granting them the privileges of the constitution? If you now blast all their hopes and tell them they shall not fight their battles constitutionally, do not you yourselves apply to them the stimulus to fight their battles unconstitutionally?, (With the support of white South Africa the National Party government after 1948 chose deliberately to

provoke Africans to meet it on the battlefield rather than grant them the right to express their aspirations as South Africans constitutionally.)

Rhodes followed with dogged determination the policy of disenfranchising Africans by passing the Glen Grey Act in 1894, in a three-pronged attack to render the African completely defenceless against naked oppression and exploitation. The Act aimed, firstly, to establish a system of local administration under which the African would be forced to concentrate on local matters rather than on national politics and parliament. With the establishment of the local council system under the Act the burden of providing funds for the development of the infrastructure and certain important services like education and veterinary services in the Native reserves was shifted to the inhabitants of the reserves. This laid the foundation for policies that for decades excluded the Africans from the Treasury.

Secondly, the Glen Grey Act provided for a system of attenuated individual land-ownership. In seven surveyed districts in the southern Transkei, a form of title-deed was issued for arable allotments averaging four morgen in extent. In the event of the death of the original title-holder, the land would pass to his male heir, while the rest of his sons would have to find other ways of making a living. Before long a mass of landless people was thrown up in the reserves.

Thirdly, the Act imposed a labour tax of 10 shillings on any African male who had not worked outside his district for at least three months in the year. With this attack on three fronts, the designers of the Glen Grey Act expected that poverty and starvation would force Africans from the reserves to seek employment on the white farms and the mines. The Act brought the conditions for Africans in the

Cape into line with those in the Afrikaner Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State, where no equality existed between Africans and Afrikaners in state or church.

Racial Organisations and the Birth of African Nationalism

Caught between the Afrikaner Bond and English-speaking colonists who had combined in a determined attack on the African franchise and access to land, Africans in the Cape formed organisations to unite them against the onslaught. In 1881 they founded lmbumba Yamanyama to fight for the advancement of African rights which the two settler groups sought to destroy. This happened shortly after the formation of the Afrikaner Bond in 1879.

Later, Africans in the Free State, Natal and the Transvaal formed, independently of each other, Native Congresses, while Cape Africans formed the South African Native Congress in 1898. In 1902 Dr Abdullah Abdurahman established the African Political Organisation (APO). Although the membership of the APO was open to all, in practice it became an organisation for Coloureds. And in Natal, Mahatma Gandhi formed an Indian Congress in 1894. Thus, at the turn of the century racially based political organisations had been formed, on the one hand; by whites to entrench their dominance and, on the other, by blacks to fight for equal rights for all.

The pursuance by the colonial government of political and economic policies that put the Africans at a disadvantage had a pervasive effect on all levels of the settler society. The church and the trading community could not have been expected to pursue policies in their own spheres that cut across the policies of the law-makers. Consequently a colonial culture developed that determined the

general attitude and set standards of behaviour in relation to the indigenous people.

While the battle was waged on the political and economic front primarily, Africans were also engaged in a struggle for equality within the Church. When they did not see this happen, they started a movement to break away from the white man`s Church, where the key positions were reserved for the whites.

In South Africa a cluster of breakaways occurred about the same period over a wide area including the Cape, Transvaal and Natal. This occurrence, about the same time, would seem to suggest that Africans saw the white-controlled Churches as pursuing the policies of denial of equality for all.

In the Transvaal, Mangena Mokone, who in 1892 broke away from the Wesleyan Church, formed the Ethiopian Church. By 1896 the Rev. J. M. Dwane had also broken away from the Wesleyan Church to join the Ethiopian Church, but later seceded to lead the Order of Ethiopia. The dissatisfaction also spread to the (Presbyterian) Free Church of Scotland. The Rev. Pambani Mzimba broke away to form the Bantu Presbyterian Church (iCawa yakwa-Mzimba) in 1898.

The growth and spread of the Ethiopian Movement took place at the same time that Africans were forming independent political movements. Although these religious and political movements grew alongside each other, individuals within them did not find it difficult to be members of both. It was in this setting that African nationalism had its origins

2. The Anglo-Boer War and its Aftermath

The end of the Wars of Dispossession coincided with the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and a massive inflow of foreign capital, largely British, for investment in gold mining. Large numbers of foreign speculators and businessmen flocked to the Reef in search of easy fortunes. To the Boers the arrival of these Uitlanders disturbed their placid farming life and threatened the continued existence of their Republic. The Uitlanders, for their part, were not satisfied with only the opening of investment opportunities; they sought to ensure the future by gaining complete control of power. That meant turning the Boer Republics into British colonies. It could not be expected that the Boers who had fled from British colonial rule in the Cape would allow the land they had acquired by conquest to fall into the hands of the British. The outcome was the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902.

When towards the end of the war the Boer generals realised that they could no longer pursue hostilities, they sued for peace on terms which left them much room for future positioning and took steps to ensure that what they had lost on the battlefield they regained by political manoeuvre. In approaching Kitchener to arrange for a peace settlement the generals sought to maintain the independence of the Boer Republics. In the end, however, the Treaty of Vereeniging saw British rule established, but the Boers made sure the British government gave an undertaking that the franchise would not be extended to the blacks in the former Boer Republics before representative government was granted.

With British rule established over the whole region and the development of the mining industry assured with massive British capital investment, the need to form a central government became urgent. Competition between the four colonies to impose customs duties could only harm the economy of the whole area. After the war,

Alfred Milner, as High Commissioner and Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River colonies, was assigned the task of bringing about the reconstruction of British South Africa. Milner was determined to keep South Africa British. Towards this goal he fostered the use of English as the only official language and medium of instruction in schools. He went further and promoted immigration of English stock from Britain, Australia and Canada.

In addition, Milner sought to help the mines find a source of labour to meet the post-war labour shortage. As part of his programme to bring about a reconstruction of British South Africa he concluded an agreement in 1901 with the Governor of Mozambique to import Shangaan labour from that Portuguese colony. Milner also introduced Chinese labour. This move was strongly opposed by Afrikaners who saw it as an attempt to deny them opportunities of employment, while white trade unionists regarded it as a threat to their high wage standards.

Milner`s anglicisation and immigration policies met with stiff Afrikaner resistance. Realising that the four colonies had to be brought under one central authority he tried to forge links with the Boers. That could only be done at the expense of the Africans. Since Milner was opposed to political equality for Africans, he set about ensuring that all the four colonies adopted a uniform policy towards Africans. A commission of inquiry was appointed, which made recommendations that met the Boer aspirations on the question of political rights for Africans. The commission recommended that there should be separation of Africans and Europeans on a permanent basis; that there should be no direct representation for Africans in any future legislature; and that in urban areas locations for Africans should be established. In these ways the commission

formalised the idea of segregation and prepared the ground for the uniform application of a Native policy in all the four colonies.

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities in 1902 the Boer leaders had pressed for self-government in their former Republics. Louis Botha, J. C. Smuts, J. B. M. Hertzog and others met Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, to demand self-government, but their representations were not received with sympathy either by Chamberlain or by Alfred Milner.

Following this setback, the Boer leaders began to form their own political organisations. In the Transvaal, Het Volk was established in 1905 and during the same year the Orangia Unie was founded at a meeting held at Brandfort in the Orange River Colony. The two organisations took a firm stand against the introduction of Chinese labour. But an even stronger movement built up round the demand for the recognition of Afrikaans as an official language and its use as a medium of instruction in the classroom. The campaign was not only waged on political platforms but was taken up by the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk.

As the Afrikaners were coming closer together as a group to fight against Milner`s policies to extend and entrench British influence, an outcrop of political organisations emerged on the Witwatersrand among English speakers. A new political body - the Responsible Government Association (The Responsibles) - was formed which, like Het Volk, sought self-government. Before long the two political organisations forged a working agreement. Het Volk agreed that they would refrain from running a campaign against Chinese labour, while the Responsibles, who represented English capitalist interests, would cease their support for Milner`s policy of making English the only medium of instruction in schools. But even more important for

Het Volk, the Responsibles gave an undertaking that the franchise would be restricted to whites only.2 At the same time a Transvaal Progressive Association came into being, under the leadership of two prominent captains of industry, Percy FitzPatrick and George Farrar.

For their part, the white working class on the Witwatersrand realised that their class interests could only be served if they formed a political party that was devoted to the advancement of their class. Thus they set up the Transvaal Labour Party (1904), the Political Labour League (1905) and the Labour Representation Committee (1906). The craft unions and those who constituted membership of the labour groupings were only concerned with the protection of the interests of white artisans, not of the working class in general. It was, therefore, no surprise that white miners made common cause with the Responsibles and Het Volk. These white labour parties joined the Responsibles and Het Volk in demanding the restriction of the franchise to whites. The last word, however, came at a convention in 1909 where a decision was taken to establish a South African Labour Party. At the convention it was agreed that the Labour Party would not open its membership to Africans.

After the granting of responsible government to the Transvaal and Orange River colonies,4 elections were held in 1907. The outcome in the Transvaal was that Het Volk won 37 seats, and the Progressives 21. In the Orange River Colonies, 4 Orangia Unie easily won the poll.

In the Cape, the Afrikaner Bond made a swift and shrewd move. They allied themselves with the liberals Solomon, Sauer and Merriman - to form the South African Party (SAP) in 1903. In the elections held in the Cape in 1908, the SAP was returned to power. This placed the Afrikaner parties in a very strong position when

Union was formed in 1910. The Cape liberals in whom the Africans had placed so much confidence colluded with the Afrikaner Bond and the leaders of the Boer Republics to keep Africans out of the body politic.

At the National Convention of 1909, following the adoption of a motion by Merriman, who worked very closely with Smuts, that a legislative Union of South Africa be formed, the delegates proceeded to draw up a draft constitution. All the parties at the National Convention agreed that as far as the political rights of the Africans were concerned, the situation that had prevailed in the various former colonies would not be changed with the formation of Union.

The African franchise in the Cape was entrenched in the Union constitution so that it could only be removed by a simple two-thirds majority of a joint sitting of the two houses of parliament. It was a flimsy protective cover which in time would be scrapped and thereby render all Africans voiceless, and place the Afrikaner and English in a position to determine the place of the Africans in their scheme of things.

African Reaction

As we have noted, by the beginning of the nineteenth century a number of African political organisations had sprung up in all the four colonies. Unlike the Ethiopian Movement, these organisations addressed themselves to the question of African political rights, which were denied in the northern colonies, and which in the Cape were continually under attack. While the white political parties sought to keep the Africans outside of a common citizenship, the latter strove to work within the framework of a common citizenship.

It was the threat of white Union which prompted the formation of a national African political organisation.5 The South African Native Convention met at the Waaihoek location in Bloemfontein on 24-26 March 1909 to consider the draft constitution which had been adopted at the whites-only National Convention. Those Africans meeting decided that the convention would continue as a permanent body, and Dr Walter Rubusana was elected as its President. From this organisation would emerge in January 1912 the South African Native National Congress, later renamed the African National Congress (ANC).

The African convention of 1909 decided to send a deputation to Britain to put their case before the British government against the draft constitution of the Union of South Africa. The deputation, which was led by W. P. Schreiner, consisted of Dr Walter Rubusana, Dr Abdullah Abdurahman, Tengo Jabavu, J. Langa Dube, D. Dwanya and T. Mapikela. In contrast with the warm and sympathetic welcome which the delegation from the white National Convention received in England, the African deputation returned home empty-handed. The British government refused to listen to the case of its black subjects against a constitution that was to exclude them from citizenship rights in their own country.

The answer to the combined onslaught of the Afrikaner and English (conducted with the approval and backing of the British government) lay in the unity of the oppressed. The need for such unity was aptly expressed by Dr Abdurahman in 1910: `If Europeans persist in their policy of repression, there will one day arise a solid mass of Black and Coloured humanity whose demands will be irresistible.6

3. The Grand Design: The Union Constitution

With the acceptance by the Imperial Government of the draft constitution the decks were cleared for a concerted assault by Afrikaners and English on African political and property rights.

The results of the 1910 parliamentary elections - the first under the Union constitution - showed an overwhelming victory for the South African Party (SAP). After the elections, General Louis Botha formed a government which was committed to bringing about a reconciliation between Boer and Briton, and the exclusion of Africans from the political life of the country. It was this government - a government dedicated to the promotion of the exclusive interests of the whites and the degradation of the Africans - that took office on 31 May 1910.

For different reasons 31 May 1910 was a significant day for both the Britons and the Boers. For the former the formation of a central government in South Africa ensured political stability for mining capital. For the Afrikaners the formation of Union under an Afrikaner-led government represented a triumph: what they had lost on the battlefield during the Anglo-Boer War they won less than a decade later in a constitutional manner. This was the beginning of a road that in time would lead to something bigger than the former Boer Republics - to a republican South Africa under Afrikaner rule. For the overwhelming majority of the indigenous people of this country, the road of struggle will come to an end when South Africa becomes a home for all its people, including the Afrikaner.

In and out of the Union parliament the main preoccupation of white politics was the problem of the relationship of Africans to whites (the `Native Problem,). It was this obsession - this evil obsession - which moved Margaret Ballinger, a member of parliament representing Africans, to declare, `All Union politics are Native

Affairs.1 Yet though they figured so largely in national politics the Act of Union denied the Africans a voice in parliament where decisions were made, and ensured that there was no room for Africans, Coloureds and Indians within the framework of parliamentary politics.

In the very first session of the Union parliament in 1911, the government fired the first shot in what would become a barrage of legislation that was designed to strip Africans of the means to defend themselves, and to deliver them helpless to capitalist exploitation by mining and farming interests. Two important statutes were passed in this first session. The Mines and Works Act reserved certain occupations in the mining industry for whites only, and thus laid down the principle of the industrial colour bar. The second piece of legislation passed during the same session of parliament was the Native Labour Regulation Act. In terms of this Act the government armed itself with powers of control over the movement of Africans. Not only was the movement of Africans from one area to another strictly determined by this law, but their vertical mobility was to be strictly controlled through subsequent legislation which condemned the African worker to a position of menial labourer.

By controlling the movement of African labour the government was able to create a pool of cheap labour in the Native reserves which could be drawn upon to satisfy the needs of employers in the `white areas` - be they the mines, manufacturing industry, commerce or the farms. The effect of this was two-pronged. Firstly it entrenched the practice of migrant labour, by creating a situation where only the labourer was permitted to take up employment in the `white areas` while his family was left in the reserves.

The adoption of the migrant labour system gave rise in turn to the compound system of housing labour, which had first started in the diamond, gold and coal mines. When the secondary and tertiary sectors developed in the twentieth century they also housed their labour in compounds, which went under the name `hostel` to make them sound more respectable. These hideous structures are to be found in all the main industrial areas. The ruinous effects of the migrant labour system on the social and family life of Africans has been well documented.2

The second effect of the Native Labour Regulation Act was to render African workers a faceless mass of undifferentiated labourers and to eliminate competition for jobs in the various sectors of the economy. This resulted in the adoption of an average standard wage for the `Native`. And the wage level on the mines became the model for all sectors of the economy.

The Natives Land Act, 1913

By the time the Wars of Dispossession ended around 1880, Africans had been pushed back to the areas which were known as the Native reserves at the formation of Union in 1910. Both the mine-owners and the farmers hoped that since the area of the Native reserves was not large enough to provide subsistence for the increasing African population, Africans would be forced to seek employment on the mines and white farms.

Africans, however, did not in practice accept being locked up in the reserves. They sought an escape from being bottled up there by renting land from the white landowners who owned in practice more land than they could gainfully use. Moreover, there were a sizeable number of non-combatants who had remained on the white farms

during the Wars of Dispossession while the African forces were being thrown back into what became known as the reserves. With the growth of new markets towards the end of the nineteenth century as a result of the mineral revolution, African peasant farmers were quick to seize the opportunities. But white farmers could not tolerate such competition from African producers. They attributed their continued shortage of labour to the fact that some Africans who should have been confined to the reserves were squatting on white farms, where they managed to raise sufficient food not only for themselves but for the market.

The squatters, whose presence on white farms had become such an intense emotional issue by 1910, fell into four categories: (a) those who paid a cash rent; (b) those who owned livestock and were granted pasturage on condition that the farmer used such stock together with his own for all farming activities; (c) those who were allowed to till a given piece of land on condition they shared the crop equally between themselves and the farmer; and (d) those who were allowed to remain on the farm as labour tenants.

