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THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA.

For centuries the continent of Africa has been subjected to colonisation and most brutal aggression. Prominent among these aggressors were Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal, Holland, Germany, the USA and Italy. We may distinguish various periods: namely, slave trading (which robbed Africa of millions of people, merchantile capitalist colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism.

The chief characteristic has always been rapacious robbery of the human and material resources of Africa, cold-blooded massacre of the people, and complete disregard for their human rights and dignity. This system left Africa with a heritage of poverty, disease and ignorance.

In some parts of Africa the system based itself on a settled European community which dominated the state and the economic, social and cultural life.

In Southern Africa, the national liberation movements each developed primarily towards unification of the oppressed African peoples, to struggle against white racism and neo-colonialism by methods originally purely political and eventually military. It was the realities of the situation that compelled these organisations to embark on armed struggle.

In this contribution to the conference, we shall concentrate on the development of the national liberation movement in South Africa in its struggle against racism, fascism and imperialism, in its driving forces and the unification of the masses of the people into a resistance and revolutionary movement aiming at a complete national and social revolution.

#### 1. The Historical Background.

It was the historical fate of the peoples of Southern Africa to experience European colonialism under the most unproductive and barbarous elements of West Europe: the adventurers of feudal Portugal and the Netherlands, mercantile capitalists represented by the Dutch East India Company. The African peoples of Southern Africa had evolved stable societies based on animal husbandry and agriculture. Handicrafts had been developed, and in Zimbabwe and what is now the Transvaal an African mining industry had been developed. Private ownership of land was unknown. The economy was of a subsistence character, without money or other medium of exchange. There were no acute or antagonistic class divisions. The Chiefs were assisted in legislative and administrative duties by general meetings of the people - common to traditional South African cultures.

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The appearance of the Portuguese and Dutch prevented the evolution of these societies and subjected them to untold calamities. On Africa's South-west coast, the Portuguese slave traders created havoc. Between 1486 and 1641 they took from Angola alone an average of about 9,000 slaves a year.<sup>w</sup> In the 18th century this traffic increased to an average of 25,000 a year.

The Dutch East India Company has aptly been described as "a typical creation of merchantile capitalism....a ferocious plunderer which only destroyed and never built".<sup>H</sup> In 1652, the Company set up a "refreshment station" in Cape Town under Jan van Riebeeck, for the Company's ships plying from Holland to Java and other colonies. The Dutch settlers brought to the Cape at this time had, to start with, no land or cattle. They acquired them by a simple process of aggression and robbery from the African people in the western Cape, taking advantage of the fact that these peaceable Africans "constantly come to us without weapons", as van Riebeeck himself put it.<sup>Itt</sup> Not only did the settlers deprive them of their land and their cattle but they enslaved them to work on their land and seized their womenfolk. This process continued throughout the 18th Century. A hundred years of Company rule virtually destroyed the once-flourishing Khoisan communities around Table Bay in the western Cape. In addition to its genocidal wars against the Khoisan people and its seizing of the great herds of cattle and the land, the Dutch East India Company also introduced chattel slavery at the Cape. Over the years there developed a steady infiltration of the Boers (farmers), formerly of the Dutch East India Company, into the interior of the country. Their farming methods rapidly exhausted the soil, and a few parties of them were continually moving east and north in marauding cattle raids against the indigenous people. It is sometimes sought to present these movements of the "Trek Boers" as if they were some sort of civilising mission. Eventually they spread far north and east - a chapter of history glorified by modern ideologists of 'Afrikaner' (Boer nationalism and the Voortrekkers. It is a theme often taken up by apologists for present-day neo-Nazism as exemplified by the Vorster regime.

But Lawson represents this period more accurately when he writes:

"The trekking movement had begun by the end of the sixteenth century and continued steadily for almost two centuries. Its peculiar character derived from the fact that it was impelled by poverty. This was no confident advance by a rich and expanding economy; it was a furtive, creeping trickle that seemed to transplant its own poverty, ignorance and cultural sterility wherever it went;....It brought no economic advance, no civilisation, only stagnation and degradation."<sup>MM</sup>

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t Basil Davidson, "African Awakening".

ht H. Lawson in 'Liberation', No.16 Johannesburg 16.2.56.)

ttt See van Riebeeck's 'Journal'.

tttt H. Lawson in 'Liberation', No.17 (Johannesburg March, 1956).

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Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century, the settler colony at the Cape came up against much stronger opposition. In what is now known as the Eastern Cape, dwelt the Xhosa people. Their vast herds of cattle and fertile farmlands attracted the greed of the settlers. But the Xhosa were formidable opponents, well-organised and with a military tradition. Thus began the long series of acts of aggression and cattle raids against the Xhosa people which white South African historians call the "Kaffir Wars", which lasted for 100 years. It is in fact absurd to describe these cattle raids as "wars". As soon as serious resistance developed, the Boers ran away. Khoisan troops coerced by the colonists were sent out in front by the Boer marauders.

