

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ANC AND WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS

#### The Rise and Fall of the ICU

It is therefore no accident that the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) was formed in 1919. The ICU has not been without antecedents. One of them was the Industrial Workers of Africa, an African trade union formed in 1917 by the International Socialist League, the forerunner of the Communist Party of South Africa. The Industrial Workers of Africa fought against pass laws and for higher wages; it strove to heighten the consciousness of the African workers. It was an expression of class consciousness of the Black workers. It could not last long. When the ICU was formed, it cooperated with it in organising strikes but later joined the ICU en bloc. It did not "disappear" but it grew qualitatively and quantitatively.

The ICU - which the African workers later called "I see you, white man" - was formed by Clements Kadalie on January 17, 1919. Who was Clements Kadalie? Clements Kadalie has given us his life story in his autobiography. <194> It is an unusual book in that Kadalie is so conscious of his qualities, intelligence and significance. These are perhaps reminiscences of an old man - his book was written a few years before his death in East London (Cape Province) in 1951 and it was first published in 1970. Before we deal with Kadalie's involvement, impact, success and failures, let us know the man first.

Born at Chifira Village, near Bandawe Mission Station on the west shores of Lake Nyasa where the first Scottish Missionaries led by Robert Laws of Livingstonia, began their work in East Central Africa (then Nyasaland, now Malawi), Clements Kadalie developed not only to be the father of African trade unionism in South Africa but became an historic figure in the industrial history of South Africa. His exact date of birth is not known "but it was recorded in the Mission Register that I was christened on Easter Day 1896". <195> He was the grandson of Chief Chimeyu - a paramount chief of the Ngoni "the well-known Askari group in East Central Africa", the "descendants of the Zulu", and the first son of Musa Kadalie. His grandfather had a first meeting with a "mzungu" - a white man, who turned out to be Dr David Livingstone.

Kadalie went to school passing the normal course "which is today equivalent to matriculation in South Africa" and later in Cape Town he enrolled with the Efficiency Institute, taking lessons in the "art of public speaking". He acted as the Principal's private secretary and Secretary of the YMCA and later as Head Teacher in Nyasaland (Malawi). He taught for a year in Nyasaland and "I left home early in 1915 in quest of a higher civilised life". <196> He travelled on foot to Portuguese East Africa (Mozambique) but could not stand it there because "the cotton planter, who was an Englishman, was very cruel. He daily sjambokked labourers for petty offences. At times he shot at the native labourers." <197> After a month he left for Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) where he worked on the Shamva Mine. He worked as a clerk but later things became hot. He moved on to

Salisbury and then to the Falcon Mines in Umvuma, near Fort Victoria. Here the compound manager was very cruel: "This man used to get up at about 4.a.m. daily in order to send out various shifts. Every morning he sjambokked the African miners, while his cruel dogs would come to his aid by biting his victims to death at times."

During the First World War, Clements Kadalie enlisted in the army but this could not materialise and he therefore decided to leave Umvuma for Bulawayo. This was in 1916. Early in 1918, he was in Kimberley in South Africa and soon thereafter reached Cape Town where he was welcomed at the station by his brother, Robert Victor Kadalie. In Cape Town he was employed in various jobs as a packer, messenger, "delivery boy", etc.

This early history of Clements Kadalie is important because it throws light on the background of some of the leaders of the first generation of African workers (perhaps it explains aspects of their politics and behaviour) and this helps us to be more realistic in assessing their achievements, weaknesses and mistakes. Here is a man who came from a relatively well off family; who acquired some missionary education; worked at the mines in Rhodesia and entered the South African labour force - not via the mines - mobilised through the labour organisation he formed.

Though there were reasons and causes for the foundation of the ICU - the fundamental laws of capitalism - its actual formation was "accidental". Clements Kadalie was reading the Cape Argus in Darling Street (Cape Town) to his friends, when a European constable pushed him off the pavement and assaulted him

at the same time. A European who turned out to be A F Batty, who was to contest the Cape Town Harbour Constituency in a bye-election as a Labour Party candidate, advised Kadalie to report the matter to the police. Instead of listening to his case, the sergeant in charge started cross examining Kadalie and made an apology on behalf of the constable. He stated that the constable made the assault because of his mental weakness arising from overwork with the epidemic cases which were raging in the city!

Kadalie met Batty who enrolled him as his electoral agent. They discussed the advisability of forming a trade union and Batty advised Kadalie that he (Kadalie) should "embark on trade union activities instead of politics" <198> The first meeting was held in Excelsior Hall, Buitengracht Street, on January 17, 1919. 24 members, mostly Coloureds, were enrolled that day and 24 shillings was contributed as entrance fee. The first banking account of the ICU was opened and it was resolved to hold weekly meetings.

Soon after its formation, to be precise on December 17, 1919, Kadalie brought African and Coloured dock workers out on strike. The strike came about as a result of the appeal by the White Railway Workers Union which asked the ICU for assistance in preventing the export of food. The ICU agreed to help, but added its own demand for an increase in wages for its members. The strike was successful but the White Railwaymen refused to support the demands of the ICU because, they alleged, the ICU had gone beyond its original agreement. Thus the seeds of confusion and disagreement were sown right at the beginning.



