

CHAPTER FIVEFUNDAMENTAL CHANGES 1930-1949Resurrection of the ANC (1930-1937)

In our last chapter, we mentioned the fact that there were changes taking place in the African society such as the growing numbers of African workers, a situation brought about by growing industrialisation. This resulted in the emergence of a new breed of African revolutionaries with a distinctively working class outlook and a new generation of intellectuals; there was also the problem of the new role assigned to the chiefs, especially after the virtual abolition of chieftaincy when they were made paid servants of the government, tools of the white exploiters, the Native Recruiting Corporation, the Chamber of Mines and Boer landowners.

These changes led to some form of political confusion and even polarisation with the ANC. These socio-economic changes and polarisation were reflected in the political sphere. This was the period of 1930-36, a time when the militant leadership of Gumede and Khaile was ousted and replaced by the aging Seme and the not so radical Revd Mahabane; leaders who could not cope with the new changes taking place in the African society - especially the change in the social composition of the African population. This problem expressed itself in splits and quarrels within the ANC.

These were times of widespread misery in the urban and rural

areas, aggravated by mass starvation caused by drought, declining crop yields, over-population and lean yields. Police brutality was another factor. These conditions in turn drove hundreds of peasants to the towns and cities. There were besides these problems other factors such as organisational weaknesses of Congress and consequently its ineffectiveness, the fragmentation of the ICU; Seme's weak leadership as President-General and sectarianism within the Communist Party. We mention this latter reason because there is an interconnection between the strength or weakness of the Communist Party and, vice versa, the strength or weakness of the ANC. The two organisations have throughout the decades influenced each other.

Historically speaking, this was a relatively brief period, i.e. 1930-36, and viewing it from the vantage point of historical retrospection it was an inevitable development; a development which was characteristic of all revolutionary movements throughout the world - at least at that time, especially during the Great Depression which in South Africa coincided with a drought; this was also the period of the rise of fascism in Europe and allied with Japanese militarism.

These problems were partly solved in the late thirties. But before we discuss how they were solved it is important to highlight some of the political problems that caused misunderstanding at the time. The Communist Party at this time was advocating the slogan of "The Black Republic" and the ANC was not - with a few exceptions like Gumede and others. Even organisations which were allied or created by the Communist Party, e.g. the League of African Rights (initiated by Bunting

after his successful Transkei campaign in 1929) demanded:

- (a) no tampering with the Cape vote (African vote) and the extension of the vote to Blacks throughout South Africa on the same basis as Europeans;
- (b) abolition of the pass laws;
- (c) universal free education for black children;
- (d) free speech and public meeting irrespective of race;
- (e) no restriction on black acquisition of land and a radical increase of land in the African areas.

This seems to us to be more in line with the ANC policy of the time than with the slogan of the Black Republic. The importance of this becomes more obvious when one considers that in those days the language of the ANC differed from the language of the Communist Party. Whereas in those days the ANC fought for the integration of the Africans into the "common society", the Communist Party fought for the Black Republic - the destruction of the state apparatus and its replacement by a predominately black state. These problems have been resolved in the course of the struggle and the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 helped in this direction, and our experience in subsequent years has vindicated the correctness of this policy.

These questions were not unrelated to the "problem" of religion versus atheism - the latter being regarded as a "communist doctrine". The "problem" here lies in the fact that many of the ANC leaders and rank and filers were religious: "According to Mofutsanyana, the educated 'good boys' and, alas, thousands of black workers were being doped by 'Skokiaan branded religion'" <239> The "problem" with this "problem" is that

African converts, since Nehemiah Tile in the Cape in the 1880's, had always rejected white churchianity and therefore one could not - under South African conditions - equate black religion with religion in general. It is true that Karl Marx defined religion as "the opium of the people", but the religion of the Blacks in South Africa - especially those Blacks associated with the ANC - is a theology of liberation; a religion of the oppressed against the oppressor; something akin to the theology of liberation in Nicaragua and other Latin American countries. <240>

These problems were one side of the coin. The other side, the rapprochement between the ANC and the CP, set in in the late 1930's, especially after the 1937 celebrations of the ANC's silver jubilee. Actually this gradual recovery of the ANC started in 1935-37 and expressed itself in a determination to revive Congress.

The fascist attack on Ethiopia by Mussolini's hordes aroused feelings of indignation amongst our people. This attack on Ethiopia "made all Africa sharply aware of being part of one great continent ... black pride was high and African newspapers, full of reports of the war and pictures of Ethiopian soldiers, had record sales". <241> On the home front the Hertzog bills, which, among other things, aimed at the disfranchisement of the Cape Africans, added insult to injury.

The ANC took concrete steps to remedy the situation. In 1936, the ANC authorised the Secretary-General, Revd Calata, and the President-General, Revd Mahabane, to tour the country. It took Calata three years, until 1939, to reach all four provinces. This exercised and important influence in reviving Congress.



They solved local problems in the process, initiated provincial activity and drew in younger blood; influenced other bodies, e.g. R H Godlo's Advisory Boards Congress, which began to work in collaboration with the ANC and even began to articulate ANC policies. R H Godlo himself, as President of the Advisory Boards Congress, regularly attended ANC meetings.

But this process was slow and painstaking. Writing from the Transkei, Govan Mbeki reflected these problems when he reported in 1941:

"The Transkei is, to be frank, politically in midnight slumber" <242>,

and Calata, the Secretary-General, reported to Xuma, the President-General, about his experience in Natal in 1942:

"In passing through Pietermaritzburg I addressed a meeting which was presided over by Mr J T Gumede, former President-General of the ANC. I am afraid that Natal requires a special attention. Congress is dying in that province ... There are no branches which are alive. There are some people called officials but they do nothing for the Congress and the people are suffering."

Godlo, writing from East London, complained:

"Sorry to have to report that Congress is not making

much progress in this town."

Similar complaints came from other areas. This was the period when ANC membership was estimated by Molema at 253: "congress lost its glamour; the Africans lost faith and interest in it". Molema wrote this in 1943 - the year in which the ANC Youth League was formed and six years before the adoption of the famous Programme of action.

Dr A B Xuma became President-General of the ANC in 1940 - the year in which Dr Abdurahman, President of the Coloured African People's Organisation, died. Xuma was by no means a radical, he was a reformer. in 1932, he wrote about himself:

"I am a medical practitioner by profession. I studied in the United States of America, in Austria-Hungary and at Edinburgh. I am neither a politician or agitator or racialist. I am merely an interested student of human relations."

Perhaps he was right. But eight years later, this "merely interested student of human relations", who was neither "a politician nor agitator", became President-General of the ANC.

One of the factors which "radicalised" Xuma's ideas was the paternalistic and patronising attitude of white liberals such as Heaton Nichols, Senator Brookes, Marwick, etc, who portrayed themselves as "experts", "specialists" and "authorities" on the "Native Question". Xuma as President-General of the ANC wrote to Professor R F Alfred Hoenle, the president of the South African

Institute for Race Relations, in September 1942, saying:

"No individual European elected to the Senate is going to save the African people from disaster. They may help but one need not go to Parliament to serve the cause of better relations. There are many Europeans - unsung heroes - who are doing their bit quietly. The salvation of the African people from disaster is the African himself through his organisation which finally (implies) his proper representation. Any philosophy of doing or working for the African instead of working through and with the Africans, means humanely enslaving the Africans, as it does not advance him in any way."

Six months later, he repeated his message - in a somewhat different context:

"The best thing to be done is for Europeans who believe in Christianity, democracy and human decency, to back up the stand taken by African organisations led by Africans, financially and otherwise, instead of them setting up organisations staffed by Europeans in which Africans become mere passengers ... The emancipation of the African people shall come from Congress, this can come about when Congress is well organised."

This language is also noticable in Mbelle's letters to Xuma which were critical not only about white liberals but also about

how African leaders conducted their affairs. It is interesting to note the similarity of this language with what later came to be known as "black consciousness" in South Africa. It does demonstrate the depth of the roots of "black consciousness" in our people, in the ANC, and that "black consciousness" was not necessarily advocated by radical Africans but in the South African context it was definitely radical.

The question of the establishment of an African press has always been a thorny issue in the ANC - especially since 1931 when Abantu-Batho (the official organ of the ANC) was finally forced by competition from the white-owned Bantu World and by Congress' weaknesses to close down. The Africans needed their own paper so as to be able to express their own views without being biased by prejudiced European domination whose commercial attitude was (and still is) to suppress any news in favour of the betterment of the lot of the African; they needed to have their own paper because the non-existence of the African press was detrimental to their development - the so-called African press in the run was only African by name; it was just for commercial purposes. The policy governing it was all European, crude and prejudiced, oppressive to the free-thinking and free-writing of the ever-oppressed African. Even Imvo Zabantsundu - the oldest African paper - had become African only in name; the transfer of this paper from the management of the Jabavus - and even before that - jeopardised its free publication of people's views and suppressed them; the transfer was obscure and mysterious and therefore affected the circulation, and its policy aroused much concern and disgust among the readers and supporters.

Govan Mbeki was expressing this concern when he wrote to Dr Xuma on May 7, 1941 about the "futility of our attempts without a press to prepare the minds of the people for what we plan to do, and to strengthen them once they have undertaken to do a thing". He reported about *Inkundla Yabantu* (People's Court), a paper he was editing in the Transkei which was "owned by two African men who are only compositors. The strain of keeping it going is telling on them and for some time they have been asking me to find reliable African men to take active interest in the press as partners", and in a letter of May 29, 1940, he had written about the African press "entirely under African control"; the ANC had passed a resolution on this which the Transvaal ANC had endorsed; the problem was finance, shareholders and how to run it. **Stephen Olifant**, the Provincial Secretary of the Western Cape, expressed himself in a similar vein:

" ... I have started a publishing company and that I am very busy with the first issue of a Bantu paper 'Inkokeli Yabantu', a monthly ... If it is possible I mean to keep it away from European influence and control that is - if a sufficient number of our people take up shares."

And Seme wrote to Calata on December 9, 1942:

"We need today a national newspaper and this should be one of the main subjects for the coming conference."