The campaign by white farmers against squatting, which culminated in the passing of the Natives Land Act of 1913, centred around the following issues:

a.According to whites, squatting on the farms aggravated the shortage of labour.

b.It was claimed that the presence of settled Africans who led an independent life on the farms they occupied, would result in social contact between them and whites who occupied adjoining farms. This was regarded as highly undesirable.

c.Whites argued that as long as the vote was open to Africans on the basis of a property qualification, unrestricted purchase of land by Africans would lead to an increase in the number of registered African voters. This would result in a threat to the white monopoly of political power.

d.Strong opposition was expressed to the practice of `farming Kaffirs` by absentee landlords and speculators who rented their farms to Africans in preference to European lessees, because it was easy to terminate an agreement with Africans at short notice.

e.It was claimed that the growing number of Africans on white farms encouraged the foundation of African syndicates that bought up land, thus creating a scarcity, which resulted in rising land values.

f.Yet another reason advanced against squatting was that the Africans did not use land properly.

Yet when the Natives Land Act of 1913 was passed the estimated number of squatters hardly justified the hysteria that surrounded the issue and brought all the parties to give their unqualified support to legislation which, in effect, sought to inflict genocide. What the whites failed to achieve on the battlefield - to wipe the Africans out - they sought to do by starving them to death. The hysteria that accompanied the build-up to the passing of the Natives Land Act was really intended to throw up a smokescreen and so hide the base racist intentions of the legislation. Sol Plaatje put it starkly thus: `The Boers are now ousting the Englishmen from the public scene, and when they have finished with them, they will make a law declaring it a crime for a Native to live in South Africa, unless he is a servant in the employ of a Boer, and from this it will be just one step to complete slavery.3 When H. F. Verwoerd made a statement

almost four decades later setting out the goals of the apartheid policy of the National Party and declaring the Africans were `sojourners, in areas outside the Bantustans, who would say Sol Plaatje`s prognosis had been baseless?

With the passing of the Natives Land Act of 1913 in addition to the Mines and Works Act and the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, the white government laid firm foundations for a race-based system of oppression and exploitation.

Long-term Effects of Land Policy

The Natives Land Act, which was introduced in parliament on a motion by an Orange Free State member, prohibited black people from wandering about without a proper pass, squatting on farms, and sowing on the share system, and it took effective measures to restrict the purchase and lease of land by blacks. In effect the Act extended to the whole Union the land laws of the Boer Republic of the Orange Free State which had denied land-ownership rights to Africans.

After the Act was passed, the South African Native National Congress (as the African National Congress was then called) made a desperate appeal to the Governor-General to withhold his signature until Congress had lodged its objections to the law. The Governor-General curtly replied that it was not within his `constitutional function, to do so. A deputation which Congress sent to England to make representations to the British government was refused a hearing and returned home empty-handed. It was at that point that the first Secretary-General of the ANC, Sol Plaatje, who had so tirelessly led the campaign against the passing of the Act, threw up his hands in despair, saying: `Thereby the die was cast, and the mandate went forth that the land laws of the Orange Free State ...

shall be the laws of the whole Union of South Africa. The worst feature in the case is the fact that ... now, however, without a president, and without the prerogative of the king (by the exercise of which the evils of such a law could have been averted), disowned by the king`s own ministers on the spot, God in the heavens alone knows what will become of the hapless, because voteless Natives, who are without a president, without a king, and without a Governor-General with constitutional functions, under taskmasters whose national traditions are to enslave the dark races.

The effects of the Natives Land Act were felt immediately. Not only were Africans dispossessed of their land, but within a month of the passing of the Act they were thrown out of white farms and dispossessed of their livestock.

In terms of the Act a commission was appointed to draw up a schedule of the areas set aside for occupation by Africans. These were known as the scheduled areas. Although in theory Africans were free to purchase land in these areas, in practice they belonged to the government, which reserved them for occupation by Africans. Thus Sol Plaatje`s oft-stated fear that the passing of the Natives Land Act would prohibit Africans `from investing their earnings in land whereon they could spend their days in peace,5 was proved true.

The Grim Reality

With all the political parties in the Union parliament agreed on setting aside certain prescribed areas of occupation for Africans, there was no problem in determining their extent. They fixed the boundaries where the end of the Wars of Dispossession had left the Africans. The area set aside for Africans constituted 7,3 per cent of the country`s total land area.

In spite of the increasing population, the extent of the scheduled areas, which had already created serious problems of landlessness at the time of the passing of the Act in 1913, remained unchanged. The government acknowledged this fact by passing the Native Land and Trust Act of 1936 in exchange for the African right to the franchise, by allocating an additional 5 789 544 morgen of released areas to make up a total area set aside for African occupation of 17 518 977 morgen or 12,4 per cent of the country`s total land area. In 1989, when the African population was estimated at 28 million, the area for African occupation remained what it was in 1936.

Over the years white governments have tried all sorts of stratagems to avoid the crucial issue of land by addressing the overpopulation of the reserves and their increasing inability to provide sustenance for the peasantry. In 1943 the Smuts government issued a White Paper in which it set out its scheme to rehabilitate the reserves. Among the major features of the rehabilitation and betterment scheme was the culling of stock to the carrying capacity of the communal pasturage, and the removal from residential areas of those who had no arable allotments and placing them in various labour settlements. In this way the government hoped that peasant farmers in the reserves could be made self-sufficient.

The peasants fought back by destroying the fences the government had put up to fence off the communal pasturage, and winter and summer grazing camps.6 In turn the government held communities nearby the destroyed fences collectively responsible and imposed a collective fine. This action served only to provoke whole peasant communities into various forms of resistance that have now become part of the national struggle for liberation.

The stringent implementation of rehabilitation measures, which limited the number of livestock to the carrying capacity of the pasturage, has left most households without stock to use for farming purposes. In many areas tractors are hired to plough the land but most owners of arable land cannot afford the charges. Consequently the land is left fallow, and the people rely to an ever-increasing extent on the earnings of migrant and commuter workers as well as on those of workers employed in the Bantustans themselves.

Since the 1960s the problem of overpopulation has been exacerbated by the National Party policy of uprooting millions of Africans and dumping them in rural settlements in various parts of the country. Among the most notorious of these settlements are Dimbaza, Sada, and Mdantsane in the border region of the Eastern Cape, Botshabelo in the Orange Free State, and Duiwelskloof, Oukasie and others in the Transvaal. The mass removal of people from areas they had occupied for half a century and more has affected an estimated three million people.

In addition, the implementation of influx control regulations also caused a swelling of the numbers of Africans in the reserves. The policy of `Back to the Land, which the Dutch Reformed Church had called for in the 1920s to stem the tide of Afrikaner urbanisation failed; yet the same people and the same church were not only prescribing it for Africans in the latter half of the twentieth century, but were enforcing it legally and brutally.

Thus with the passage of time, the land distribution in the various reserves became critical as millions of Africans were trapped between-the grinding poverty of the reserves and the hammer of the laws that forced them out of the urban or rural `white areas`. As a result migrant labour became a way of life for the vast majority of

able-bodied men, who were forced to leave their families in the reserves while they went in search of employment in the white areas. This set in motion the widespread, socially undesirable system of migrant labour which entrenched some of the worst forms of exploitation.

Not on y did the mines pay very low wages to the migrant labourers but because of the role which gold played in the economy, they set a pattern for the low level of wages throughout the economy. In computing the wages of workers the mines did not take into account their families. For a long time the Chamber of Mines argued that the wage of a black mine worker was subsidised by the produce of his peasant arable holding - a lie which the Chamber of Mines knew to be such. In seeking to find a theoretical justification for its bloodsucking practices, the Chamber`s economists advanced the theory that if the wages of an African mine worker were raised he would work only for a short period of time to satisfy his simple needs. They proceeded to lend respectability to this false theory by representing it graphically with a backward-bending supply curve; hereby they sought to show that higher wages would result in a diminishing supply of labour, since African mine workers required cash wages only to pay once annually the poll and local taxes.

In the 1960s the government devised a policy of industrial decentralisation in an attempt to create employment for the impoverished and overpopulated Bantustans by encouraging the establishment of industries on the borders of these territories. The immediate effect of the decentralisation of industry to the border areas was the creation of large settlements of African workers on the Bantustan side of the border. To attract industries to locate in border areas the government tolerated the worst forms of exploitation. Chinese industrialists from Taiwan, for example, have found a fertile

field for investment in the Bantustans. Here, under conditions which hardly differ from those on South Africa`s commercial farms, Africans toil under unimaginable conditions of insecurity. Not satisfied with denying the African workers recognition of their trade unions, the government prohibited the Wage Board, which had originally been set up to protect the interests of the unskilled and unorganised workers, from determining wages for African workers employed in border industries. Even after black trade unions were recognised in the late 1970s, Bantustan administrations did not allow unions in the industries that operated in their areas.

In this way the South African government sought to wash its hands of its responsibility for the millions of Africans whom it condemned to a living death in the Bantustans. It did not have to provide housing, education or health services. It denied them the right to protect themselves through their trade unions against unscrupulous exploitation by greedy domestic and foreign capitalists. The workers in these settlements fall into two broad categories, namely those who commute daily to work on the `white` side of the border, and those who work in factories located on the Bantustan side of the border. The underlying assumption in the case of both is that the wage supplemented earnings from subsistence farming. Yet in practice the earnings derived from employment either in the border industries or in factories inside the Bantustans as well as from migrant labour are the only real source of income for households in the reserves.

The issue of land and its redistribution is fundamental to the struggle for liberation in South Africa. There can be no peace until this and other rights of which the majority of the people have been deprived for so long have been restored to them.

4. African Rights under Siege

The formation of the South African Native Convention in 1909 marked a watershed. The convention drew together all the black political groups which had operated in the four colonies. Its decision to continue meeting and elect a committee to ensure such continuity laid the ground for the establishment of a national organisation. Even before the formation of Union the need to unite in order to fight effectively against determined attacks on the political rights of Africans by the alliance of Boers and Britons had become apparent.

The launching of the South African Native National Congress on 8 January 1912 (later renamed the African National Congress) was thus the culmination of a process that had started before Union. Emphasising the dire need for unity which would have to cut across and replace all hitherto ethnically based organisational structures, Pixley ka l. Seme- one of the founders of the ANC - declared: `The demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa-Fingo feud, the animosities that exist between Zulus and the Tsongas, between the Basutos and every other Native must be buried and forgotten ... We are one people.

The call for unity has been consciously kept alive throughout the history of the ANC, and has been immortalised in today`s ANC freedom songs:

Sikhalela		Izwe		Lakithi
Sikhalela		Izwe		Lakithi
Elathathwa		ngama		Galajana.
Zulu		Xhosa		Msotho
Hlanganani.				
[We	cry	for	our	country
We	cry	for	our	country
Which	was	taken	by	robbers.

Zulu Xhosa MoSotho
Unite.]

When the ANC was formed the people of those days expressed their joy by saying that while Boer and Briton had formed a parliament for themselves, the ANC represented the Africans, own parliament. Obviously matters could not for ever remain this way. There cannot be two parliaments in one and the same country. The ANC is struggling to form one people, to be represented in one parliament in one country. In spite of the various ethnic groupings in the country, black and white, the ANC is seeking to forge one nation, building a non-racial democracy in a unitary state.

Still in its swaddling clothes, the ANC had to wage a grim battle against the Natives Land Act, which laid the foundation for naked exploitation of African labour and easy accumulation by white capitalists. In addition, in 1913 pass laws were extended to women in the Orange Free State, thus opening another front. The resistance by the women took the form of defiance, and in the end the government was forced to abandon its plans to extend the pass laws to women. That was a victory for the ANC in a battle in which women formed the front line, a victory that kept at bay for more than forty years the forces that sought to enslave and expose African women to the unspeakable indignities of the pass laws.

When the ANC saw how harshly the government was implementing the Natives Land Act, and the disastrous effects 1 it had on Africans who were regarded as squatters under the law, it once again, out of desperation, sent a delegation to London to make representations to the British government. As was the case with the delegation sent in 1909 it met with indifference. From then on the ANC knew that it had, out of necessity, to plough a lone furrow. Yet while it faced this

reality it was prepared to join hands with anyone who was opposed to the injustice that white domination unleashed on the majority.

An event that was to bring to the South African political scene a new force and new thinking was the breakaway from the South African Labour Party of some of its members, who formed the International Socialist League in 1915. Following the teachings of Karl Marx, the members of the League, though they had for so long been members of a political party that subscribed to the racist attitudes of `keeping the Kaffir in his place`, moved away from the established white stereotypes. They accepted that the African working class suffered even greater exploitation than themselves and in addition were subjected to national oppression. They therefore forged links with the ANC by appearing on the same platforms with it. By the time the League was transformed into the Communist Party of South Africa in 1921, the ground had been prepared for a relationship that would ripen into a deeper and clearer understanding of the problems facing South Africa.

The Stallard Commission

The legislation affecting Africans that parliament passed in the first few years after Union had been hastily put together to deal with specific issues. Louis Botha and Jan Smuts considered that there was a need to set out guidelines that would provide a framework for and continuity in the policies that white governments would pursue with regard to Africans. The Stallard Commission was assigned this task. Its findings appeared in the Report of the Local Government Commission of 1921.

After considering representations made before it on the question of differentiation between Africans and whites on grounds of colour,

the Report had this to say: `The differentiation on the ground of colour - by confining the franchise to Europeans - is one of a serious character and raises at once the future of the black races in white urban areas. If the Native is to be regarded as a permanent element in municipal areas, and if he is to have an equal opportunity of establishing himself there permanently, there can be no justification for basing his exclusion from the franchise on the simple ground of colour.`

The Commission proceeded to make a statement that was so often refuted on public platforms by white politicians. `Some Coloured persons and Natives are possessed of property and of brains, and have educational qualifications not inferior to some enfranchised Europeans; many carry on trades and are their own employers, and it cannot be denied that they have special and peculiar needs not at present being met If, as we consider, it is to the public advantage that all sections of the permanent community should be represented in the government, on what ground is the franchise withheld from the Natives?,

That is the question, the crucial question that anybody would ask. But other factors had to be taken into consideration. The Commission`s final recommendation was this: `We consider that the history of the races, especially having regard to South African history, shows that the commingling of black and white is undesirable. The Native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man`s creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom, when he ceases so to minister. In seeking a way to control the movement of Africans, the Commission laid down guidelines, which were later refined by the National Party after 1948 by the influx control regulations, the tightening of the pass laws, and the

setting up of the labour bureau system of the 1950s. For the efficient and effective administration of these measures, the Dom Boek became the monitoring instrument which every African over the age of fifteen years had to carry on his person and produce on demand. The Commission recommended: `Natives should ... be warned timeously of the prevailing conditions in the labour market and in this matter the government might usefully co-operate with municipalities, magistrates, officers of the Department of Native Affairs, and the police might be posted with the necessary information and advise Natives of places where work is and is not available, of the nature of the labour required... Such measures will check the excessive influx of Natives to towns.

The Commission further suggested that every municipality should establish a department dealing solely with Native Affairs as was the case in Durban where such a department had been set up with `most satisfactory results,. Also following the example of Durban, the Commission recommended that municipal authorities should have the sole monopoly of production and distribution of Mqombothi (African corn beer). All profits derived from the sale of the beer would be spent on improvements in the African areas. It was this recommendation which in later years was used by the Nationalist government to justify its insistence that the Africans must pay for the provision of services in their areas - in housing, the building of schools, and all aspects of welfare. They had to be drowned in alcohol in order to generate funds to provide for improvements in African areas. Is it surprising that during times of unrest in African townships the first targets to be destroyed were the liquor outlets which the government built?

To solve the problem of lack of housing for Africans in the urban areas in those days (which is still as bad in the present day), the

Commission concluded: `After careful consideration and consultation with the Native Affairs Commission and the officials of the Native Affairs Department, your Commissioners have unanimously come to the conclusion, and recommend, that it should be a recognised principle of government that Natives men, women and children - should only be permitted within municipal areas in so far and for so long as their presence is demanded by the wants of the white population.

One may ask, as did one of the characters in Plato`s Republic, What is Justice? The reply, which is apt in today`s South Africa, was: Justice is the interests of the Stronger.