In 1920, the ICU became involved in the struggles of the working people in Port Elizabeth when it had to mourn its first African martyrs - 23 people killed and many more injured in a mass demonstration. During the war, the prices of foodstuffs and necessities in Port Elizabeth had increased by 105% and the minimum wage of Africans was 4 shillings a day and this "left the African real income below that of 1914" <199> This was the cause of the problem. The mass demonstration was for 10 shillings a day. The leader of Port Elizabeth, **Masabalala**, "a well educated African in the employ of Lennons (Wholesale Chemists) where he was liked and respected" and "a good speaker and popular at meetings" was arrested. <200> A Commission of Inquiry into these disturbances was appointed by the government and the ICU demanded that a Black be included in the commission: "For the first time in the history of South Africa, a non-European, **Dr A Abdurahman**, was appointed on the Commission of Inquiry". <201>

It was at this time that the ICU spread like a veld fire; from 1922-24 Kadalie consolidated his position in the Cape Province and later on Kadalie began to advance into the country districts and into the northern provinces and this led to the rapid growth of the ICU. Its membership increased rapidly from 30,000 in 1924, to 39,000 in 1926 and by 1927 it had 100,000 members! This should be viewed against the background that in the years 1918-21 South Africa had 801,000 African workers (350,000 in mining and transport and 450,000 in agriculture) out of a total of 1,060,000 workers. <202> Even the prestige of the ICU was rising at this period - at Easter in 1925, the South African Trades Union Congress passed a resolution supporting the

Bloemfontein demand of the ICU for a minimum wage: "this was the first public recognition of the existence of the ICU by a white workers organisation." <203> In 1925, the then Prime Minister of South Africa confessed in the House of Assembly that: "Kadalie had been a very active agitator, and one of no mean culture, with the result that through his action and the actions of one or two others, there had been a scare for the last six or seven months throughout the Union." <204>

One of the factors which facilitated the spread of the ICU was the help and assistance it received from the ANC. There are many examples of this assistance but we shall confine ourselves to a few as a means of illustration. Selby Msimang, a founder member of the ANC organised the ICU in Bloemfontein in 1919 and was arrested for ICU activities in March 1919. In August 1919, he addressed an ICU meeting in Cape Town. In 1919, up to 1921, he was President of the ICU and the First Secretary of the ICU which reconstituted at a coordinating conference held in Bloemfontein was a "Christian minister, the Secretary of the Congress in Kimberley." <205> Msimang reported about his activities in the ICU at the Annual Conference of the ANC in Queenstown in 1920. When Kadalie went to Durban in 1924, he was helped and assisted by J T Gumede, later to be President-General of the ANC (who lived in Pietermaritzburg) to obtain permission to be in the city.

In Johannesburg assistance came from Seloape Thema in 1924 "who was then the General Secretary of the African National Congress" and many others: "Mvabaza, Mabaso and the Reverend Ngcayiya, also officials of Congress cordially welcomed the ICU

and rendered me assistance". <206> A significant aspect of the relationship between the ANC and the ICU is the question of the overlapping membership and common attitudes. There are many such examples. Masabalala is one of many. In 1919, he was Secretary and Treasurer of the Cape ANC and later became prominent in the ICU in the 1920s and by 1930 he was again active in the ANC and obtained a position in the National Executive. The women were also playing their role in this early period. Charlotte Maxeke, was organising the Womens League of the ANC and was also involved in the organisation of the ICU. It is true that the ICU "did not wish to challenge the authority of the older South African Native National Congress" <207> but Kadalie did attend the 1924 Bloemfontein Conference of the ANC as an ICU delegate and made suggestions and proposals some of which were accepted and adopted as an ANC political line and position.

But this does not mean that this relationship was without problems and difficulties. One of these problems was the form of struggle to be pursued. Whereas the strike, mass campaigns - in short class struggle - were normal and accepted forms of protest and action in the ICU, the ANC was not yet accustomed to these forms of struggle and even tended to be unresponsive and even unsympathetic to strikes.

At the international level, the ICU gained some success. It was invited to participate in the first "Negro Labour Congress" which took place in New York in May 1925 but Kadalie could not attend because he could not get a passport: "This invitation was a great honour as it was now apparent that an international association was being forged for me as well as for the ICU.

Before this invitation I had contributed some articles to an American Negro Magazine, The Messenger. Through these articles my name and that of the ICU became internationally known." <208>

When Kadalie invited **Tom Mann**, the British trade unionist and communist, to attend and speak at the Third Conference of the ICU in Cape Town on January 17-25, 1923 he did not know that he was inviting the anger, misrepresentation, attack, smear and villification by the enemy and his agents so much that when he first visited Lovedale at Alice together with **J A La Guma**, The African Voice run by **I B Nyembolo** and **S M Bennet Ncwana**, wrote in big headlines: "Bolsheviks visit Lovedale". On the other hand Tom Mann was so impressed by this invitation during his four month stay in South Africa that at the 5th World Congress of the Comintern in 1924, which was discussing the colonial question, Tom Mann reported at length and enthusiastically about his participation at the conference of the ICU.

This brings us to the question: what was Kadalie's relationship with the Communist Party of South Africa? Even before the formation of the CP, its predecessor - the International Socialist League - maintained good contacts with the ICU. It was members of the International Socialist League in Cape Town who assisted in drafting the preamble and constitution of the ICU. **Stanley Silwana**, **Thomas Mbeki** and other Communist Youth Leaguers helped Kadalie establish his headquarters in Johannesburg in 1925 after he had moved from Cape Town. Members of the CP were so active that five of them were on the National Council of the ICU - 2 Africans, 2 Coloureds and 1 Indian, namely: **Thomas Mbeki**, Transvaal Provincial Secretary; **E J Khaile**,

Financial Secretary; J La Guma, Assistant General Secretary; J Gomas, Cape Provincial Secretary and R de Norman, member of the Cape Town Committee. Kadalie was even enthusiastic about the Soviet UnionL "No government in the world is sympathetic to the workers except the government of Russia." <209>

But clouds were beginning to gather - it was just before the storm. There developed a dissatisfaction within the masses. The leadership could not deliver the goods. The masses who had joined the ICU in their thousands saw no improvements in their conditions. The lack of a militant policy combined with mass action and of an ideological mass work led to a situation where peasant ideas of Messianism entered the labour movement. These ideas were consolidated by Kadalie who, because of his ambitions, became despotic and could not respond to a demand for the checking and control of finances - a demand which was democratic in content.

