



CHAPTER 5

INTROSPECTION AND NEW DIRECTIONS, 1936-1960

Legislative measures and socioeconomic changes in the preceding period of 1870 to 1936 required a reappraisal by Blacks of the current situation. This was particularly important in regard to how they viewed the present in terms of the past. More specifically they would become increasingly concerned to determine their future in terms of a redefined past.

The change in tone and perception is not only a product of altered circumstances but also to a "changing of the guards" in terms of writers. The early generation was gradually falling prey to the passage of time. Nevertheless there are those like D D T Jabavu, H I E Dhlomo and to a lesser extent Molema, who do not lend themselves to chronological categorisation. Part of their writings and the era in which they were created preceded the one now under discussion.

The early generation of writers was dying out and it is not surprising that later and modern writers, commentators and critics should be more concerned with their immediate past. It was the evolution of their current situation that demanded their attention, rather than something in the far-distant past, although it should also be noted that they were not unmindful of that distant past. Their concern was not, however, in portraying the faraway past in detail. Instead they sought patterns in various stages of the past. This pattern served to justify the critique of the present. The final passage of the "Hertzog Bills" in 1936 signalled the crisis point of developments since 1902. The failure of resistance to legislative confirmation of dispossession and electoral segregation required a reappraisal. Two important perceptual developments arose from this reassessment. Firstly the question of whether earlier interpretations of the past had not lulled Blacks into a false confidence in the future. Secondly Blacks had to establish to what extent they themselves had contributed to their current position

by misreading the past and adopting the wrong ideological responses as a consequence. This self-evaluation was not only an individual or personal one. Instead it took the form of criticism of the stance adopted by others. Thus one finds the divergent perceptions apparent in the preceding three chapters. From a Black viewpoint this re-estimation had some negative consequences.

At a time when there should have been unity there was division. There was agreement about what should be aimed at in the sociopolitical arena, but there was a good deal of dissention about how this should be achieved. This division was reflected in criticism of individuals and organisations for adopting futile policies due to a misinterpretation of the past. From the beginning of the period under discussion these divisions and their causes were apparent.

On the eve of the enactment of the Representation of Natives and the Native Trust and Land Bills, attempts were made to coalesce Blacks into opposition to the legislation. Prof. D D T Jabavu convened the All African Convention (AAC) on December 15-18, 1935 in Bloemfontein.<sup>1</sup> The AAC evoked two types of comment: There were those who discerned something positive in its foundation. A second group rejected its inception as a retrogressive step and a source of schism in Black ranks at a time when unity was needed.

Some of the negative criticism can be attributed to the fact that the AAC pre-empted a call made in January 1930 by T D Mveli-Skota, secretary general of the ANC, for a pan-African congress to demonstrate opposition to both Smuts and Hertzog. Skota's vision was broader than that of Jabavu as the former sought to unite delegates from the Cape to Cairo.<sup>2</sup> At this stage already the need was being expressed for some

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<sup>1</sup> L Kuper, "African Nationalism in South Africa", in M Wilson and L M Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume II, South Africa 1870-1966, p. 450.

<sup>2</sup> Report of T. D. Mveli-Skota, Secretary-General of the African National Congress, January 1930 [?], quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 1, pp. 306-308.

high profile political action or the ANC would lose the initiative. This argument should be seen against the background of the inroads that the ICU had made into the ANC's claims to being the leading Black opposition group.

The December 1935 meeting was a response to the ANC's inability to offer effective opposition to the Hertzog Bills. Similarly the ICU had become moribund and was in no position to rally resistance to the proposed laws.<sup>3</sup> In a letter to Mandela, I B Tabata contends that African opposition had become "completely atomized". Consequently "without any premeditated theory the people spontaneously gave birth to a form of organisation which would knit together a whole people into a single compact unit, a fighting force."<sup>4</sup>

The inaugural convention was viewed as remarkable for the numbers involved "and, at that stage, its national character."<sup>5</sup> It was felt that its policy of non-collaboration and emphasis on principled struggle made an indelible impression on African opinion.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless the failure to apply a "premeditated theory" allowed it to degenerate into the "polemics of nihilistic perfection" through which it lost contact "with the realities of the race crisis" and became nothing more than "a highly articulate debating society." Its demise was not due to external agencies, "it merely 'withered' away from the front line."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson, Mandela June 16, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup> G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 91

<sup>7</sup> JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 91.



On the other hand a youthful observer commented to Noni Jabavu that in fact the AAC did have a "premeditated theory", but did not realize that "all that 'gradualism and constitutional channels' business is dead".<sup>8</sup> Both the negative and positive critics of the AAC appear to have a common perception of the early leadership of the AAC. Mandela condemned the leadership for leaving a legacy of intellectual and social elitism that was still felt in the 1950s.<sup>9</sup> Tabata reckons that the early leadership stonewalled debates and "buried" unpalatable resolutions and did all that it could to prevent the Convention becoming a mass movement. The ultimate affront was when H Selby Msimang tried to place the AAC under the "tutelage of the N.R.C.".<sup>10</sup>

Tabata did not entirely apportion blame to the AAC leadership. He was equally critical of the ANC contribution to the decline of the Convention. According to him ANC members of a weak AAC leadership prevented the AAC from achieving its aims.<sup>11</sup> Through its connivance at the disintegration of the AAC the ANC committed an enormous crime against the whole people.<sup>12</sup> As if these divisive forces were not enough, the Communist Party of South Africa was believed to have had a part in undermining the organisation.<sup>13</sup> To add to the trials and tribulations of

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8 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, p. 212.

9 N Mandela, "Land Hunger", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 46.

10 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, pp. 343-344.

11 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 341.

12 "Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 363 and p. 366.

13 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 159.



the new body the government of the day also contributed its part. By propagating the AAC as a representative and, according to its lights, a responsible body, it managed to cast doubts on the integrity of the Convention.<sup>14</sup> Division was encouraged within the leadership by bestowing honours on men like John Dube, who was awarded an honorary doctorate and praised as a "great statesman, a moderate, a practical politician and in fact an epitome of all virtues."<sup>15</sup> Overall the AAC's leadership was condemned for "bringing about the acceptance of oppression, not the determination to overthrow it."<sup>16</sup>

In many respects the conflicting perceptions surrounding the AAC and the reciprocal criticisms that arose from them foreshadowed many of the comments that developed during this period.

While the AAC and the ANC were still jockeying for the leadership of Black politics new developments overtook both organisations. The first major bone of contention was the decision of the Union of South Africa to throw in its lot with the Allies in World War II. Here again a marked awareness of previous actions was apparent. The consciousness of what had happened in the previous global conflagration played an important role in how Blacks responded to the call to serve "king and country".

The frustrated expectations of participation in World War I did much to dampen enthusiasm for enlistment in World War II. Support of the war effort was made far more conditional. At the same time there was a far

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14 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 343.

15 "Letter ["On the Organisations of the African People"], from I.B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, pp. 364-365.

16 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 343.

more pronounced debate about the causes of the war and South Africa's position in it. All these shifts in tone can be attributed to how Blacks perceived their treatment during and after the first world war.

Support in World War I had been acknowledged by steadily deteriorating conditions for Blacks in post-bellum years, therefore they were reluctant to enlist unconditionally.<sup>17</sup> Enlistment would only be considered if the government halted prosecutions in terms of "technical" offences and allowed employment at living wage levels.<sup>18</sup> With the memories of the Great War lingering on the Congress Youth League felt it was ridiculous that Blacks should enter the war which would decide "which European power would have what sphere of influence."<sup>19</sup> And as for the call to combat the terror of Nazism it was debatable whether this terror could exceed that experienced by Blacks in South Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Political allegiances also caused conflict for potential participants. Members of the Communist Party felt themselves in conflict over obedience to Moscow's non-aggression and taking up arms against the perceived enemy, fascist Germany.<sup>21</sup>

The Communist Party was also seen to be behind the equivocation on the

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17 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 69.