With regard to the administration of urban African locations, the Commission suggested the appointment by the government of location superintendents. The Commission went on to recommend that there should be an Advisory Committee `representing all Native residents in that area under his jurisdiction, to ensure that he would be best placed to `keep in close touch with the Natives under his charge ... thus ensuring prudent administration and general contentment. The Commission concluded thus: `We ... recommend that Municipal Councils should be empowered by law to make regulations (subject to the approval of the central government) for the constitution of Advisory Committees of Natives in Native villages, and that these regulations should define the duties and functions of these committees.

Following this recommendation, Native Advisory Boards were established in 1923 ostensibly to provide urban Africans with a platform to air their views, thereby complementing the rural local councils set up under the Glen Grey Act of 1894. For good measure the Commission felt that there should be a special mechanism to

ensure that the policy it had outlined in the Report would be carried out: `We consider that a most powerful and, indeed, an essential weapon exists in the pass laws, which should be maintained in their integrity... It must be obvious that by the slack administration of those laws, travelling and settlement of undesirable Natives in White areas are facilitated.

The passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923 established the parameters within which the government`s policies affecting Africans were to be determined.

The Implementation of Policy

The crushing of the white mine workers, strike of 1922 by the Defence Force paved the way for the formation of an electoral pact between the Labour Party and the National Party. In the elections subsequent to the Rand Rebellion, the South African Party (SAP) was defeated and a Labour-Nationalist Pact government was formed in 1924.

No sooner had the Pact government taken over the reins of power than it passed a battery of legislation to promote the interests of white workers, in particular, and those of the whites as a group. The legislative measures of the 1920s and 1930s were enacted with such rapidity that they had a crippling effect on both the African National Congress and the Communist Party.

In 1923 the Natives (Urban Areas) Act systematised the pass laws and marked out those who carried them in the same manner that slaves carried brand marks. It was under these laws that Africans were subjected to some of the worst forms of humiliation, and to untold indignities, were thrown into jail in droves, were pressed into

convict labour on the farms, where the relations between them and the farmers were no better than those between the lord of the manor and his serfs in feudal Europe. Parents were insulted by young, uncaring police at any time of day in the presence of their children in ways that were calculated to destroy their self-respect.

In 1922 the Smuts government passed the Apprenticeship Act which laid down conditions of apprenticeship that virtually excluded the Africans. In addition, the deeply embedded prejudices of the whites against Africans were so strong that white skilled workers were never prepared to help African workers to serve their apprenticeship. As a result Africans were condemned to remain in the category of unskilled workers. They slowly emerged from that position as job reservation was abandoned in order to meet the growing demand for skilled labour by all sectors of the economy. For years the government tried to prevent the employment of Africans in skilled categories by recruiting white labour from Europe.

As soon as the Pact government was formed it passed the Industrial Conciliation Act in 1924, which provided machinery for collective bargaining between employers and trade unions. In terms of this law, pass-bearing Africans were not regarded as employees, and therefore were excluded from its provisions. For years African trade unions were not recognised, and if the workers resorted to strike action the police came in to break it up violently.

In terms of the Wages Act of 1925, a Wage Board consisting of three members appointed by the government was set up. Its main function was to investigate conditions of work and wage rates in industries in which there were no trade unions. After listening to representations by trade unions, the Wage Board fixed minimum wage determinations which were legally enforced. As African trade unions

were not recognised by law, their case was put before the Board by the (white) trade union in the particular industry. How effectively that was done depended on the sympathetic attitude of the trade union to the African workers.

By the middle of the 1920s, the poor white problem had become so serious that the government was compelled to seek a solution. Thousands upon thousands of Afrikaners were drifting from the farms to seek work in urban areas. Primary industry which involved the exploitation of mineral resources offered few employment opportunities. The one sector of the economy that was capable of absorbing the increasing numbers of poor whites was manufacturing industry. The government thus charged the Board of Trade and Industry (BTI) with the task of making recommendations to promote the development of secondary industry.

Towards this end, the government passed the Customs Tariff and Excise Duties Act in 1925 which afforded protection to a number of firms in secondary industry on condition they gave preference in employment to whites. In addition, the government required that the white unskilled labour force should be paid wages commensurate with an arbitrarily determined standard of living - a practice known as the `civilised labour policy`, in terms of which even the wrapping on tins of jam was marked `Manufactured by white labour`. (This raised such strong reaction among students at Fort Hare University during the Depression years of the 1930s that they emptied the contents of the jam tins on the tables and the floor in the dining-room.) Unskilled whites began to earn more than their unskilled black counterparts. This differential practice meant in effect that the higher wage level of whites was subsidised by the black worker, and largely explains the hostile attitude of the white worker to any

changes that would alter the status of the African workers and make the African workers compete with him.

The pursuance of this preferential employment policy speeded up the growth of the manufacturing industry and also wiped out the poor white problem by the time the Second World War broke out in 1939. Employment avenues were kept open for whites at a time of decline in business activity. During the Depression years from 1929 to 1933 the number of black workers in manufacturing industries dropped by almost ten thousand while that of whites increased by three thousand.

The position of the Wage Board was reviewed towards the end of the Second World War. By then the interests of virtually all white workers were looked after by their trade unions. The Board continued to operate after the end of the war purportedly to look after the black workers who were largely unorganised. But during the decade 1947 to 1957, when Afrikaner business enterprises were finding their feet, the Wage Board did not fix new minimum wage levels so that there was no growth in real wages for blacks.

In 1925 parliament passed legislation to consolidate laws relating to the payment of taxes by Africans. The poll tax was imposed on all African males between the ages of 18 and 65 years. Development services for Africans were paid for from the poll tax of one pound per head. Only one-fifth of the poll tax proceeds was set aside for African education. It was this niggardly provision for African education which for years set severe limits to any further development. Over a long period of time, both the colonial and the Union governments had not shown any interest in African education. Missionary schools under the management of various denominations set up schools in the Native reserves to enable their converts to acquire literary skills mainly to read the Bible. As African

educational needs grew beyond the ability of the churches to finance, they pressurised the government to subsidise them. The government, however, regarded the provision of services for Africans as an area in which the Africans should provide for themselves from their own resources. According to government policy Africans were not part of the country`s population. It was in compliance with this policy that the government subsidised African education from the poll tax proceeds, and used four-fifths of the poll tax to pay for the development of the African areas.

Disenfranchisement of Africans

After the Pact government was formed in 1924, Prime Minister Hertzog elucidated the policy of his government in his notorious Smithfield speech of 1925, in which he dwelt at length on the threat the African franchise in the Cape posed to the whites. If the Africans continued to exercise the vote, he argued, `It must inevitably lead to the decline of the whites and European civilization in the Union. He saw the continued enfranchisement of Africans in the Cape as a `threatening evil` which had to be removed: `Unless this franchise is removed from the Natives in the Cape ... it will become impossible for the Northern Provinces ... to keep the door closed against the demand for the franchise from the Natives within their boundaries.2

General Hertzog advanced as a reason for the need to scrap the African franchise the fact that a number of Cape members of parliament owed their seats to the African vote. Out of 135 members of parliament the Cape had 51 members, 12 of whom were elected in constituencies where the registered African voters were in the majority. In this he saw the danger that the whites would not have an unlimited right to do what they wished with the Africans, as there would always be opposing voices in parliament. The answer lay in

the creation by the government of a `Union Native Council` where Africans would `satisfy their desire to participate in the government of the country`. This foreshadowed the establishment some twelve years later of the Natives Representative Council. Such a Council would give the African an `opportunity to do everything for his nation within his own country ... without the intervention of the white man - except in so far as the white man`s leadership is required. In the establishment of such a Council he saw what he regarded as the final solution of the `Native Problem,.

As far as the Coloureds were concerned he dismissed their position thus: `Fortunately the Cape Coloureds are sensible enough to realise in line with the politics laid down by the Nationalist Party that their interests are with the Whites and not to be found with the Natives. 3

As prime minister, Hertzog pressed hard for the elimination of the Cape African franchise. He pursued this vigorously as one of the conditions for the formation of a coalition government with Smuts`s South African Party in 1933.

As a result of the concerted attack not only to deprive the Africans in the Cape of their right to the franchise but also to slam the door against the extension of the franchise to Africans in the three other provinces, P.Ka L Seme, then President-General of the ANC, and Professor D. D. T. Jabavu called the All-African Convention in 1935 to fight against the Hertzog Bills. For the second time when Africans were faced with legislation that sought to deprive them of basic human rights and to cut them off from the common stream of South African society, they converged on Bloemfontein, as they had done in 1909, to oppose the Hertzog Bills, which had once again provided a common platform for the unity of the whites.

The Representation of Natives Bill provided for the removal of Cape African registered voters from the common roll of voters. After the legislation had been passed Africans would be allowed to elect three representatives to the law-making House of Assembly who would only vote in matters affecting Africans. This meant that no other members of parliament would owe their seat to the African vote. The other provinces, as well as the Cape, were allowed to elect, through electoral colleges, four representatives to the Senate, which was like a schoolboys, debating society with no powers to make laws.

To salve the conscience of whites who might still have some scruples about disenfranchising a whole people, rendering them outcasts, parliament passed the Native Land and Trust Act which allocated an additional seven million morgen for the African population. When Africans complained about the inadequacy of the offer, Hertzog sent them away saying that half a loaf of bread was better than nothing; they should be grateful.

On the Defensive

The vicious attack that was launched in the years from 1920 to 1936 caught the ANC unprepared. From the day the ANC was formed it had been forced on the defensive, always seeking to parry an unending series of crippling blows. In devising its tactics to counter such attacks, the ANC had been guided by the belief that it could appeal to what it believed was the British sense of justice. When it found itself unable to take a stand against Hertzog`s attacks it was not in a position to go to the people with any plan of action, being top-heavy with very little support amongst the masses of people. As a result, not only were the masses not provided with an effective leadership, but those who were at the head of the ANC felt helpless to do anything.

From year to year the ANC held conferences and passed resolutions that failed to grapple with the ever-deteriorating situation. It was only in 1935 that both the ANC and their African leaders were shocked into action and called the All-African Convention.

5. A New Front Opens: The Labour Struggle

It did not take long before the Natives Land Act and other legislation achieved what they had been intended to do. Africans were soon being driven out of the reserves by the sheer need to survive by finding work in the `white areas`. Given the level of economic development in the decades following the formation of Union in 1910, the supply of labour flooding the labour market was far in excess of the demand. This was illustrated by a statement made by a white foreman at a jam factory that if workers did not work hard enough there were many others sitting at the gate `waving flies off their faces,. Driven hard, paid barely a subsistence wage, workers faced conditions of employment that were utterly deplorable: the stage was set for employer-worker conflict.

Within the first few years after its formation the ANC found itself involved in various facets of the struggle to promote the interests of the oppressed in the country. In the period 1918-1919 a great deal of activity among the African and Coloured workers of Cape Town took place around the issue of wages, especially the African and Coloured dock workers. There was also considerable discontent among the stevedores who were employed by private firms and were paid according to the number of days they worked. Wages had lagged behind the increasing cost of living. This was very ably illustrated by S. H. Frankel: `nothing has changed so little in South Africa as the Black man`s rate of pay.1 The workers attributed the increases in the price of commodities to the fact that foodstuffs were

exported, thus creating a shortage in the domestic market. Because of a severe drought in the Eastern Cape in 1919, there was a grave shortage of maize in the Transkei, resulting in an increase in the price of maize and maize products while the government continued to export maize.

On 16 December 1919 the Cape Native National Congress, jointly with the Industrial and Commercial Union (ICU) and Industrial Workers of Africa, held a meeting at Ndabeni location. The meeting resolved to approach both the government and private employers to increase the wages of African and Coloured workers. The meeting also protested against the export of foodstuffs.

Congress played a leading role in the strike that ensued as a result of the unwillingness of employers to raise wages. The strikers involved fell into three groups: African dock workers employed by the Railways; African and Coloured workers; casual and general labour employed by the Railways. Even then the tendency of the white workers to observe from a distance while the black workers were locked in a struggle with the employers gave an indication of the gap that was to widen on racial lines over the years between black and white workers, to the detriment of the working class. During the course of the strike, Robert Stuart of the Cape Federation of Trade Unions and E. H. Jones of the National Union of Railways and Harbour Services gave only moral support and failed to bring out the white workers.

On the other hand, the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane, president of Congress in the Cape, wrote a strongly worded letter to the press in reply to a statement made by Mr Girdwood, the Port Superintendent of Cape Town. [He] had the effrontery to suggest that at the outside a couple of pounds a month would cover the gross living expenses of the

average raw kaffir? ... The truth of the matter is that even this "raw kaffir" can never in these days of profiteering subsist and support his family at home and pay his taxes on a sum of 40s. per month. Mr Girdwood`s horse (if he has any) could not subsist on that amount.

In the `bucket strike` of municipal workers that took place in Johannesburg in 1917, Congress had also been involved. Five of its leaders, D. S. Letanka, L. T. Mvabaza, N. D. Ngojo, R. Cetyiwe and H. Kraai - the last two formed the Cape Town branch of the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA) - were arrested together with S. P. Bunting and H. C. Hanscombe of the International Socialist League. They were charged with instigating the `bucket strike`. When the ICU later set up offices in the northern provinces it was welcomed by some of the leaders of the ANC like J. T. Gumede, R. Ngcayiya, Selope Thema, and L. T. Mvabaza.

All Bound Together

It was not just because of colour prejudice that African workers were excluded from the provisions of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924. The main purpose of government policy was the exploitation of Africans. To achieve that end the policy with regard to Africans had to be all-embracing, covering them all without distinction between classes. The interests of the workers, like those of any class or social group, were bound together by a common bond of oppression and exploitation. From this there was no escape even for those who were used by the government to carry out its policies - for example, the police, civil servants and chiefs.

The refusal to recognise African trade unions and the right of an African to become a member of a registered trade union because he was pass-bearing was part of an overall plan of national oppression

and exploitation. It serves to show in a practical way that the working-class struggle in the South African situation is inextricably bound up with the struggle for national liberation. The working class has no way of bringing about fundamental changes to the long-entrenched policies of exploitation without first breaking down the barriers that stand in the pathway towards national liberation.

In addition, the refusal to recognise African trade unions was linked up with very intense capital accumulation during the period from the 1920s through to the 1960s. It was during the twenties that the government accepted the advice that the economy of the country should not be made to depend on gold since it was a wasting asset and the gold-mining industry had a limited life. In 1925 the government adopted the recommendation of the Board of Trade and Industry (BTI) to encourage the development of manufacturing industry. When the National Party formed a Pact government with the Labour Party, it was well placed to create the conditions in which the growth of Afrikaner capital would take place rapidly.

The founding of the Afrikaner Broederbond in 1918 and of Sanlam as well as of Federale Volksbeleggings, which was formed as a result of decisions taken at the Ekonomiese Volkskongres in 1939, represents the main landmarks in the rise and development of Afrikaner capital. Occupying the commanding heights in both government and civil service, Afrikaners were able to make use of parliament to pass legislation that would favour capital accumulation.

In forming these cultural-political-economic organisations purporting to be concerned with the interests and welfare of the Afrikaner, Afrikaner capitalists succeeded in bringing all classes of Afrikaners into the trenches `in defence of Afrikanerdom,. In this way there was no fear that the volk would make demands that would

affect unfavourably a programme that was designed to improve the cause of the Afrikaner.

Like their English counterparts, Afrikaner capitalists realised that the paramount feature of costs in production in primary and secondary industry as well as in commerce and service industry had to be kept as low as possible. The wages of African labour, the main component of the labour force, had to be maintained at a level that would allow for rapid capital accumulation. It was for this reason that Africans were excluded from recognition as employees in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924; and that, in implementing the plan to foster the development of secondary industry in 1925, the Pact government under the leadership of General Hertzog adopted the white labour policy whereby the white working class was bought by the ruling class with unearned remuneration drawn from the surplus value created by African labour. The way was now open for the ruthless exploitation of the Africans.

The ANC was thus forced to fight on a multiplicity of fronts for it was the rights of all Africans, of all classes, that were under attack. The struggle for liberation is a struggle that affects all Africans equally and it is in recognition of this fact that the ANC has always been and still is in the forefront of the working-class struggle, of the general struggle for liberation.

When the National Party of D. F. Malan came to power in 1948 it immediately set about preparing an ingenious plan to create labour pools to control the flow of labour to every sector of the economy. This is what the influx control regulations set out to do, by establishing labour bureaux which kept a tag on every worker. The labour bureau issued every African with a Dom Boek (reference book) which showed the name of his or her employer.