This development led to a crisis at the meeting of the National Council in Port Elizabeth on December 16, 1926. There emerged two wings: a militant one led by the communists and a reformist one led by Kadalie - Edward Roux calls them the 'hamba kahle' (go slowly) leaders. The bone of contention was the question of sending a delegate to the International Congress of the League against Imperialism which was to be held in Brussels in 1927. Kadalie was of the opinion that the "Brussels conference was a Bolshevik affair financed by Moscow". <210> James La Guma, the ICU Assistant Secretary-General and Communist stated that the Brussels Conference was a meeting of people with different political convictions and ideological complexions and

that the South African Trade Union Congress and the ANC were attending. Kadalie was adamant and a resolution was proposed in which it was stated that no member of the ICU should be a member of the Communist Party. Thomas Mbeki, the Communist, attempted to save the ICU from following anti-communist allies by suggesting that no functionary of the ICU should be victimised or expelled for being a member of the CP. The anti-communist resolution was adopted by 6 votes against 5.

There was internal struggle within the ICU. The CP explained its trade union policy whose content was the strengthening rather than the weakening of trade unions. The argument that CP members have a "double loyalty" or "serve two masters" because they belong to two organisations could not be accurate for the simple reason that "your expelled officials have never served two masters, but only one - the downtrodden workers of Africa". <211>

To save himself from the people's anger Kadalie appealed to the instincts of the masses, namely the anti-white sentiment and misused it - he identified the anti-racist and anti-colonial sentiments of the Africans with the hatred of Whites. He wanted to misdirect the national feelings of the masses; at that point he was not against the Government but against "white communists"; he intended to separate the white from the black communists; to isolate the white communists from the masses so as to weaken the influence of the black communists.

What were the reasons and causes for his new development in the ICU. Before we discuss these aspects let us hear the story of Gilbert Coka who became a functionary of the ICU in Natal

(when the movement was at its peak) and later saw the downfall of the ICU at headquarters in Johannesburg.

Born in January 1910, Gilbert coka was influenced by his father who was "an active steward in the Church and was also interested in the African National Congress affairs" <212>. Later he came under the influence of people like A W Champion, D L Bopela, I J London and Sam Dunn who went to Vryheid to address a meeting of the ICU: " ... the coming of the ICU leaders was a memorable event. It stirred the district for miles. Not since the news of King Dinizulu's death, had Vryheid seen such a huge multitude." <213>

The people's grievances, especially the rural population, were very concrete: their landlords compelled them to work for the year round without any pay; the landlords demanded the services of all family members; they sjambokked and maltreated their tenants; cases of burning and shooting were frequent; their tenure was insecure; they were liable to eviction from farms at any season and moment; they had not time to attend the proper cultivation of their patches of unarable fields; they could not build decent houses; they were compelled to dip their cattle frequently while their landlords seldom did so - failing to do so or being in arrears with their dipping fees meant that they could be criminally prosecuted. Coka remarks: "From the daily reports handed in I discovered that there was terrorism right under my nose. And those people flocked to the ICU as the ark which could convey them to safety." <214> Coka who was issuing ICU membership cards in Vryheid knows what this meant; " ... I wrote until my arm ached."



The April 1927 Annual Conference of the ICU in Durban decided to send Kadalie to Europe where he used the opportunity to seek affiliation with the yellow International Federation of Trade Unions in Amsterdam. Meanwhile, Champion became acting General Secretary and the rise in the membership of the ICU coincided with his period in office. Kadalie came back from Europe and gave a report about his tour to a Special Conference of the ICU in Kimberley where he suggested that he would like to bring a private secretary to England. The total result of that Conference was that an amended constitution was adopted! No wonder that a "buxom African woman" from Boksburg asked: "Kadalie, you went out black; have you returned white?"

On the other hand the plight of the people did not diminish; Boer farmers organised eviction campaigns; families were evicted in hundreds; white farmers refused to have tenants who were members of the ICU - they spied on them; felled their huts to the ground; burnt out their huts and threw the tenants to the roads; confiscated their stock if they did not leave quickly enough. In Natal white farmers attacked and raided the ICU offices at Krantzkop, Weenen and Greytown and even marched to Pietermaritzburg:

"It was now a question of endurance ... Africans were ready to do anything in order to throw off the chains of servitude and slavery. Everything rested with the higher officials. A general strike, passive or even active resistance, demonstrations, or any militant move would, at that time, have changed the history of the



Union. The masses were ready to follow the lead even to death. The news of the outrages had hardened their determination to strive to the last. Everything depended upon the leaders; and they gave no lead. <215>

People came to the ICU offices for assistance but "instead, secretaries enjoyed joy-rides in cars, lived fast and ran up and down the countryside". The ICU head office in Ferreirastown in Johannesburg "showed all signs of anarchism and laxity"; money was squandered; there was maladministration and the habit of engaging lawyers for trifles. The salaries of officials were extravagantly high. And just round the office, workers were underfed and ill-clad, ignorant and undernourished; buildings were dilapidated - fitter for pigs than for human beings; ill ventilated and full of vermin. Unemployment led to deplorable conditions of people becoming drug vendors and sellers; bootleggers; prostitutes, thieves and gamblers. The people paid exorbitant rents and were unable to educate their children who led a wild, violent and criminal life amidst insecurity, squalor, crime (stabbing), disease and poverty. Wages for those who got jobs - went for rent, wood, coal, candles, food: nothing for clothing or the education of the children. To add insult to injury the African workers were debarred from legally forming trade unions and thus could not collectively bargain for their labour. No matter how bad conditions were, no African could go on strike, for that was a criminal offence. He was supposed to accept whatever wages and conditions the bosses imposed.