18 "An Address at the Mendi Memorial Celebration. Bantu Sports Grounds, Johannesburg," by Dr. A. B. Xuma, February 23, 1941, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 165.

19 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 292.

20 "Address by I. B. Tabata, All African Convention Conference, December 16, 1941", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 342.

21 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 213.





part of the AAC on the question of support.<sup>22</sup> Outside of these considerations there were some who had the chagrin of being told they would be fighting for the "privilege of being oppressed". Thus children lost "the great fascination of the glory of war" and instead "privately cheered the military advances of the Third Reich: it was not so much of admiring Hitler, but an emotional alliance with the enemy of South Africa."<sup>23</sup>

In certain respects Modisane's viewpoint is significant: it appears that the image of the future in terms of the past and present looked so bleak that even a German victory looked attractive. The record to date appeared to indicate that a common future was unattainable. The heap of shattered hopes had left the feeling that Blacks could no longer rely on White benevolence.

Force of circumstances required the government to make verbal concessions to African demands, without rescinding legislation. Thus with the war over Blacks were made to understand that pre-war conditions once again applied.<sup>24</sup> In a bitter reverie Dhlomo has a veteran of the war think,

"Of a war I won to lose  
Of a peace I may not choose".<sup>25</sup>

Later Dhlomo wonders whether defeat might not have been a salutary exercise for Whites so that they too could "taste [their] own medicine of oppression and humiliation."<sup>26</sup>

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22 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 168.

23 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 78.

24 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 232-233.

25 HIE Dhlomo, "Not For Me", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 376.

26 HIE Dhlomo, "Farmer and Servant", in N Visser and T Couzens (eds), H.I.E. Dhlomo. Collected Works, p. 460.



While many expressed regret and self-recrimination at the end of the war for enlisting, another faction adopted a different stance while hostilities were still in progress. This faction saw the straws blowing in the wind with the declaration of war. It looked at what had transpired previously and decided to articulate its demands in regard to participation in the war and a future dispensation in unequivocal terms.

The opportunity for this development linked directly with the Atlantic Charter. The stated aims of the Atlantic Charter issued on August 14, 1941 were analysed and a response formulated in terms of the situation of Blacks in South Africa. What is apparent from the document that issued from this analysis, African Claims in South Africa. Including "The Atlantic Charter from the standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa" and "Bill of Rights", is that any future participation by Blacks in local and international affairs would be conditional. The conditions reflect the reaction of Blacks to the gradual erosion of their rights. The past had shown that Blacks had received nought in reciprocity for their support of common causes in the Union.

The demands contained in the document clearly reflect an increasing disillusionment with the status quo, based on a perceived betrayal in the past. An equally important characteristic of African Claims is the rejection of a double standard. African Claims made it clear that the ideals of the Atlantic Charter were no longer seen as applicable only in other parts of the world, without any relevance to the colonies and South Africa in particular. Because African Claims was considered such a radical departure in policy it was clearly stated in the document that it was purely of African origin and that the responsible committee had drafted its findings without external inputs.<sup>27</sup>

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27 "African Claims in South Africa. Including 'The Atlantic Charter from the standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa' and 'Bill of Rights'", quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 210.





This statement on the approach adopted and the conclusions reached has two implications. It shows a sensitivity to suggestions that Blacks were unable to formulate their own aspirations and the means to achieve them. Simultaneously it suggests a rejection of White trusteeship and tutelage. The self-assertiveness that speaks from African Claims heralds the culmination of the realization that a dependence on the intervention of the "liberal" and "friend of the native" had borne no fruit. One Black academic argued that although African Claims contained the most direct statement of African demands it still did not "as yet talk of the destruction of the "White" social system."<sup>28</sup> Magubane encapsulates much of the criticism against the ANC in this era. This criticism suggests that the ANC still relied too heavily on its middle class leadership which more readily identified with the ideals of a White-dominated society than the aspirations of the Black masses. It appeared that this reliance on White goodwill had done little else but assuage the anger felt at the increasing discrimination against Blacks. This blunting of anger was to an increasing extent seen as diversionary, sidetracking Blacks from articulating and attaining their goals. A further facet of this new direction was that it was an indication of a self-evaluation. Blacks looked back on past policies and strategies and through African Claims showed that they had become dissatisfied with the status quo within the Black body politic.

It was one thing for the ANC to indicate new directions in policy, but it was another matter whether it had the leadership to both point to and lead the way. Once again Blacks were required to look inwards and assess their leadership. Strangely enough the body that was responsible for this reassessment, and in many respects became the leading critic of the existing ANC leadership, was initiated by its target, the then ANC leadership. The president of the ANC, Xuma, had launched a programme to revitalize the ANC. This programme included an appeal to a

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28 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 175.



relatively new constituency, the youth. Thus the Congress Youth League (CYL) was officially launched in March 1944.<sup>29</sup>

Founding members of the CYL argued that earlier ANC leadership had lacked militancy, and thus allowed the ANC to decline into a debating society without a programme of action.<sup>30</sup> The pandering to White whims was rejected and an overtly racial element was introduced. The argument for this was that White rule had emphasized individualism at the expense of African "communal contentment". At the same time, because White rule was based on the assumption of racial superiority, the only effective counter to this was to proclaim African sovereignty.<sup>31</sup>

There can be little doubt that the launch of the CYL was one of the most significant developments in Black politics. The League infused a new vitality and direction in Black politics. At the same time it created new tensions within Black ranks that prompted a vociferous and at times vindictive debate between Blacks. The discussion evolved around the question of what the solution to the present and the future situation of Blacks was. An integral part of the debate was a review of the past as justification for present policies. Frequently the vision was not explicit, but implied in the criticism of the policy adopted by the opposing faction.

The two ideological directions that emerged from the formation of the Youth League were the multiracial Congress Movement/Alliance and the proponents of Africanism. The labels attached to these directions only

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29 "Congress Youth League Manifesto", issued by the Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 300.

30 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 305.

31 "Congress Youth League Manifesto", issued by the Provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 301.



gained currency in the 1950s, but the tone of their ideologies was already noticeable in the latter half of the 1940s. The foundation of the CYL was interpreted according to the ideological persuasion of the commentator.

Luthuli reckoned that the overall impact of the League "as a whole was considerable and beneficial."<sup>32</sup> An outspoken critic of the ANC, I B Tabata, argued that Congress's influence was so all-pervasive that the Youth League had to sacrifice its principles in order to remain within the Congress fold and retain legitimacy.<sup>33</sup> Therefore the CYL was not a regenerative force.

The CYL was also seen to have been created under stress, at a time when the ANC was under threat from rival political organisations such as the African Democratic Party. As a result it was felt that the League's initial manifesto had flaws that should be ironed out. The major flaw was believed to be that its original policy allowed divided political loyalties. This weakness was interpreted as a diversion from the struggle for "African Nationalism and National freedom", based on an African National Front.<sup>34</sup> The emphasis on African nationalism prompted one commentator to say that the CYL and the Africanists were an extension of the Ethiopian movement into the political arena.<sup>35</sup> The League was also an indication of dissatisfaction over the ANC's "defeatist and apologetic tactics",<sup>36</sup> that showed its weariness with "the pomp of consul-

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32 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 91.