This problem of the African press was not unrelated to the broader problem of the reorganisation of the ANC as a liberation movement. At the annual conference of the ANC in Bloemfontein on December 15-16, 1941, Xuma spoke about the need for unity and self-sacrifice. Evaluating the positive traditions of the ANC since its foundation, he did not shy away from the problems it faced and the weaknesses inherent in the movement - and this had serious political consequences: the political inactivity "led to a belief that organisations led by non-Africans were more dignified than African organisations and thus we abandoned our organisation and surrendered our leadership to others."

Xuma reiterated the aims of Congress which were to unite the Africans and to fight for their rights - "unity means strength and hope"; to educate African people on their rights, duties and obligations and to promote mutual help, a feeling of fellowship and a spirit of brotherhood. The question of "bringing together in common action" as "one political people" by means of "combined effort" and a "united political organisation" - these are Xuma's words - was seen as a means to "discourage and contend against racialism and tribal feuds or to secure the elimination of racialism and tribal feuds; jealousy and petty quarrels by economic combination, education, goodwill and by other means". The ANC as the medium of expression of representative opinion was to "formulate a standard policy on Native Affairs for the benefit and guidance of the Union Government and Parliament"; its other task was "to educate Parliament and Provincial Councils, Municipalities, other bodies and the public generally regarding the requirements and aspirations of the native people; and to

enlist the sympathy and support of such European Societies, Leagues or Unions as might be willing to espouse the cause of right and fair treatment ...". The ANC was the mouthpiece of the African people: "all its efforts are and must be concentrated upon raising the status of the African people from their semi-serfdom to citizenship". This was all the more so because the "Africans have no vote and therefore no voice in South African affairs".

These questions of adequate representation and right of franchise for Africans; participation of Africans as voters and citizens in the building of a Union Policy acceptable to all sections of the community; representation of Africans in all government chambers and government departments were basically questions connected with the struggle for democracy in South Africa.

Connected with this was the land question - the provisions of the 1913 Native's Land Act were reinforced by the Natives' Land Trust Act Amendment of 1935. The Africans had no land and the problems posed by stock limitation ruled out the possibility of the improvement of the quality of stock. Land was bought at highly inflated prices and this resulted in problems of overcrowding and starvation; undermining the physique and health of African people for generations. The Pass Laws, which restricted the freedom of movement of the African, also limited his bargaining power; exposed him to exploitation and excluded him from enjoying the "rights" of the white workers - he was paid far below the cost of living; debarred from skilled trades; forced to live below the breadline.

The Africans were the worst paid and consequently the poorest section of the community; they had no margin from their earnings to set aside for a rainy day, during old age; disablement and non-employment find them with nothing to support themselves. They are more in need of benefits from the Social Welfare departments than any other section of the South African community. Therefore the questions of old age pensions for Africans; disability and disablement pensions; extension of the provisions of the Children's act to meet the social requirements of destitute African children - that is adequate maintenance grants - were bread and butter issues for the ANC, said Xuma. The Africans have the highest infantile mortality rate, highest mortality and morbidity rates with low wages, lack of adequate food, semi-starvation and therefore low resistance to disease and consequent ill-health and premature death.

Xuma therefore concretised the demands of the ANC as follows:

1. removal of industrial and commercial restrictions against the African;
2. living wage and better working conditions;
3. right of all African workers to organise into trade unions;
4. recognition and registration of African trade unions under African leadership by the Union Labour Department with all rights, privileges and immunities appertaining to such organisations under the Industrial Conciliation Act;
5. right of Africans to learn skilled trades and engage in them;
6. trading rights for Africans anywhere;



7. abolition of pass laws, natives' Servie Contract Act and Masters' and Servants' Act and other special disabilities.

Another problem which was worrying the ANC at this time was the question of African soldiers who were fighting in the Second World War. These Africans had volunteered to fight against fascism, mainly in North Africa, but were restricted to manual labour; the wages were deplorably low - one shilling and sixpence a day for unmarried African soldiers: "that one shilling and sixpence a day for unmarried African soldiers is just sixpence more than the allowance which, I understand, was given to internees, enemies of the state, whose dependants were receiving £2.10s. to £5 allowance in addition and that for working against the Government."

Here Xuma is referring to those who were interned in South Africa for their pro-Nazi activities - later rulers of South Africa.

African soldiers could not rise higher than the position of sergeant; they were not receiving the extra shilling a day allowed for doing extra work such as electrical work, training transport drivers, etc. There was also the problem of the disabled and discharged soldiers. Indeed, said Xuma, Africans had given from their meagre earnings, from their dire poverty, more than their proportionate share towards the various war funds.

The attitude of the ANC towards the war demonstrated another, broader dimension - a spirit of solidarity with the Soviet Union which was being attacked and occupied by the Nazis. This was at a meeting of the Johannesburg branch of the Transvaal ANC when, on November 16, 1941, the Chairman said:

" ... Soviet Russia has been drawn into conflict under such obviously vague pretences, that I feel it would be idle on my part to mention them ... We sympathise with the Soviet people who are living in a fatherland so occupied. We Africans are competent to express sympathy with people under ambitious elements because we know what it is to be under such elements. Our sense of pity is aroused when we read about atrocities in Europe because we Africans are going through the same mills in South Africa." <243>

This spirit of solidarity and identity with the oppressed in other countries: "because we know what it is to be under such elements", shows the farsightedness of the ANC leaders at that time and this was miles ahead of the thinking of the founding fathers of the ANC.

Five years earlier, in 1936, Msimang reminded us of Gumedé's message of 1927, but he went further than Gumedé:

"We may live to see, if we have the soul and the righteous determination to do and dare, the history of the overthrow of the Russian Empire by the governed, repeated in our dear Fatherland." <244>

Selby Msimang was by no means a communist, neither was he a friend of the communist - we are not even sure whether he was for or against what he described above - but one thing we are sure

of, he was expressing his sincere feelings: he was a patriot. These trends and tendencies within the ANC demonstrate clearly that the ANC has always been a "parliament of the African people"; incorporating within its ranks people of different political persuasion and ideological complexions including internationalists who were always striving to express their internationalism in conformity with the demands of the people.

One of the tasks of the meeting described above was to discuss recommendations to the National ANC through the Provincial ANC. The amendment of the constitution of the ANC was of crucial importance:

"As a matter of fact the whole constitution as it stands today is so antiquated that those of us who are charged with the administration of the Congress are finding it hard to be guided by it ..." <245>

But it was also acknowledged that "nobody is more proud than us to have been the inheritors of this legacy. We are pleased to have had predecessors who have left us a foundation capable of many storeys."

This process of continuity and renewal has characterised the history of the ANC; today it has crystallised into a custom.

Suggestions were made on the composition of the National Executive Committee, including the appointment of a Working Committee which will consist of members of the National Executive Committee (or by cooption) resident in the same district as the President-General, which will be the headquarters of Congress for

the time being. This was due to the fact that the members of the National Executive were scattered and they could not meet with facility. This Working Committee was supposed to be what its name implies - a working body.

There were also decisions taken on the organisational form and structure of provincial congresses and financial arrangements. This was all connected with discussions on the constitution, which was said to be entirely unsatisfactory, verbose and bulky: "It sets up cumbersome unworkable machinery and financial arrangements which cannot be implemented", it was said. The then constitution required to be amended, if not scrapped; it should be substituted by one which will provide for a fairly simple organisational structure and financial arrangements; one that will not be overburdened with details but that will confine itself to the basic requirements. If necessary, this should be supplemented by a set of rules to be added as circumstances require.

In other words, the aims of Congress were to be simply set forth in the constitution in a readily understandable form based on the statement of policy recently issued by the President-General, Dr Xuma.

The discussion on the constitution was of significance in the great task of politicising the masses, their education about the aims of the ANC and inspiring them with hope and above all in organising Congress, ensuring discipline and acceptance of the authority of the mother-body and regulating the relations between the various provinces and the provinces and the mother-body, e.g. uniform membership cards had to be issued, and the question of

reorganisation of the Cape where there existed three Congresses, in the Transkei, in the Eastern Cape and in the Western Cape.

### The All-African Convention (AAC)

The formation of the Hertzog-Smuts coalition in 1933; its endorsement by the white electorate in the "general elections" later and the economic recovery from world-wide depression filled the racists with a new confidence. A two-thirds majority of both houses of Parliament, the number required by the Act of Union to amend the entrenched clause protecting the black franchise in the Cape, was ensured. In 1936, Prime Minister Hertzog and Jan Smuts removed the Cape African voters from the common voters' roll.

The Representation of Natives Bill and the Native Trust and Land Bill did not only exclude the African voters from the common roll and entrench the 1913 Land Act, which increased the land occupied by Africans from 7.5% to 13% without any hope of further purchase of land, they also laid the basis for the creation of the Natives' Representative Council (NRC); a body in which twelve Africans indirectly elected by Africans throughout the country, would sit with four Africans chosen by the government and with white Native Commissioners under the chairmanship of the Secretary for Native Affairs.

The Africans in the Cape - and throughout South Africa - who had hoped that there will be an evolution of the democratic process, extending the African vote to other provinces, saw these Acts as a total onslaught on the remaining rights of the Africans.

These were some of the immediate issues agitating the Africans in South Africa. There was also the question of the Italo-Ethiopian war which was a cause for concern and also the question of support for the struggle of the people of the so-called Protectorates - Basutoland, Swaziland and Bechuanaland - against incorporation into South Africa: a genuine problem at the time.

These and more reasons explain why Professor Jabavu, a distinguished academic, together with Pixley ka Izaka Seme, President-General of the ANC called on all Africans - and Blacks - from all shades of the political spectrum and from all sections of South Africa to converge on Bloemfontein in December, 1935. The Boers were celebrating the 97th Anniversary of the Battle of Blood River - where they killed Africans in Natal. The Africans on the other hand viewed the venue from a different angle: it was in Bloemfontein in 1909 that Africans formulated their protests against the Act of Union and in 1912 the ANC was formed in Bloemfontein.

The All-African Convention was meant to be an umbrella organisation within which all existing African political groups could be linked. It was not meant to phase out or replace people's organisations such as the ANC. It did attract a wide spectrum of people: ANC leaders, ICU personalities, chiefs, church dignitaries, professional men, elected members of advisory boards, prominent women, representatives of a number of local organisations, including Coloureds from left-wing study circles in Cape Town and also Communist Party members.