Coka had the opportunity to go through the ICU files and he

"learnt the key to many riddles": "I discovered how an opportunity for raising the working class to fight for better conditions had been missed by a policy of opportunism. There was no lead given except an appeal for funds. That done, all would be well." <216>

What were the objective and subjective reasons that led such a powerful working class organisation to disappear from the face of history? Was it only a question of political opportunism? What were the causes of this political opportunism?

The emergence of trade union reformism in South Africa had social causes and was determined by internal and external factors. The hostile attitude of the white workers contributed to the fact that African trade unions had such weaknesses. <217> The Communist Party at this time (1926) did not have many African members and this led to a situation where it sometimes hesitated to take the initiative and unscrupulous black nationalists misused this fact to "prove" that the Communist Party was a "white party". The African National Congress was weak and its social composition (small numbers of workers) at this time did not help much to strengthen the trade unions, let alone lead them in the struggles. Structurally the ICU was loosely organised.

By the time the ICU was formed in 1919, the African people as a whole and the African working class in particular had a political experience of less than a decade - the ANC was formed in 1912 and the South African state in 1910. Up until then there existed a more or less negligible stable and structurally independent African working class. The difficulty of organising at the time under conditions of increasingly severe colonialist -

racist exploitation, oppression and suppression should not be underestimated. These conditions were not conducive to the emergence of an independent working class movement and its leadership.

The final break up of the ICU into three (and later more) separate sections was a result of the contradictory nature of the ICU's political - ideological development and character of its leadership - a development which cannot be separated from the society in which the ICU was embedded. The leadership traits and political methods of its leaders related to the milieu of the time, e.g. the emergence of "platform thunderers" like Kadalie, to popular prominence in the 1920s was integrally related to the level the mass movement amongst the Africans had reached, to the level of political consciousness of the workers (especially the migrants) and the worker-peasants on the white farms; the essentially petit-bourgeois radical nature of the ICU's leadership which, leaving aside its positive aspects, found expression in political vacillations, and indiscipline (inter alia, in respect to money) evolved out of a specific social political context. The weaknesses of the leaders reflected and were integrally related to the weaknesses of the mass movement which, in their turn, arose not out of racial characteristics, but out of the objective conditions, which amongst other things, produced a particular social psychology. Let us take the class consciousness of the African workers at that time as an example. There many tendencies. None ever thought of himself as a worker and end there. He was Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, Pendi, Tsonga, Venda, etc. first and foremost and then worker. He worked so

that he could buy cattle for labola for his future wife and wanted to educate his children so that they can improve his (the parents) lot. The fact that there were no channels open either for soft jobs or for improvement of the qualification of the worker was known; what was not known as what to do about it.

In the 1920s the African mass movement was inevitably of a sporadic nature and was accompanied by elements of spontaneity which was influenced by objective (the then existing relation of forces) and by subjective forces.

We have already dealt with the internal factors. There were also international or external factors which led to the downfall of the ICU. The South African Blacks have never been totally incapsulated from outside influences.

Theoretically, we need to explain that after the October Revolution (and as a counter to its influence) and with the rise of national liberation movements and trade union organisations in the colonial world, the Labour and Social Democratic Parties affiliated to the 2nd International were forced to abandon their policy of passivity, indifference, and unconcern towards the liberation movements and trade unions in the colonial world, and decided to "bore" from within so as to divert and derail these movements from their militant positions.

In an article on the ICU, Teresa Zania has explained the sources of Kadalie's behaviour. <218> She mentions Ethelreda Lewis, an English writer who had contacts with the Independent Labour party of Britain where her contact was Winifred Holtby. Winifred Holtby came to South Africa in 1926, shortly before the expulsion of the communists from the ICU. She contacted Kadalie

and worked with the Joint Councils and Welfare Societies in Johannesburg and Durban as well as with church circles around Howard Pimm. Rheinald-Jones and Edgar Brookes. The correspondence between Ethelreda Lewis and Winifred Holtby (May 1928) is revealing:

"I must do all I can to remain an unsuspected person in the eyes of the communists here ... It would be a setback to may work with the ICU if it were known to everybody." <219>

When Ballinger came to South Africa in 1928 to "advise" the ICU, he completed the process.

It is these factors that forced the leaders of the ICU to withdraw from radical positions. The moral and other weaknesses played a secondary role. These factors led to the break-up and disappearance of the ICU from the historical scene. The history of the ICU is important not only because "the revolutionary period of Kadalie is still remembered by millions of African workers from whom he emerged" <220> but also because in the coming battles the South African working class has a significant and leading role to play.

The role of the white liberals affected not only the ICU, but also the ANC. Let us take the case of Seloape Thema.

At the end of 1915, he was elected Secretary-General of the ANC under the presidency of John Dube - Sol Plaatje, the ANC Secretary-General was in England at the time. When Thema went on an ANC delegation to England in 1919 he met the British left and

was even interviewed by Sylvia Parkhurst, the Editor of the left-wing weekly "Worker".

There were other influences which disturbed Thema's political career. The visit of Dr Aggrey - a liberal Gold Coast (Ghana) African, then resident in the United States - to South Africa in 1921 and the subsequent activities of some white liberals notably, again, Howard Pim, Dr C E Loram, Reinhalt-Jones and others who later launched what became known as the Joint Councils - a liberal institution of Africans and Whites, a form of "race relations exercise", Letanka, the Vice-President of the ANC attacked him and

"I was forced to resign my position of provincial secretary to the Congress". <221>

This was Seloape Thema's first step out of the movement. He, together with Le Grange and Paver, launched the Bantu World in 1932 as a diversion from Congress politics and ended up joining the Moral Rearmament in the 1950's.