33 Letter ["On the organisations of the African people"], from I. B. Tabata to Nelson Mandela, June 16, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 362,

34 Letter on the Youth League, from A. P. Mda to G. M. Pitje, September 10, 1948, quoted in T Karis and GM Carter (eds), From Protest to Challenge. Vol 2, p. 322.

35 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 69.

36 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 41



tations and the nobility of gentlemen's agreements". The latter tendency of the ANC paved the way for the breakaway of the Africanists or "national extremists" in 1958.<sup>38</sup>

Attempts by the ANC to negotiate and so blunt the thrust of confrontation launched by the League only served to emasculate the CYL at a time when it was already weakened by the death of its guiding intellect, Anton Lembede.<sup>39</sup> Fortunately for the League its early years were provided with a focus for its actions. The CYL had marshalled its forces and resources to do battle with Smuts. But as the engagement was about to commence White political developments altered the target when Malan led the National Party to power in 1948.<sup>40</sup>

The National Party victory resulted from the Afrikaner uniting over class and social differences into a single voting bloc that gave the Afrikaner the power to control a whole society in his own interests.<sup>41</sup> The electoral victory of 1948 did have its advantages. The National Party was to "demonstrate unambiguously to the African people what it is that the Congress movement is pledged to resist." The attitude of the National Party towards negotiation also showed the misplaced reliance placed on this method.<sup>42</sup>

It could also be said that the electoral victory of the NP in 1948 was

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37 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 126.

38 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 69.

39 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 127

40 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 98.

41 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 169.

42 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 97 and p. 105.

a boon to Black politics in that it provided a focus for the rhetoric of opposition. By giving its racial policy a label, that of "apartheid", the NP offered an ideal target for those who were trying to coordinate Black opposition to South Africa's racial dispensation. Also, because apartheid placed such emphasis on race, the very vivid spectre of Nazism, as a racial policy culminating in genocide, was increasingly invoked. This is despite the attitude of some Blacks to Germany during World War II. It appears in the writing from this period on that Black authors, in various guises, were at last able to express themselves in what they believed to be universally comprehensible terms.

Apartheid was perceived as an answer to the need for Whites to remain master, and as "the point of final fulfilment for the descendants of the Trekkers."<sup>43</sup> In this respect the concern of the liberal school of writers becomes apparent, whether they belong to the early or modern ages, they all endeavoured to show that the situation that they commented on was the product of a long tradition of racial prejudice. In this case the belief was held that the concept of racial supremacy that had spawned the Great Trek was alive and well and living in the hearts and minds of the heirs to the Voortrekkers. For Ngubane the "chain of continuity has never been broken", so that apartheid was giving effect to the "temper of the slave owner".<sup>44</sup>

The overt and covert racial discrimination of earlier decades was seen to be masquerading behind different masks under the apartheid dispensation. In many respects past policies were perceived to have been given new dimensions and emphases through apartheid. Thus the stress on cultural differentiation was argued to be "for the purpose of using it as an instrument to maintain our people in backwardness and ignorance."<sup>45</sup> This would be achieved by underlining "the temporary

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43 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 37.

44 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 37 and p. 64.

45 ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 19.

sectarian interests of various national, ethnic, tribal and social groups"<sup>46</sup> emulating the divide-and-rule tactics so popular in the Roman and British empires. In this way an effective counter to burgeoning African nationalism was intended. White supremacy could only survive if Black nationalism was diverted into manageable channels. By so doing African nationalism that had gradually been evolving could be fragmented.<sup>47</sup> Aside from the ethnic divisions within the broader Black community social stratification was also encouraged within ethnic units.

A "ruling aristocracy of hireling chiefs" was created to hold sway over remnants of peasant farmers who were in the final throes of being dispossessed of their means of subsistence. Further class antagonism was created by the encouragement of a middle class of professionals and traders.<sup>48</sup> The chiefs were co-opted into the system by financial inducements and persuaded to fob off their subjects with the argument that "half a loaf is better than no loaf".<sup>49</sup> Chiefly avarice was apparent in resolutions of the Transkei Territorial Authority which showed that chiefs could not be bought off by promises of gain. Instead they demanded that substance be given to governmental pledges.<sup>50</sup> The chiefs who collaborated within the system had to replace the old native commissioner of the days of direct rule. The native commissioner had become "too visible and accessible a target for anti-government action." Thus without a direct acknowledgment of the debt to Lord Lugard,

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46 ANC National Executive Committee, "Forward to Armed Seizure of Power", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 142.

47 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 22 and p. 47.

48 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 73-74.

49 ANC National Executive Committee, "Forward to Armed Seizure of Power", in ANC, ANC Speaks..., p. 144.

50 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 74-75.





a system of indirect rule was adopted.<sup>51</sup> Most of the comments thus far have a bearing on the homelands and the political function that they were to perform.

Magubane, however, broadens his vision to include the urban environment as well. He argues that apartheid was a response to increasing class consciousness and solidarity amongst Blacks in the industrial centres of South Africa. This development had to be choked off before class action could threaten the industrial centres of South Africa and thus its economy.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, from Magubane's viewpoint, apartheid is the ideological expression of the demands of capitalism. This viewpoint is entirely consistent with Magubane's overall perception of the motive forces in South African history. But Magubane was not the only one to apply this logic. Ndebele contends that apartheid "is no longer a pseudo ideology; it has become an economic principle."<sup>53</sup> Similarly the South African economy was kept in motion by the never ending supply of migrant labourers whose procurement was a major function of apartheid.<sup>54</sup>

If these were the broader concepts attached to the policy of apartheid how did Blacks view their lives under the system? A constant thread that runs through all the perceptions is that of an all pervasive intrusion into the lives and dignity of the individual. Apart from the "obvious crudeness of the practical application of separate development there lies a very sophisticated and subtle tiger - psychic manipulation."<sup>55</sup> This "psychic manipulation" can be ascribed to the feeling

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51 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 37-38.

52 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, pp. 153-156.

53 N Ndebele, "Black Development", in S Biko(ed), Black Viewpoint, p. 20.

54 G Mbeki, South Africa The Peasants' Revolt, p. 86.

55 NC Manganyi, Being-Black-in-the World, p. 27.

that Blacks are being meshed into a system designed by an architect over whom they have no control, and who is, in addition, impervious to pressures.<sup>56</sup> It is a self-perpetuating system that feeds on fear. It is a delusion to think that economic forces will destroy apartheid, because it has originated in,

racial hatred, the fear of miscegenation and extinction as a group, the fear of self-discovery, the fear of being liberated from one's own superstitions, have come to stay: that the laws of the country which buttress these emotions and are in turn supported by them, are the laws of the Medes and the Persians.<sup>57</sup>

Apartheid was the single word that changed the political face of South Africa. It was "charged with the emotional intensity which suited the general temper of White South Africa." It made Dr Malan while it destroyed General Smuts. White opposition politicians made trite jokes about the term while Blacks were "put in their place". The word generated passages of purple prose at the United Nations. All the while as the "pigeon-hole-philosophy of apartheid" was being implemented Blacks were being "dehumanised and defaced".<sup>58</sup> Modisane felt himself obliged to "come to terms with its reality and arrange myself under the will of its authority. I have to be sane, calculating and ruthless to survive."<sup>59</sup> It is clear that the impact of apartheid was also seen to extend far beyond physical deprivation and deep into the psyche of the individual.

The ideals of youth were shattered. Luthuli and Matthews, while they were at Adams College, believed that the only limitation on their futures was themselves. But their estimation did not take the implementa-

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<sup>56</sup> E Mphahlele, Afrika My Music..., p. 175.

<sup>57</sup> E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 195.

<sup>58</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 122-123.