But in 1799 there was a real war. The oppressed Khoisan slaves arose and made common cause with the Xhosas. Writing in 1800, Governor Young stated that "neither the Hottentots nor the Caffers have been the aggressors but the savage and oppressive conduct of the Dutch Boers, more uncivilised even than the others."

In June 1799 a Commando of 300 Boers was defeated at the Sundays River by 150 Xhosa and Khoisan warriors. But by 1802 the cattle thieves were at it again, taking 15,000 cattle that year.

However, the Cape Colony under Dutch rule was never able to conquer the Xhosa people. Nor for that matter did the Boers, despite their European firearms, ever succeed in decisively conquering any African people in South Africa.

Then a far more formidable and destructive power appeared. In 1806 the Cape Colony was taken over for the second time by British imperialists. The sporadic cattle raids of the Dutch colonists were replaced by a huge army of ruthless mercenaries controlled by Great Britain for the purpose of conducting total war. The British settled large numbers of unemployed English families in the Eastern Cape in 1820, and built forts wherever they went, manned by professional soldiers. Their object was not merely to seize cattle and land, but to destroy the fabric of traditional African society and convert the tribespeople into hired labourers and customers for British manufactures.

The Xhosa resisted fiercely, under such inspiring leaders as the Prophet Makana. In the war of 1818, writes Eddy Roux, "there is no doubt that the whites were the aggressors". They crossed the Colony's boundary, were joined by some followers of the Collaborator Ngqika, and forced Makana and Ndlambe to retreat. After burning all the huts they retired with 25,000 cattle, giving a share to Ngqika..3 . \_.

He then: JI'I .1 White support) and defeated him utterly. Following the cattle tracks, the Xhosa then crossed the boundary and carried the war into the Colony, advancing in the spirit of a crusade. In the end, after frightful slaughter of the Xhosa troops, the attack was beaten and Makana himself sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. But the resistance of the Xhosa people under such leaders as Ndlambe, Hintsa and Makana was an epic struggle which long held up the advance of imperialism.

to E. Roux, "Time longer Than Rope" (Wisconsin University, 194

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A similar story may be told of the rest of what is now South Africa. In Natal the Zulu people, using the famous battle tactics evolved by the military genius of Shaka and under such leaders as Dingaan, Cetwayo and Bambata, continued to fight for many years against Boer invasions and from the north and the British advancing from Port Natal. Countless thousands perished in heroic advances with spears against fortresses armed with rifles and cannon.

In the Transvaal the Pedi, Tswana and other peoples resisted continuous attempts by the Boer Republic to seize their land and cattle. Indeed, the Republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were continuously in a state of running warfare.

In the mountain fortress of Lesotho, King Moshoeshe I, an outstanding strategist and founder of the nation, repeatedly repelled onslaughts by the British and Boer forces. He was compelled to cede the areas west of the Caledon River, but the heartland between the Drakensburg and Maluti mountains remained unconquered and has retained a precarious independent existence till today.

For some time the British tolerated the Boers governing the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, even though these Boers were technically "rebels". In 1867, however, huge deposits of diamonds were found in Kimberly. The area was claimed by the British Cape Colony, by the Orange Free State and - with more right - by the Griqua tribe who lived there. However, the British won the legal battle and established control over the diamond fields as part of the Cape Colony. At once there was a rush of capital and immigrants to the country.

From 1877 to 1879 the Battle of Ngonyama was fought between the Xhosas and the British. This battle in fact ended the hundred years resistance of the Xhosas. In 1879 similarly the Bapedi under Sekhukhuni were finally defeated. The mighty Zulu armies which had inflicted the biggest humiliation on British forces in the battle of Isandhlwana in 1878, were finally beaten in the battle of Ulundi in 1879. So that by 1880 all the African peoples in what is now the Republic of South Africa had come under the control of European governments.

In 1886 gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand and all the processes of capitalist development were carried forward with fantastic speed. Expropriation of African land; poll taxes; hut and animal taxes; pass laws and labour control proceeded apace.

The gold mines were in the Transvaal Republic which was under the control of the Boers. The British imperialists who had poured millions w. into the development of the gold mining industry, were determined to wrest the Transvaal from the Boers. A number of pretexts were found to wage war on the Transvaal Republic. Among the most cynical was the British claim that they were waging war on the Boers because of the latter's ill treatment of Africans.