In the 1950's, he led a group, the ANC National Minded Block which attacked the ANC and he was ultimately expelled from the ANC.

We relate this story of Seloape Thema because it demonstrates a trend within the liberation movement - a trend away from the politics of liberation to downright reformism.

## The ANC and the Communist Party 1921-1928

The Communist Party was formed in 1921. Its history is relatively well known. Our main concern here is its relationship with the ANC. It is a well-known fact that the Communist Party originated within the radical wing of the white workers and intelligentsia. This does not mean that socialism is a "foreign ideology" in South Africa because the history of socialist thought teaches us that socialism originated in Central Europe and spread to all countries of the world, where a working class or forces ready to assimilate that ideology, existed. The fact that in South Africa these forces were white radicals is historical - in a sense accidental. But stating this fact does not mean hiding that this led to some problems in relation to theory and practical political questions - problems which were later solved thanks to the assistance rendered by the Communist International especially at its Sixth Congress in 1928 which decided on the "Black Republic" as a slogan for the immediate revolution in South Africa. The "Black Republic" was viewed by the Comintern as a stage towards the workers and peasants Republic which in turn was viewed as a transition towards socialism.

The formation of the ICU in 1919 ushered in a new chapter even in the thinking of the white radicals. But the belief in the white workers being the main revolutionary force persisted and this belief was reinforced by the 1922 white miners' strike which the press erroneously dubbed as the "Red Revolt". After this strike the white workers became more demoralised, more hostile to

the Africans and were becoming an appendage of the bourgeoisie. Within the Communist Party at this time events seemed to outstrip theory.

There was a militant wing within the CP which emphasised that the main task of the Party was the "awakening of the African proletariat"; it became more vocal and the 1924 conference of the Party adopted this line. Africans were recruited into the Party; black communists established ICU branches and therefore strengthened that organisation and they were elected to the National Executive of that body. There emerged the first generation of African communists and communist leaders such as Albert Nzula, Johannes Nkosi, Moses Kotane, J B Marks, Edwin Mofutsanyana, Gana Makabeni, and many others.

In the late 1920's, important developments took place within the ANC. These developments were closely connected with the name, actions and ideas of Josiah Tshangana Gumede. Who was Josiah Tshangana Gumede? What did he do and think?

Gumede's early life is little known. Born in Natal in the mid-19th Century, Gumede attended school in Grahamstown (Cape) and taught for some time at Somerset East in the Cape before going to Natal where he became advisor to Natal and Orange Free State chiefs.

It was in 1899 that Gumede and Saul Msane met Hariette Colenso to discuss the formation of an African political organisation and in 1900 together with Martin Lutuli and Saul Msane, he became a co-founder of the Natal Native Congress and was for several years its General Secretary.

In 1906, Gumede was a member of a delegation to Britain over



the land laws of the Orange Free State. He acted as the agent of the Sotho people who had bought land in the Orange Free State. For leaving Natal without a pass (for which he had applied but which had not been granted) he was arrested and fined £10 or 3 months on his return. This was regarded as a "piece of insubordination".

With Z M Mazuku he co-signed the constitution of Iliso Lesizwe Esimnyama - The Eye of the Black Nation - an organisation of Wesleyan Methodist converts and chiefs formed in the Dundee and Newcastle area of Natal in 1907.

Surely Gumede belongs to that generation of the founding fathers of the ANC. He was member of the ANC delegation which went to petition the British Government in 1919. His name appears and re-appears in the petitions of the time.

The ANC attended the inaugural Congress of the League against Imperialism which took place in Brussels from the 10th to the 15th of February 1927. At this Congress at the Palais Egmont there were 174 anti-colonial fighters from all over the world. For the first time in history, representatives of the progressive labour movement of the capitalist countries were united with delegates from the labour movements and national liberation movements of the peoples still under the yoke of colonialism and imperialism on all continents. The aim of the participants was to take up the struggle for the independence of those countries and against imperialism on a wide front.

J T Gumede represented the ANC and the communist and ANC leader J A La Guma was there as well as D Colrairie of the South African Trade Union Congress. This Brussels Congress was

attended by communists, anti-colonial freedom fighters from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, bourgeois humanists and social democrats. Despite the heterogeneous nature of its composition and the difference in ideological and political conviction the necessity and the will to unite was an overriding factor.

Gumede spoke twice in Brussels. According to Otto Schnudel from Switzerland who was at this Brussels Congress [and later Gumede]: "His speeches made a deep impression on the assembly". <222>

Gumede analysed the plight of our people, their living conditions and resistance and on an optimistic note, he stated:

I am happy to say that there are communists in South Africa. I myself am not one, but it is my experience that the Communist Party is the only Party that stands behind us and from which we can expect something. We know there are now two powers at work: imperialism and the workers' republic in Russia. We hear little about the latter, although we would like to know more about it. But we take an interest and will soon find out who we have to ally ourselves with". <223>

Gumede was not making a "diplomatic" statement - he was sincere in what he was saying and this sincerity did not stem from some moral and value judgements but from what he himself experienced. Gumede repeated this theme - or message - in his Presidential report to the annual conference of the ANC in June

1927:

"Of all political parties the Communist Party is the only one that honestly and sincerely fights for the oppressed people". <224>

It is interesting to remember that Gumede, this sincere nationalist and devout catholic had strongly opposed "Bolshevism" in 1917.

Back to the Brussels Congress. It is important to note that in Brussels, Gumede, La Guma and Colraine drafted a joint resolution and signed it adding "South African delegates" before it was adopted by Congress. This unity of South African revolutionaries, though it took place outside the country, was significant. The resolution demanded: the right to self determination through complete overthrow of the capitalist and imperialist rule. Surely this was a step forward and Jack and Ray Simons are of the view that this resolution introduced an impetus and a new dimension in our view of the struggle; a concept which was later incorporated in the slogan of the "Black Republic".