<sup>59</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 56.



tion of apartheid into account.<sup>60</sup> Thus apartheid was seen by Luthuli as an artificial restraint on human development that thwarted the individual's attainment of his potential. This view is echoed by Noni Jabavu who comments on the frustrated career ideals of youthful acquaintances. But it is not only the young who had to experience this aimlessness. Their mothers experienced the anguish of being unable to nurture hope in the future in the minds and hearts of their offspring.<sup>61</sup> The obvious and frequent escape route was to sink into despair, or to become a domestic in one "of those incredible 'kitchen-boy suits'." That this option should be considered or taken was a victory for the system.<sup>62</sup>

Ngubane reckons that the influence of apartheid is so corrosive that it is futile to expect objectivity from a writer on the topic "when his very being is attacked as a matter of policy: where human resources are callously wasted in order to uphold an ideological preference."<sup>63</sup> These human resources are wasted in a variety of ways, apart from the disincentive of futility. The futility gives rise to destructive social aberrations. Thus from "what Colonel Visser says it is clear that Mr. Average Soweto Sojourner is not born a murderer, he is moulded by the repressive and exploitative system into a drunken and stupefied killer."<sup>64</sup>

Beneath the frenetic life style that seeks to obliterate the White presence is a sombre note of violence and despair.<sup>65</sup> Life under apartheid

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60 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 42.

61 N Jabavu, The Ochre People, pp. 57-58.

62 N Nakasa, "Oh, To be an Anonymous Houseboy", in E Patel (ed), The World of Nat Nakasa, pp. 154-155.

63 JK Ngubane, An African explains Apartheid, p. vi.

64 J Sikakane, A Window on Soweto, p. 28.

65 B Modisane, Blame Me on History, pp. 117-118.

also produces anomalies in urban society. Urbanized Blacks still cling to traditional practices to provide an anchor in an insecure environment.<sup>66</sup> The alienation between parent and child is seen in the formation of street gangs bent on wreaking "their revenge on the society that confronts them with only the dead-end alley of crime and poverty."<sup>67</sup>

In addition to the conflict between generations, urban society is also plagued by ethnic conflict. Ethnic divisions had existed prior to the advent of apartheid. The Basotho gangs known as the "Russians" had always been viewed with trepidation in the Johannesburg locations. However with the rigid ethnic divisions implemented and encouraged by apartheid, action against criminal elements such as the "Russians" took on an overtly tribal tone. Vigilante groups were formed along ethnic lines, which tended to accentuate schisms in society according to tribal criteria. This also tended to draw those who were not directly involved in the conflict into the fray by virtue of their ethnic affiliation.<sup>68</sup>

The preceding indicates some of the perceptions of apartheid as a policy and its impact on the individual and society. Naturally this is not the full picture as apartheid itself underwent mutations over the years. Simultaneously perceptions of the policy and its impact changed. This became particularly apparent in the era of "grand apartheid", when greater emphasis was placed on the creation of the bantustans. But first one must turn to the immediate responses to the events of 1948. In some respects it can be said that the foundations for a response were laid in the years 1943 and 1944.

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66 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 171.

67 OR Tambo, "Introduction", in N Mandela, No easy Walk to Freedom..., p. x.

68 C Themba, "Terror in the Trains", in E Patel (ed)., The World of Can Themba Selected Writings of the Late Can Themba, pp. 111-115.



Modisane believes that the introduction of apartheid brought about a fundamental change of direction in Black politics. He argues that by closing the door on consultation with moderate Black leadership, which set the tone and pace for Black politics at the time, apartheid brought a new leadership to the fore. By applying an overall policy, that allowed for no class distinctions between Blacks, the old guard found itself having to turn to the rank-and-file rabble as a constituency. However when the middle-class leadership sought to establish its role it found that the "young Turks" had ousted them. Men like Lembede, Mda, Sisulu and Mandela aided and abetted by Sobukwe and Leballo, had successfully challenged "the respectable politics of the old guard." The new guard was essentially based in the Congress Youth League. Equally important was that the new generation had broadened its platform to include and be part of the African continent.<sup>69</sup>

It should be remembered that though these changes in policy appeared to be viewed with a measure of equanimity they were to become the basis of bitter and acrimonious dissent. The bone of contention was the extent to which these changes were a deviation from ANC principles. Another point of controversy was whether these changes were not in fact a betrayal of Black aspirations to other vested and inimical interests. The debate around these issues became crucial after the formation of the Pan-Africanist Congress and therefore will be discussed at a later stage. But the points raised in this paragraph should be borne in mind when looking at the divergent appraisals of various actions taken in reaction to apartheid.

The blueprint for future action in dealing with the White dominated government was contained in the Programme of Action ratified in 1949. This was considered to be one of the "first sorties from a politics in conformity and persuasion to a politics of confrontation. For the first

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<sup>69</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me on History, p. 124.



time ANC turned consciously to the masses to stimulate political action and to arouse their fighting spirit."<sup>70</sup>

The Programme was an attempt to provide the method to give practical expression to African Claims in South Africa. It contained elements of "bootstrap economics" to funding of Congress actions, providing propaganda material and mobilizing union activity. Nevertheless it did not envisage revolutionary change, but rather "a more rapid evolutionary advance towards a democratization of government."<sup>71</sup> This "milestone in Congress history...represents a fundamental change of policy and method" that indicated that Blacks were no longer satisfied with crumbs from the White man's table.<sup>72</sup> Mandela argued in his defence in the Treason Trial that the Programme of Action had been the result of disillusionment in the efficacy of constitutionality.<sup>73</sup> Luthuli maintained that it was aimed at the franchise question. Once this had been resolved all other issues such as land, discrimination and poverty could be settled.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand Dube perceived the Programme to be an Africanist manifesto that outlined how Africans would regain their land.<sup>75</sup>

Significance is also attached to the Programme because it was indicative of new developments in the broader spectrum of Black politics. As early as 1946 formal recognition had been given to the need for coopera-

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70 BM Magubane, The political Economy of race and class in South Africa, p. 298.

71 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community, A Case study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 180 and p. 219.

72 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 98.

73 N Mandela, "A Charge of Treason", in N Mandela, No Easy walk to Freedom..., pp. 82-83.

74 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 98-99.

75 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 46.





tion between African and Indian on matters of common concern through the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact. This Pact became the forerunner of the Congress Alliance.<sup>76</sup> The Congress Alliance was in later years the source of much recrimination. But already in 1950 voices of dissent were heard over the multiracial character that the ANC was assuming. Thus Selope-Thema and his "ANC National Minded Bloc" was concerned over the ANC being reduced to "paid agents of the Indian merchants."<sup>77</sup>

The Programme outlined the aims of Black politics but how were they to be achieved? The first steps to attempt to realize the aims were taken with the Defiance Campaign. With due regard to symbolism the Campaign was officially announced on April 6, 1952, the tercentenary of Van Riebeeck's landing at the Cape. It would actually commence on June 26, in itself a date that features prominently in the time charts of Black history. April 6 was chosen because it commemorated a day that was viewed as either a day of divine beneficence or Black dispossession.<sup>78</sup>

The Campaign entailed Union-wide civil disobedience aimed at specific discriminatory laws, with the intention of bringing the plight of Blacks to the attention of Whites.<sup>79</sup> But it appears that some observers discerned a reluctance on the part of the ANC to enter into the Campaign. Thus it required the Congress Youth League to engineer Luthuli's ousting of Moroka as President of the Congress before the League could obtain the ANC's commitment to the Campaign.<sup>80</sup> Ironically Luthuli was nearly precluded from participation in the action. The

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76 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 179.

77 D Nokwe, "Congress and the Africanists: (2) Congress Replies", in Africa South, Volume 4, #3, April-June 1960, pp. 34-35.