The British won the war. The Republics of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal were overthrown. Under the compromise "Peace of Vereeniging" signed in 1902, the old Boer policy toward the African people was in fact endorsed. The seeds were laid for joint Anglo-Boer oppression of the non-white peoples.

There followed discussions concerning the uniting of all the British colonies, and eventually a South African Convention was called which laid the basis for the formation in 1910 of the Union of South Africa. The non white people were completely ignored in these negotiations. The African people had no hand whatsoever in the setting up of the state now known as the Republic of South Africa.

The way to the military conquests of Southern Africa had been paved by white traders and missionaries. The tribal structures of African societies was not sufficiently developed to counter the professional soldiers of imperialism. Above all, the various African peoples were disunited and never succeeded in establishing a common front against the invader. Moshoeshoe indeed envisaged the need for such a front, sending emissaries to the leaders of the Xhosa and Zulu peoples and to the famous Coloured leader Adam Kok, who had established an independent republic of Griqualand. But these efforts failed, as indeed they were bound to. The oppressed peoples of South Africa had to pass through the fire: of the disintegration of tribal societies, the proletarianization of the masses of the people, and the absorption of modern concepts of national and social liberation, before their unity could find realization in a form which could seriously challenge white imperialist domination.

That form was found in the modern liberation movement headed by the African National Congress, which is supported by the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Congress, the Congress of Democrats, the S. A. Congress of Trade Unions, the 3.3. Communist Party, plus organisations of women, youth etc. The national liberation movement has developed its own fighting organisation - Umkhonto we Sizwe - which is engaged in a life-and-death struggle to free South Africa.

It is with the development, driving forces and aims of this national liberation front that the remaining section of this report will deal.

## 2. The African National Congress.

It is significant that the year 1880 which saw the defeat of African military resistance (save for the so-called Bambata rebellion of 1906) also saw the birth of the African political organisation - the Imbumba Yema Afrika (Union of Africans) in the Eastern Cape. In 1884 the African newspaper 'Imvo Zabantsundu', edited by J.T. Jabavu, was established. Other pioneer efforts followed, paralleled by a trend among African churches to break away from the missionaries. The pioneer African political organisations from the four British colonies met to oppose the Act of Union drawn up in 1909, which proposed that Britain should hand over power to the privileged white minority alone. The meeting, led by African editor the Rev. Walter Rubusaba, J.T. Jabavu and the Rev. John Dube, demanded "full and equal rights" for all in the new union. A deputation was sent to London to petition the British Parliament - but the demand fell on deaf ears. The British Parliament duly passed the 'South Africa Act of 1910', providing for a Parliament of whites only, elected almost exclusively by whites.

This situation faced the Africans with an urgent need for unity. After two years of hard preparatory work by Pixley Ka Izaka Seme and other professional men, the Founding Conference of the African National Congress (called at first

in English the 'Native National Congress') opened in Bloemfontein on 8 January 1912, with many Chiefs, clergy, teachers, and people from all walks of life taking part.

The organisation was full of dynamic, revolutionary potential. In the words of Seme's opening address, its purpose was "to find ways and means of forming one national union for the purpose of creating national unity and defending our rights and privileges."

The Rev. J.L. Dube was elected first President of Congress with S.T. Plaatje as Secretary-General. From its inception the new organisation was faced with a struggle of immense importance: the fight against the Native Land Act of 1913 - that illuminating expression of the unity of class interest of mine-owners and rich farmers who dominated South Africa. They had their own differences; but they had in insatiable appetite for cheap labour and land. The 1913 Land Act expresses their common drive to satisfy these appetites at the expense of the African people.

The Chamber of Mines had long complained of lack of labour supplies. In 1913 a Government Commission reported that "the scarcity of native labour is due .... to the fact that the native tribes are .... primitive pastoral or agricultural communities who possess exceptional facilities for the regular and full supply of their needs .... The subject of food supplies is thus intimately bound up with the fact that African natives are in possession of large areas of land.... No considerable change can reasonably be expected .... until a great modification of these conditions has been brought about." The Commission recommended that the entire native social system should be attacked with the object of modifying or destroying it." In other words, to force Africans to work on the mines it was essential to alienate them from the land and destroy the fabric of their social and economic systems.

The 1913 Land Act made it illegal for Africans to own or occupy land outside the overcrowded rural areas designated "Native Reserves" (now re-christened by the Nationalist regime as "Bantu Homelands" , comprising less than 13% of the country.

Tens of thousands of families, unwilling to work as agricultural labourers for white farmers, or unwanted by them, were suddenly turned adrift on the roads; a whole nation turned suddenly into a landless proletariat, wanderers in their own land.

The ANC campaigned vigorously against this vicious law, winning widespread popular response. A substantial sum of money was collected to send yet another deputation to London for the British had retained a veto on certain legislation affecting Africans ( a sop to Labour and Liberal opinion). But the deputation was unsuccessful; most of the shares in the Witwatersrand mines were held by British monopolists and financiers.