More than 400 delegates converged on Bloemfontein. 200 came

from the Cape Province, 100 from the Transvaal, 70 from the Orange Free State, 30 from Natal, 10 from Basutoland and 1 (representing the paramount chief) from Swaziland.

It is important to note that the Hertzog Bills alienated even Africans normally regarded by the government as moderates, e.g. the United Transkeian Territories General Council, Ibunga, and also African professional men associated with Cape liberalism such as Professor Jabavu.

Despite the broadness of approach, diversity in thinking and ideology, the general tone was the rejection of the Hertzog Bills. At the All-African Convention B Mashologu (Basutoland) maintained that the Cape vote (first granted in 1854) was not franchise, for the Africans there could not send people they wanted to Parliament, but were bound to send European candidates elected by other people. No race could be adequately represented by another, he contended. The Cape Africans had the shadow but not the substance. <246>

Mashologu was right. But there were two problems here. There was the question of reformism, of a "half a loaf" being "better than no bread" and there was also the question of the relationship between reforms, the defence of the achieved, and further advance to new gains, that is, the question of defending the existing standards - and in practical terms this meant defending the Cape vote and extending it to other provinces. But this demand had to be accompanied by or be subordinate to the overall strategy which included even changing the form, essence and goal of the Cape vote.

The AAC, which was a conglomerate of diverse and

contradictory forces, expressing both rebellion and subservience, proved inadequate to tackle these complex problems. But there were new ideas that emerged:

"During the discussions, a rather novel idea of designating Europeans in South Africa was mooted with appreciable effect. One delegate strongly contended that it is erroneous to describe Africans in South Africa as 'Non Europeans' when to all intents they formed the indigenous population of the continent of Africa. He urged the Convention in all sincerity to adopt the nomenclature of 'Non Africans' for all Europeans as distinct from Africans, arguing that here they lived in Africa, and not in Europe where the term 'Non European' is conceivable and tolerable for strangers in the continent of Europe. This sign of race-consciousness may well be discussed next year in December". <247>

These sentiments, first expressed in the 1930's were to become one of the central tenets of black consciousness in the 1970's.

Selby Msimang posed the question of dependency and rebellion; the question of divided loyalties; loyalty to the present government or to the people's demands:

"... let us now admit, both publicly and in our conscience, that Parliament and the white people of



South Africa have disowned us, flirted and trifled with our loyalty. They have treated us as rebels, nay, they have declared we are not part of the South African community. Whatever it means, I am satisfied in my mind that if we do no longer form part of the community which constitutes Parliament and the Government of the Union of South Africa, we have to belong to some authority other than the present, or we shall have to admit that we are slaves and outcasts in our fatherland. If we refuse to be made slaves then we should seek emancipation by such means as the dictates of self-preservation may lead us to" <248>

It took the ANC decades of hard slogging, organisational, propaganda work - in short practical-political experience before our people resolved the question of divided loyalties - loyalty to the government or to the ANC. Today the people are rendering South Africa ungovernable.

The All-African Convention also sought to identify the role of imperialism in Africa and called for African (continental) unity and worldwide condemnation of imperialism:

"a) The All African Convention hereby expresses its utmost condemnation of the savage, unprovoked and unwarranted attack made by Italy upon Abyssinia and declares as its considered opinion that the ruthless action of Italy can only be regarded as large scale violence against fundamental human rights.

- b) Further this convention sees in this action of Italy a continuation of the game of grab which the imperialist nations of Europe have played in this continent whereby millions of inhabitants have been deprived of their land, exploited and robbed of their labour.
- (c) This Convention hereby declares its conviction that imperialism which has thus resulted in the ruthless destruction of life, in violent acts of robbery, in increasing exploitation and in the destruction of African culture is an evil force to be exposed, condemned and resisted.
- d) The All African Convention recognises the value and desirability of establishing contacts with Africans and African organisations in other parts of the world. To this end the All African Convention believes that a call to international conference of Africans and overseas peoples of African descent should receive the serious consideration of the Executive Committee." <249>

With reference to Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland a resolution was unanimously adopted. The resolution heartily supported the struggle of the Africans in these territories against incorporation in the Union "as such incorporation would not be in the best interests of the people of the Protectorates" and further pledged to supply all information to the people of the Protectorates "with a view to assisting them to come to a

proper conclusion if and when they are consulted by the British Government with regard to the question of their inclusion in the Union". <250>

These and other sentiments (going back to 1919) depicted a shift in policy - the liberation movement in South Africa was no longer dependent on deputations alone to the racist regime. It was openly identifying and associating itself with the colonised people.

The contradictions and inconsistencies in the All African Convention led to a position where the movement accepted the very positions it had originally rejected:

"The middle-of-the-road policy which it had adopted in June 1936 was extended to include the very institutions which the AAC had initially opposed" <251>

The AAC sought to convert itself into a permanent federal body at a time when the ANC was re-establishing itself, undergoing a process of revival, revitalisation, rejuvenation and re-emergence as a central body coordinating and expressing the views and opinions of the Africans. There were bound to be some problems. The AAC "had no organisational basis save fragmented and emaciated factions" and "in the long run" it was the ANC rather than the AAC that had hopes for the future. Jack and Ray Simons, write:

"Unable to develop a mass basis, the Convention lapsed into inactivity until the early forties when Coloured

and African radicals in the WEstern Cape revived it with the aim of putting themselves at the head of the liberation movement" <252>

This situation necessitated a new strategy of forming and/or forging another form of a united front. This led to the birth of the Non-European United Front in Cape Town on April 8, 1939. Communists, Nationalists, Trotskyists and others came together to work out a new strategy under new conditions. Those elected to the national council included Mrs Gool, President; Baloyi, Senior vice President; M Kotane, Secretary; W H Andrews, Treasurer; Dr Dadoo and H A Naidoo. The Non-European United Front represented "a seed of a grand non-racial alliance" that had been planted "but seventeen years were to pass before it bore fruit". <253>

#### The Mobilisation of Women 1941-1948

In an earlier chapter we dealt with the women's struggles in 1913. These struggles continued under the new and difficult conditions imposed by the First World War. It was not until 1918 that the Bantu women's League was formed as a "branch of the ANC". Charlotte Maxeke was the moving spirit.

Charlotte Maxeke died in 1939 but her spirit did not die. One of the resolutions adopted at the annual conference of the ANC held at Bloemfontein on December 14-16, 1941, was the "Resolution on the Women Section" which read:

"That this conference recommends to the parent body the

necessity of reviving the women's section of the Congress in terms of the provisions of the constitution. Further, the women be accorded the same status as men in the classification of membership. That the following means be made to attract the women:

- (a) to make the programme of the Congress as attractive as possible to women;
- (b) a careful choice of leadership."

In 1943, the ANC Women's League was formed under the leadership of Madi-Hall Xuma and it was inaugurated at the 1948 Annual General Conference of the ANC.

#### The African Claims 1943

Besides the question of dealing with organisational problems and modernising the constitution, the ANC was faced with the problem of mapping out a future South Africa, especially that it was becoming obvious that fascism was about to be defeated in Europe. Xuma took the initiative and organised a Committee whose brief was to discuss the Atlantic Charter "from the African's point of view". The Committee met at Bloemfontein on December 13-14, 1943. Z K Matthews was elected chairman and L T Mtimkulu as secretary, and a sub-committee consisting of S B Ngcobo, M L Kabane and J M Nhlapo, with the chairman and secretary as ex officio members. This sub-committee drafted the findings of the Atlantic Charter. Xuma throughout guided the committee. The Atlantic Charter Committee - as it was then called - consisted

of:

R G Baloyi; Dr R T Bokwe; Revd J Calata; R H Godlo; M L Kabane; M Kotane; E M Lepolisa; Revd Z S Mahabane; G Makabeni; T M Mapikela; Z K Matthews; C Mbata; G A Mbeki; M T Moerane; E T Mofutsanyane; Dr S M Molema; Dr J S Moroka; Revd Mpitso; Revd Abner Mtimkulu; D Mtimkulu; L Mtimkulu; J M Nhlapo; S Ngcobo; Dr I P Ka Seme; Dr Setlogelo; R V Selope-Thema; B B Xiniwe; Dr A B Xuma.

This list is in alphabetical order. It includes leading members of the ANC (Xuma, Calata, and Baloyi, the Treasurer-General); the Secretary General of the Communist Party (Moses Kotane); leading provincial and local leaders of the ANC; intellectuals and academics; peasant leaders; religious personalities and friends of the ANC. Dr Xuma, the President-General of the ANC and Secretary-Organiser of the Atlantic Charter Committee, had this to say about this committee:

"The list of names of the members of the committee who produced this document tells a story for those who would understand. These fruits of their labours are a legacy, nay, a heritage, which will leave behind for future generations to enjoy. For it, and to them, we are all forever indebted to ... We realise that for the African this is only a beginning of a long struggle entailing great sacrifices of time, means and even life itself. To the African people the declaration is a challenge to organise and unit themselves under the mass liberation movement, the African National

Congress. The struggle is on right now and it must be persistent and insistent. In a mass liberation movement there is no room for divisions or for personal ambitions. The goal is one, namely, freedom for all. It should be the central and only aim for objective of all true African nationals. Divisions and gratification of personal ambitions under the circumstances will be a betrayal of this great course." <254>

The terms of reference of this Committee were: (a) to study and discuss the problems arising out of the Atlantic Charter in so far as they relate to Africa, and to formulate a comprehensive statement embodying an African Charter, and to draw up a Bill of Rights which Africans are demanding as essential to guarantee them a worthy place in the post-war world.

It should be remembered that the Atlantic Charter was signed on January 2, 1942 and the Africans were interested in the interpretation of its Clause 3, which demanded:

" ... the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they may wish to live and ... sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them" <255>

The imperialist countries maintained that this Clause was only applicable to "occupied territories" in Europe and not to colonies; no wonder Xuma remarked:

"The Africans in Southern Africa should draw up their own Atlantic Charter." <256>

This imperialist interpretation of the Atlantic Charter raised the question whether the meaning of "nations", "states", "peoples" and "men" included colonial people or not.