78 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 104.

79 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 105.

80 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 310.



Natal leader of the ANC at the time, A W G Champion, had been opposed to the Campaign. As a result the ANC Natal was delayed in committing itself to the Programme and Luthuli himself accused of cowardice for not declaring himself in favour of the Campaign.<sup>81</sup>

Evaluation of the Campaign is divided. Even those who were optimistic in their viewpoint tended to qualify their appraisal. Those who condemned the Campaign were not unanimous in their reasons for doing so. It appears that these differences can be attributed to the ideological perspective from which the individual observer saw the event. In addition those who believed that something positive had developed from the Campaign were generally directly involved and could therefore not be overtly condemnatory of their creation.

It is apparent that both the detractors and supporters of the Campaign viewed it as a programme of passive resistance. It was intended to place such strains on the country's law enforcement and judicial agencies that they would collapse. Thus the laws that concerned separate amenities and passes would be forcefully expunged from the statute books. As the Defiance Campaign was to be a manifestation of overt action on a multiracial front other targets were also defined to provide a target for other racial groups. To meet the needs of "Coloureds", the Separate Representation of Voters Act was targeted; action by Whites had to aim at the Suppression of Communism Act; Indians had to set their sights on the Group Areas Act; Africans had to add the cattle culling programme to their list of objectives.<sup>82</sup>

A declared proponent of the Campaign had reservations over its potential for violence, which would have negated its passive nature and thus violated ANC policy. Luthuli's reservations were not so much based on doubts about the correctness of the Campaign as that it appeared to be

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81 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 101 and p. 106.

82 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 136.



precipitate and required more planning.<sup>83</sup> Opposed to this Mokgatle criticizes the action as a lost opportunity. He believes the people were ready for mass action but they had not been properly mobilized so that "an onslaught was never launched against the police and fascist state headed by Dr Malan." It was also naive to believe that attacking unjust laws would resolve the issue of an unjust state. Similarly sending out volunteers to be arrested achieved nought but suffering without recompense.<sup>84</sup> On an organizational level the Defiance Campaign was criticized for failing to provide a "point-by point blueprint".<sup>85</sup>

Doubts were also expressed about the targets of the Campaign with the exception of the pass laws. Modisane believed, like Mokgatle, that the civil disobedience did little else but provide heroic moments as the people resisted the symptoms of apartheid rather than the causes. Nevertheless he believed that if the pass laws could be brought to collapse then the economy would be destroyed. In a somewhat contradictory comment Modisane says that he doubts that jails crammed with pass offenders would deter the government of the day. Rather the supporters of the National Party in the agricultural sector would welcome this relief to their labour problems.<sup>86</sup> Ngubane on the other hand felt that an imminent collapse of the economy was a misplaced belief. He reckoned that "the economy was so organized that Whites could easily join forces and frustrate African efforts."<sup>87</sup> The Non-European Unity Movement saw the Campaign as a betrayal by "African Quislings" of the African cause to the vested interests of Indian merchants. Luthuli answered that it was all very well for the NEUM leadership to snipe at the ANC leader-

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83 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 102.

84 N Mokgatle, The Autobiography of an Unknown South African, p. 308 and p. 306.

85 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 76.

86 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 136-137.

87 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 81-82.

ship for seeking "freedom from responsibility in gaol", but the Unity Movement failed to offer alternatives.<sup>88</sup>

The earlier expressed fears over violence were realized in October 1952 when rioting in New Brighton was sparked off by police action not related to the Defiance Campaign. Eleven people died. Violence and deaths followed in Johannesburg, Kimberley and East London. It appears however that regret over violence was not at the bloodletting but that the police could now take the initiative. Luthuli was of the opinion that the riots in Kimberley and Port Elizabeth were instigated by agents provocateurs who incited the youth of the districts to violence.<sup>89</sup> The police had long been waiting to commence their crackdown by provoking riots.<sup>90</sup> Luthuli, however, concedes that the police showed great restraint, although "these were not yet the days when South Africa bristled from end to end with heavily armed police and troops."<sup>91</sup> Tsotsi was not surprised at the repression that took place because, in his view, the police made no distinction between law and justice where Blacks were concerned.<sup>92</sup>

Although there was a degree of unanimity about the way in which the Defiance Campaign was broken there was still the post mortem to be held over the initial cause of death and the overall significance of this first attempt at mass action. It is in these aspects that the emerging ideological conflict in Black politics becomes most noticeable.

Whether obliquely or directly, the multiracial character that the ANC

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88 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 113 and pp. 115-116.

89 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 115-116.

90 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 62.

91 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 107.

92 WM Tsotsi, From Chattel to Wage Slavery..., p. 95.

had taken on since 1946 became a matter of major concern. Mokgatlé's judgement on the lack of mass mobilisation has already been cited. More significantly, the membership recruitment drive launched by the ANC to coincide with the Defiance Campaign exposed the ANC to police infiltration. During Moroka's trial it transpired that a member of the national headquarters was in the service of the security police.<sup>93</sup>

There was a lack of solidarity in the ranks of the leaders, which became clear when Moroka broke ranks with his co-accused.<sup>94</sup> There appears to have been a lack of commitment over the efficacy of passive resistance. The old-guard leadership did not consider passive resistance part of the African political machinery. Opposed to them were the "Young Turks" of the Congress Youth League, who have since "gone respectable" and believed that the Defiance Campaign was in keeping with the Programme of Action. They did not conceive of the Campaign as an object in itself, but merely as a prelude to future action. Also the instigators of the Campaign were naive to believe that the present government would react like the British government had to Gandhi's agitation in India.<sup>95</sup> Thus both leadership factions failed to manifest a total commitment to what was perceived by some to be a critical moment in Black history.

In the case of Natal it was reckoned that in addition to the late agreement to join the Campaign the necessary motivation was inhibited by the involvement of the South African Indian Congress. But Luthuli felt that this issue was merely a red herring. The commitment to collaboration had already been made in 1946 with the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact.<sup>96</sup> The preceding comments are largely the result of retrospection, but there

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<sup>93</sup> N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 116.

<sup>95</sup> B Modisane, Blame Me On History, p. 137-138.

<sup>96</sup> A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 102-103.



were also factors that indicated that facets outside the ANC and its allies contributed to the collapse of the Campaign.

The White press did little to advance the cause of Blacks. The Afrikaans press reacted hysterically, while the English press did little but provide pictorial and statistical coverage.<sup>97</sup> Even though the Campaign had brought churches out of their inertia, the direction that they took was not always that wished by the campaigners. The DRC was seen, by Luthuli, as the most obstructionist. It not only condemned the Defiance Campaign but also stated that civil disobedience was equal to disobedience to God. The Presbyterians were not only noted for their sympathy with the sentiments that underlay the Campaign but also for their condemnation of the Programme itself.<sup>98</sup> Ngubane assigns a far more subtle role to the churches in the failure of the Campaign. He believes that the White hierarchy of the established churches played an active part in people accepting the power of constituted authority and thus diluting militancy.<sup>99</sup>

Very much on the line of "The Campaign is dead, long live the Campaign" supporters and detractors of the Campaign were not expected to walk away from the graveside of their actions and forget about them. Instead it was viewed posthumously as a source of inspiration or caution for future activities.

Liberal Whites were believed to have taken the Campaign as an indication of the need for solidarity with Blacks.<sup>100</sup> An assessment of the Campaign brought Mandela to the realization that the winged word did not mobilize the masses. Instead emotive speeches would do more harm

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97 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 106.

98 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 122-123.

99 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 81-82.