Despite all disappointments, the ANC leadership continued to hope the British would rectify its betrayal of the Africans.

In 1913 Congress campaigned against the Land Act, and Congress women in the G.P.S. conducted a militant struggle against the extension of the pass laws to women.

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The war temporarily interrupted mass activities. At the end of 1917, under the impetus of the economic crisis " which hit the African workers hardest, further militant steps were taken. One of the great factors which also, directly and indirectly, played a most important role, was the world-wide revolutionary feeling evoked by the Great Socialist Revolution in Russia.

It was during the first ten days of the Revolution in Russia that members of the ANC executive met the Prime Minister, General Botha, to protest against the proposed Native Administration Bill. General Botha warned the delegation against the International Socialists who were then advocating a strike against the Bill. The President of the ANC, S.h. Makgathe, informed Botha that if the Bill were passed there would in fact be a general strike. The Bill was withdrawn and only ten years later did the ruling class feel strong enough to pass it.

In March 1918 one of the greatest strikes in South African history broke out when 100,000 African workers on the mines refused to work until their demands for higher wages were met.

In 1919 a renewed ANC campaign against pass laws broke out in the Free State and the Transvaal. Many other mass actions and strikes occurred throughout the country, often violently put down by the whites.

For a number of years, vigilant and militant struggles were conducted by the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union which had then emerged. At the same time the Communist Party of South Africa was established.

The ANC went through a period of relative recess in the twenties, but it never ceased to function. It represented profound forces of national unity and aspirations, containing within it not only conservative forces but also revolutionary representatives of the working class masses and the youth.

At the 1927 national conference of the ANC there was, writes Mary Benson, "a sharp swing to the left". The new President, James Gumede, attended the militant conference of the League Against Imperialism, and was invited to tour the USSR. He visited Asiatic parts where he saw non-Europeans, some as dark as himself, enjoying the same political and social rights as the whites. Back in Cape Town in 1928 he told a crowded reception in his honour that he had come from "the new Jerusalem". "Your land and yourselves" he told South Africans, are held in bondage. You must redeem your heritage." t

The methods of struggle and tactics of the ANC have always been determined by the concrete situation in which it had to lead the people. From its inception, the ANC rejected white domination and minority government. It has always stood for pan-African unity, participating for example in the very first Pan-Africa Congress. From the start the ANC adopted its own independent national anthem and its own flag, around which it rallied the masses of the people, as opposed to the flag of the ruling group.

W

h Mary Benson, "The African Patriots" (Faber & Faber 1963).

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In addition to the task of uniting the African people, the ANC has sought the unity of all nonwhite peoples in South Africa and all persons of whatever colour, creed or ideology, who believe in the destruction of racism in South Africa.

One of the greatest achievements of the liberation movement in South Africa was the establishment of the Congress Alliance. We shall now consider the evolution of the fraternal movements that together with the ARC belong to the Congress Alliance.

### 3. The Coloured People.

Centered mainly in the Western Cape, the Coloured community forms a distinct national community in South Africa. Of mixed descent, they speak European languages (English or Afrikaans), but because of their skin colour they are denied most citizenship rights.

One of the earliest political organisations in South Africa was the African Peoples Organisation (APO), formed by the Coloured people in the Cape in 1902. Dr. A. Abdurahman, a member of the Cape Town City Council, was elected President in 1905, and continued for many years to head this organisation. The late Lionel Forman considered Abdurahman "one of the giants of the liberation movement...It is utterly shameful that no one has yet written his biography." Certainly in its early years the APO was a militant organisation, favouring a united front with the African people and workers unity for the eventual achievement of socialism. What undermined the APO, however, was its fatal tendency towards alliance with the white bourgeois South African Party (now the United Party), the Party of Shuts and the Chamber of Mines.

The virtual collapse of the AP with the death of Dr. Abdurahman in 1940, left a gap in the political life of the Coloured people not adequately filled for many years. Efforts to find new bodies such as the National Liberation Movement. A new revival of militancy and consciousness took place with the establishment of the D.A. Coloured Peoples Congress closely allied with the ANC and sharing its common programme - the Freedom Charter.

Under the leadership of the CPC the Coloured people re-entered the political field as a formidable force. Mass Coloured participation in the general strikes of the early 1960s shook the South African ruling class, who had held the delusion that the Coloured community could be relied on as an ally against the "black revolution".

As with the other organisations of the Congress Alliance, the CPC suffered heavy casualties in the period of repression since 1960. Many of its foremost leaders have been jailed, banned or forced into exile. With public activity virtually precluded by police terror, the CPC is compelled to work mainly underground, where it continues and intensifies its struggle alongside the ANC.