The African Claims, that is the Atlantic Charter "from the standpoint of the Africans within the Union of South Africa", was adopted by the Annual Conference of the ANC at Bloemfontein on December 16, 1945. It starts off by demanding the safeguard of the status, independence and the right to sovereignty of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) which was being attacked by fascist Italy and goes on to demand that "the former Italian colonies in Africa should be granted independence and their security provided for under the future system of World Security". As far as the Protectorates (Bechuanaland, Basutoland and Swaziland) were concerned, the African Claims rejected the idea that these protectorates be incorporated into South Africa: "Africans, therefore, are definitely opposed to the transfer of the Protectorates to the South African state."

It is on the question of self-determination where the African Claims becomes more eloquent. It states that "this principle of self-determination necessarily raises not only issues relating to the independent existence of small nations besides their more powerful neighbours but those also concerning the political rights and status of minorities and of Africans now held under European tutelage". It goes on to characterise the



situation in Africa where "European aggression and conquest has resulted in the establishment of alien governments which ... are not accountable to the indigenous inhabitants". The document states categorically: "Africans are still very conscious of the loss of their independence, freedom and the right of choosing the form of government under which they will live. It is the inalienable right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live ... "

It is interesting to see how the ANC treated the struggle in Africa those days. The document states that "in certain parts of Africa" it should be possible to "accord Africans sovereign rights and to establish administration of their choosing", but "in other parts of Africa" where a ruling white minority has politically entrenched itself "the demands of the Africans for full citizenship rights and direct participation in all the councils of the state should be recognised". This was said to be the "most urgent" in South Africa.

This differentiation of tasks in the anti-colonial struggle in Africa was a result of the realisation of the fact that the African revolution is not homogeneous; that in countries where there were no white settlers the struggle and the tasks facing the anti-colonial fighters were relatively straightforward. This shows a sense of realism in the ANC and at the same time testifies to the fact that the ANC was never at any time anti-white; it has always been against white domination. Though the ANC today continues the policies followed by our predecessors, there has been a change of emphasis in its policies over the decades. Then the ANC was fighting for "full

citizenship rights and direct participation in all councils of the state"; today these demands have expanded and include not only the national liberation of the Africans, but of all Blacks (Coloureds and Indians) and the social emancipation of the Whites.

#### Massive Indian Resistance 1946-1949

We have already discussed the early beginnings of Indian protest in South Africa. These early beginnings did not meet with corresponding organisational preparedness. There was not yet a viable Indian organisation which could harness the people's anger and hatred of the system. Necessary preparations had to be made. This question was not unconnected with the weaknesses and failures of the ANC at the time - a problem which had an objective character. The reorganisation of the ANC had an impact on the Indian community and vice versa.

There was a growing realisation of the need to mobilise the Indian community. The first conference of the South African Indian Congress was convened in Cape Town in January 1919 by the Cape Indian Congress, but the constitution was adopted at the third conference held in June 1923. There were problems, differences of opinion and even splits, but by February 1928, at the eighth conference of the South African Indian Congress, these were partially overcome.

It was in the thirties that younger men infused with enthusiasm and vigour saw the need to change the form and nature of the Indian Congresses. These were men like Dr Dadoo, Mulvi

Cachalia, Nana Sita, Jasmat Nana-Bhai, Naransammy Naidoo, G H I Pahad, etc. In the Indian Congress itself there was a clash between the moderates and the radicals. The issues were:

- a more militant and democratic Transvaal Indian Congress;
- development of links with the African and Coloured organisation;
- Indian women should be more involved in the struggle and the Transvaal Indian Congress should guarantee their full participation.

The moving spirit was Dr Dadoo, a young militant Communist who became involved in politics in 1936 after qualifying as a doctor in Britain.

In Natal a similar process was taking place. The main leaders in this drive were militants like H A Naidoo, Dr G M Naicker, George Singh, M D Naidoo, G Ponon and others. These radicals were either members of or had contacts with the Communist Party and trade unions.

The battle was won when the militants managed to oust the moderate leaders - but it was not all that smooth and non-violent.

Besides these internal problems within the Indian Congress, there was a bigger problem: the racist onslaught against the Indians. In 1940, the racist regime, worried about the extent of what they called Indian "penetration" of white areas in Natal and the Transvaal, set up the Broome Commission to enquire into this question. This commission reported and there came the Asiatic Land and Trading (Transvaal) Act in 1941. On March 15, 1946, Premier J C Smuts introduced into parliament the Asiatic Land

Tenure Act and Indian Representation Bill, which curtailed the movement of the Indians and circumscribed where Indians could reside and trade; prohibited any land transfers between Indians and non-Indians in the Transvaal and Natal, and went even further to propose "in return" token representation of Indians by three Whites in parliament. This law, which was an insult to the national honour and dignity of the Indian people, anticipated the Group Areas Act of the racist regime.

In February 1946, the South African Indian Congress held a conference in Cape Town which resolved to oppose the new law with concerted and prolonged resistance and Passive Resistance Councils were appointed in Natal and the Transvaal. The "Ghetto Bill" (as the bill became known) became law on June 2, 1946, and the Indian community replied by proclaiming June 13, 1943 "Resistance Day" in which a complete "Hartal" (strike and closing of businesses) was observed throughout the country. Mass meetings of 15,000 in Durban, the main centre of the Indian population, hailed the first batch of volunteers, headed by Dr Naicker and M D Naidoo, who pitched tents on land reserved for Whites. White hooligans in full view of the police attacked the "Resistance Camp": "The unprovoked vicious attacks continued until finally an Indian - ironically a policeman off duty - was killed. In a manifestation of solidarity 10,000 people attended the biggest funeral ever given to a policeman." <257>

On June 27, the first group to be jailed included Dr Dadoo and Dr Naicker. Within two months, over 2,000 resisters (including 300 women) were sentenced. Dadoo and Naicker were sentenced for a second time to six months' hard labour. The

campaign continued until 1948 and one of its by-products was the publication of a weekly Passive Resister from July 1946 until the end of 1948 and edited by I C Meer. Many young Indian youth interrupted their studies to do fulltime work in the resistance - one typical example being Ahmed Kathrada, who joined the passive resistance campaign at the age of 15 - he was involved in politics at the age of 12 - and has since then known no other life except that of being a practical revolutionary. He is now serving a life sentence in Pollsmoor Prison having been transferred from Robben Island. Essop Pahad states that "By June 1947, 1,710 resisters had courted imprisonment ... As well as Indians, there were 47 Coloured, 15 Africans and eight white resisters imprisoned." <258>

The slogans of the resistance were "Down with the Ghetto Bill" and "To Hell with the Ghetto Bill". Essop Pahad quotes a message from Joshua Fritz Makue, an African speaking at a mass meeting after his release from prison (before the Indian resistance) who said:

"The present struggle is not a struggle of the Indian people alone. It is part of the struggle of the oppressed people of the world. By struggle alone we can liberate our people ... I am prepared to go back to prison for we must make the necessary sacrifices. I appeal to all the Non-European people to join in a mighty battle for freedom." <259>

"A Resister" wrote to Dadoo:

"I felt proud to be a member of the Indian community for in you we have a leader who symbolises our hopes and aspirations to be free. It was difficult to say goodbye to you but we all felt that with you as our leader our community was destined to make a glorious contribution to bringing about democracy in South Africa ... You may be in jail, but the spirit of freedom is already sweeping the cities and open roads of South Africa ... and in the new dawn of freedom, men, women, and children will forever remember your name, the name of Dr Dadoo, the torch bearer of freedom. "

And a message from the ANC Youth League read:

"We salute the Indian people whose resolve to carry on the struggle against the Colour bar and race domination as a struggle for fundamental human rights. Onward. Forward to Freedom." <260>

What was the philosophy of resistance? It is usually said that the philosophy of "passive resistance" was Gandhism - a non-violent philosophy of Gandhi which some people call "passive resistance". (Although these campaigns are known as "passive" resistance campaigns, they were in fact active campaigns of protest and defiance.) <261> It is true that some people shared and embraced this philosophy, but the movement was broader and

included communists and other revolutionaries. Concerning methods and techniques of struggle, our people and movement have never been dogmatic and inflexible; what is important is that the method of struggle should go beyond verbal protests, petitions and deputations and the people should understand and accept it so that they can back it with mass demonstrations and strikes.

The campaign aroused the Indian people to a higher level of political consciousness and militancy. It gained general admiration and support from African and Coloured people and democratically-minded Whites. It certainly stimulated and inspired the struggles of our people in the 1950's. The Indian community thrust up its own leaders and organisers - Dadoo and Naicker being the most outstanding. Indian women and girls took part in the demonstrations, withstanding attacks from white hooligans, and **Michael Scott**, a White, also took part in the Indian mass demonstration. The Indian organisations increased their working class membership and the Natal Indian Congress grew from a few hundred to about 35,000, and this radicalised the South African Indian Congress, with the result that the conservative leadership was ousted and a new, radical leadership took over; Dr Naicker in Natal, and a "few months later" Dr Dadoo became the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress.

It is then no wonder that in 1947 Dr Xuma, Dr Dadoo and Dr Naicker signed the famous pact: the Africans and Indians decided voluntarily to join forces in the common struggle against the common enemy. The precondition was overcoming reformism - total rout of the Indian Congress right wing led to closer relations between Indians and Africans. In June 1946 the Indian Government

recalled its High Commissioner from South Africa and that meant a beginning of a worldwide condemnation and boycott of South Africa at the UN and internationally.