100 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 81-82.





than good to the organisations and the struggles that they purported to serve. He realized that far greater emphasis had to be placed on mobilizing rank and file for any future action.<sup>101</sup> The phraseology of correspondence with the government prior to the Campaign indicated that the action was still predicated on constitutionality. This had clearly failed and thus this avenue was now closed.<sup>102</sup> Oliver Tambo was more inclined to consider the Campaign as one of "aggressive pressure" because he saw passive resistance as a self-pitying resignation to oppression.<sup>103</sup> Mandela evaluated the Campaign as an important step in radicalizing and mobilizing the Black community.<sup>104</sup>

Opinions were divided over the final significance of the Campaign. Pheko maintains that the Campaign caused the ANC to adopt a multiracial policy that abandoned the Youth League's policy based on the Programme of Action and nation-building.<sup>105</sup> Pheko's evaluation should be seen against the background of the ideological split that was developing between Blacks. This rift centred around who had remained loyal to the credo of the Congress Youth League and thus the ANC, and could therefore claim to be truly representative of Black aspirations. In today's ideological context this difference in ideology is expressed in the so-called "progressive" and "Black Consciousness" movements. The evolution of this argument will become apparent in later pages. Opposed to Pheko one has the interpretation given by Ncube to the Defiance Campaign: de-

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101 N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 23.

102 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 136-137.

103 O Tambo, "Passive Resistance in South Africa", in JA Davis and JK Baker (eds), Southern Africa in Transition, (First edition, Frederick Praeger, New York, 1966), p. 217 as cited in M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social Ethical Analysis, p. 59-60.

104 N Mandela, "No Easy Walk to Freedom", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 22.

105 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 82.

spite its failure "it fostered the co-operation and unity amongst liberation organizations, specifically the ANC and the SAIC."<sup>106</sup> Luthuli believes that the Campaign triggered the revolts in areas such as Zeerust, Natal and Sekhukhuneland, but is adamant that the ANC neither sanctioned nor was actively involved in these uprisings.<sup>107</sup>

Implicit and explicit in the perceptions and evaluations of the Campaign was that it represented, in the final analysis, a step towards the attainment of Black ideals. But, there were also doubts expressed over organisational, leadership, and methodological aspects of the Programme of Action. What then was the next step, and would it be taken with the questions raised by the Defiance Campaign answered? There is no doubt that the next most significant step was perceived to be the Freedom Charter. Just as in the case of the Defiance Campaign, the Charter had its supporters and detractors who saw in the latter document confirmation of the trends that they had praised or criticized in the Programme of Action.

With a few exceptions, comment on the Freedom Charter is limited to evaluation, critique and perception of the significance of the document rather than dealing with the specifics of content. The content was only considered to illustrate why the Charter was seen by many critics as the cause for the final schisms in Black politics, and they had to justify their stance in regard to the document.

In summarising the views of the Africanist, Motlhabi comes to the conclusion that he saw the Charter as "a 'sell-out' of the African's birth-right - his prerogative in his land."<sup>108</sup> Ultimately the dilution of

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106 DMJ Ncube, The Influence of Apartheid and Capitalism on the Development of Black Trade Unions in South Africa, p. 94.

107 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 122.

108 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 47.



principles was viewed in such a serious light that opponents of the Charter were willing to sacrifice unity. Thus the Africanists in the Congress Youth League broke away to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) on April 6, 1959.<sup>109</sup> What was it that the Africanists found so objectionable that they were willing to give up the unity that was so urgently required? It appears that a fundamental issue was that the acceptance of the Charter as a policy document of the ANC indicated the end of the organisation's initiative. From comments it appears that the ANC was the last of the major Black political organisations to subscribe to the Charter.

Matthews maintains that the concept of a congress of the people was mooted at the March 1954 meeting of the National Executive of the ANC in Natal. As the proposer of this motion he was directed to draw up a memorandum that should serve as the basis for discussion between interested parties.<sup>110</sup> In addition, according to the evidence of some participants in gathering the views of people on the proposed congress, the input from the broad mass was extensive. These information gatherers were recruited from the ranks of the Freedom Volunteers who had offered themselves for arrest during the Defiance Campaign. The Volunteers were carefully instructed on how to canvass, record and report opinions on demands to be contained in any proposed charter of the people.<sup>111</sup> Viewed from this perspective then, it seems that the initiative for the Charter originated with the ANC and that it received widespread support and reaction. Therefore it appears remarkable that the ANC should only adopt the Charter as an official platform in March 1956.<sup>112</sup>

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109 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 86.

110 ZK Matthews, Freedom For My People..., p. 175.

111 R Suttner and J Cronin et al., 30 Years of the Freedom Charter, pp. 6-30.

112 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 142.



Luthuli finds nothing remarkable in this. Instead he argues that the delay was procedurally correct. The ANC could not commit itself to a policy without ratification by its members. Luthuli himself had misgivings about an unequivocal acceptance of the document. He was particularly concerned about the question of nationalisation which, he felt, should have been properly debated. Debate was, however, stifled by reactionary elements personified by Robert Sobukwe.<sup>113</sup> By implication the critics of the Charter were blamed for the imperfections of the document and the policy it outlined.

Matthews argues that the delay had been intentional. It had been agreed at the Kliptown Congress that the sponsoring organisations should get an endorsement from their rank-and-file. The delay in the ANC obtaining this mandate was attributed to internal political tensions within the ANC. Thus the first opportunity which presented itself for ratification of the Charter in December 1955 was lost. The Annual General Meeting of the ANC held in Bloemfontein that December was dominated by the election of office bearers. Ratification had to wait until March 1956.<sup>114</sup> It is clear that Luthuli did not subscribe to the views of Mandela on the issue of nationalisation. The latter argued that monopoly capital and agriculture had to pay, by being nationalised, for their centuries of exploitative plunder if the Freedom Charter was to succeed.<sup>115</sup>

A disincentive to debate might also have originated with the perception amongst many Blacks that the Charter's lack of clarity indicated that "the ANC was at best vague and at worst ambivalent in its policy."<sup>116</sup>

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113 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 142.

114 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 182.

115 N Mandela, "Freedom in Our Lifetime", in N Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom..., p. 57.

116 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 45-46.

Were these delays merely the result of reactionary obstructionism, internal political rivalry and a lack of enthusiasm?

To judge from the views of Luthuli and Matthews the answer is, yes. But from the comments of other observers it becomes clear that the Freedom Charter was the source of much tension. Ngubane detects the hand of the Congress Movement and thus the South African Communist Party behind the Charter.<sup>117</sup> Pheko states quite unequivocally that the Charter was the progeny of the South African Communist Party "intended to sabotage and confuse the Azanian revolution."<sup>118</sup> It is further contended that Luthuli had very little to do with the final contents of the Charter, due to ill-health and the banning orders imposed on him.<sup>119</sup> Luthuli himself concedes this point and also points an accusatory finger at organisational weaknesses.

Local structures were tardy in making submissions. Therefore their suggestions could not be included in the draft. The final document was a reflection of this weakness as it was uneven in expression. At times it lost meaning through a plethora of detail and at other times it was so loosely worded that it became obtuse.<sup>120</sup> From the preceding it seems that opponents of the Charter saw it as hiding a hidden agenda. On the other hand a proponent like Luthuli had misgivings about the possibility of ambiguities.

Luthuli might have phrased his doubts over the Freedom Charter in delicate terms but opponents did not share his sensibilities. One object of criticism was that although the Charter contained a set of principles on which a future society should be established, it did not set out how

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117 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 183-184.

118 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 134.

119 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 86.