On the first page it carried in purple stamp: ,[John] is permitted to remain in the urban area of ... while employed by... The effect of this was threefold: (i) It tied down a worker to an employer, however bad his conditions of employment were, for fear that if he lost his job he would be endorsed out of the city to the reserves. (ii) Inexhaustible supplies of labour were dammed up in the reserves and only released in regulated doses as they were wanted for specific employment. (iii) The government delivered the African worker bound hand and foot to capital for exploitation.

The operation of the influx control regulations encompassed all Africans. The fight against them could not be left to any one section to lead. It was a total fight that required mobilisation of all the people. It was the ANC, and it alone, that had the capacity to rally the people against such ruthless suppression of every human right. The decade of the fifties saw the ANC going into action in the urban townships to organise workers, and in the Bantustans to organise peasants in a peasant-led struggle against the racially inspired monster of apartheid. ANC organisers concentrated on instilling the need for its members to join trade unions. Scores and scores of meetings took place in the townships under the cover of darkness. It was a task that was carried out patiently and consistently. It blossomed over a long period of time into the mushroom growth of the trade-union movement of the 1980s, which has culminated in the formation of the biggest trade-union federation COSATU - the country has ever known. From the beginning of the 1950s the ANC was actively involved in the working-class struggle in two significant respects that were to influence the course of the struggle for liberation.

Firstly, in 1953 the government amended the Industrial Conciliation Act and brought in apartheid to ensure that trade unions would be

organised on a racial basis. War Measure 145 of January 1942, which had been renewed from year to year, was incorporated in the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act of 1953. This provided for works committees to make representations to employers, thus slamming the door on the recognition of African trade unions. The differences which arose in the trade-union movement as a result of the compulsory enforcement of apartheid by the government led to the formation of two trade-union federations. One, TUCSA, fell in line with government policy not to admit Africans in its membership. The other, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), was openly opposed to the government`s racial policies. The ANC actively assisted in its formation and worked with it in the Congress Alliance.

Secondly, the ANC spared no effort to show to its members and to the public generally the symbiotic relationship between the oppressed and exploited working class and itself in the struggle for liberation. The role of the working class in the national democratic struggle and the role of the ANC in the working-class struggle for the recognition of the rights of workers to form and belong to trade unions became two faces of the same coin. The ANC is thus the spearhead of the national democratic struggle, and the working class as the major force within the national democratic struggle should give effective leadership to that struggle.

6. The Interlude: 1936-1946

The decade 1936-46 marked a departure from years of inactivity as well as a pointer to a new phase in the struggle for liberation.

The All-African Convention had been convened for the specific purpose of marshalling Africans in every walk of life to fight the

disenfranchisement of African voters in the Cape. But with the passing of the Representation of Natives Act in 1936, the AAC failed in the task. What then was to be done? Some delegates at the 1936 conference of the AAC, especially those from the Western Cape, argued that it should be permanently established. Those who espoused this view were carried away by the apparent unity of all Africans and the solidarity of some small groups of Coloured debating societies into believing that independent organisations like the ANC, which had taken part in the AAC during 1935-6, would surrender their autonomy. Furthermore, no attempt was made to examine the inherent weakness of a federal structure in leading a protracted struggle that demanded a high degree of individual loyalty.

The Representation of Natives Act provided, firstly, for the representation of the Cape African voters by three whites in the House of Assembly, and by two whites in the Cape Provincial Council. Secondly, four whites elected by bodies like Advisory Boards and the United Transkeian Territories General Council (UTTGC or Bunga) would represent Africans in the Senate. Thirdly, a Natives Representative Council was established to ensure representation of Africans at national level, as distinct from Advisory Boards for urban Africans and the local councils, which provided local administration in the Native reserves. The Natives Representative Council consisted of twelve elected members and four government-appointed members. The Secretary of Native Affairs presided at all the meetings of the Council, which were also attended by a number of Native Commissioners.

In their immediate reaction the African voters of the Cape, who had for eighty years known the value of the franchise and used it to influence decisions where they were made - in parliament - decided to boycott participation in government-created institutions. But the

older African leadership, for whom there was no alternative to complying, saw boycotts as a form of passive inaction that robbed them of an opportunity to elect people to put their case to the government. Moreover, the Africans in the northern provinces, who had never known any better, also participated in elections to the new bodies, as did the Communist Party, which gauged the support of its policies by the number of votes it mustered in such elections. When differences of opinion in such matters arise it is easy to call the opposite side names. Because the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) was known to be Trotskyite-inclined and supported the boycott, all those who urged the boycott of government institutions were associated with the Unity Movement and with Trotskyism. On the other hand, the NEUM dubbed all those who argued for participation as collaborators. Consequently no proper examination of the advantages or disadvantages of participation took place, with the result that a tactical move which could have been tried and abandoned if it did not work was allowed to simmer over a long period of time until the Nationalist government through its own blunders virtually closed the debate.

With the passing of the Hertzog Bills, the government slammed the door on Africans who had enjoyed the franchise on a common roll with whites, to say nothing of extending the franchise to Africans in the northern provinces. It was then that the ANC awoke to the dire need to provide effective leadership. It set out to reorganise, and in the years from 1937 to 1939 its President-General and Secretary-General - the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane and the Rev. J. A. Calata - toured the country with a view to breathing new life into the ANC. At the 1940 conference of the ANC, Dr A. B. Xumawas elected President-General. Conscious of the structural weakness of the organisation whose constitution had not been reviewed since 1912 when it was

established, he took steps to ensure that the effort to recruit membership would be matched by a suitable organisational form.

Guided by his vision that `The emancipation of the African people shall come from Congress, this can come about when Congress is well organised`, a new constitution, which became known as the Xuma Constitution, was adopted by the 1943 conference. This provided for individual membership based on payment of a membership fee. It also clearly defined the structure of the organisation, consisting of the National Executive, elected at national conferences, to which delegates came from branches established throughout the country; the Provincial Executive, elected at an annual conference to which delegates were drawn from branches within the provinces; and at the local level an executive elected by a conference of the branch, which became the machine for the recruitment of members. The organisation financed its activities from the meagre membership fee of 2s. 6d. shared equally between the three levels. The 1941 conference was the first to take place with Xumaas President. In addition to the decision to draw up a new constitution, it resolved to revive the Women`s League, and a year later conference called on the National Executive to set up a Youth League. With the establishment of these two important organs to work among women and youth, the ANC had its feet well set on the road to lead the national struggle for liberation.

While the ANC was striving to build an efficient machine based on a people united in purpose to fight against segregation, elements among African and Coloured intellectuals set up splinter organisations. With the passing in 1936 of the Hertzog Bills, a system of segregation and repression was established for the Africans that eventually would be extended to the Coloureds and Indians as well. But the government sought to tackle one group at a

time to make sure that the three would not be united in fighting a common evil. Each would tend to see an attack on its rights in isolation.

Though in 1938 the National Liberation League had the foresight to form a Non-European United Front against the emerging policy of segregation, when the Smuts government struck against the Coloureds some intellectuals thought they could stem the tide by forming new organisations. In 1943 the government set up within the Department of the Interior a Coloured Affairs Department (CAD), under which all matters relating to Coloureds would be handled separately by civil servants assigned for that purpose. This was the equivalent of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) for Africans. Some Coloureds reacted by forming the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department, which was an organisation of the elite composed mainly of teachers and debating societies like the New Era Fellowship. Shortly after its formation, its members attended the annual conference of what was left of the All-African Convention (AAC), where a decision was taken to form a Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) based on a l0-point programme. In practice the Non-European Unity Movement concentrated all its energies and propaganda on opposing the ANC. Its mouthpiece, Torch, poured venom on Professor Z. K. Matthews as if to destroy him would have been tantamount to paralysing the ANC. Its main plank was to call for a boycott not only of government institutions but also of every move by the ANC and other progressive organisations against the government. When the government introduced separate seating arrangements for whites and blacks in buses in Cape Town, the Non-European Unity Movement boycotted the decision to fight the move. As long as the discussions were limited to talking and they could take an opposite view, all was well with them. Action ... No. Talk, talk, talk ... Yes.

Another group that sprang up at the time was the African Democratic Party under the leadership of Paul Mosaka, a brilliant scholar and an able and courageous debater who grew up in the slum of Pimville. He would stand up at any time, anywhere, as he did in the Natives Representative Council, to express unflinchingly his views about government policy. But he kept out of the organisation where his talents could have been fruitfully harnessed. The Democratic Party, which never mustered much support, assumed the role of critic of the ANC, and it soon disappeared.

After the government had taken the stand that the Africans were not to be part of the country`s common political stream, it adopted other repressive measures which left the Africans no alternative but to resist as best they could. Among these were the Native Laws Amendment Act which tightened up the pass laws so that it became very difficult to get permission to seek work in areas like the Western Cape; War Measure No. 145 which strictly forbade strike action by African workers during the war years when the scarcity of basic consumer goods, accompanied by sharp increases in the cost of living, resulted in a serious lag in wages; and the Betterment and Rehabilitation Scheme with its emphasis on the culling of stock in the reserves and resettling of people, which resulted in removals and touched the peasants on a raw spot.

It was as a result of these pressing social and economic conditions that the ANC had to give leadership in the fight against the pass laws. The anti-pass campaign of 1943, which was led by the ANC, covered both the urban and rural areas. This campaign served to focus the attention of the people on the ANC as the organisation to lead the struggle not only against pass laws but against national oppression in all its manifestations. The President-General of the ANC presided over an action committee, which included also some

members of the Communist Party. The committee guided the campaign, in the course of which many people joined the ANC as members.

The war years saw the rapid expansion of manufacturing industry, which attracted a large influx of labour from the reserves. The Council of Non-European Trade Unions became very active in organising unions among African workers, whose wages were low and could not keep pace with the fast-rising costs of living. The 1942 War Measure 145, on the other hand, prohibited strikes by Africans, thus creating a situation in which discontent was rife and an opportunity developed for the ANC to increase its membership. In addition, the large inflow of people from the reserves gave rise to a sharp demand for housing. The situation became critical as shantytowns began springing up, and although the ANC did not exploit this situation to make the shantytowns their recruiting field, it was the only organisation to which the people looked for leadership.

The problem of housing and high rents was aggravated by increasing costs of transport. Before the end of the war, two bus boycotts had taken place in Alexandra as a result of an increase in fares by one penny. The fact that people had to walk eighteen miles to save a penny is a measure of how seriously the high cost of living had affected the people.

There were other troubled waters in which the ANC was to fish. The situation of migrant labourers in the mining industry was appalling. For a long time the mines had based their calculation of the wages of migrant labour on the assumption that these were supplemented by production from subsistence peasant farming. Following this approach, the wages on the mines remained pegged over a long period of many years; while in the meanwhile, during the war years,

a serious drought had broken out, resulting not only in a grave shortage of mealies but in high prices for the product. Although mealies were strictly rationed at 200 bags a month per trader in the reserves, the supplies were so short that maize of very poor quality had to be imported from Argentina at a high price.

It was under these conditions that great discontent with wages spread through the mines; and at a conference held in 1941 under the auspices of the ANC a decision was taken to form an African Mineworkers, Union. The union embarked on a campaign to claim a minimum wage of ten shillings a day. The demand made no impression on the mine-owners and the government, whose main concern was to keep the costs of producing gold low so that they could raise the level of profit and taxes. After the union had been making representations for a number of years to no avail, the workers voted at a meeting in April 1946 to go on strike. As in 1922 with the Rand Rebellion, Smuts acted swiftly and brutally to crush the strike of 70000 African mine workers and forced them at bayonet point from the compounds to go to work. Some 12 workers were killed and 1 200 wounded.

In June 1936 Clements Kadalie had told the writer that it was virtually impossible to organise on the mines, so tight was the security. Yet almost a decade thereafter a massive strike on the mines was organised. The organisers of the 1946 strike used ooMabhalana (the mine clerks) to reach out to the workers through the indunas. This was the only way to circumvent a regulation which prohibited a meeting of more than twenty Africans on mine property. After the 1946 mine strike, the mines were never again the same.

The repercussions of that strike were nation-wide and far-reaching. The Natives Representative Council which was in session at the time

could not look on while the people whom it represented were being killed. At the time of the outbreak of the strike the President-General of the ANC, Dr A. B. Xuma, had already asked the members of the Council to adjourn if the government did not abolish the pass laws, recognise African trade unions, and repeal the Native Administration Act of 1927, which provided for the banishment of Africans without trial. Consequently at a session of the Natives Representative Council, Dr Moroka, after the Deputy Secretary for Native Affairs failed to answer questions on the strike, moved for an indefinite adjournment. The motion was adopted unanimously. Ignored by the government, with their advice counting for nothing, the councillors had come to realise the futility of the Council. In the words of Paul Mosaka it was a `toy telephone`, which was ultimately destroyed by the government itself because it did not serve the purpose for which it was intended, namely to distract the attention of the Africans from the struggle for full political rights on an equal basis with whites in a South Africa undivided by race or colour lines.

Another important factor which was decisive in breathing new life into the ANC as well as giving it a sense of direction was the formation of the ANC Youth League, which acted as a pressure group within the organisation. Unlike the older generation, the Youth League members had not had any contact with liberals. They therefore pursued a line which was nationalistic and sought to rely exclusively on themselves to revive the ANC into a fighting instrument for the rights of the Africans. They mounted an intensive recruiting campaign among young students - men and women - especially at Fort Hare and among workers in the urban areas. The ANC Youth League competed for pride of position with the All-African Convention and the Non-European Unity Movement, which were weak federal structures given to indecisive armchair talk on the

basis of a programme that was never translated into action on the ground.

From its inception the Youth League was constructively critical of the manner of operation of the mother body. It argued that the ANC had tended to cater for the interests of the elite rather than for the masses of the people. The main ideas in its manifesto were finally incorporated in the Programme of Action, which was passed by the 1949 conference of the ANC. Taking its line from the various attempts to fight against the increasingly repressive measures of the 1940s, the programme called for mass action by means of strikes and other forms of protest. It also called for non-collaboration with government institutions for Africans such as the Advisory Boards and the Bunga and rejected separate representation of Africans in parliament.

In Port Elizabeth the local people, who were down-to-earth in their approach to issues, took a decision in New Brighton township in 1949 to elect the chairman of the ANC branch, Raymond Mlahba to the local Advisory Board with a mandate to raise general grievances at its meetings. He was required to report back regularly at open-air meetings. After he had taken up the people`s grievances over a period of time to no avail, the branch decided that it was futile to work through the Advisory Board and did not continue to elect anyone. It called for a boycott of government institutions and got down to the task of organising the local people to form the biggest branch in the ANC. The most important lesson learnt from this was that it did not require a government-created platform to reach out to the people. If anything, using such platforms resulted in the neglect of organisational work that made a real difference in people`s lives.

One successful struggle in Port Elizabeth took place against an increase in bus fares, which eventually resulted in the South African Railways giving up its bus service at New Brighton. As from the beginning of April 1949 the South African Railways raised the fare from 3d. to 4d. The ANC branch called on the people to boycott the buses. The bus boycott lasted about four months until the beginning of August. During that period meetings were held in the township which discussed a wide range of grievances about local conditions. The attention of the people became focused on making their own representations rather than depending on outsiders to take up issues for them.

They demanded that the railway bus service be taken over by private companies, as people were always late at work because of poor service, and coming back home after work had to stand for hours waiting in long queues; moreover, the drivers were abusive and often co-operated with the police, stopping at police stations so that the police could search people. The Minister finally agreed to terminate the service if a private company could take it over. When the ANC could not find any African bus company to absorb it, the Bay Transport Company did so. The ANC next insisted that the company should hire African drivers and conductors, and won this demand.

The people had through their own organised strength succeeded in getting results. This inspired them with confidence as they moved into the 1950s. All the struggles of the late 1940s were achieved as a result of mass organisational work - a lesson the local people never lost sight of, as later years were to bear testimony.

The situation in the reserves in the 1940s also called forth government attention. The reserves had long been overpopulated and overstocked. Faced with conditions like these and the endemic

shortage of mealies, the government introduced measures which failed to take into account the root cause of overstocking and the consequent denudation of land, namely overpopulation of a small area of land. In 1943 it introduced the Betterment and Rehabilitation Scheme which laid stress on reducing stock to the carrying capacity of the available pasturage. To accomplish this, the pasturage was padlocked to provide winter and summer grazing camps, which were divided by fences.