While these progressive developments were taking place, others, not so progressive developments were to be encountered. In January 1949, riots broke out between Africans and Indians in Durban. These riots were sparked off by a seemingly insignificant incident: an assault of an African youth by one Indian. The riots started. The authorities stood aside and did not avert the riots. Then the army and police opened fire indiscriminately:

"The casualty figures were as follows: Dead - 142: 87 Africans, 50 Indians, 1 European and 4 who were not identified. Injured - 1,087: 541 Africans, 503 Indians, 11 Coloureds and 32 Europeans. Fifty-eight of the injured died later". <262>

The ANC (Natal) and the Natal Indian Congress appealed to the African and Indian people of Durban to do everything in their power to prevent any further disturbances and later on January 20, the Working Committee of the ANC expressed its appreciation of President General Dr A B Xuma "for his timely visit to Durban during the riots, and for his cooperation and consultations with African leaders in Natal in their efforts to bring the race riots between Indians and Africans to an end." <263>

These attempts by the ANC to grapple with this problem led to an "historic joint meeting" of the representatives of the



national organisations of the African and Indian people, representing the Executives of the ANC and the South African Indian Congress and other leaders, held in Durban on February 6, 1949. These were:

For the African National Congress: Dr A B Xuma, President General; A W G Champion, President (Natal); C S Ramahanoe, President (Transvaal); R G Baloyi, Treasurer General. H Selby Msimang, J B Marks, J Malangabi, G Makabeni, Moses M Kotane, L K Ntlabati, O R Tambo.

For the South African Indian Congress: Dr G M Naicker, President; A I Meer, Joint Hon. Secretary; J N Singh, Joint Hon. Secretary; Dr A H Sadler, Joint Hon. Treasurer, I A Cacchalia; T N Naidoo, V Lawrence, I C Meer, M D Naidoo, Debi Singh, Nana Sita, Y Cachalia, G H I Pahad.

Other Indian and African leaders: Professor D D T Jabavu; Rev. Z R Mahabane of th Orange Free State; N Mkele, Observer, All African Convention; D W Moshe; S B Ngcobo; S R Naidoo (Cape); T B Gwala; E O Msimang; A N Ntuli; J G Mgadi.

While epxressing its deep and heartfelt sympathy with the relatives of all the victims of this "unhappy tragedy" and all those who have suffered, the statement issued by this joint meeting went further to say:

"Whatever are the immediate causes which may have precipitated the outburst, and which are receiving the attention of this meeting, this meeting is convinced that the fundamental and basic causes of the distrubrances are traceable to the political, economic

and social structure of this country, based on differential and discriminatory treatment of the various racial groups and the preaching in high places of racial hatred and intolerance. Any disturbances such as the recent riots are therefore the fruits and results of such a policy as well as the responsibility of those who create and maintain such an artificial social framework" <264>

A strategy for the respective peoples was formulated:

- a) to view the problems in this perspective;
- b) to devise ways and means for closer cooperation and mutual understanding through the existing national organisations;
- c) to stand together in the fight for national liberation and mutual political, economic and social advancement and security.

The meeting gave directives to the constituent bodies, particularly the ANC (Natal) and the Natal Indian Congress to constitute a joint council and to establish thereunder local committees to advance and promote mutual understanding and goodwill among the respective peoples. These were the beginnings of unity which found organisational expression in the 1950's and later.

#### Workers Set Pace - the Great Mineworkers' Strike of 1946

The period between 1933 and 1946 was a period in which South Africa saw a rapid economic development and significant changes in

the structure of production. The economy was stimulated by the rise in the price of gold after abandonment of the Gold Standard in 1932 and then by wartime production - the economy expanded rapidly in 1933-1939 and in the period 1940-1946. The total dependence on agriculture and mineral exports was transformed into a high level of industrialisation: "The contribution of manufacturing to National Income first surpassed agriculture in 1930 and outstripped mining in 1943." <265> This "boom" expressed itself in an increase in the number of manufacturing establishments which rose from 6,543 in 1933 to 8,505 in 1939, and by 1946 one could count 9,999. This is also the period when "the poor white problem" disappeared.

This industrial development also affected the social composition of the African population: by 1946, almost one in four Africans was an urban dweller. The permanency of urbanisation was guaranteed by the increasing ratio of African women to men in the urban areas, from under 1:5 in 1921 to 1:3 in 1946. Between 1933 and 1939, an additional 240,000 Africans entered industrial employment but mine labour remained migrant labour.

Following the Land Act of 1913, the rural areas became impoverished. This impoverishment of the rural areas expressed itself in the fall in productivity and landlessness became more acute. The 1948 Fagan Commission did reveal the existence of the three broad "classes" in the Reserves: owners or occupiers of land; the landless who owned the cattle and the landless whose cattle were grazed on common land. It was found out that in the Ciskei, for example, 30 per cent of the families were landless

and over 60 per cent owned five or fewer cattle, and 29 per cent owned nothing. The vast majority of the recruits to the mines came from the landless. This explains why the African mine labour force increased by 135,000 or 40 per cent in this period.

It is important to remember that this period of rapid development (1933-46) did not produce an African bourgeoisie. It is true that a small trading petty bourgeoisie emerged dealing mostly in foodstuffs, and there was a small stratum of professional men and administrative and clerical workers. This stratum comprised 0.2 per cent of all adult Africans in 1921; 0.9 per cent in 1926 and 1.2 per cent or a total of 62,246 individuals in 1946:

"The exploitation of the African proletariat produced no material benefit for the African petty bourgeoisie, but was in fact the direct cause of their political oppression. The labour policies of the state which differentiated between skilled and unskilled on racial grounds closed off avenues of mobility to this class and in effect lumped them together with the proletariat as politically rightless and economically exploitable." <266>

Also noteworthy is the fact that at the political level (as "opposed" to the trade union level) this was a period of acute contradictions sharpened by the Hertzog Bills of 1936 which disfranchised Cape Africans in return for seven (white) parliamentary representatives and an advisory Native

Representative Council and slightly extending the area of the Reserves. Perhaps it is important - one again - to say a word or two about this franchise of the Cape Africans and Coloureds. This qualified franchise was meant to encourage the formation of a political elite among Africans. It is true that "in principle" and "de jure" the franchise was not discriminatory but in practice, given the inequality in the distribution of income and property among Blacks and Whites, it enfranchised the Whites and disfranchised the Blacks who were supposed to vote for their white "spokesmen". In 1887 and 1892, new laws were enacted raising property and other qualifications and, by implication, making it more difficult for Africans to qualify for franchise. These Acts did not only set an early precedent for the progressive diminution of African political rights in South Africa by constitutional means, they also helped to maintain the elite status of African voters in the Cape, setting them apart from the great mass of the Africans, who had not vote, and this also created political interests among the Africans in the Cape (interests which in any case could not be satisfied) distinct from those of the Africans in other parts of the country. <267> The political activity of the Black enfranchised was secondary, auxiliary and subordinate to white politics. This is how "Cape liberalism" worked!

All the same, it was important for the ANC to fight against the disenfranchisement of the Cape Africans because the question of enfranchisement of the Africans all over the country was another battlefield - a fight for democracy.

During the War the living conditions of the Black masses

deteriorated - low wages, pass laws, need for more and better education, miserable housing conditions, insanitary overcrowded slums without street and house lighting, bad roads, often non-existent sanitation, long distances to and from work, no proper transport system, etc.

In Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, bus fares were raised from 4d to 5d. It should be remembered that the average wages of the Africans was £5.2s.11d a month and the fares alone would be tantamount to one-fifth of that! The Africans decided to walk - 1,500 men and women. They walked for nine or more miles to work. After nine days, the bus company gave in and reduced the fares to 4d. This was in August 1943, in mid-winter and in the bleak cold of the highveld. Two years later, in 1945, a similar thing happened again. This time the strike lasted for seven weeks and the Utility Company was forced to take over the bus service and revert to the original fare. There were riots in Marabastad Pretoria, in which 16 Africans and one European were killed and many wounded. In 1944, tens of thousands of Africans, who had been homeless for years, followed **James Mpanza**, nicknamed "**Sofasonke**" (we shall all die) to squat, setting up shanties near Orlando.

Such was the situation when the African trade unions were formed. The Council of Non-European Trade Unions (CNETU) was formed at a conference held at the Trades Hall in Johannesburg on November 29-30, 1941. It was formed by African and Coloured workers. In 1942, a number of strikes in CNETU's campaign for a 40 shillings weekly minimum wage led directly to further state action against African unions. War Measure 145 of December 1942

outlawed strikes by Africans; severe penalties and persecutions were "promised" but this did not deter the workers. The Department of Labour complained that "Natives seem to be ignoring War Measure 145". <268> Without official recognition, subjected to a wide range of legal and other restraints by September 1945, the CNETU had a national membership of 158,000 in 119 unions, embracing more than 40 per cent of the 390,000 Africans employed in commerce and manufacturing. The growth of African trade unions between 1930 and 1945, saw a corresponding growth in militancy, especially during the War: in the period 1940-45, more than 52,494 Africans went on strike.

There was another dimension in the organisation of African workers - the mobilisation of African miners. In a circular signed by Gauer Radebe, the Transvaal ANC Secretary of Mines, on June 9, 1941, he makes a concrete suggestion about a conference to be held at the Ritz Hall, 5 Polly Street, Johannesburg on August 3, 1941. The agenda is straightforward:

1. Report on condition of African miners.
2. Ways and means of organising them.
3. Discussions and resolutions.
4. Election of a committee. <269>

He goes on to explain the bad working conditions of the 400,000 African mineworkers employed on the mines; they are completely unorganised; have to work under extremely bad conditions at very low wages. They are injured and killed in mine accidents every year; thousands more get pthisis and are sent back "home".

The circular goes on to state that the improvement of their conditions is necessary; the organisation of this sector of the black workers would give great encouragement to African trade unionism; they would become a source of new life and strength to the African trade union movement; this would help overcome "tribal" friction and to create an organised body capable of taking its proper place in the advance of the African people out of national oppression; this would carry with it the possibility of advance of other sectors of the population at present suffering under discriminatory legislation. The circular states:

"This matter has engaged the Transvaal African Congress for some time and a serious study has been made of the conditions of the African miners and of the best methods to be adopted in organising them."