1. "Lionel Forman's From His History notebooks" - S. Forman (Cape Town 1964.)



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#### 4. Indian Congress.

In 1860 the white sugar planters of Natal made an agreement with the British Government of India to import from India indentured labourers to work on the plantations. When their term was over many elected to remain in South Africa and by the 1890s the number was about 80,000 in Natal (compared with 10,000 whites).

But the whites both in Natal and the Transvaal discriminated viciously against the Indian population. A young Indian lawyer, L.K. Gandhi, had come to Natal in 1895 to conduct a law suit. Subjected personally to the insults which affect all persons of colour in South Africa, he found the Indian community in Durban in a ferment about the proposed Indian Disfranchisement Bill. Wanting to set up an organisation, they asked the young Gandhi to lead it. This was his first political experience, but he immediately agreed to found the Natal Indian Congress. It was not until 1914 that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India to heed the national liberation movement of his motherland.

Gandhi led 2 number of famous passive resistance struggles both in Natal and the Transvaal, where the Transvaal Indian Congress was formed to join the NIO in the South African Indian Congress. One of the greatest campaigns began in the Transvaal in 1906 against proposed taxes for Indians. The Indians defied en masse; thousands were arrested, and the campaign continued in various forms for many years. An attempt to deport Indians from the Transvaal to Natal was countered by a mass march of Indian defiers to the border in 1913. In sympathy, and in protest against a poll tax, a mass strike of Indian coalminers and other workers took place. The strikers joined the mass march. Against a world-wide storm of protest and solidarity with the Indians, the S.A. Government had to retreat and withdraw a number of the discriminatory measures imposed against the Indians.

With the departure of Mahatma Gandhi for India, a leadership vacuum was left in the Indian Congress which was not filled for decades. The leadership of the SAIC was taken over by members of the Indian commercial bourgeoisie, bent on negotiating for minor concessions for their class and with little regard for the ever deepening difficulties of the Indian workers and none at all for those of the African masses.

It was not until the advent in the early 40s of the militant and radical group headed by Dr. Y.H. Dadoo in the Transvaal and Dr. G.H. Naicker in Natal, that a completely new orientation took place in the SAIC. They boldly challenged the policy of the bourgeois leaders and proposed a revolutionary alliance of all oppressed people on the principle of equal rights and opportunities. This won the enthusiastic support of the Indians who, after a hard internal struggle, removed the reactionaries from office. Immediately a new round of passive resistance struggles was begun by the SAIC, as thousands of courageous volunteers defied the new segregation laws and were sent to jail. On 9 March 1946, Dr. Xuma of the ANC, Dr. Naicker for the NIO and Dr. Dadoo for the TIC, signed the famous "Kuma-Naicker-Dadoo Pact" for the two Congresses to work together for full rights and equal opportunities for all. This was

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the forerunner of the great Uongress Alliance which developed in South Africa.

Since then the SAIC has been a firm, unswerving partner in all the great campaigns of the liberation movement. One of the first achievements of the ANCeSAIC Alliance was the Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws in 1952, in which 10,000 disciplined Congress members were 'ailed for deliberately flouting apartheid legislation. he campaign was a landmark in Congress history, winning for the movement greater hass support than it ever had and leaving an indelible stamp on the development of the struggle. In addition, as Nelson Mandela pointed out, the Defiance Canpaign "pricked the conscience of the European public which became aware in a much more clear manner of the sufferings and disabilities of the African people. It led directly to the formation of the Congress of Democrats. It influenced the formation of the Liberal Party. It also led to discussions on the policies of apartheid at the United Nations - and I think to that extent it was an outstanding success."ik

##### 5. White Democrats.

A prevailing atmOSphere of intense white chauvinism dominates official politics in South Africa. The ruling Nationalist Party differs only in degree from the "opposition" United Party, which also upholds segregation, police terror and fascist legislation. These two parties hold all the seats in the whites-only Parliament save for the solitary seat held by the Progressive Party. It is only against the background of South African politics that this Party deserves the name "progressive"; for though Mrs buzman takes a stand in opposing many aspects of government injustice, her Party advocates a modified franchise for non-whites which would leave political power firmly in the hands of the white minority.

Against such a background, considerable credit is due to that courageous band of white men and women of principle, some of them Communists like Bram Fischer, others earnest Christians like Bishop Huddleston, who have come out unequivocally for the Congress stand of complete democracy in every field.

In 1953, following the Defiance Campaign, a number of white South Africans approached the ANC to find out how they could aid the movement. As a result the ANC called a meeting in Johannesburg, in which Oliver Tambo, then General Secretary, suggested that an organisation be formed to campaign among the white minority, against racialism and in support of the Congress policy.