After the Congress, Gumede and La Guma travelled to Germany where they addressed large crowds at rallies organised by the Communist Party of Germany. Otto Schnudel has some interesting things to say about Gumede in Berlin:

"Following the Congress there was in Berlin an informal meeting of the delegates who had come to the German

capital, among them our friend Gumede. Berlin was to be the seat of the League Against Imperialism formed in Brussels.

I was present at that meeting, since for the next three years I was to work on the International Secretariat of the League Against Imperialism and for National Independence. Josiah Tshangana Gumede and I were standing side by side. He towered over most of those present with his tall, powerful figure. Most of the Whites he had met until then had treated him with contempt, and that was why this Berlin meeting was infinitely important. For the first time he stood as an equal among people of all races, all colours and various beliefs, united in brotherhood with the purpose of putting an end to the contemptible system of colonialism. Josiah Tshangana Gumede was so overwhelmed by this experience that his eyes were filled with tears. 'I am so happy!' he stammered. Then he drew himself up and added: 'I am going to fight!'" <225>

Gumede and La Guma proceeded to the Soviet Union. They returned to Moscow at the end of the year to attend the celebrations and commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the October Revolution. They also participated at the Congress of the Friends of the USSR. Gumede then made a trip through the Soviet Union. He chose to go to Georgia. A photograph of Gumede in Russian winter clothes with Georgian peasants shows how

cheeful a man he was. Fifty years later, his former interpreter, **A F Plate**, then a student and now professor of chemistry at the Moscow State University, told **SECHABA**:

"Gumede considered as one of the greatest achievements of our country that the Socialist Revolution managed to unite people of different nationalities in their struggle for common ideals. He emphasised the significance of this experience for all nationals struggling for their independence and considered that success in this striggle would highly depend on the unity of action of all forces fighting against racism and colonialism." <226>

Gumede never forgot this experience. Back in South Africa he told large crowds: "I have seen the world to come, where it has already begun. I have been to the new Jerusalem." <227>

Gumede called for a united front in the form of unity of action between communists and non-communists. He crossed the borders of South Africa into Basutoland (now Lesotho) where he addressed meetings of **Lekhotla la Bafo (Common Man's League)** which was led by **Maputseng Lefela**. He was preaching the new gospel. The masses responded to his message: he was elected President-General and **E J Khaile** (a known communist) was elected Secretary-General of the ANC.

Surely Gumede's trip to Brussels was a turning point in his life. He met anti-colonial revolutionaries from Asia (including **Nehru**), Latin America, Caribbean and Africa some of whom were

"blacker than myself, speaking languages I could not understand". <228> (He was surely referring to French). In the Soviet Union Gumede learnt a lot and his former interpreter, Plate, remembers:

"In Tbilisi Gumede was given a good reception and had various conversations with Georgian leaders and Georgian peasants. One of these meetings was held in the 'house of the Peasant' - a place where peasants coming to town could have a place to shop.

Gumede asked the peasants about their lives in detail ... We visited a number of Georgian villages and returning to the hotel everytime, Gumede compared the way of life of the Georgian peasants with the mode of life and labour (conditions) in his motherland". <229>

The growing influence of the Soviet Union seems to have had an impact on many genuine black leaders of the time. Dr Du Bois himself confessed in 1926:

"I stand in astonishment and wonder at the revelation of Russia that has come to me. I may be partially deceived and half-informed. But if what I have seen with my own eyes and heard with my ears in Russia is Bolshevism, I am a Bolshevik". <230>

And the 4th Congress of the Pan African Movement in 1927

stated:

"We thank the Soviet Government for its liberal attitude toward the coloured races and for the help which it has extended to them from time to time." <231>

These statements by leading black radicals demonstrate that Gumede's reactions were not an exception to the rule; the ANC was moving with the times and reflecting the dynamism characteristic of a revolutionary organisation. The very existence of the Soviet Union; the fact that in the Soviet Union racism has been completely eradicated and that the Soviet leaders treat any manifestation of racial chauvinism with great severity and the fact that the Soviet people show great sympathy - and actually render assistance to the oppressed colonial people: these are the factors which impressed Gumede and many black radicals. Gumede was never a communist. He was a sincere nationalist. He was a devout catholic who strongly opposed "Bolshevism" ten years before he went to Moscow. His is definitely one of those whom Nelson Mandela, in his Rivonia speech in 1964 - characterised as "experienced African politicians (who) so readily accept communists as their friends". <232>

Though the ANC as a whole held different views to Gumede's message, two trends are distinctly discernible. The first one expressed itself at a meeting of the Cape Town branch of the ANC, held in the International Hall, 162 Caledon Street, Cape Town, on May 9, 1928 which adopted by a large majority, the following resolution:

"This General Meeting of the Cape Town Branch of the African National Congress, though it affirms the statement of the President, Mr J T Gumede, to the Convention of Chiefs held in Bloemfontein in April last, that the African National Congress is in no way attached to or affiliated to the Communist Party of South Africa, hereby places its full and unqualified confidence in the CPSA, in view of the fact that of all political parties of South Africa the Communist Party alone unreservedly advocates freedom and equality for the non-European people of South Africa with other races.

Further, that it is the only party that champions the cause of the workers of South Africa irrespective of colour and knows no colour discrimination within its ranks.