This aroused the anger and resistance of the peasants as nothing else had ever done. They cut the fences, and grazed their stock at night in the camps that had been set aside for a different season. The actions of the government in using the chiefs, alleging it had been informed by them that the peasants had consented to the introduction of the Betterment and Rehabilitation Scheme, drove a wedge between the chiefs and the peasants.

It was against this background that the Transkei Voters, Association resolved at its annual conference in 1942 to call a meeting of all organisations in the Transkei to consider the deteriorating situation. The meeting of a wide range of bodies - including, among others, the Transkei Voters, Association, the General Workers, Union, Zenzele (a women`s organisation that concentrated on home improvement), the Transkei African Teachers, Association, the Bunga Employees, Association, and the Chiefs, Association - set up commissions to draw up memoranda on a variety of grievances. At the end of the conference a composite memorandum embracing the demands of the conference was presented by a delegation which the conference also decided to establish as a permanent body called the Transkei Organised Bodies (TOB). As with all matters raised through such constitutional channels the reply was that the matter was receiving the attention of the Chief Magistrate in his capacity as the Chief

Native Commissioner, who would pass it on to the Minister of Native Affairs.

The constitution of the Transkei Organised Bodies made it clear that in matters of a national interest the TOB was prepared `to co-operate or follow the lead of a National Organisation in questions of a national character.1

In a number of letters to Dr Xuma, the writer kept on calling upon the ANC to give `effective leadership to rural people ... in questions of a national character`. In both urban and rural areas the people were turning their eyes to the ANC, and the ANC in turn accepted the responsibility and trust thrust upon it.

It should be pointed out, however, that in spite of the awakening of the peasants in reserves throughout the country, both the ANC and the Communist Party gave scant attention to the organisation of the peasants. What organisational work did take place amongst them was carried out by the peasants themselves with their very meagre resources. The neglect of this very important area left the government free to implement its policies without the co-ordinated resistance not only of the peasants but also of the urban and rural areas. Further, the press and the media generally did not give coverage to happenings in these areas, which it regarded as out of the way unless something bordering on catastrophe took place there.

The struggle in the reserves was also handicapped by the fact that it was not rooted among the peasants themselves. The organisations that operated in the reserves consisted in the main of the petit bourgeois elite - teachers, retired teachers, civil servants and others. There was no peasant movement that had peasants in its leadership. At one stage when an attempt was made in the Voters, Association to

broaden its base by drawing peasants into its ranks, the members of the All-African Convention opposed it. The argument that the Voters, Association represented a dwindling number of people and that since the voters were placed on a separate voters, roll the prospects for growth were virtually nil, failed to make an impression on them.

As the Voters, Association was engaged in the controversial debate whether to boycott dummy institutions, the writer was approached by some of his colleagues to stand for the Bunga elections in 1943. He stood as a candidate in one ward in Idutywa district. The District Council consisted of six members, four of whom were elected and two were appointed by the Governor-General. In turn the District Council elected two members to the United Transkeian Territories General Council, while the Governor-General appointed one. This was the position in all the districts in the Transkei except in those where there was a recognised chief. The Bunga met once yearly at Umtata where a special chamber had been erected for the purpose. Motions to be raised at the Bunga sessions were first vetted by the district Native Commissioner, and after the session of the Bunga the 26 Native Commissioners from the 26 districts in the Transkei who had also attended the sessions of the Bunga met and vetted the resolutions of the Bunga before they were passed on to the Secretary for Native Affairs.

After he had been a member for four years, the writer was convinced that nothing could be gained by participating in the Bunga. The government invariably put to the Bunga for debate almost all unpopular legislation before introducing it in the white parliament. When the final legislation appeared, the councillors found that they were tied up because the government claimed that it had consulted the representatives of the people in the Bunga. As a result, all the unpopular measures were seen by the people to have been passed by

the Bunga. Even on matters where the Bunga had authority, such as building dams, it did not have sufficient funds to build them as they were required by the people. Its revenue was largely drawn from a local tax of ten shillings per household and quitrent in the seven surveyed districts of the Transkei. The tendency was for the councillors to try to explain and justify the failure to provide the service in terms of the shortage of funds. Thus the writer found himself carrying the responsibility of defending government failures.

An opportunity provided itself for the writer to break the Bunga from inside as those who had induced him to go into it had argued. For years the Idutywa district had been the only one in the Transkei to operate its cattle-dipping operations independently of the Bunga. Year after year the other districts raised motions at the Bunga asking to be allowed to do the same. But in 1946 the Cattle Dipping Committee decided to raise the dipping fees as a result of increased costs. The peasants opposed it and voted to have the scheme handed back to the Bunga to run. The writer then moved in the District Council that it should resign since the government was not prepared to allow the people to run any project which was not under government supervision. On resigning, the District Council sought permission to address the full Bunga, hoping it would carry the support of the Bunga members, who would resign in sympathy. The Native Commissioners persuaded the Bunga members to agree to appoint a select committee to hear the case from the former District Council members. The Native Commissioners succeeded in killing the attempt at the select committee stage.

The writer learnt the lesson from this exercise that it was the most difficult thing to destroy dummy institutions from inside. The only way to destroy them was to go to the people and campaign against them, slowly and carefully showing the people that the power was in

their hands to destroy them. The argument that such institutions should be used as a platform to fight government policies and that not to seek representation there serves to isolate popular organisations, is false. The people are the key, and should be reached directly by building the organisation and bringing them into it to fight government policy.

The Atlantic Charter and `The African Claims`

Not only did national problems contribute to the revival of the ANC during the first half of the forties, but international happenings also demanded the attention of the ANC, involving it in the struggle for liberation in the interests of the oppressed wherever they were affected.

After the declaration of the Atlantic Charter, the ANC appointed a special committee to interpret it from the point of view of the Africans. Its findings were published in 1943 in booklet form as `The African Claims,, which also included a Bill of Rights. In its opening paragraph it demanded `The abolition of political discrimination based on race ... and the extension to all adults, regardless of race, of the right to vote and be elected to parliament ... and other representative institutions.

The ANC thus assumed full responsibility for the leadership of the cause of freedom for the oppressed, and towards that end would use all platforms - nationally and internationally - to espouse that cause. When Field Marshal Smuts went to the peace conference at the end of World War Two, the ANC also presented `The African Claims, to this body. In the preface Dr Xuma, the President-General, pointed out: `We desire them [the government] to realise once and for all that a just and permanent peace will be possible only if the claims of all

classes, colours and races for sharing and for full participation in the educational, political and economic activities of the country are granted and recognised.

While he made this demand to the international community he did not lose sight of the fact that greater reliance had to be placed on the oppressed people themselves to achieve the goals set out in `The African Claims, and the Bill of Rights: `We realise that for the African this is only the beginning of a long struggle entailing great sacrifices of time, means and even life itself. To the African people the declaration is a challenge to organise and unite ... under the mass liberation movement, the African National Congress. The struggle is on right now.

If we take into account the role that Smuts played at the peace conference which gave birth to the United Nations, it is difficult to see how at one and the same time he could pursue abroad the noble ideas set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights while at home he stooped to downright racism. In pursuance of government policy to apply its segregation measures to one racial group at a time, Smuts introduced in 1946 legislation affecting Indian rights, the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill. This aimed at setting aside certain areas for Indian occupation, and as a sop offered Indians representation in the House of Assembly by three whites and by two in the Senate while in the Natal Provincial Council they could be directly represented by two Indians.

The proposals brought about a break in the South African Indian Congress. Leadership in the Transvaal and Natal passed into the hands of progressive forces led by Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Dr Monty Naicker respectively. This was a significant development as, for the first time, the ANC and the Indian Congress sought and found each

other in order to co-operate in the struggle for national liberation. This alliance was sealed in the Xuma-Dadoo Pact of 1946.

The same factors that helped the ANC to revive also prepared the ground for a new alignment of forces against national oppression. From the ashes of Dr Abdullah Abdurahman`s APO emerged the South African Coloured People`s Organisation, which became part of a broadening front against racism. But probably more important was the fact that even the Communist Party after many years shed its ambivalence about whether to support a national democratic struggle and came to accept that the ANC was the leading national liberation organisation. At the end of the 1920s, the president of the ANC, Josiah Gumede, during a visit to the Soviet Union, became impressed with both the achievements of socialism and that country`s support for the struggle of the black man in South Africa. At the same time, the Communist Party of South Africa came under pressure from the Third Communist International, Comintern, to provide leadership to the national liberation movement in South Africa: it was felt at the time that the ANC was not forceful enough in its opposition to British imperialism and that the ANC leadership was ambivalent in its attitude towards capitalism. These currents created a tension between the two organisations, leading on the one hand to the ousting of Gumede from the ANC presidency in 1930 and on the other hand to the Communist Party taking a rather dim view of the combative capabilities of the ANC. Because of this embittered attitude between the two organisations during the 1930s, when the All-African Convention was convened in 1936 the Communist Party had no difficulty in trying to encourage the AAC to supersede the ANC as the leading national liberation movement of South Africa. This view of the Communist Party was to earn it the wrath of the ANC Youth League in the 1940s; for example, in 1945 the Transvaal ANC, which was under the leadership of the League at

the time, passed a resolution calling for the expulsion of communists from the ANC.

Not all communists, however, subscribed to the CPSA`s view that the ANC should be superseded by the AAC. Some leading African and `Coloured, communists who were also members of the ANC joined in the efforts to revive the ANC in the 1940s. This made it possible for prominent communists such as Moses Kotane to retain their positions in the ANC National Executive Committee in 1949 despite the dominating presence of the NEC in that year of the (then) generally anti-communist Youth League.

When the National Party came to power in 1948 after it had promised the white electorate that it would implement a policy of apartheid, it was to find that there were other actors on the stage who pursued ideas and ideals that were the complete opposite of what it sought to achieve. The adoption by the 1949 ANC conference of the Programme of Action, which was sponsored by the Youth League, cleared the decks for a struggle that was to be bitter and long.

7. The New Offensive: The ANC after 1949

The adoption of the Programme of Action at the 1949 conference of the ANC marked the beginning of a new era. It was a great shift from the defensive position which had previously characterised the struggle for national liberation. For years the ANC had merely reacted to government legislation which was designed to seal off the Africans from the body politic. A change of gears took place as the struggle moved into the offensive, first building up the mass support of the oppressed people and then throwing their weight behind a series of actions that forced the Nationalist government onto the defensive. While carrying out relentlessly its programme of

apartheid, the government could not predict with any measure of certainty what those engaged in the struggle for liberation were going to do.

Typical of a regime inspired by fascist ideas and practices, the government opened its programme of trampling human rights underfoot by passing the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. The Act, which was purportedly intended to crush Communism, carried clauses of a sweeping nature that destroyed everybody`s right to free association and expression. It was the realisation of this fact which induced the ANC to share the platform jointly with the Communist Party on May Day 1950 to protest against the Suppression of Communism Bill, which parliament duly passed into law. During the course of protests in various parts of the Reef, the police killed eighteen Africans and wounded many others.

After the May Day killings, the National Executive Committee of the ANC held a series of meetings to discuss and decide on the form protest would take against the brutal murder of defenceless workers. The NEC called for a stay-at-home for 26 June 1950. After the 26 June 1951 observance of Freedom Day, it was recommended that a campaign be launched jointly by Africans in the ANC, together with Coloureds in the South African Coloured People`s Organisation and Indians in the Indian Congress. Consequently a Joint Planning Council, consisting of Dr J. S. Moroka, Walter Sisulu (President-General and Secretary-General respectively of the ANC), J. B. Marks of the ANC, and Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Yusuf Cachalia of the Indian Congress, recommended that a Defiance Campaign be launched against unjust laws on 26 June 1952.

The Defiance Campaign was a significant watershed, which saw 8 326 people volunteering to defy unjust laws and thus court

imprisonment. The liberation struggle derived several benefits from the Defiance Campaign. Firstly, it gave an opportunity to the rank and file of the ANC membership to be involved in a practical way in the struggle against oppression. The Campaign unleashed the pent-up energy of the people and inspired them with a desire to join the ANC to fight against oppression. The membership rocketed from 4000 to 100 000 within months. Secondly, the people shed the fear of jail as they realised that the way to freedom passed through jail. Further, imprisonment lost the moral stigma that had been attached to those who had been jailed for whatever reason. Thirdly, the campaign inculcated the idea and spirit of sacrifice of personal interest for the public good. Fourthly, out of the campaign came a disciplined volunteer corps of men and women who gave unstintingly of their time and energy, by day or night, without any remuneration in order to build and strengthen the ANC. And finally, the Defiance Campaign put an end to the era of deputation`s to and pleading with the government to grant rights which it had deliberately, as a matter of calculated policy, taken away from the oppressed and exploited majority.

Verwoerd Against the Tide of History

At the beginning of the fifties, the Nationalist government began unfolding its sinister plans to implement apartheid. To conceive and carry out a plan of this nature, of such magnitude, one that, to all appearances, was impossible to execute, required ideologues of exceptional ability, albeit with sick minds, to make so many people, especially the whites in South Africa and the leading imperialist governments in Western Europe and North America, believe that the evil they were perpetrating was morally right. Here was a plan that was painstakingly designed to wipe out millions of people by subjecting them to a slow death by starvation, so that the Afrikaner

could live out his life in peace without fear of the swart gevaar, the `Bantu`.

It was Hendrik F. Verwoerd as Minister of Native Affairs and later as Prime Minister, with the assistance of W. W. M. Eiselen as his Secretary for Native Affairs, who developed the ideology of apartheid and pursued it with the consistent logic that utterly destroyed Jan Smuts`s United Party with its policy of segregation and trusteeship. With the perpetual smile of a sadist who enjoys inflicting pain, he used the state machinery - the civil service, the army and the police - and harnessed the NGK as well, ensuring that the main body of the Church would close its eyes to the excesses of apartheid, and business would share in the spoils of apartheid. He did these things in the name of, and in order to save, Western Christian civilisation.

With a few well-calculated moves, he aimed at achieving complete control of the life and thinking of the Africans. The institutions which previous governments had established to provide a platform for the airing of the grievances of Africans he found unacceptable. His view of local councils like the Bunga for the reserves, Advisory Boards for the urban areas and the Natives Representative Council was that these provided platforms for liberal ideas. They had to go to make room for a structure that would tighten control over the lives of the Africans.

In contrast with the indirect rule of the British government in its colonies in West and Central Africa, under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 the Nationalist government revived chieftainship, which had been utterly crushed and destroyed after the Wars of Dispossession. Verwoerd drew a picture of chieftainship restored to its ancient glory before the arrival of the white man, and assured putative chiefs that

the government would empower them with authority that was theirs by divine right to rule over their people. To show how serious the government was, it immediately appointed a large number of recognised chiefs, and raised their stipends to levels undreamt of before. As heads of Bantu Authorities they were given free rein under the protection of the police to gather a rich harvest from peasants. Secondly, the government drew in the chiefs as `baas boys, to implement apartheid under the direct command of the local Native Commissioner in his dual capacity as the field representative of the National Party and as an officer of the apartheid judiciary working hand in hand with the police. The chief tried and convicted in bush courts those who fell foul of the manifold apartheid regulations and was even given powers to banish people. Originally only the Governor-General had enjoyed that power in terms of the Native-Administration Act. Among the many who were banished at the height of the resistance to the Bantu Authorities Act were Chiefs Msutu, Moroa Mose and Godfrey Sekukune who were sent to Vryburg, Cala and Zululand respectively. Appeal could only be had to the Native Commissioner`s Court, where the police officer, who also enforced the law on the ground, was the prosecutor.

The government allowed the chiefs to spread their tentacles to the urban areas, where they appointed representatives with the job of taking up matters affecting tribal members and especially migrant labourers working in the main industrial areas. The role of the urban representative was to persuade his tribal compatriots to look to the chief in the reserves rather than concern himself with urban issues.

With the introduction of influx control and the labour bureau system, the Native Commissioner delegated his power to the chief to select workseekers for contract labour. This opened the gates for widespread bribery and corruption. In a situation where there was an

inexhaustible supply of labour, the chief`s hands could be greased. He took money from those whom he recommended for a job under contract, as well as from those whom he promised to place at the head of the queue for the next call-up for contract labour. Even though the chiefs were by and large illiterate they were placed at the head of school committees and took instructions from the Native Commissioners on how the schools should be run. The teachers had to carry out the chiefs, instructions or lose their jobs.