The result was the Congress of Democrats (Bram Fischer was the first President), which played a full part in the Congress Alliance. It took part in the Congress of the People and fully endorsed the Freedom Charter. It was outlawed in 1962; many of its former leaders and members are in prison today, or have been placed under house arrest, banned or exiled.

t Nelson Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom" (Heinemann 1965)

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#### 6. grade Union Movement.

It is impossible to do justice here to the history of the South African labour movement - a stormy story indeed, rich in experiences. We shall content ourselves with some of the main features under two headings: the trade union movement, and the Communist Party.

The trade union movement in South Africa had its origins among immigrant workers, mainly British. The Cape Town branch of the Amalgamated Society of Joiners and Carpenters was established in 1881 as part of the parent organisation in Britain, and most early craft unions followed this pattern.

Many militant struggles were fought by these pioneer labour organisations. In 1922 the famous miners' strike (called the "Red Revolt") developed into armed confrontation between Smuts's troops and "workers' commandos" set up by the strike committee to prevent the strike being broken by force. However, the white labour movement suffered from a fatal weakness which led to its almost complete surrender to the imperialist bourgeoisie. That was its colour prejudice, which has alienated it from the non-white workers (today the great majority of the labour force) and their national liberation movements. AS Michael Harmel has pointed out: ".... The white trade unions did not reach out to include Africans in their ranks, or even to assist their organisation into separate unions of their own. On the contrary, they often looked upon the African worker as a dangerous competitor who was able to offer labour at a rate far cheaper than their own."1e

Even the 1922 miners' strike was fought around the issue of preventing the employers from introducing Africans into certain categories of skilled work.

However, from the end of the first world war, the African workers began organising trade unions of their own. In 1917 the International Socialist League organised the Industrial Workers of Africa, predecessor of the famous ICU, which in 1918 issued the first Marxist pamphlets in the Zulu and Sotho languages.

In the same year, following the famous "bucket strike" of African sanitary workers in Johannesburg, five ANC leaders (N.D. Ngojo, A. Cetyiwe, H. Kraai, D.S. Letanka, L.T. Mvabaza) and three ISL leaders (S.P. Bunting, H.C. Hanscombe, T.P. Tinker) were arrested and charged with incitement to violence.

However, the main drive of African trade unionism in the 20s is bound up with the spectacular rise of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). The ICU was founded in Cape Town in 1919 among the deck workers. Its founder and first secretary was Clements Kadalie, a halawian.

Police terror was used against the ICU. 23 Africans were killed when police opened fire at Port Elizabeth in 1920; and five Africans were killed and 24 wounded by police at Bloemfontein a few years later. This terror did not stop

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t M. Harmel in 'Liberation' No.16 (Johannesburg Nov. 1954)

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the movement. The ICU conducted militant strikes and enrolled members even as far afield as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi. At its peak it claimed a quarter of a million members here.

However, under the influence of white "liberals" Kadalie decided on a fatal step, the expulsion of the "reds" - i.e. the most hard-working and incorruptible builders of the ICU. Roux writes that Kadalie was not immune to subtle flattery from these humanitarian representatives of the ruling class. "They told him that if only he would get rid of these 'reds' ... the Government would tolerate - nay, even recognise - the organisation."<sup>3e</sup>

He succeeded in carrying through a motion in the Executive (by 6 votes to 5) excluding members of the Communist Party from ICU membership. This began a process of decline in the ICU which ended in its disintegration.

When the African trade union movement was revived in the 1950s, it was on the basis of individual unions for different occupations. These were united eventually in the Transvaal Council of Non-European Trade Unions, established in 1941 at a unity conference presided over by Moses Kotane. The CNETU did great work organising African workers until 1955 when it merged into the South African Congress of Trade Unions, which it helped to form.

One of the greatest achievements of that period was the great African Miners' Strike of 1946, when over 100,000 African mine-workers on the Witwatersrand struck for a week in the face of police terror in which the miners were machine-gunned and bayoneted, suffering hundreds of casualties. The Union President, J.B. Marks, was arrested, together with scores of militants and supporters. It has been said of this strike:

"It was one of those great social events which at once illuminate and accelerate history: brilliantly showing up and hastening the main conflicts which determine social development, pitilessly exposing the hypocrisy, cowardice or futility of those who seek to evade those conflicts and stand on the sidelines. The strike destroyed once and for all, the myth of the State as a "neutral" body .... It spelled the end of the compromising, concession-begging tendencies which had hitherto dominated African politics." <sup>t4</sup>

But the militancy of the African trade union was not paralleled in the "recognised" white labour movement, the Trades and Labour Council. The TLC sent a disgraceful cable to the World Federation of Trade Unions to which it was then affiliated), condemning the African miners and condoning the state brutality.