120 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 141.



these principles should be realised.<sup>121</sup> Dube dismisses the document as "the most notorious...fraudulent document" that denies that there has been dispossession and that there has to be Black self-determination.<sup>122</sup> Through the principle of multi-racialism Black self-determination is denied. In fact the Charter, through advocating multi-racialism, is sanctifying the present political geography in South Africa. It is seen as being tantamount to endorsing the racial ideologies of the present regime.

It was a logical contradiction to wed private ownership and nationalisation. In addition the Charter did not answer the question on the status of the protectorates.<sup>123</sup> In a similar vein Modisane berates the Charter on the grounds of its multi-racialism. Modisane criticises the emphasis on the protection of group rights and the encouragement of cultural identity. He continues to make a statement which, when read in conjunction with the immediately preceding views of Dube, indicates the new directions that were emerging in Black politics:

It was a criminal affront that any man should be organised to pledge himself to the foundation of a society which history has proved dangerous, not only in South Africa, but everywhere in the world where man has erected barriers which prevent a free exchange of ideas, culture and human relationships."<sup>124</sup>

Opposed to these viewpoints is that of Magubane who endorses the Charter for being the only viable foundation for "the social climate in which a new state could be made to develop a truly South African society embracing all its peoples."<sup>125</sup> Others were not content to sub-

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121 E Mphahlele, The African Image, p. 53.

122 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 84.

123 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 47.

124 B Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 237-238.

125 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. xii.



scribe to a "colossal fraud" that originated with the White South African middle class while the "white reformist Communist Party of South Africa had done all the planning."<sup>126</sup>

Those who remained loyal to the precepts of the Freedom Charter endowed it with certain characteristics that justified both their situation and the document. Sensitive to the accusations that ANC had sold out African primacy in the struggle against "apartheid, segregation or White domination" by adopting the Freedom Charter, Sisulu claims that it was the only set of principles acceptable to Africans. Nevertheless Africans were prepared to work in conjunction with anyone who opposed manifestations of apartheid and oppression.<sup>127</sup> Magubane also believes that the Charter was significant for other reasons as well. He took the Charter to signal the end of a reactive process in Black politics. This reaction manifested itself in the despatch of deputations to the government in response to its actions, in the hope that concessions could be negotiated. By adopting the Charter the ANC had, according to Magubane, committed itself to taking the initiative and dictating the pattern of future developments.<sup>128</sup> It is clear that diametrically opposed standpoints were emerging that were becoming increasingly irreconcilable. Ngubane claims that Luthuli in fact was willing to see the ANC split in order to have the Charter accepted as policy.<sup>129</sup>

Tensions continued to mount between those who believed that the Black man's struggle in South Africa was essentially the Black man's and should therefore be based on an ethic of African origins. This group reviewed the past and believed that the failure of Blacks to attain

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126 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 83.

127 WM Sisulu, "South Africa's Struggle for Democracy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #2, January-March 1957, p. 30.

128 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 183.

129 JK Ngubane, Ushaba: The Hurtle to Blood River, p. 190.



their goal had been due to allowing their struggle to be subverted by non-African groups. Initially the role of subverter had been played by White "friends of the natives". With the formation of the Congress Alliance, that had originated with the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact, it was held that the diversionary role of the early liberals had been taken over by Indians, "Coloureds" and the White Congress of Democrats. The basis of the argument was that the South African dispensation was the product and current manifestation of a colonial situation. Thus alien elements had to adapt to an African-dominated system of government and values purged of all vestiges of colonialism. In effect the South African situation was viewed as a colonial one.

Opposed to the Africanists one had the Congress Alliance, supporters of the Freedom Charter, whose premise was that the South African situation reflected distortions imposed by racial prejudice and capitalist exploitation. By removing these disruptions, the development of an ideal society, based on freedom and justice for all, could be assured. In this way the exodus of White colonists, that had marked so many processes of decolonisation, could be avoided.

Many Blacks did not conceive of the Congress Alliance in these terms. At best solidarity was restricted to the intellectual level as Blacks still saw themselves as a separate entity, segregated from their "Coloured" and Indian counterparts by the impositions of territorial segregation.<sup>130</sup> The Congress Alliance forced Africans into an "ungodly sacrifice" of their material interests. "It was an alliance of master and servant - the exploiter and the exploited".<sup>131</sup> The battle lines had been drawn and now it was up to the protagonists of the divergent ideological assumptions to entrench and advance their

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<sup>130</sup> E Mphahlele in an interview with NC Manganyi, published under the title "Looking in: In Search of Ezekiel Mphahlele", in NC Manganyi, Looking Through the Keyhole..., pp. 42-43.

<sup>131</sup> M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 76.

positions. As is to be expected much of this activity would revolve around highlighting the failure of their opponents in the past.

The first pronounced crack in the edifice of Black politics showed itself in 1958. Africanists in the Transvaal had opposed two major campaigns, the bus boycott and the pound-a-day actions. Finally two Africanists were expelled from the ANC. But this did not quell the incipient revolt. The National Executive had to take over the functions of the Transvaal Provincial Executive, apparently on the grounds of mismanagement. A meeting called to resolve the conflict broke down when the Africanists walked out in November 1958, which ended their small but debilitating influence within the ANC.<sup>132</sup> From Luthuli's perspective it appears that the PAC walkout was the result of obduracy on the part of the Africanists. He does not mention, as does Ngubane, that their walkout resulted from a purge of non-communists in the Congress Movement. In doing this the Africanists left the communists unopposed in the Congress Alliance.<sup>133</sup> Motlhabi attributes similar causes to the walkout but says that an additional factor was influences arising from the Congress Movement.<sup>134</sup>

At the root of the differences was the perception that by adopting the Freedom Charter the ANC had in effect abandoned the Programme of Action. Luthuli allows this point and says that in purely doctrinaire terms the Programme of Action dealt with conditions that applied specifically to Africans at the time, but developments of the 1950s had changed conditions considerably.<sup>135</sup> By implication Luthuli is saying that the struggle could no longer be conceived of as a purely African one. Not everyone subscribed to Luthuli's interpretation. The criticism

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132 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 165-166.

133 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 167.

134 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 74-75.

135 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 165.



by the Africanist wing of the Congress Youth League, of the Congress Movement's policy of multiracialism was vindicated when the status of the ANC within the Congress Alliance was analysed.

Due to the constitution of the Alliance, according to Ngubane, the ANC, with by far the biggest constituency, was subordinated to the whims of the Congress of Democrats, South African Coloured Peoples Organisation, South African Indian Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions by a majority vote.<sup>136</sup> Thus the conclusion was reached that the Congress Movement "was a device concocted by the whites and Indians for ganging up against the Africans."<sup>137</sup> Dissent was not caused by racialism, but by reneging on the Programme of Action which had established African paramountcy. Continued commitment to the Programme of Action was essential as the past had "already taught the African people white leadership militated against their genuine interests."<sup>138</sup> Through its subservience to White politics African politics was reactionary.<sup>139</sup> In a bid to establish their legitimacy as true heirs to Black political leadership, the PAC further claimed that it had no ideological differences with the ANC other than that the latter had deviated from its original policy. Therefore the PAC had been formed to become the "caretakers, guardians and trustees" of the principles and politics of self-determination.<sup>140</sup>

Luthuli could not accept arguments that the PAC was non-racial. He was

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136 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 100-101.

137 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 181.

138 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 117.

139 PAC of Azania, "Kurze Zusammenfassung der Politik und des Programms des PAC von Azania", quoted in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas, p. 95.