Clear Statement of Policy

When the National Party came to power it re-examined the Native policy that had been formulated by previous governments and tailored it to fit the racist plans of apartheid. The new package of legislation comprised the Bantu Authorities Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the pass laws and influx control regulations, and the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act.

Let us here examine the policy statements made by Verwoerd when he introduced the Bantu Education Bill in 1953 1 and when he addressed the Senate on the government`s Native policy in 1954.2 The government decision to take over the control of African education coincided with a demand by African Teachers, Associations for a transfer of the control of African education to the Union Department of Education. The teachers, demand arose from expectations that if African education fell under the Department of Education it would be financed better than was the case under the joint control of the missionaries and the provincial administrations, and that conditions of service would also improve. Verwoerd, on the other hand, wanted it transferred, but for different reasons, to the Department of Native Affairs of which he was Minister.

He stated that as the aim of Bantu education was to improve race relations, its control should be transferred to the Department of Native Affairs, which had contact with the Bantu. Racial relations could not `improve if the Bantu are trained for professions which are not open to them`. He argued that race relations cannot exist when education is under the control of people who believe in equality. Such a person will create in the Bantu expectations which clash with the possibilities in this country. He emphasised that it was a fundamental educational principle that `Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life ... What was the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics which it could not use in life? According to Verwoerd it was important that `their education should not clash with government policy,.

In a subsequent statement of policy, Verwoerd set out in a notoriously clear manner how he intended to use the school to poison and paralyse on a mass scale the minds of teachers and schoolchildren so that they would accept their position as perpetual serfs in the service of the white man. In all his pronouncements he sought to put to the fore the `Bantu community,. He was concerned that the product of the school should not aspire to rise above certain forms of menial labour as prescribed by apartheid nor should the child seek to rise above his community. He saw the role of the African teacher in this way: `The Bantu teacher must be utilised as an active factor in the process of development of the Bantu community to serve his community and build it up and learn not to feel above his community so that he wants to be integrated into the life of the European community, and becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does not happen and tries to make the community dissatisfied because of such misdirected and alien ambitions.

He set out to destroy utterly any values the African had learnt to cherish from an educational system that had inculcated in him free and independent thinking. He condemned a system of education which produced a `class [of Natives] which has learned that it is above its own people and feels that its spiritual, economic and political home is among the civilised community of South Africa, namely the Europeans`. Again, `The Bantu must be guided to serve in his own community ... There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... Up till now he has been subjected to a school system which ... practically misled him by showing him the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there.

From the strict implementation of apartheid, as conceived and shaped by Verwoerd, emerged features which turned out to the advantage of the national liberation struggle led by the ANC. Guided by his hatred of Africans, he made the serious mistake of examining what he intended to be the solution of the white man`s problem - `die swart gevaar` - only from one angle. He did not stop to consider how such plans would impact on the African ability to resist them. His most serious mistake was to regard and treat all Africans as an undifferentiated mass that had all to be swept to the reserves, to be subjected to pass laws and influx control regulations, to live in the locations in rented houses, denied any opportunity ever to invest in landed property. The government dismissed the appeals of the Liberal Party to create an African middle class with corresponding rights and privileges as sickening liberal ideas that would make the African aspire to the life of Europeans. There was no escape for any African from the dragnet of apartheid laws. These conditions applied equally to the unskilled and often illiterate worker, the medical doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the professional categories of all sorts, the business people and ministers of religion. This lack of security

resulted in the professional people withdrawing from participation in the activities of a political organisation like the ANC. In most anti-colonial struggles for independence, the middle class and the national bourgeoisie, where it had developed, led the struggle for independence. This was not to be the case in South Africa.

When the government started in earnest to implement the influx control regulations and the other repressive measures it had placed on the statute book in the early 1950s, these had far-reaching effects on the social makeup of the ANC leadership and membership. For many years since its establishment in 1912, the ANC had depended to a significant extent on African intellectuals, middle-class businessmen, and white-collar employees of various categories, both for the general membership and for its leadership at all levels. The implementation of influx control regulations and the battery of other laws that placed these groups at the mercy of the whims of white government officials deeply threatened the livelihood of these sections of the African people. They therefore started gradually to retreat from political activism. As large numbers of them withdrew from resistance politics, the character of both the membership and leadership of the ANC started also to change. By the end of the 1950s the great majority of the ANC membership was drawn from the urban working class. These also provided a large component of the ANC leadership at branch, regional and even provincial level. The few intellectuals, professionals and middle-class people who continued to play an important role were to be found at the national level, in the National Executive Committee. These, however, were elected on the basis of their proven leadership record by a largely working-class constituency made up of the delegates to the annual congress of the ANC.

The ANC thus became unique among African nationalist movements in that it came under the strong influence of the urban working class. This was in marked contrast with similar organisations elsewhere in Africa which continued to be dominated by intellectuals and the middle class throughout the period of their struggle for independence and also beyond, into the era of independence.

The one group that the apartheid regime singled out for repression among the middle class was the African businessmen. Among the measures the government took to discourage the growth of African business in the urban areas were the following: the plot on which an African could set up business was limited to an area scarcely bigger than that of a matchbox township house; the businessman was not allowed to own more than one business nor was he allowed to form partnerships or companies. If a businessman wished to expand his business activities, he was given the option of doing so in the Bantustans. The Bantu Investment Corporation, which was established to finance African business, would only extend loans to those who operated in the Bantustans. It lured those who appeared to be running successful small businesses by offering them loans to open in the Bantustans or to take up overpriced businesses which had been owned by whites whom the government was removing from the Bantustans to the so-called white areas of South Africa.

Perhaps the first prominent intellectual to step down from the leadership of the ANC in the 1950s was Dr Moroka, a wealthy medical doctor from a well-known aristocratic family from Thaba `Nchu in the Orange Free State. Moroka had been promoted by the leaders of the ANC Youth League to take over the presidency of the ANC in 1949 from Dr Xuma, who did not come up to scratch on the finer points of African nationalism, the favoured philosophy of the Youth League. At the end of the Defiance Campaign, Moroka fell

foul of the ANC because he insisted on pursuing a line of defence in court that tended to undermine the militant posture of the organisation. He had to give up the presidency and was replaced by Chief Albert Luthuli.

The intellectuals who remained in the ANC in significant numbers were concentrated in a faction known as the Africanists. This was the group led by Robert Sobukwe, Potlako Leballo, Peter Raboroko and Z. B. Molete, amongst others, who in 1958 broke away from the ANC to form the Pan-Africanist Congress. This group, however, was not active in the ANC, and after the Defiance Campaign it adopted the role of professional critic of ANC policies and was not involved in confronting the government. Another group of African intellectuals prominent in this period was comprised of the journalists associated with Drum, Golden City Post and Bantu World. These were also critics of the ANC and yet were themselves not members. They argued that a journalist should not belong to a political party as that would destroy his or her objectivity.

The one organ of the ANC where the working class was strongest was the Women`s League. In many respects, the 1950s was a decade of women in South Africa. African working-class women came out of the kitchen and took their rightful place as leaders of the African community. The names of leading women who came to prominence during these years included Lilian Ngoyi, Florence Matomela, Frances Baard, Annie Silinga and Dorothy Nyembe, to name but a few. These women transformed the Women`s League into a fighting arm of the national liberation movement. In the past the Women`s League had been led by the wives of the professionals who were leaders of the ANC. There was a marked difference between these urban working-class women and their counterparts in the peasantry in that, except in a few cases such as in the western Transvaal where

women were involved in the liberation struggle, peasant women on the whole were not politically active.

It is therefore one of the ironies of history that the National Party, in trying to defend and protect white minority privileges by cracking down on those whom it perceived as its biggest threat, in reality succeeded only in digging its own grave.

Charting a New Course

At the end of the Defiance Campaign, the ANC found itself faced with a government that intended to destroy not only the ANC but all opposition by African organisations. In the climate of fear and uncertainty even white liberals were affected to the extent that they found themselves adopting in practice positions indicated by the government. Even the liberal municipal council of Port Elizabeth, which had not imposed pass laws, was frightened out of its wits when in October 1952 an event sparked off by the unthinking behaviour of a white constable took place at the New Brighton police station. As workers returned home from work, a policeman saw an African carrying a tin of paint and immediately assumed that the tin had been stolen. He stopped him and attempted to arrest him and in the scuffle that ensued he shot the man dead. This action immediately set off a riot, which resulted in the death of four whites and seven Africans, while a number were wounded.

The city of Port Elizabeth thereafter introduced a night curfew, which was applied even more rigorously than had been the case in Bloemfontein, Pretoria or Johannesburg. No African was allowed in the streets of Port Elizabeth after ten o`clock. Further meetings of the ANC which had attracted weekly open-air rallies of 20000-30000 were banned. This resulted in the implementation of the M-plan in

the area from 1953 onwards, thus introducing it to underground methods of organisation. It had become clear that in order to face this new situation the ANC had to chart a new course of struggle which was not based on the old defensive approaches. For instance, the boycott of consumer products, which was to be one of the effective methods of struggle during the fifties, started with the boycott of oranges in Port Elizabeth. This was designed to put pressure on the citrus-growing farmers along the Sundays River valley to treat their workers fairly. The pattern for such consumer boycotts was set when the representatives of the citrus industry settled with the executive of the ANC and the boycott, which had resulted in the Port Elizabeth market being flooded with unsold oranges, was called off.

Following the end of the Defiance Campaign came yet another major event which would influence the course of the struggle for national liberation for the next two decades. Those whites who could not find a political home in the white political parties were, with the assistance of the ANC, advised to form a new organisation the Congress of Democrats (COD) - at about the same time that the South African Coloured People`s Organisation (SACPO), later called Coloured People`s Congress (CPC), was formed. The four Congresses representing Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites together formed the Congress Alliance. At the head of this alliance was the ANC. The formation of the Congress Alliance represented an advance. Previously each of these bodies had operated in defence of the particular group it represented. Now they realised that they all had one thing in common, that in spite of differences in their oppression, they were all oppressed. As such they agreed to work together in an alliance to fight against oppression. This was a significant stage in the development of the struggle for national liberation; for in all the campaigns that followed the formation of the

alliance, both the planning and execution of decisions were decided at a meeting of the joint executives of the Congresses.

As a result of the passing of an amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act, which separated Coloureds and Indians from whites, a new federation of trade unions was formed. This was the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which, in opposition to the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), supported the policies of the Congress Alliance.

The Congress Alliance lost no time in setting up machinery that would allow it to chart a new course - a course that would enable it to take initiatives of its own on a battlefield of its own choice. One of its most momentous decisions was to organise a congress where the people of this country would forge together a policy instrument embracing the aspirations of all South Africans. After collecting the demands of the people both in urban and in rural areas, the Congress of the People met in 1955 to adopt an all-embracing policy document - The Freedom Charter.

After the Freedom Charter had been adopted by the members of the Congress Alliance, it became the policy document of each and all of them. Of course not everybody agreed with everything in the Freedom Charter. There was some debate, especially in the ANC in Natal, about three of the clauses, which members thought contentious. The three clauses that were troublesome were `The people shall govern`; `The mineral wealth below the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole,; and `The land shall be shared among those who work it`. The main objection to the clause `The people shall govern, came from those who believed that there should be a qualified franchise that excluded illiterate people. The objection to the

nationalisation clause came from people who thought that policies which moved away from `free enterprise, would threaten the viability of the South African economy. The objection to the land reform clause came in particular from landowners, who feared that their landed property would be confiscated.

All these objections were, however, not brought to the national congress because the people who raised them in Natal were anxious to distance themselves from the Africanists, who had latched onto the same points in order to attack the ANC and accuse it of being socialistic. The deal that was struck was that in return for the objectors not raising their disagreements in congress, the supporters of the Freedom Charter in Natal would in turn not reveal that there were disagreements in their province about the Freedom Charter.

The Congress Alliance, now guided by this great policy document, embarked on probing attacks - sometimes of shorter and sometimes of longer duration, both at home and internationally. As soon as the government introduced Bantu education, the ANC reacted by calling for a national boycott. This move met with serious problems. Firstly, the government hit back by harassing open-air classes and threatened churches that allowed their halls to be used for running such classes, which were illegal under the Bantu Education Act. But the major problem was that those parents who were eager for the education of their children did not by and large support the boycott. Bad as Bantu education was, it was felt that the children should be able to acquire reading skills, although examination results in the open-air ANC schools were good and the children were also taught about the struggle for liberation. The boycott could not be sustained for a long time and it was therefore called off.

A series of consumer boycotts took place in the fifties mostly in support of workers, demands. The most effective boycott was that of potatoes during 1959. The shocking conditions under which African farm workers, especially in the eastern Transvaal, worked were exposed by newspapers such as New Age. The ANC immediately called for a boycott of potatoes, and as the markets experienced a glut, farmers started selling the potatoes in the reserves at low prices but even that gave them very little relief.

Yet another significant boycott was that of a newspaper. The Eastern Province Herald issued every week a special issue which was circulated only in the townships of Port Elizabeth. The issue dealt with social and sport activities in the African townships and used Africans who were clerks in the Native Administration offices as reporters. The ANC objected to this on the ground that it was a discriminatory practice on the part of the newspaper to distribute that issue only in the townships. It called upon the paper to stop the special edition for the township, and when it refused to do so a boycott was called of the paper. Within days the management of the paper apologised, giving the assurance that it would not issue this special edition again.

After the government started implementing in earnest the Bantu Authorities Act, the representative of the Ciskei paramount chief in Port Elizabeth, together with her councillors who were mostly members of the local Advisory Board, organised a function to raise funds to build offices for the paramount chief in the Ciskei. Now that the status of the paramount chief, who had for years been demoted to the level of headman, had been raised to that of a recognised chief under the Bantu Authorities Act, the government decided to put up offices in the Ciskei from which it would implement the Bantu Authorities Act. In terms of this Act, the government divided

Africans along tribal lines, called `nations`. Each of the chiefs at the head of such a `nation` was allowed to have an `ambassador` in the main industrial centres in the country so that the tribal divisions which the government had established in the rural areas would be carried over into the urban areas. In the new townships, certain areas were divided along tribal lines, as was the case in parts of Soweto in Johannesburg.

The ANC approached the representative of the Ciskei paramount chief to express its disapproval of the campaign to raise funds in the Port Elizabeth townships to build offices for the Bantu Authorities. But the Ciskei representative disregarded this request and proceeded to raise money from industry and commerce among the whites to provide a feast for township people during the fund-raising campaign. A festival was also organised at which a beauty contest of nurses from the local hospital and various tribal dancing groups were to feature.

On the eve of this festival, the ANC issued leaflets throughout the townships of Port Elizabeth on a door-to-door basis, calling upon the people and the dancing groups to keep away from the festivities. It also distributed a leaflet at the hospital, dissuading the nurses from attending the beauty contest. Only the organisers of the fund-raising campaign turned up for the feast. The ANC then turned on the chief organiser, who was employed by a tea-packing firm as its salesman in the townships. It issued a leaflet calling upon all the township shops not to stock the products of the tea firm. It also posted a copy of this leaflet to the firm, which immediately threatened to dismiss the salesman for involving himself in Bantu Authorities politics to the detriment of the business. If the firm had done so, the salesman would have faced the prospect of being endorsed out of the city once he had lost his job. This man, who had arrogantly treated the ANC,

was back within a few days at the ANC offices to apologise. The ANC in turn demanded a hundred reams of duplicating paper, two boxes of stencils, and half-a-dozen tubes of ink to enable it to call off the boycott.

Another significant boycott was that of buses in Port Elizabeth in 1958. The bus drivers and conductors of the PE Tramways, which operated a bus service between the African townships and the city, had agreed to form a workers, committee under the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act. One morning the workers expressed their dissatisfaction with both wages and working conditions by embarking on a go-slow strike, which resulted in commuters arriving late for work. By midday there was a complete stoppage of work. The workers, committee then approached the offices of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) for advice. Consequently a joint committee of the workers, committee and SACTU representatives sought to establish a link with the management of the bus company; the latter, however, was not prepared to meet them.