In 1950 the Nationalist government used the Suppression of Communism Act to "purge" the trade unions, both white and non-white, of all their most militant leaders. By 1954, the right-wing leaders of the TLC were able to dissolve their body, which had been founded by Bill Andrews and other militants 30 years earlier on the basis of a non-racial constitution. In its place, the right-wingers set up the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) which barred African workers' organisations.

<sup>t</sup> E. Roux "Time Longer Than Rope" (Wisconsin University, 1964).

<sup>tt</sup> M. Harmel in 'Liberation' No.10 (Johannesburg 1954).

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on 16 December 1950. The police intervened in force. Johannes Nkosi, leader of the Communist Party in hotel was shot and killed with two other men. Over 200 Africans were deported from their homes.

During the second world war and after, closer fraternal relations were established between the national liberation movement; and the Communist Party.

In the 1949 elections of the ANC, the moderate leadership of Dr. Xuma was ousted and new militant ones elected, including prominent members of the Youth League such as O.R. Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and others. In 1950 a mammoth "Defend Free Speech" Convention decided on a strike throughout the Transvaal to protest at bans imposed on J.B. Marks, Yusuf Dadoo and other leaders. On May 1st, 1950 a most powerful strike took place throughout the Transvaal.

The Government introduced the Unlawful Organisations Bill to give it power to prescribe organisations. The ARC, the SAIC, the Communist Party and the Non-European Council of Trade Unions together organised the first general strike covering the whole country in protest against the law. On 26 June 1950, hundreds of thousands stayed away from work. This was a historic date because it laid the foundations for close cooperation between national liberation and working class organisations.

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The Suppression of Communism Act had just become law and the Communist Party of South Africa, which had worked legally for 50 years, was outlawed. Savage penalties were provided for any person advocating communism or defending its objectives. A list of communists was prepared and administrative action taken against people on the list.

The Party was formally dissolved, but the Leninist core came together underground to form the S.N.C. Communist Party. Throughout the hard struggles of the 50s and 60s, the diCP has a proud record of service in the united front of national liberation, which is its programme declares is its "immediate and foremost task".

8. Freedom Charter and the New Phase.

Between 1953 and 1955 a giant campaign was organised throughout the country to mobilise people behind a common program. The climax of this unique campaign was the holding of the Congress of the People in Kliptown. The Congress adopted a Freedom Charter on 26 June 1955. The Freedom Charter was and is the programme of the united front of national liberation in South Africa.

The Government called this programme a treasonable document and on 5 December 1956 arrested 156 leaders of the national liberation movement on a charge of High Treason. The trial was to drag on for four years.

The importance of the Freedom Charter lay in the fact that the different national organisations of the African, Indian and Coloured people together with the working-class organisations had a common programme of national liberation. The various strands of the progressive movement which had worked separately with brief moments of co-operation, were now pledged to work together for long-term aims. A complex

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A section of the former TLC affiliates fought bitterly against these actions as a betrayal of trade union principles. These unions refused to join TUCSA. Instead, they joined with the T.C.N.E.T.U. to found a new body, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, based on non-racial and internationalist principles.

SACTU became the first and only non-racial trade union movement in South Africa to ally itself fully with the national liberation movement. It endorsed the Freedom Charter and became a partner in the Congress Alliance.

As a result it has been bitterly persecuted by the fascist government. The national President, Steven Dlamini, is serving a long-term jail sentence, and all the former officials have been banned, jailed or exiled.

#### 7. The Communist Party.

In 1915 the S.A. Labour Party, political wing of the white trade union movement, split over the war issue. The left wing headed by the Party Chairman Bill Andrews, Ivon Jones, S.P. Bunting and others, denounced the war. The right-wing jingoes, however, managed to get a majority at a special conference. The revolutionary section thereupon set up a new organisation - the International Socialist League - which campaigned vigorously against the imperialist war. It did not take long for it to become clear that on many issues the International Socialist League took up positions until then unknown in South African political organisations. The League began to turn away from the idea that only European workers could be organised. In 1917 the Industrial Workers of Africa movement was formed under the auspices of the ISL. A campaign called "WAR ON WAR" was waged on class lines. Efforts were made to link up with international working-class organisations. When the idea of founding the Communist International was mooted by Lenin, it found a ready response in South Africa. The International Socialist League was among the first workers' groups to affiliate to the Comintern. Subsequently it was the healthy elements in the Industrial Socialist League and the International Socialist League who came together to form the Communist Party of South Africa on 29 July 1921;

The Executive of the Comintern on which Comrade Ivon Jones represented South Africa, took a great interest in the affairs of South Africa. Very detailed resolutions were adopted. The 1928 Congress of the Comintern in particular considered the position and concluded that the main demand was the establishment in South Africa of an "Independent Native Republic."