Further, as the aims and objects outlined in the constitution of the Communist Party are the correct interpretation of the aims and aspirations of the workers of South Africa, this meeting calls upon the Headquarters Executive of the African National Congress to consider and explore every avenue towards the closest cooperation with the Communist Party as the only party correctly interpreting the aspirations of the working class of this country especially the subject peoples" <233>



At a subsequent meeting, held on May 13, 1928, and attended by a large gathering, the above resolution was re-affirmed upon a motion by J Mabitla, seconded by N Maseti and carried by a large majority.

This was not the only trend. There was also a conservative wing which could not remain neutral to the remarks and ideas of President-General J T Gumede. One chief warned:

"The Tsar was a great man in his country, of royal blood like us chiefs and where is he now? ... If the ANC continues to fraternise with them (the communists) we chiefs cannot continue to belong to it. <234>

And another chief (not without regret and a sense of fear for a future social revolution) said:

"It will be a sad day for me when I am ruled by the man who milks my cow and ploughs my fields." <235>

We have already stated that the resolution of the Brussels Congress introduced a new dimension in our concept of the struggle in South Africa. This was elaborated, enriched and developed in the discussions La Guma held with Bucharin and other Comintern leaders. These leaders viewed our struggle from a somewhat different angle and perspective. Whereas up to then the Communist Party of South Africa regarded the struggle in our country as a working class struggle for socialism, the Comintern saw the importance of a national struggle uniting all oppressed

people and classes against white domination and imperialism and for national liberation. The Comintern suggested the adoption of the slogan: An independent Native Republic as a stage towards a workers' and peasants' republic with full, equal rights for all races.

For the CP which had up to then advocated working class unity as the only way to socialism and equality of black and white, this new call for the support of the liberation struggle led by the ANC - which was then regarded as reformist - was indeed a new departure. The CP had reservations about the ANC; the Communists were ready to unite with the ANC on sepcific campaigns but the ANC was basically reformist - they argued. The question of communists working to build and strengthen the ANC was never raised partly because the ANC was said to be serving the interests of the "African bourgeoisie" - and some of these people called "bourgeoisie" were very poor indeed!

Speaking about this period and these attitudes, Lionel Forman remarks:

"The party believed it was necessary to rally the masses on national slogans but under its own banner. Experience had still to teach the vital lesson that it was not in spite of, but in alliance with Congress that the party would lead the struggle against national oppression." <236>

In other words, the Black Republic slogan was a theoretical and practical-political framework which set in proper perspective

the relationship between African nationalism and socialism by stating that the concept of class struggle in South Africa must of necessity incorporate the principle of national self-determination for the Africans and other nationally oppressed Blacks.

We have dealt with this question of the historical roots and genesis of relationship between African nationalism and socialism in South Africa. It is necessary. There are reasons for this. We shall mention a few:

Our enemy - whatever form and colour it takes - has always at different times deliberately distorted the relationship between the ANC and the CP. The ANC is portrayed either as a brainless organisation, without independent thought or initiative, "controlled" by communists who are white. The aim of and reasoning behind this distortion is clear. They are trying to tell our people that whether you are in or outside the ANC it is the same: "white control" is everywhere. They are trying to demoralise our people, disarming them and instilling a sense of hopelessness and preventing them from joining the ranks of the freedom fighters;

The second reason why we deal with this topic at this length is that we want to make it abundantly clear that the ANC made its impact and contribution to the realisation of the urgent need for a solution of the national question. If perhaps the ANC was not articulate enough in bringing this point home, its very existence spoke louder than words. This contribution of the ANC was made independently. But this does not mean that the ANC was immune or

incapsulated from the liberatory ideas of the ICU and CP. But there is a difference between influence and control.

Thirdly, - and this is a fundamental, if not vital, issue - the question of relations between the ANC and CP was not only a theoretical question. This is a bread and butter issue. The two organisations emerged separately and independent of each other, fought separately and on different premises. At times they ran parallel to each other but as the struggle developed the two organisations came closer to each other and began to discover each other. As it happens in such cases, the great teacher was our common experience and the school was the practical political struggle. At times, the fees were high - our sacrifices were great but we were sure to graduate at this school as comrades, friends, equals and countrymen.

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The period of the formation of the ANC is important because this period perhaps more than any period in our history, demonstrates the creative thinking and positive initiatives taken by the Africans to redress their grievances. The formation of the ANC was a reaction to an unsolved national question and was an attempt to solve it. This question is closely connected with the role of intellectuals in the liberation struggle. The very existence of this social group disproved racist theories about the so-called inherent inferiority of the Africans. This period also shows their limitations. To illustrate this point let us take the example of John Langalibalele Dube.

John Dube was born in Natal in 1871. He was the son of Rev. James Dube, one of the first ordained pastors of the American Zulu Mission. He was educated at Inanda and Amanzimtoti Theological School (later Adams College). In 1887, he accompanied W C Wilcox, the missionary to America, where he studied at Oberlin College - literally supporting himself in a variety of jobs. He went back to Natal but did not stay long before returning to the United States for further training and to collect funds for a Zulu industrial school along the lines of Tuskegee. The influence of Booker T Washington manifested itself in Dube's emphasis on the virtues of thrift and industry, education and capital accumulation.