The bus company proceeded to employ scab labour to keep the service running. It was at this point that the ANC intervened, calling upon the people in the town ship to boycott the scab-labour-driven buses. The boycott continued for more than a month before management gave in to pressures by both industry and commerce to enter into negotiations with the workers. The dispute was finally resolved when management and workers agreed to set up a tribunal.

The boycott campaigns of the 1950s had some important lessons. Firstly, employers in industry and commerce got to know that even though African workers were denied the right to organise trade unions, the ANC would not allow them to be exploited. Secondly,

the traders in the African townships and in the white towns and cities who depended on African consumer support were taught the lesson that they could not disregard the decisions of the ANC on matters that affected the community. Thirdly, the masses of the African people, especially in the urban areas, saw in the ANC an unflinching organisation that fought uncompromisingly for their rights. This gained increasing support for the ANC in both urban and rural areas.

Dissenting Voices

The early 1950s were a period of intense mass mobilisation. However, each time the ANC came up with a move, the government responded with an even bigger counter-move. In this escalating contest, the ANC had to broaden its base of friends and supporters in order to increase its own muscle. This necessitated building alliances with other organisations and with other races. It should be remembered that ANC membership was open only to Africans at this time. The Congress of Democrats, for example, was the brainchild of the ANC, formed from among the white members of the banned Communist Party who wanted to continue co-operating with the ANC but could not do so as individual members. The 1950s, therefore, was a period when new structures and new alliances were established to fight apartheid.

Some hard-line elements within the ANC Youth League felt unhappy about the decision by the ANC to enter jointly into campaigns with non-Africans. Although they had tolerated the fact that the Defiance Campaign was a joint venture of the ANC and the SAIC, antipathy was expressed more strongly by these elements when the Congress Alliance was formed. They also received support from the Liberal Party, which claimed that the ANC was led by white communists.

The Liberal Party was formed in 1953 at a time when the government was launching its most vicious attacks against the ANC and its allies, destroying what was left of any democratic rights the African might once have enjoyed. In the face of all these oppressive measures, the Liberal Party concerned itself with keeping communists from taking an active part in leading the ANC in the struggle against national oppression. Its leading scribe and exponent, Patrick Duncan, claimed that the ANC leadership was being manipulated by white communists in the Congress of Democrats or by the Indian Congress. Exponents of liberalism even to this day trot out the story that the ANC leadership consists of communists who are out `to seize, in the holy name of the people, all the assets of the Anglo American Corporation, General Mining, First National Bank, Volkskas ...3

After the conference of African leaders at the end of 1960, the Liberal Party worked feverishly to pull both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African section of the Liberal Party out of the conference resolution to organise for an All-In Conference, which was to be held in March 1961 in Pietermaritzburg. Jordan Ngubane, then National Vice-President of the Liberal Party, who had been instructed at the conference to make arrangements for a venue for the proposed All-ln Conference, did not do so, and the delegates had to make arrangements for the venue when they got there. Neither the PAC nor the Liberal Party attended; and at a subsequent trial of the steering committee which had been elected at the conference, the PAC and the Liberal Party members, accused jointly with members of the ANC, denied the allegations and claimed that the leaflets and pamphlets (exhibits in the case) which had been made in preparation for the All-In African Conference, had been issued by Duma Nokwe and the co-accused ANC members. But in spite of that, all thirteen co-accused were sentenced to twelve months, imprisonment.

The Africanists

By the time the Congress Alliance was formed, most of the members of the ANC Youth League who still clung to the orthodox ideas of exclusive African nationalism found it difficult to accept the Freedom Charter. At the special conference of the ANC in 1956 at which the Freedom Charter was adopted as the ANC`s basic policy document, members who were to constitute the leadership of the PAC objected, especially against the clauses `South Africa belongs to all who live in it`, and `The land shall be shared among those who work it`. To them this was tantamount to selling a birthright, as the land could not be shared with non-Africans. At the 1957 conference they opposed the adoption of a new constitution, claiming that the clause `membership shall be opened to all` meant that non-Africans could become members of the ANC.

When the Treason Trial took place towards the end of 1956, almost all the known leadership of the ANC at all levels of its structure were thrown into jail. In the Transvaal, a decision had been taken on both the national and provincial levels not to hold the annual elections in order to show the government that the people continued to have confidence in their elected leaders, in spite of their arrest. But there were strong elements amongst the membership, especially in Orlando East and Sophiatown, that insisted that the election be held. Incidentally the leaders of this campaign were the Africanists who were later to constitute the leaders of the Pan-Africanist Congress. At the 1957 national conference of the ANC, they tried hard to get conference to rule that the decision taken by the former Provincial Executive Committee with the support of the working committee of the National Executive should be declared unconstitutional. After a sharp debate lasting the whole night, the speaker (this writer) ruled that elections for the office-bearers of the province should take place

within three months as from the beginning of 1958. After trying hard to take over the leadership of the ANC at the provincial level, the Africanists were defeated at the elections. From then on, they set about organising to break away with as many members as they could to form the Pan-Africanist Congress towards the end of 1959.

The defeat of the Africanists in open elections holds important lessons for those who think they can ride to power in South Africa on a wave of racial hatred against the so-called non-African peoples of this country. It also holds important lessons for many pro-capitalist and anti-socialist forces that are being aided and abetted by foreign powers today. The three centuries of racism and racial oppression of blacks by whites have failed to transform blacks in this country into racial bigots. In South Africa racism remains, therefore, a white man`s ideology and those blacks who over the years have thought they could adopt it and use it against other races, be they Coloureds, Indians or whites, have failed to get the support of the overwhelming majority of the black people.

Several generations of African intellectuals have made strenuous efforts to try to change this way of thinking among the black people of South Africa but have failed. Some of the leaders of the ANC Youth League tried this approach in the 1940s and failed. The Africanists of the 1950s and the Black Consciousness advocates of the 1970s continued this tradition among African intellectuals. This tradition - let us call it `black exclusivism` presents a misguided solution.

As far back as the 1930s, students at Fort Hare, Lovedale and Healdtown, in their frustration with the (then) ANC leadership, attributed their lack of dynamism to the `bad influence` of white missionaries on African intellectuals. The students argued that the

influence of the missionaries helped to dampen the nationalistic fervor of African intellectuals, who were transformed into confused and hapless black Englishmen who did not share the inner feelings of the black people. These inner feelings were presumed to be anti-white.

When teachers at these centres failed to play an active part in opposing the Hertzog Bills in 1936, the students saw their thesis confirmed. It was argued that the teachers, Africanness had been diluted by the study of English and Ethics, subjects allegedly dear to white missionaries. To overcome this apathy of black intellectuals it was thus thought necessary to shake off the influence not only of white missionaries but also of communists, be they black, white, Coloured or Indian, as these were also said to dilute Africanness through their theories of class society. The notion of social class was offensive to the youth because it was thought to contribute to dividing the African people, who were presumed to be a homogeneous mass.

These youthful intellectuals-to-be had no difficulty concluding that the salvation of the African or black people lay in opposing the white missionaries and white liberals on one hand and the communists of whatever complexion on the other. The black man was called upon to stand on his own without being supported by whites.

Realising the role which the African working class had begun to play in the national liberation struggle through their trade unions, the PAC launched the Federation of Free African Trade Unions (FOFATUSA) to compete with SACTU, which supported the policies of the Congress Alliance. This parallels the clumsy efforts by Inkatha to form UWUSA to counter COSATU, which supports the national democratic struggle. Both these counter-revolutionary

federations scarcely made any progress and the former quickly disappeared.

As opposed to the inclusive African nationalism espoused by the ANC, which recognised that the Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites had all made South Africa their home, Potlako Leballo - one of the leading members of the PAC - declared that his organisation would sweep the whites into the sea. Hendrik Verwoerd had also sworn that the National Party would push all Africans out of the `white areas back into the Native Reserves,. A strange similarity between the two exclusive nationalism`s - African and Afrikaner nationalism.

What has characterised all groups that claimed to be opposed to government policies - groups that either broke away from the ANC like the PAC, or others like the Liberal Party, Unity Movement (NEUM), Inkatha and Black Consciousness Movement - has been that instead of opposing the government directly, they have mounted campaigns aimed at thwarting those initiated by the ANC. It was in line with this behaviour pattern that after the last legal conference of the ANC on 16 December 1959 had resolved to embark on an anti-pass campaign to start on 31 March 1960, the newly formed PAC decided to forestall this by launching its own antipass campaign on 21 March 1960. When the police reacted by mowing down with machine-guns no less than 69 people at Sharpeville who out of curiosity had come to witness the handful of PAC members hand over their passes to the police, it was the ANC that stepped in, to turn the event against the government. It called within three days for a national stay-at-home to mark a day of mourning. Fearful of an uprising, the government made mass arrests of political activists, especially within the Congress Alliance, during the night of 31

December 1960 and declared a State of Emergency, and banned both the ANC and PAC.

At the meeting of the National Executive of the ANC at which the decision to declare a day of mourning was taken, it was also resolved that in the event of the government banning the ANC, it would not dissolve. The groundwork for setting up machinery for illegal operations was also laid. The following steps were taken:

a.Parts of the constitution were to be suspended in order to bring about a more efficient mode of operation suited to underground activities. To streamline the cumbersome structures, the provincial level was discarded, leaving the national, regional and the branch levels.

b.In place of the National Executive, a seven-man committee were appointed to direct the struggle.

c.Both the Youth League and Women`s League, which had enjoyed a measure of autonomy, would be dissolved and replaced by five-person advisory committees working directly under the seven-man committee at the branch level.

After the State of Emergency was lifted on 31 August 1960, it became clear that the organisation had been thrown into a state of disarray. It was to address this problem that the national seven-man committee decided to call a meeting of African leaders to chart a new course of struggle. An indication of the turn which the struggle was going to take was given at the All-In Conference in March 1961, where a resolution was put to the conference and adopted, calling upon the government not to unilaterally declare South Africa as a Republic and to call a national convention of all the people of South

Africa to draw up a new constitution which would embrace all its people. The resolution went further to say that if the government disregarded this call, the National Action Committee appointed at that conference would call for a three-day stay-at-home to take place from 29 to 31 May 1961, after which the people would embark on a course of non-co-operation.

For the sensitive observer this resolution should have been a pointer to the shape which the struggle was going to take. At a meeting of the joint executives of the Congress Alliance in June 1961, the situation was reviewed and a decision was taken that in all future stay-at-homes, the possibility of the use of force could not be excluded.

8. The New Option: The Armed Struggle

At a meeting of peasants during the Defiance Campaign, one aged man expressed himself critically about the campaign plan. With typically down-to-earth peasant logic he argued that Africans had lost the Wars of Dispossession because the weapons they used did not match those of the Boers or British. According to him, unless that imbalance was corrected there was no point in embarking on a defiance of unjust laws. Any talk of non-violence in conducting such a campaign was merely to tickle the Boers (Niyawa-nyubaza Amabhulu; Le ea oa Tsikinyetsa Ma Buru). Having said this, he took his old military coat which he had folded to sit on, shook the grass off, and started to move away.

The peasants had always been consistent in thinking along military lines, and throughout the twentieth century did not hesitate to resort to the use of armed resistance to Pretoria`s edicts, whether or not the ANC or the SACP supported their action. The Bunga system

introduced under the Glen Grey Act of 1894 was, for example, never accepted by the peasants, who saw it as a compromise with white authorities, though it was accepted by the more educated amongst the rural people at the time - the headmen.

When the ANC eventually decided to embark on armed struggle at the end of 1961, it was natural that it would once again turn to the peasants, long the chief advocates of armed resistance, for support. The work that the writer had published during the 1950s in the journal Liberation had also helped to awaken the national liberation movement to the importance of its enlisting the peasantry in the struggle. Even more important, the armed struggle that the peasants had mounted on their own during the 1950s, especially in Pondoland, Witzieshoek, Zeerust and Sekukuneland, had made amply clear to the ANC leadership the necessity of recruiting this section of the population to the armed struggle.

What also helped turn the attention of the ANC to the peasants was the theories of guerrilla warfare that the ANC and the SACP leadership were obliged to study and understand before embarking on the establishment of Umkhonto weSizwe, or MK. The most important books on guerilla warfare that were available at the time in South Africa were the writings of Mao Tse-tung on the Chinese experience and of Che Guevara on the Latin American experience. Both emphasised the importance of enlisting the support of the peasantry if a revolutionary war was to succeed.

What we did not allow for, however, was that the white regime had over the years evolved a counter-strategy in response to peasant insurrections. At each location in the reserves was a chief or headman. Under him at ward level were sub-headmen. These subheadmen were the eyes and ears of the government and since

they were permanently resident in their wards, they knew who were normally resident in their wards and who were strangers. They were thus perfect spies. Moreover, the government installed telephones at every trading station in the reserves. These telephones were used by the headmen to inform the police whenever strangers were sighted in the villages or whenever unrest occurred in their wards. All this we were to find out at considerable cost once the armed struggle got under way from the end of 1961.

Towards the end of the fifties and especially at the beginning of the sixties, the rank-and-file membership of the ANC, especially the youth, were increasingly insisting that the policy of non-violence had had its day and was no longer practicable in the face of the harsh measures which the government was meting out to peaceful African protest. If the ANC leadership was to continue to have control of the situation amongst its members, it had to take seriously the developing mood amongst the Africans in both the urban and rural areas. Already for the first time during the three days, stay-at-home that preceded the formal establishment of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, volunteers who picketed used petrol-bombs to stop buses from breaking the stayaway.

At the meeting of the joint Congress executives in June 1961, at which the ANC indicated that it was shifting from the path of non-violence, it met with sharp criticism from leaders of the Indian Congress, who had been brought up in the tradition of Gandhi`s satyagraha or non-violent policies. But this was not a majority position.

The South African Communist Party lost no time in setting up sabotage units, while the ANC also formed its own. Towards the end of the year, however, these units were merged to form the first

sabotage units of Umkhonto weSizwe, which were thrown into action on 16 December 1961.

By that time Nelson Mandela, who had been elected secretary of the National Action Committee at the All-ln African Conference held earlier in the year, was sent out to rally support from the African independent states, as well as those that were scheduled to obtain their independence shortly. In the meanwhile the newly formed alliance of the ANC-SACP formed a National High Command which would direct the military activities of MK. It also sent out to China in November of that year about half a dozen comrades to train as officers in guerrilla warfare. These included Raymond Mhlaba, Wilton Mkwayi, Andrew Mlangeni, Joe Gqabi, Patrick Mthembu and Steve Naidoo.

Below the National High Command were regional commands which directed the activities of MK units at regional level. Although it was publicly made known that MK was run as a separate organisation, this was to ensure that the known membership of ANC at the time of its banning would not be held legally responsible for the activities of the MK units. In practice, however, MK was a joint organ of the ANC and SACP. Each of these had a representative on the NHC to ensure that in carrying out its operations, it did so within the framework of the policies of the two allies. As far as was possible, a political commissar was to be attached to each regional command. Thus, when units of MK went into action on 16 December 1961, they were given instructions to strike only against government installations and to make sure that they did not jeopardise the lives of civilians and that they should not carry arms. At a later stage, however, when both the government and industry and commerce placed armed guards at possible targets, the regional committees were instructed to arm units and to shoot only in self-defence. If any

unit carried out punitive measures against informers, it could only do so after obtaining approval from the National High Command.

In its manifesto, Umkhonto pointed out that it would include in its ranks `South Africans of all races` in carrying out a struggle into which it was forced by government policies. `The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom. In explaining the reason why it had become necessary to embark on the armed struggle, the manifesto continued: `We are striking out on a new road for the liberation of the people of this country. The government policy of force, repression and violence will no longer be met with non-violent resistance only; the choice is not ours; it has been made by the Nationalist government which has rejected every peaceable demand by the people for rights and freedom and answered every such demand with force and yet more force.

Turning to the people to assure them of the role which MK was to play, the manifesto proceeded to say: `Umkhonto weSizwe will be at the front line of the people`s defence. It will be the fighting arm of the people against the government and its policies of race oppression. It will be the striking force of the people for liberty, for rights and for their final liberation!,

The manifesto further emphasised the point that, by taking the action which it did, MK was seeking to avoid a civil war in the country: `We of Umkhonto weSizwe have always sought as the liberation movement to achieve liberation without bloodshed and civil clash. We do still. We hope even at this late hour that our first actions will

awaken everyone to a realisation of the disastrous situation to which the Nationalist policy is leading.