At that time, South Africa was still a self-governing colony of Great Britain. In fact what the Comintern was demanding in the parlance of today was the establishment of a Republic under African majority rule.

In the South West Cape and Natal, the Communist Party had made great strides. During 1929 and 1930 big anti-pass campaigns were organised by the C.P. In Potchefstroom a demonstration was held on 16 December 1929, the principal speakers being Edwin Mofutsanyana and J.B. Marks. Groups of white hooligans broke up the meeting when they fired shots at the speakers, killing one African and injuring six. The following year bigger demonstrations were held in Durban and in the Western Cape; In Durban a huge pass-burning campaign took place

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structure emerged with tremendous potential for the future. The unity of the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the Coloured Peoples Congress, the Congress of Democrats and the South African Congress of Trade Unions became famous as the Congress Movement. This is one of the great achievements of the liberation struggle in South Africa.

In 1960 the ARC, previously illegalised in the rural areas of Zeerust and Sekhukhuniland, was declared illegal throughout the country. The other organisations of the Alliance were immobilised by arrests, dismissals and restrictions.

In 1962 the Congress of Democrats was also declared illegal. The campaigns before 1960 had been based on militant mass actions such as strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience. But the situation internally and the upsurge in Africa resulting in the emergence of many independent states, caused a change of policy. The national liberation movement decided to prepare for armed struggle. The terrorism practised by the Government against the struggles of the people made it clear that this was the only way out. Therefore the liberation movement decided armed revolution to the methods to be used to overthrow the apartheid regime. In 1961 Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) came into existence as the military wing of the liberation movement. Numerous acts of sabotage took place. People were sent abroad for military training which they could not get in the country. Thousands of freedom fighters were imprisoned in retaliation. These included foremost leaders of the national movements and the Communist Party.

Beginning in August 1967 the use of the armed struggle has opened with the formation of a military alliance between the ANC and the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union. Freedom fighters of the ANC/ZAPU alliance have entered into armed clashes with the combined forces of the Smith and Vorster regimes.

Inevitably the guerrilla struggle will be intensified and the masses of the people will continuously join in the armed repression with armed revolt.

Our people's inevitable victory is also dependent on the vital role played by the governments and peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the international working class movement and the socialist countries.

We are waging our struggle not only against the fascist Vorster regime, but also against the unholy alliance of Vorster, Smith and Caetano. Imperialism, led by the USA, considers it its duty to protect the white minority regime in South Africa and to maintain imperialism's hegemony over all of Southern Africa. For this reason, the imperialists ensure that South Africa continues as their fortress - hence the military, technical economic and other might that the South African white racists control and have turned against our people and organisation.

An important characteristic is that Nazism is firmly resolved to re-group in South Africa. The involvement of West Germany in this development has been fully documented, especially by the Afro-Asian solidarity Committee of the GDR.

Imperialism and fascism are using South Africa as their base and springboard for launching a counter-revolutionary offensive in Africa. The aggressive nature of these forces constitutes a direct threat to peace and independence not only

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in Africa, but also in the rest of the world.

In this situation it is crucial that all progressive forces throughout the world realise that they constitute one of the main motive forces in wiping out imperialism and fascism in South Africa. That realisation must be translated into concrete action in support of the national liberation movement in South Africa as led by the ANC for the victory against imperialism, for true national independence and lasting peace.

In this year of Human Rights, the duty of the forces that stand against Vorster fascism is no less than the duty that faced the progressive forces against Hitler Nazism.

From the progressive international point of view, a fundamental change of attitude and outlook is required towards the struggle against fascism in South Africa.

The brunt of the struggle is ours: it is a duty to our people and our international duty to destroy the monster of white domination in our country. The struggle is also international.

It is of basic importance to the whole development of the world-wide revolutionary and progressive movement, urgently and immediately. This Conference establishes this and, if only for that reason, is of great importance.

Prosecution of action by all progressive forces to destroy fascism and imperialism in Southern Africa and the rest of the unliberated countries in Africa is, we repeat, the urgent and immediate duty of all anti-imperialist and progressive forces.

The African National Congress and its allies are confident that Victory will be ours in the hard and protracted struggles that lie ahead. The long night of oppression that descended on our people is approaching its end. A new dawn of freedom is heralded by the machine guns of our freedom fighters - the first African army with modern weapons ever to tread the soil of our Motherland.

However long and hard the battles ahead may be, we shall win, because our cause is just. It is supported by our own people, by the peoples of Africa, by the whole of progressive mankind.

AI-EANDLA NGAWETHU !