The two largest groups of African workers, the mineworkers and farm labourers, remained unorganised during the growth of trade unionism until Gauer Radebe, Secretary of Mines and Employment in the Transvaal ANC, and Edwin Mofutsanyana, responsible for Labour in the NEC of the ANC, organised the above-mentioned conference in August 1941 to discuss the formation of an **African Mine Workers' Union**. Eighty delegates from 41 organisations attended. They resolved to organise workers both on the mines and before recruitment in the Reserves. A committee of 15 was elected to raise funds and to build an African Mine Workers' Union. J B Marks became President and J J Majoro, a leading member of the Witwatersrand Native Mine Clerks'



association, became Secretary. The election of Majoro was very significant because the African mine clerks had their own grievances: Proclamation 110 of 1942 excluded "mine labourers" from the statutory cost of living allowance payable to all industrial employees - the Chamber of Mines rules that the 1,935 African clerks fell within the category of "mine labourers" and refused them the allowance. This is one of the reasons why the Native Mine Clerks' Association affiliated to the African Mine Workers' Union. The mine clerks were important for another reason: they acted as a liaison between the miners and the African Mine Workers' Union (AMWU). This was all the more important because the mine compounds were closed to AMWU officials. The Union grew in numbers and ideology. In 1944 it had 25,000 members. There was a series of work stoppages in 1943 and the AMWU and the African Gas and Power Workers' Union made representations.

The government decided to appoint a commission - the Lansdowne Commission of Inquiry - to investigate the wages and conditions of African miners. The evidence of the AMWU called for an end to cheap migrant labour with five basic demands:

1. regular wage increases;
2. payment of a cost of living allowance;
3. statutory wage minima, and a Wage Board enquiry;
4. the total abolition of the compound system, the "tribal" division of the workforce and all restrictions on freedom of movement; and
5. recognition of the AMWU.

The Commission did not help much to solve these problems at

a time (August 1943) when there were 308,374 Africans on the Witwatersrand gold mines. Working a six-day week, the average wage was two shillings and one penny per shift for surface workers. There were no overtime rates; sick or leave pay were not granted. There were also deductions for boots, mattresses and other items, totalling 15 per cent of gross earnings.

Both the Chamber of Mines and the government attempted to stifle the work of the AMWU: "The Chamber persistently pressurised the government to detain Marks and Majoro", <270> as an attempt to victimise and intimidate active members of the AMWU. Africans were not only not allowed by the Chamber of mines to reorganise, all mines followed the Chamber's policy to get rid of anybody trying to organise workers: "At one mine alone, 102 AMWU members were arrested for intimidation." <271>

On the advice of the Chamber of Mines, the government proclaimed War Measure 1425 in August 1944. According to this proclamation, gatherings of more than 20 people on proclaimed mining ground were prohibited. Meetings had now to be held clandestinely at night under mine dumps.

In August 1944, the Report of the Lansdowne Commission was considered by the annual AMWU conference, attended by delegates from every mine, and a mass emergency conference of March 1945 demanded the repeal of the War Measure and the retrospective enforcement of the Lansdowne recommendations. In June 1945, an AMWU delegation met the Acting Prime Minister and other members of the cabinet. It failed to convince them.

South Africa at this time suffered food shortages; in 1945 rations were cut on all mines in July and canned beef substituted

for fresh meat. This deteriorating quality and quantity of food aggravated the grievances of the miners, who formed workers' committees to demand better food. Food riots broke out on at least ten mines and a miner was killed and 40 injured when police broke up a protest outside the kitchen at the Modderfontein East Mine. Surely the clouds were gathering before the storm.

In April 1946, the AMWU conference took place. Two thousand delegates attended. They demanded:

- a minimum daily wage of 10 shillings;
- family housing;
- two weeks' paid annual leave;
- a £1,000 gratuity after 15 years' service;
- payment of repatriation fares;
- repeat of War Measure 1425; and
- an end to migratory labour.

The Chamber remained intransigent and the fact that numerous letters from the AMWU went unanswered reflected the Chamber's policy, which acknowledged neither the existence of the AMWU nor the miners' grievances.

In June the conference of the CNETU unanimously pledged full support to the AMWU in the event of a strike.

At a special open-air conference on Sunday, August 4, a resolution to trike was moved from the floor and unanimously adopted by the 1,000 delegates. On Monday, August 12 1946, in response to a call by the African Mine Workers' Union, over 60,000 African miners on the Witwatersrand struck work. Mary Benson describes the day:

" ... it was a cold clear night on the highveld. All along the Reef from hundreds of shaftheads African miners surfaced at the end of their shift and walked out in the wintry night, back to the compound. Some, as they tramped wearily along, passed others, waiting to go underground. But on seven mines they passed no one. The cages went down empty. The huge fly-wheels stopped. The great mine strike had begun." <272>

Estimates of the number of participants vary between 50,000 and 100,000; monthly production fell that month on 31 out of the 45 mines; the total monthly production went down by 169,000 tons to the lowest since 1937.

Official reaction was swift and violent because the strike was a result of agitation and not of legitimate grievances; "appropriate action" had to be taken and "ringleaders" were to be arrested. This is the language of our oppressors and it meant nothing more than that the leadership of the AMWU had to be paralysed and at the same time this was seen as an incitement to the police to attack the miners with rifles and clubs. Sixteen hundred police were put on special duty; reinforcements were rushed to the Rand; compounds were sealed off under armed guard:

"The strikers were thus put out of touch with the Union organisers and with no news from other mines or compounds." <273>

They fired on strikers at the Sub-Nigel mine, six were

reported killed by rifle fire and a further six trampled to death in the ensuing panic; at the West Springs Mine 324 casualties were reported, including one policeman bayoneted by a miner. On the following day, the miners staged a sit-down strike underground - they were baton charged and driven up "step by step, level by level" to the surface and back into the compounds. Miners from the City Deep, West Springs, Simmer and Jack and Robinson Deep Mines marched towards Johannesburg to see the Chief Native Commissioner. They were "dispersed" by the police.

An emergency meeting of the CNETU was held on August 13 and it issued a call for a general strike in 48 hours. The ANC President-General, Xuma, and the Transvaal ANC and Indian Passive Resistance Councils pledged full support. Police burst into the meeting and arrested J B Marks, the AMWU President, and raided AMWU offices.

The 1946 mine workers' strike was indeed a turning point in many respects in the history of the South African liberation struggle. The migrant workers, the miners, launched the largest strike in South African history. The violence of the state's response indicated the degree to which it felt threatened. The strike took place immediately after the war and was therefore an aspect of the general crisis of capitalism.

The strike did not only arouse widespread support among the ranks of the working class and national liberation. It also strengthened the solidarity between the African and Indian community who were fighting against anti-Indian legislation - for instance, the Durban Indian resisters sent £100 for the strike fund. Scores of resisters helped to roneo leaflets and

distribute them to the compounds from Randfontein to Springs. The strike opened the eyes of our people to the power and indeed the role of the working class, especially the miners, in our national liberation movement. In August 1946, the African National Congress Youth League issued a flyer: "The African Mine Workers' Strike - A National Struggle" in which they pledged their support to the miners' strike:

"The African national Congress Youth League calls upon all Africans - in all spheres of life and occupation and employment - to lend active support to the mine workers' struggle. The African Mine Workers' struggle is our struggle. They are fighting political colour bar and economic discrimination against Africans." <274>

The immediate result of the strike was the trial of 53 trade union, ANC and CP officials for aiding and abetting an "illegal strike", followed by the trial of the entire CP Central Committee on sedition charges: "even Dr Dadoo, who was brought from prison in Natal where he was still serving his sentence for passive resistance". <275>

These were links, acts of solidarity which strengthened the ties between the ANC and CP, producing a broad set of leadership contacts of vital importance in the years to come. In any case, the African Mine Workers' Union was established by the ANC with the active participation of the communists. The miners' strike helped to bring to the fore the convergence of interests among

the different sections of the liberation movement, strengthened by the cooperation between respective leaderships and helped to radicalise the ANC. In the words of Michael Harmel:

"The miners' strike of 1946 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, standing above the conflict between employer and employed, rich and poor. It spelt the end of the compromising, concession-begging tendencies which had hitherto dominated African politics ...

"The courage and class consciousness of the miners inspired and awakened tens of thousands of oppressed African workers: the miners of '46 were the forerunners of the protest strikers of May Day and the 26th of June, the defiance volunteers, the brave men and women who have stood by the Congress movement through the grim days of Nationalist repression." <276>

#### The Formation of the ANC Youth League 1943-1949

In the mid-forties young men and women in their mid-twenties or early thirties mainly teachers or students of medicine or

law, became dissatisfied with the manner in which things were done by the ANC and the pace with which they were done. They came from the Anglican (Episcopal) Secondary School of St Peters in Johannesburg; from Lovedale or Healdtown; Adam's College and Fort Hare. **Walter Sisulu**, a worker, was a noticeable exception.

These were prominent members of provincial and/or local student associations who articulated the aspirations of their generation and the masses of our people as a whole. They held political discussions frequently.

The African youth were concerned with the deteriorating conditions of our people; the rise of fascism in Germany and Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia in 1935-36 aroused interest not only about the fate and future of South Africa but of the whole continent. The growth and new militancy of African trade unions and the activities of the Communist Party were other factors which led to the rise of the ANC Youth League. These young people participated in militant mass actions.

It was in response to this situation that the annual conference of the ANC on December 21, 1942 resolved that "this annual conference of the African National Congress authorises the Executive to institute a Youth League of the African National Congress to include students at Fort Hare" <277>, and the 1943 annual conference adopted a similar resolution.

These young men consulted with the ANC leadership, especially Dr Xuma, before the ANC Youth League was formally established at the inaugural meeting held at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg in April 1944. **Anton Muziwake Lembede** became its first president and **Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela**



it secretary. The aim of these young men was simple and honest: a desire to remould the ANC. There was a noticeable shift towards recruiting a broader circle and organising a permanent youth league within the ANC.

Before we take a closer look at their ideas and ideology, let us answer the question: Who were these Youth Leaguers? There were many of them - the most notable being **Lembede, Mandela, Sisulu, Tambo, Mda, Njongwe, Nkomo, Ngubane, Sobukwe, Ntsu Mokhehle** and others. Lembede was definitely the most dynamic and articulate.

Born in the rural district of Georgedale near Durban in Natal in 1914, Anton Muziwake Lembede was of peasant origin. His parents were extremely poor. He went to Adam's College on a bursary in 1933 to train as a teacher. During his spare time he did matriculation, which he passed in 1937 with a distinction in Latin. He taught in Natal and the Orange Free State at the age of 29 and at the same time learnt Sesotho and Afrikaans. In 1943, he obtained a BA degree through correspondence with the University of South Africa and, again through self-education, he obtained a LL.B degree. Pixley ka Isaka Seme agreed to article Lembede as a law clerk and he became a full partner - the firm became "Seme and Lembede" in 1946. He later achieved an MA degree in philosophy.