The manifesto ended by assuring the people of South Africa that there could be no happiness or peace in the country until the Nationalist government had been overthrown. `In these actions, we are working in the best interest of all the people of this country - black, brown and white - whose future happiness and well-being cannot be attained without the overthrow of the Nationalist government, the abolition of white supremacy and the winning of liberty, democracy and full national rights and equality for all the people of this country.

It is important to note a few salient points in the manifesto. Firstly, MK would recruit into its ranks on a non-racial basis. At that stage already, it had become clear that the ANC could not continue to call upon non-Africans to take up arms and even make the supreme sacrifice in order to promote a cause which it pursued, while it was not prepared to admit them into its membership. Secondly, by the actions it took on 16 December 1961, it hoped to shock not only the National Party government, but all the whites in South Africa who either actively supported it or by their silence allowed the government to implement its racist policies. Thirdly, by implication, if the government abandoned apartheid, there would be no cause to resort to violence.

Moreover, the ANC would do all in its power to avoid civil war because given the racial polarisation in the country, a civil war could only occur along racial lines. Lastly, MK would be fully committed to fighting under the leadership of the ANC for national liberation.

The main problem that faced the National High Command was to find the materials to enable its units to start their sabotage activities. In South Africa it was very difficult for Africans to gain access to supplies of explosive materials as these were under the direct control of whites at every place of work where dynamite was used. Thus if the units were to use dynamite they had to depend on stolen supplies.

At a meeting held one night at a location in the Transkei, the peasants were discussing what punitive measures to take against notorious chiefs who under the command of Kaiser Matanzima were persecuting the opponents of Bantu Authorities. One peasant suggested that a drop of glycerine on permanganate of potassium would light a fire, thus igniting the manure in a cattle kraal so that all the cattle of the chief would be destroyed. When this was related to a comrade who was a chemist and had experience of dealing with explosives, he immediately suggested that the permanganate of potassium should be mixed with magnesium. Technical committees were set up to develop both explosives and incendiary bombs from this mixture, as well as timing devices. It was easy to determine the proportion of magnesium to permanganate of potassium to make a bomb. What was not so easy was to produce a timing device that could be used to control the glycerine in such a way that a drop would percolate into the mixture at regulated time intervals. This was finally solved by putting a certain quantity of sea sand in a plastic tube that was closed at one end and then topped with a given time limit, depending on the quantity of sand. For incendiary bombs a certain volume of petrol placed in a closed vessel would be set alight by a similar timing device.

With the exception of a few units that had managed to acquire dynamite either through some agents or by stealing it, most units used the bombs. Even those units which started with dynamite could

not continue to obtain supplies. Either the stolen supplies dried up or the agents sold the units dummy stocks of dynamite.

The casualties of those first actions were Petros Molefe who was blown up and killed by a premature explosion of the bomb he carried, and his co-operator, Benjamin Ramotse, who was injured. In the Transkei, when an MK operator was arrested he and his co-operator disclosed that they had received their training in Port Elizabeth. This led to the arrest of the Technical Committee consisting of Harold Strachan and the writer Joseph Jack. Yet another unit in Johannesburg was infiltrated by a police agent who was responsible for their landing in jail.

By the end of 1962 most units could no longer operate since they did not have the materials to carry out their sabotage activities. It therefore became clear that MK had to enter a new phase. It was in these circumstances that the National High Command decided to couple sabotage activities with military action. The document `Operation Mayibuye` was consequently drawn up, discussed and accepted by the NHC. In addition, the comrades who returned from China after they had completed their training were each given charge of certain operation areas.

As a matter of interest, when the document `Operation Mayibuye, was captured by the police during the raid on Rivonia, it was decided that the significance of this document to the strategy of the ANC and MK would be played down as part of the legal defence tactic of the accused. It was therefore argued in court that the document`s recommendations had not been fully discussed and adopted while in fact they had.

Once again, the problem of arming the military units loomed large. Both preparation for sabotage and that for military units had to be planned anew in the light of the high phase of the military struggle contemplated in `Operation Mayibuye`. Firstly, MK had to find its own headquarters where it could produce almost all the logistical material required. The headquarters were established at Travalyn, outside Johannesburg, where all the National High Command members were stationed. This farm was some ten miles away from Rivonia along the road to Hartbeespoort. Secondly, a mission was sent abroad to find sources from which the NHC could obtain military equipment and in addition arrange ways and means whereby such material could find its way into the country.

A week after the personnel of the NHC had established themselves at the MK headquarters, a meeting of the joint secretariats took place at Rivonia but its business was not completed and had to continue a week later. It was when a few members drawn from the ANC-SACP and NHC gathered at Rivonia to discuss some matters which had been left over from the previous week`s meeting, that a large contingent of police converged on the farm and arrested all those they found there, including the labourers. One of the NHC, Wilton Mkwayi, had been sent to the township on the day of the raid. When he heard the news, he drove to Travalyn to clear as much as he could. However, in collecting suitcases, typewriters and other material which was lying about, he omitted to check the drawers of the desk where the files were, but he did take away the key to the coded documents which was in the suitcase next to the desk. It was this that Dr Percy Yutar, state prosecutor in the Rivonia Trial, kept on demanding- `give us the key,. When all of a sudden the security police stopped interrogating us, we realised they had found the files which had correspondence dealing with the regional commands of MK as well as with the external mission of the ANC.

After the Rivonia arrests, the security police threw a wide dragnet in which they collected a large number of known activists. In the course of detention, some who had served in key positions broke down and told everything. Amongst those were Bruno Mtolo, who was described by Percy Yutar as having a photographic memory, Bartholomew Hlapane, who has acted as a co-ordinator of party cells and full-time organiser for both the party and ANC, Piet Byleveld, Kholisile Mdwayi and a few others.

The ANC took a hard knock, which threw it into disarray and from which it took some years to recover. The number of ANC members who were on Robben Island during the sixties and the number of women ANC members, especially from Port Elizabeth and Cradock, who served in various jails in the Transvaal were an indication of the extent to which the organisation had been crippled. Worse still, when they were released after serving short sentences of two and a half years to five and ten years, further charges were trumped up by the police. Thereafter they were sent back to jail to serve longer periods of imprisonment, or else they were endorsed out of the urban areas to such desolate places as Sada near Queenstown, Dimbaza near King William`s Town and Mdantsane.

It is quite understandable why after such a vicious attack by the government, the organisation had to reorganise and re-group before it could launch its activities again. One of the most significant features of the period was the convening of the Morogoro Conference in 1967 at which a decision was taken to open membership of the ANC to all who shared its policies, irrespective of colour or race. This decision marked a new era in that the major national liberation organisation became non-racial. This decision, however, also raised the question of whether there was still room in the country for organisations which were ethnically based. The

opening of membership to all by the ANC meant that there could be no going back to the Congress Alliance of the fifties.

A Calculated Decision

The decision to embark on armed struggle did not arise out of sheer frustration nor was it arrived at in a fit of blind emotion. It was a calculated decision taken after the consideration of a number of factors. For people who had not been allowed to bear arms in the South African army and who even in times of war were only allowed to serve in menial positions, it meant taking on the full might of an army that served to defend the apartheid policies of the government.

Some argued that since South Africa was surrounded by hostile territory - Portuguese Mozambique, British-controlled Rhodesia, Portuguese Angola and the South African colony of South West Africa - what hope was there of mounting a successful military struggle, if the units of MK could not fall back across the boundary into a friendly territory? South Africa does not have a terrain which suits guerrilla operations. There were no mountains, no big forests. In other words there were none of the features which characterised conventional guerrilla warfare, it was argued. The one important factor which this argument did not take into account was the people themselves. In other words, the argument underestimated the value of intensive and extensive political work amongst the people - raising their level of consciousness to the extent that whole masses of the people would see the struggle of MK units as advancing their own aspirations and would thus shield and protect the units. Failure to appreciate this was tantamount to a lack of confidence in the ability of ANC to reach out to the people and inspire them with a determination to fight against oppression, or a failure to realise that the military struggle does not exist in isolation, operating

independently of the political struggle. Rather it is born out of the political struggle and is aimed at achieving the objectives for which the political struggle has been waged over a long period of time. Even when the military form appears to be the dominant form of struggle, at no time should the primacy of the political struggle be lost sight of.

In the South African situation - in which national oppression is exerted by a dominant white minority seeking to establish its superiority - the African National Congress is the spearhead of the National Democratic Revolution, which aims at destroying apartheid and correcting historical injustices that have been perpetrated for so long against so many. In seeking to achieve this objective, the ANC calls upon all the people of South Africa to rally together to eliminate apartheid if there is to be peace and the development of the country`s material and human resources for the benefit of all. It calls upon all to fight to establish a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa for one nation.

9. Epilogue

The years 1970 to 1990 differ in a very significant way from the previous twenty years. In the preceding two decades the NP government had created the policy of apartheid. It had put it into practice in the period 1950 to 1970, convinced that apartheid could work. But already in the time that John Vorster was prime minister it had become clear within the NP that apartheid could no longer work in the manner in which it had been conceived by Verwoerd, Strijdom, Eiselen and others. The direct rule approach - using Native Commissioners and the police as a battering ram to break down resistance to the Bantu Authorities - had been tried and it failed. The use of the chiefs to achieve the same end had also failed. The

government had been forced to do the unthinkable, namely, to set up self-governing Bantustans and then `the independent` Bantustans of the Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda, which had also not met with much success.

The existence of Portuguese-controlled Mozambique and Angola and white-dominated Rhodesia on the borders of South Africa had long served as a buffer, and so long as this buffer remained the Nationalist government felt sufficiently secure. When that buffer was destroyed in April 1974 by a coup d`etat against the fascist regime in Lisbon, the fear grew within the National Party that the oppressed majority could no longer be insulated from the wave of ideas of freedom that was sweeping through southern Africa. When the black workers, strike took place in Durban in 1973 in spite of the strong arm of the police and the army, the government began to realise that the right of African workers to belong to recognised trade unions could no longer be held back by the use of guns. Again, when the school pupils rose in 1976 against the use of Afrikaans in the classroom as a medium of instruction, the government realised that if those pupils risked their lives rather than allowing themselves to be mentally paralysed and their vision distorted by the theories of racism, apartheid could no longer work.

State President P. W. Botha`s famous speech at Upington that we must adapt or die, was a signal to those within the fold of apartheid and those outside it that the dominant position which the white minority had held in the country for so long had to be dressed up differently from the past if it was to continue to be tolerated by the oppressed.

What then was the NP going to do in order to adapt to the situation? How were they to stem the tide of freedom? Was there a way of

stopping the forward march of the millions of the oppressed in this country? Was there a chance that the marching millions would accept the manner in which the government was proposing to `adapt,? Although Botha had seen the need to adapt, he did not have the answer as to how to adapt. While he vacillated and was unable to give a lead and while the pressures increased internally and externally against racism and apartheid, elements within his own cabinet had come to realise that the sands were shifting under their feet. To save the situation, they removed Botha ignominiously and put in his place F. W. de Klerk under orders to come up with a formula to adapt.

Faced with a similar crisis in 1942 when the Japanese were said to be in the vicinity of Madagascar, Jan Smuts had announced that `segregation has fallen on evil days`. Smuts was faced with the problem of convincing whites that Africans should be armed in order to help in the defence of South Africa. A similar situation arose in 1960 when Paul Sauer announced after the Africans rose against the pass laws that the government was going to turn a new page. The pass laws were indeed suspended for a while, though when the Nationalists felt that they had contained the situation after the Rivonia arrests they forgot all about turning the new leaf. When De Klerk came to power in 1989 during the height of a deep crisis, he announced that he was going to abolish the domination of one group by another. The experience of previous promises by white regimes to mend their ways should teach us not to take his word at face value.

Has De Klerk a chance of going back to apartheid despite his promise to eliminate group domination, a euphemism for white domination, in the same way that his predecessors have done? What are the forces today at work which will determine whether De Klerk is pushed forward not only along the way of the reforms he has

promised but to bring about fundamental change in the country? On the side of the people, what are the forces which may see to it that De Klerk and the Nationalist government lose their grip on the levers of power so that power passes into the hands of the people?

De Klerk`s Formula

From the statements which have come profusely from De Klerk and leading members of his cabinet, it is becoming clear - that what the NP leaders are seeking to achieve through negotiations is a situation where they can continue to exercise power while the oppressed are lulled into a sense of security. By engaging in negotiations, the oppressed people, through their political organisations in general and the ANC in particular, may - so it is hoped - lower their guard. The regime still wants to maintain its position of domination but in doing so would like the oppressed, especially the ANC, to feel that the NP is genuine about letting go of power.

Towards these ends De Klerk and the NP government are seeking a realignment of forces which will take the same view as themselves at the negotiating table. Already at the international level they are succeeding in enlisting support not only of the imperialist powers but also of some socialist powers, as well as some African countries, that see the statements in which De Klerk has made sufficient movement away from apartheid as deserving of reward. The object of all these moves is to have economic and financial sanctions lifted as well as to have removed the many measures designed to isolate white-dominated South Africa.

Within the country De Klerk`s regime seeks to strengthen itself, in an effort to continue to cling to power, by building alliances with political and religious groups among the oppressed. To achieve this,

it has started a battlecry against the alliance between the ANC and the SACP, and against nationalisation, which it accuses the ANC (under the influence of the SACP) of wanting to bring about. The regime is highlighting free enterprise as the new heaven towards which the poor and the disadvantaged must look for their salvation. It has thrown its doors open to all racial groups in the hope that in that way, when the tricameral parliament is abandoned, the Coloured and Indian tricameral parties will align themselves with the NP and sit on the same side of the table during the negotiations. It is encouraging the political parties which were set up in the Bantustans by those who administer these areas to do likewise. In turn, Inkatha has now thrown its membership open to all racial groups.

ANC Formula

The thrust of ANC policies is `power to the people,. After 1960 the ANC saw the main route to that end as the military struggle. But in a situation of fluidity, where a number of forms of struggle are employed, there can be no saying that any one form is always going to be primary. This is illustrated by the various forms of struggle which have been employed by the ANC throughout its history. This fact remains all the more important now that the NP government, a white minority government, has seen fit to sit down and talk with the ANC about how to solve the problems of the country. A new factor has entered the protracted struggle for the liberation of South Africa, a factor that requires constant reviewing of the role and value of any form of struggle in any particular time.

When the ANC was banned it was forced to operate from outside the borders of the country. This gave rise to a situation in which for more than two decades it concentrated on gaining support for its cause, primarily from the international community. As a result the

ANC lost contact with the oppressed people at home. The unbanning of the organisation on 2 February 1990 changed the manner and style of the game. If the ANC is to carry out its programme in the new situation of legality it must of necessity create the machinery in the country which will ensure that it gets the maximum support of the people. What is going to play a decisive role in the course of the next two to three years, when De Klerk must translate his promise for reforms into a new constitution, is the committed support which the ANC has from the oppressed people themselves, especially the Africans. This means that the ANC must also reach out to the whites who for one reason or another find it difficult to accept apartheid. It certainly is not going to be an easy matter for the ANC to establish the infrastructure throughout the country - in the urban areas, in the Bantustans and on the white commercial farms. One of the key elements of the De Klerk formula of reform is to disrupt this process so that the ANC might be brought into government without this strong core of organised support from the oppressed people of South Africa.

It is important, in fact absolutely crucial, that the ANC should be conscious of the fact that political groupings such as the NP and Inkatha have been operating within the country for years without let or hindrance, and therefore have already built up a substantial membership. If the ANC is going to face these forces across the negotiating table and be drawn into some governmental structure, it needs to have a massive backing of committed membership. We should not make the mistake of thinking that the people who show up at rallies are members. It is the committed membership, which we can call upon to embark on a mass campaign throughout the country, that is crucial. To achieve this level of organisation and mobilisation requires that we put in massive human and financial resources to

help build the membership of the ANC. It should, however, be realised that time is of the essence in seeking to achieve this goal.

An important aspect of mobilising the oppressed people is the issue of co-operation between the ANC and other organisations that are presently not members of the Congress Alliance. It has already been conceded by the ANC that it is not the only organisation in the country that is seeking liberation. There are others such as the PAC and AZAPO that are seeking broadly similar objectives as ourselves. The ANC therefore should attempt to forge alliances with these organisations in order to oppose the reactionary alliances that are being built by De Klerk and the National Party.