In 1901, his activities were crowned with success and he built a school on 200 acres of land in the Inadna district - 200 students were enrolled. He founded the Zulu-English newspaper Ilanga lase Natal. He raised funds for Ohlange - again in the United States - and because of his political reputation was elected the first President-General of the ANC in 1912. Dube fought against the Native Land Act of 1913 which affected every stratum of African rural society and he was part of the delegation of the ANC in 1914 which went to London to protest against this Act. His presidency of the ANC lasted until 1917. From then onwards he concentrated not so much on national issues as on the activities of the Natal Branch of the ANC. In the 1920's he, like many intellectuals of his generation, became closely involved in "liberal" attempts to establish "racial harmony" between black and white through the Joint Council movement and many missionary conferences. He was one of the

South African delegates to the international missionary conference at Le Zoute in Belgium in 1926. In 1935, he became a member of the executive of the All-African Convention. The University of South Africa awarded him an honorary doctorate in the mid-1930's. He died in 1946. <237>

This generation of Congress leaders straddles two historical periods; they witnessed the dramatic changes in African society as a result of industrialisation; they saw the final destruction of African independence and conversion of African peasants into dispossessed rural and urban wage earners; they saw the African proletariat emerging. There were specific characteristics of the emergence of the African working class. The emergence of the African working class was closely connected with the colonial plunder of the African continent. This was characterised by colonial oppression, forced labour, merciless extermination and national communities, disorganisation of the social life of ethnic groups and nationalities with the resultant deformation of the economic structure of African societies and conservation of precolonial loyalties.

These factors together with the existence of prefeudal productive relations and under-developed productive forces could only hinder the emergence of forces that could lead modern national liberation movements. These factors were the cause for the weakness of the national liberation movement and working class organisation in our country. The class and national liberation struggles took the form of revolts of religious sects (171 people belonging to a religious sect - the "Israelites" - were shot dead in Bullhoek near Queenstown for refusing to move

their huts and return to their various villages in 1921); uprising of ruined peasants (Bambata rebellion); demonstrations, anti-pass campaigns, migration to other areas, "desertions" and strikes. These were sometimes spontaneous, unorganised, rudimentary and lacking in clear political concepts and ideology.

There arose a need to develop new strategies and tactics and to work out new solutions. Some of the leaders of the ANC articulated some of the grievances of this emergent class but they could not provide leadership to this new class - Kadalie and Champion did give leadership for some time but they were swept away by history. In other words the strategy and ideology of this generation of Congress leaders could not move fast enough with the times. But this does not mean that they changed from their early radicalism - they did not become "reactionary" - but the world around them had changed. Their theories about and demands for racial equality, justice and African unity (at times on a continental scale) challenged the very basis of white power but the masses and the new leaders who were emerging in the CP and ICU went beyond that. This generation tended to "mediate between two unequal societies" to swing "between belligerence and servility" in their attitudes to the Whites. <238> What about their attitude to the chiefs?

The Africans have always attempted to assert their pride in their past. To illustrate this we shall use the same example of Dube. He was so bitterly opposed to the trial of Dinizulu, son of the last Zulu king, who was arrested in connection with the 1906 Bambata rebellion, that he (Dube) actively assisted in raising funds for his defence. Dinizulu was a symbol of

resistance connecting the past with the present. He was an embodiment of hope for the future. Dinizulu meant for the Africans a need for stimulation of national pride and identity, an assertion of patriotism and revolutionary traditions of anti-colonialism. This explains the relationship between the new radicals and the royal houses.

The ANC's ideology has always been African nationalism. It is true that the nationalism of the ANC has undergone changes with the passage of time, - and this is due to the fact that the ANC itself has undergone changes and the South Africa of today is different from the South Africa of the 1920's. The nationalism of the ANC sought to unite the Africans in the struggle against colonial domination; it instilled a feeling of belonging to a people - an oppressed people whose existence was threatened at various levels and in various ways; it sought cohesion, consolidation and a defence of national values and asserted national identity; it defended the rights, customs and traditions of our people; fought against the loss of land, liberty and independence and for the preservation of African culture.

This early form of African nationalism in South Africa was influenced by missionary education which strove for "psychological conversion" if not "psychological colonisation" of our people with the emphasis on the maintenance of "law and order". This partly explains the contradictions in these early radicals who rejected 19th Century liberalism with its Eurocentrism but at the same time advocated "mild" solutions. But what is important to emphasise is the fact that these



contradictory beliefs and values sprang from the social contradictions inherent in South African society affecting the Blacks, especially the educated elite. These social contradictions were reflected in the speeches of the leaders of the ANC.

Talking about African nationalism, it is important to state the historical fact that the ANC as an organisation never at any stage advocated narrow nationalism. Some of its members were influenced by many ideological trends including Garveyism which emphasised the powerful slogan "Africa for the Africans" which was applicable to the rest of Africa but needed modification in South African conditions partly because it could have been "sectarian" to say the least. That is why the ANC mobilised around the slogan: "Freedom in the land of our Fathers".

In an effort to broaden its constituency and mandate the ANC sought collaboration with other protest organisations, especially the ICU. Membership of both organisations was overlapping and after the fragmentation of the ICU, some of its leaders such as George Champion, Doyle Modiakgotla and Thomas Mbeki, moved back into prominence within the ANC.

Concerned with the question of African liberation the ANC was prepared to contribute and to learn from other organisations that were engaged in the same struggle. Surely, the ANC must have learnt from the ICU which was engaged in class rather than "racial issues". The ICU was concerned with the economic reality of "racial interdependence" and issues of wage levels, industrial colour bar, trade union rights and introduction of social security for all citizens. Though the ICU developed its

independent programme this conformed to the ANC's outlook.

This insistence of the ICU on class struggle and its antipathy to capitalism must have emanated from the influence of the CP. But this process was not without problems and contradictions. H D Tyamzashe, a printer and ICU Provincial Secretary for the Transvaal was a living example of these contradictions. The *South African Worker* (April 1, 1927) quoted him as referring to African workers who had joined the CP as "an illiterate native sprinkling of communist dupes" and "Professor" Thaele of the Cape ANC moved a resolution in 1930 in a members' meeting barring the communists from speaking at Congress meetings. Something which was tantamount to a violation of the ANC constitution.

The inconsistencies do not detract from the main contribution of the ANC whose essence was African unity and unity of the revolutionary forces. The ANC proved that liberation in South Africa will come through it.