Lembede was militantly nationalistic, with very strong views on the Africanness of our struggle - his philosophy, he called it, "Africanism". He was a practising Catholic and this explains his mysticism in his ideological concepts. He was controversial and his ideas were full of contradictions. T Singh has assessed

the ideas and concepts of Lembede in a review article of Gail Gerhart's book. <278> He says Lembede was preoccupied with working out a "nation building faith", the philosophy of "Africanism", and Lembede claimed that " ... the dynamic human energy that will be released by African Nationalism will be more powerful and devastating in its effects than ... atomic energy". <279> But Lembede tended to be idealistic and his ideas of self-reliance, which were inspired by all sorts of ideologies including reactionary ones, denied the need for solidarity and unity. But he was not alone - he was part of a bigger collective.

Let us take a closer look at the ideas of this collective. We shall start with the 1944 Manifesto of the ANC Youth League, which was issued by the Provisional Committee of the ANC Youth League in March 1944, a month before the formation of the ANC Youth League. <280>

The preamble of this document states that "Africanism must be promoted" and this meant that Africans must struggle for development, progress and national liberation so as to occupy their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world; that the African youth must be united, consolidated, trained and disciplined because from their ranks future leaders will be recruited. The document goes on to explain the policy of the Youth League, which is based on the conviction that "the contact of the white race with the black has resulted in the emergence of a set of conflicting living conditions and outlooks on life which seriously hamper South Africa's progress to nationhood." The Whites, said the Youth Leaguers, possess superior military strength and superior organising skill and therefore have

arrogated to themselves the ownership of the land and invested themselves with authority and right "to regard South Africa as a white man's land".

On civilisation it was stated that: "The African regards civilisation as the common heritage of all Mankind and claims as full a right to make his contribution to its advancement and to live free as any white South African: further, he claims the right to all sources and agencies to enjoy rights and fulfil duties which will place him on a footing of equality with every other racial group."

The devastating effects of the Land Act are dealt with at length and the Colour Bar Acts are scrutinised, as are the Mines and Works Act of 1926, "which shuts Africans from skilled trades", and the 1923 Urban Areas Act "which warned Africans clearly that they were bidding farewell to freedom", the 1927 Native Administration Act, which "established the white race as the Supreme Chief of the African people. The conquest of the African was complete", the 1937 Native Laws Amendment Act, it was said, closed up any other loophole through which the African could have forced his way to full citizenship.

The dilemma of the Africans during the Second World War was that "South African blood - of Whites and Africans alike - has been shed to free the white peoples of Europe while Africans within the Union remain in bondage".

On an optimistic note, the document goes on:

"These conditions have made the African lose all faith in all talks of Trusteeship. HE NOW ELECTS TO

DETERMINE HIS FUTURE BY HIS OWN EFFORTS. He has realised that to trust to the mere good grace of the white man will not free him as no action can free an oppressed group other than that group itself.

"Self-determination is the philosophy of life which will save him from the disaster he clearly sees on his way ... The African is aware of the magnitude of the task before him but has learnt that promises, no matter from high source, are merely palliatives intended to drum him into yielding to more oppression. He has made up his mind to sweat for his freedom; determine his destiny himself and, THROUGH HIS AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS IS BUILDING A STRONG NATIONAL UNITY FRONT WHICH WILL BE HIS SUREST GUARANTEE OF VICTORY OVER OPPRESSION."

The African National Congress was described by the ANC Youth League as "the symbol and embodiment of the African's will to present a united national front against all forms of oppression" - but it was admitted that Congress had not been able to make progress and this had drawn on it criticism "in the last 20 years". The arguments of the critics are dealt with and the correct conclusion is drawn:

"But it does not good to stop at being noisy in condemning African leaders who went before us. Defects in the organisation of the people against oppression cannot be cured by mouthing criticism and not putting our heads together to build what has been damaged and

to find a way out of the present suffering ... In response to the demands of the times African Youth is LAYING ITS SERVICES AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT, THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, IN THE FIRM BELIEF, KNOWLEDGE AND CONVICTION THAT THE CAUSE OF AFRICA MUST AND WILL TRIUMPH."

This positive attitude towards the solution of the problems that faced the ANC at the time was accompanied by an articulation of a positive strategy which took a form of a programme, a goal and clarifying ideological questions in the process. This was expressed in the sub-section "Our Creed" which states:

- "(a) We believe in the divine destiny of nations.
- (b) The goal of all our struggles is Africanism and our motto is 'AFRICA'S CAUSE MUST TRIUMPH'.
- (c) We believe that the national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves. We reject foreign leadership of Africa.
- (d) We may borrow useful ideologies from foreign ideologies, but we reject the wholesale importation of foreign ideologies into Africa.
- (e) We believe that leadership must be the personification and symbol of popular aspirations and ideals.
- (f) We believe that practical leadership must be given to capable men, whatever their status in society.
- (g) We believe in the scientific approach to all African problems.
- (h) We combat moral disintegration among Africans by maintaining

and upholding high ethical standards ourselves.

- (i) We believe in the unity of all Africans from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans in the South - and that Africans must speak with one voice."

We have quoted at length from this important document because its adoption has far-reaching repercussions on our movement. This also helps us to identify the trends and tendencies in the ideological struggle and the problems that faced the ANC at the time. The central theme of the document is the struggle for national self-determination which will be brought about by "building a strong national unity". The document is oriented towards mass action; action to strengthen the ANC and to fight for freedom.

At the ideological level one notices an attempt at defining an ideology that corresponds to reality in South Africa - a striving towards the rediscovery of the African personality. This ideology is called "Africanism" and its essence is to be found in the formulation: "We believe that the national liberation of Africans will be achieved by Africans themselves". This sounds almost literally like the philosophy of present-day "Black Consciousness" in South Africa which states: "Black Man! You are on your own!" This was interpreted to mean that Africans are struggling, through their own efforts, to occupy "their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world".

There is a serious attempt to work out an ideology for liberation and a need is expressed "to borrow useful ideologies

from foreign ideologies, but we reject the wholesale importation of foreign ideologies in Africa". This statement is significant because it correctly - despite the unfortunate formulation - points out that ideology should be subject to popular demands and express popular aspirations. At the same time, the Youth Leaguers recognised their inadequacy - their ideas were not consistent and fully developed; they were still at a formative stage; in the process of development.

Another important aspect of the Youth league Manifesto is that it viewed our struggle in the context of the struggle in Africa and expressed the idea of African unity: "from the Mediterranean Sea in the North to the Indian and Atlantic Oceans in the South - and that Africans must speak with one voice". This was 30 years before the formation of the OAU and definitely not a new idea.

In talking about the ideology of the Youth League, it is important to stress that the slogan of **Marcus Garvey**, "Africa for the Africans", was not mentioned in the Manifesto. Not that the slogan was wrong in itself but in the South African context it had the implication that Whites and other non-Africans are irrelevant to the struggle. This is important to mention because in 1959, the PAC claimed to be successors of the ANC Youth League under the slogan "Africa for the Africans". They failed to modify the aspirations of the Africans to suit the concrete reality of our country by accepting the historical fact that there is room in our movement for those Whites who are prepared to fight side by side with the Africans and who are willing to accept the policy of the ANC under African leadership. What the

PAC did was to latch on to aspects of philosophy of young Lembede: self-reliance without solidarity; African exclusivism and anti-Marxism. But they forgot that Lembede was developing.

Let us see how he was developing. On March 9, 1947 a meeting of the Joint Committee of the African National Congress, the Natal Indian Congress and the Transvaal Indian Congress was held in Johannesburg. Present were Dr A B Xuma, in the chair, Dr Y M Dadoo (Transvaal Indian Congress); Messrs Debi Singh of the Natal Indian Congress; J B Marks (ANC); M P Naicker of the Natal Indian Congress; D Tloome (ANC); C S Ramohanoe (ANC); Y A Cachalia (Transvaal Indian Congress); J N Singh; A B Meer (both of the Natal Indian Congress); and, significantly, A M Lembede.

Dr Xuma, President-General of the ANC, explained that the cause of so much exchange of correspondence was due to some difficulties confronting the ANC in regard to the invitation coming from the Passive Resistance Council and not from the Indian National Congress as they had anticipated. The ANC desired to cooperate with the national body of the Indians.

Dr Dadoo emphasised the need for proceeding with some preliminary plans which would ultimately be the final steps agreed. The Joint Committee was to work out a practical basis of cooperation between the national organisations of the two peoples.

A sub-committee, consisting of Drs Xuma and Dadoo; Messrs J N Singh, A I Meer and A M Lembede, was appointed to draft a joint declaration. The joint declaration which was read and accepted by the joint committee, stated:



"that the next meeting of the joint committee be held on 23 March 1947 at 11.00 a.m. in which representatives of APO should be invited to attend". <281>

This historic fact, that Lembede was part of the Joint Committee of Africans and Indians, that he was a member of a sub-committee which appealed to the Coloureds to join the Africans and Indians, is of great political significance because it proves that it is the ANC which has upheld the tradition set by Lembede. Even ideologically, he was developing and changing his views and ideas about the Communist Party as Brian Bunting remarks:

"Before he died at the tragically early age of 33, Lembede had also changed his attitude towards the Communist Party. 'They are workers, not just talkers,' he admitted gurdgingly to Kotane". <282>

Unfortunately, Lembede died in July 1947. This change in the ideas of Lembede reflected the change in the social composition of the African society when workers were beginning to play a more important role. This is what the PAC did not understand when they said they were the upholders of African nationalism "as expounded by Lembede". What they did was to cling to some of the early, immature concepts of Lembede; before he changed; before he realised the need for unity and solidarity; before he discarded his anti-communist attitudes. Yet Lembede was changing. This "mistake" of the PAC is repeated by Gail Gerhard in her book. <283>

So that we should not be misunderstood, we are far from maintaining that Lembede had overcome all of his earlier weaknesses. He was in the process of doing so. He was becoming more and more socialist inclined but his socialism was "African socialism". In an article on the "Policy of the Congress Youth League" in Inkundla Yabantu in May 1946, he wrote:

"Africans are naturally socialistic as illustrated in their social practices and customs. The achievement of national liberation will therefore herald or usher in a new era, the era of African socialism. Our immediate task, however, is not socialism, but national liberation. Our motto: Freedom in Our Life Time." <284>

In 1948 the ANC Youth League issued the Basic Policy Document <285>, which does not differ much from the 1944 Manifesto and therefore we shall not go to any length analysing it. This document articulates the basic aspects of the national question, though not without errors of emphasis and judgment: "we are oppressed not as a class, but as a people, as a Nation". This one-sided approach missed the point that the overwhelming majority of the Blacks are oppressed as a class and as a people, or a nation if you like. Let us take a closer look at the national question and the ideology of African nationalism as expressed in this document.

The document explains the fundamental aim of African nationalism as:

1. the creation of a united nation out of the heterogeneous tribes;
2. the freeing of African from foreign domination and foreign leadership;
3. the creation of conditions which can enable Africa to make her own contribution to human progress and happiness.

It is stated categorically that the African has a primary, inherent and inalienable right to Africa, which is his continent and motherland, and that the Africans as a whole have a divine destiny, which is to make Africa free among the peoples and nations of the earth. In order to achieve this - it was stated - the Africans must build a powerful national liberation movement and, in order that that national liberation movement should have inner strength and solidarity, it should adopt the national liberatory creed - African Nationalism - "and it should be led by Africans themselves". The history, bravery and "unparalleled heroism" of the struggle is recorded and there is even mention of a "possibility of a compromise" on condition that:

- a) the Europeans completely abandon their domination of Africa;
- b) they agree to an equitable and proportionate redivision of land;
- c) they assist in establishing a free people's democracy in South Africa and Africa in general.

The need for a "long, bitter and unrelenting struggle" was acknowledged:

"It is known, however, that a dominant group does not voluntarily give up its privileged position. That is

why the Congress Youth puts forward African Nationalism as the militant outlook of an oppressed people seeking a solid basis for waging a long, bitter, and unrelenting struggle for its national freedom."

The Youth League refuted the accusation that African nationalism was one-sided and racialistic, and they also rejected what they called "pseudo-nationalism": "People who pretend to be Nationalists when in fact they are only imperialist or capitalist agents, using Nationalistic slogans in order to cloak their reactionary position". "Fascist agents", "Vendors of foreign method" and "tribalism" were equally denounced.

What was the attitude of the Youth League to other nationalities?

The majority of the Whites (then called Europeans) were said to be sharing the spoils of white domination; they have a vested interest in the "exploitative caste society" in South Africa. "A few of them love justice and condemn racial oppression, but their voice is negligible, and in the last analysis counts for nothing. In the struggle for freedom, the Africans will be wasting their time and deflecting their forces if they look up to the Europeans, either for inspiration or for help in their political struggle." It is interesting to notice the similarity between this statement and many statements of the same kind uttered and published by the Black Consciousness Movement in the recent past. But the problem is that this statement was ambiguous and even controversial because, while we agree that the Africans will never look up to the Europeans for inspiration, there is no need

why they should reject the help coming from the Europeans in the political struggle if it is forthcoming. This "help" might even be more than "help": direct participation, contribution and even commitment to the cause of the black masses! The Indians were said to be oppressed as a group like Africans "but" they differ from Africans in their historical and cultural background "among other things". They have their mother country, India, "but thousands of them made South Africa and Africa their home". "They, however, did not come as conquerors and exploiters, but as the exploited. As long as they do not undermine or impede our liberation struggle we should not regard them as intruders or enemies". This reflects a specific stage in the development of African nationalism; an acceptance - though with reservations - of the Indians as allies. Four years later, when the Defiance Campaign was launched in 1952, this question did not arise at all.

the Coloureds were said to be like Indians in that they "differ from the Africans": "they are a distinct group, suffering group oppression". But their oppression differs in degree from that of the Africans, it was said. The Coloureds have no motherland to look up to and "but for historic accidents" they might be nearer to the Africans than are Indians, "seeing they descend in part at least from the aboriginal Hottentots who with the Africans and Bushmen are original children of black Africa."

It was summarised:

"Coloureds, like Indians, will never win their national freedom unless they organise a Coloured People's

National Organisation to lead in the struggle of the National Freedom of the Coloureds. The National Organisations of the Africans, Indians and Coloureds may cooperate on common issues."

The realisation and acceptance of national characteristics and distinctions was very important; what was more significant was the recognition of the need to "cooperate on common issues". Today this "cooperation" has reached a higher level which we call "unity of the patriotic forces".

The philosophy of the Youth League comes out clearly in the summary of their ideas:

"The above summary on racial groups supports our contention that South Africa is a country of four chief nationalities, three of which (the Europeans, Indians and Coloureds) are minorities and three of which (the Africans, Coloureds and Indians) suffer national oppression ... It is to be clearly understood that we are not against the European as such - we are not against the European as a human being - but we are totally and irrevocably opposed to white domination and to oppression."

It is interesting to record that the Youth League noted what they called the "Two Streams of African Nationalism". The Youth League states:

"Now it must be noted that there are two streams of African Nationalism. One centres round Marcus Garvey's slogan - 'Africa for the Africans'. It is based on the 'Quit Africa' slogan and on the cry 'Hurl the white man into the sea'. This brand of African Nationalism is extreme and ultra-revolutionary.

"There is another stream of African Nationalism (Africansim) which is moderate, and which the Congress Youth League professes. We of the Youth League take account of the concrete situation in South Africa, and realise that the different racial groups have come to stay. But we insist that a condition for inter-racial peace and progress is the abandonment of white domination, and such a change in the basic structure of South African society that those relations which breed exploitation and human misery will disappear. Therefore our goal is the winning of National Freedom for the African people and the inauguration of a people's free society where racial oppression and persecution will be outlawed."

This statement is important for two reasons: firstly, the national liberation of the Africans was interconnected with another vitally important issue: social emancipation - "such a change in the basic structure of South African society that those relations which breed exploitation and human misery will disappear" - and secondly, it takes into consideration the reality which is different from many African countries. It must

be said - in fairness to the Congress Youth Leaguers - that they were not attacking the theories of Marcus Garvey, which had a liberating effect on Africa. After all, Marcus Garvey is now a national hero in Jamaica - his home country - and the Jamaican revolutionaries assess his contribution to the liberation of the black people all over the world positively. This attitude of the ANC Youth League was meant to emphasise South African reality - a multinational society - and to underline the non-racist and anti-racist policy of our movement.

This document concludes with a powerful message: "The historic task of African Nationalism (it has become apparent) is the building of a self-confident and strong African Nation in South Africa. Therefore African Nationalism transcends the narrow limits imposed by any particular sectional organisation. It is all embracing in the sense that its field is the whole body of African people in this country .... The strength, solidarity and permanence of such a front will, of course, depend not on accident or chance, but on the correctness of our front ... the most vital aspect of our forward struggle is the political aspect."

Two things need to be said about the character of African Nationalism as propounded by the Youth League. Firstly, this was a "nationalism of an oppressed people, seeking freedom from foreign oppression". The Youth Leaguers were very much aware of this, as the letter A P Mda wrote to G M Pitje (August 24, 1948) reflects:

"Please note that our Nationalism has nothing to do



with Fascism and National Socialism (Hitleric version) nor with the imperialistic and Neo-Fascist Nationalism of the Afrikaners (the Malanite type). Ours is the pure Nationalism of an oppressed people, seeking freedom from foreign oppression. <286>

Secondly, though the ANC YOUTH League was African, it was not exclusive because its constitution stated that "young members of the other sections of the community who live like and with Africans and whose general outlook on life is similar to that of Africans may become full members ...". <287>

The Youth Leaguers learnt a lot from the ANC leadership and they in turn contributed positively to the formulation of a new militant policy of the ANC. Some of their ideas were incorporated in the famous 1949 Programme of Action. These were the emphasis on:

1. The principle of self-determination.
2. Rejection of white domination.
3. Vigorous pro-African policy "under the banner of African nationalism".
4. Injection of a spirit of self-confidence and pride in being African as opposed to racist theories and paternalistic attitudes of liberals who seek to instil a sense of self pity, "shame" in and even "excuses" for being black.
5. Demand for mass action: strikes, demonstrations, protests, etc.

The Youth League contributed more than this to the ANC. At the 37th annual conference of the ANC held in Bloemfontein on

December 15-19, 1949, Revd J A Calata explained the significance of raising the right thumb when singing the national anthem. The first four fingers symbolised unity, determination, solidarity and militancy, while the thumb was raised as a supplication for Africa to come back to us. The symbol was first introduced by the Congress Youth League at the Cape and it has been found appropriate to adopt it unversally in Congress.

The concepts and ideas in the ANC about the principle of self-determination developed and were incororated in the 1949 Programme of action adopted by the annual conference. This conference received messages from Dr Naicker of the South African Indian Congress and from as far afield as Nyasaland (Malawi), from the Nyasaland African National Congress. Mzamane gave a report of the coordinating committee of the Programme of Action, which was thorough scrutinised, paragraph by paragraph, and then accepted and adopted unanimously in its amended form, and it was pointed out that only those people who signfied their willingness to carry out this Programme should be elected onto the incoming Executive. They were:

1. President-General: Dr J S Moroka
2. Secretary-General: W M Sisulu
3. Treasurer-General: Dr S Molema

Committee

4. Dr A B Xuma
5. Dr R T Bokwe

6. Revd J A Calata
7. L K Ntlabati
10. O R Tambo
11. J L Z Njongwe
12. G Radebe
13. J A Mokoena
14. G M Pitje
15. D Tloome
16. M M Kotane
17. R G Baloyi
18. V V T Mbobo

The policy and line of the Youth League had triumphed. Now the ANC was put on a path of struggle with a more concrete and radical programme than ever before. **Lionel Forman** characterises the Youth League as follows:

"These Youth Leaguers were students and teachers and professional men - as petit bourgeois as their predecessors. They were men thrown up by the national struggle, and not the class struggle, and more significant still, although they were not Communists when they initiated and carried through their militant policies, many of them were afterwards drawn towards Marxism and the Communist Party." <288>