140 PAC of Azania, "Kurze Zusammenfassung der Politik und des Programms des PAC von Azania", quoted in RM Sobukwe, Hört die Stimme Afrikas, p. 94 and p. 96.



convinced that the PAC was overtly racist, and one could not fight racism with racism. It was also immoral to set such an example to future generations apart from the complicating post-liberation reconstruction.<sup>141</sup> While the PAC was in a relatively impotent position it could afford to theorise, albeit imperfectly, but once it came to grips with reality it would realise that it would have to work step by step. Similarly it was one thing to express solidarity with African states to the north of the Union on the grounds of their perceived rejection of Whites. But it was a misinterpretation of the situation in emancipating Africa to read rejection of colonial "partnership" with Whites as perpetual "senior partner", as a rejection of Whites. In effect such a policy led to accusations of Black supremacy, which was a grave disservice to the African cause.<sup>142</sup> The identification with broader African ideals was not accidental as the PAC had committed itself to a "giant monolithic People's Socialist State of Africa."<sup>143</sup>

Although Ngubane held no brief for the ANC he was also antagonistic towards the perceived racial domination of the PAC, but for different reasons. He saw the racial exclusivity of the PAC as an ideal gateway for communist infiltration. Communists would be able to manipulate racial tensions to divert Africans from their struggle.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand Ngubane found it laudable that the PAC made "direct participation in government a matter of practical politics." It also stated its ideals for a future society unequivocally, which was more than any other political grouping had done before.<sup>145</sup> In opposition to this Magubane slated the PAC for presenting a confused policy. On the one hand it had "relatively progressive and anti-imperial slogans of the Pan-Af-

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141 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., pp. 165-166.

142 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 167.

143 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 54.

144 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 144-145.

145 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 102.



rican movement", But these "were interwoven in a bizarre fashion with reactionary nationalists concepts."<sup>146</sup> On the other Magubane continues with the Marxist paradigm and criticizes the Africanists advocacy of African nationalism. Magubane believed that the doctrine of African nationalism with its implied homogeneity ignored class formations within African society. The pursuit of nationalistic ideals was little else than the inflation of nationalism beyond its true relevance merely to boost the egos of a few individuals.<sup>147</sup>

Even though the PAC was subject to stringent criticism some commentators appreciated that the South African situation was one that called for decolonisation. This was in direct contrast to the perception created by the ANC that South Africa's problems were of an internal nature that could be resolved by reforms.<sup>148</sup>

The dissent aside, the break between the ANC and the PAC required more than posturing. It also required a postulation of the theoretical foundations for future actions. The setting out of policy brought two forms of criticism to the fore. The first aimed at castigating the opposition for past failures as a result of the incorrect definition of principles. The second critique was directed at showing the weaknesses of each other's policies due to a misinterpretation of the past and thus the present.

Through its commitment to "multiracial liberalism" the Charterist Congress denies the claims of "any movement that shows signs of being genuinely nationalist, socialist or democratic." The ANC exists merely

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146 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 310.

147 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 310-311.

148 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, pp. 78-79.





"to resist the transfer of political power to the African people."<sup>149</sup> The Congress Alliance also drew the ANC into issues that were considered to be beyond its ambit, so that it implicitly expressed support for the United Party in the 1958 general election. This came about by the ANC supporting South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the National Workers' Conference in its strike action in 1958.<sup>150</sup> By aligning itself with the Freedom Charter, or as the Africanists preferred to call it, "the Kliptown Charter", the ANC had abandoned the principles of the Programme of Action. In so doing it had to falsify history and virtually ignore the Programme because its preamble contained phrases such as "national freedom", 'independence' and 'white domination' all of which are taboo in Charterist circles." It is therefore not surprising that the ANC is unwilling to cite it.<sup>151</sup>

In this context the term "Charterist" is imbued with a sense of betrayal.

While not directly answering Raboroko's criticism, Magubane sees a logical dishonesty in the PAC's claimed position. He argues that since the PAC says that it has remained loyal to the precepts of the old South African Native National Congress (SANNC) that ultimately found expression in African Claims in South Africa and the Programme of Action then they must acknowledge the roots of African Claims. The provenance of African Claims was to be found in the Atlantic Charter. The latter is explicitly anti-racist. Therefore it is dishonest to claim support of African Claims while advocating a racist ideology. The loyalty of the PAC to the Programme of Action, as sequel to African Claims, was to be

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149 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 26.

150 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 31 and WM Sisulu, "South Africa's Struggle for Democracy", in Africa South, Vol 1, #2, January-March 1957, p. 32-33.

151 PK Raboroko, "Congress and the Africanists: (1) The Africanist Case", in Africa South, Vol 4, #3, April-June 1960, p. 28.



rejected on the same grounds.<sup>152</sup>

It is clear from these reciprocated criticisms that the ANC it believed that the past impact of racism had been to the detriment of the country and its people. Therefore a new and more explicit form of racial nationalism was an unwelcome and destructive addition to the South African political spectrum. The PAC's answer to this was to argue that it was by the recognition of race that non-African interests were allowed to manipulate developments to their advantage. Therefore Africans had not achieved the original ideals of the SANNC.

It was one thing to claim and justify legitimacy as heir to Black aspirations but some more concrete proof of acceptability was needed. In the last few years of the decade of the 1950s there was a marked increase in political activism culminating in the shootings at Sharpeville and banning of the two major Black political organisations, the ANC and PAC.

It is not intended to discuss these events in themselves, but rather what the perception of their significance was. In addition the counter-accusations that followed on these events will also be brought to the fore.

A supporter of the ANC, Magubane, minimizes the overall significance of Sharpeville on the grounds that it merely provided the PAC with a legend that saved it from sinking into oblivion.<sup>153</sup> Magubane's dismissal of the event is not surprising given his political affiliations. In the scramble to claim ascendancy in the Black political arena the PAC and ANC competed to launch a campaign substantiating their claims to dominance. In the intensity of their competition actions were launched not

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152 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 219.

153 BM Magubane, "Sports and Politics in an Urban African Community. A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations", p. 223.



so much aimed at targets but at pre-empting the efforts of their political opponents. Consequently campaigns were announced that had greater political value than organisational or tactical sense. This was the case in Sharpeville - when the PAC called on its supporters to destroy their passes at police stations and present themselves for arrest. Sobukwe was criticised for hustling the PAC into a badly-organised campaign, instead of following the example of the ANC which always laid sound foundations before launching a campaign.<sup>154</sup>

To an extent Sharpeville epitomises the fundamental philosophy underlying Ngubane's work An African Explains Apartheid. He argues that apartheid and its predecessors had created such a total void between Black and White that violation of the no-man's land between them would result in bloodshed. Blacks, under the aegis of the PAC had entered the "no-go" area and paid the price on March 21, 1960.<sup>155</sup>

What had prompted the protesters to present themselves at the Sharpeville police station? Was it a demonstration of unity rooted in anger over the current situation and determination to end it, as Kunene suggests?<sup>156</sup> Motlhabi believes that not all the crowd at Sharpeville had a commitment to particular cause but were there without knowing why.<sup>157</sup> Similar doubts about the commitment to PAC policy are raised by Magubane who believes that some of those at the Sharpeville police station might have been driven there by more personal reasons. He sees no reason to doubt that a number of victims of the shooting might have marched there due to their anger at the loss of relations in the Coal-

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154 A Luthuli, Let My People Go..., p. 198.

155 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. v.

156 DP Kunene, "The Pit of Hell", in DP Kunene, From the Pit of Hell to the Spring of Life, p. 2 and p. 9.

157 M Motlhabi, The Theory and Practice of Black Resistance to Apartheid. A Social-Ethical Analysis, p. 94.



brook mine disaster that occurred a few weeks previously.<sup>158</sup>

A leader of the "Positive Decisive Action against the Pass Laws" in the Cape motivated his call for support by saying that, in the final analysis, the struggle was not against any individual or group of individuals but against

imperialism, colonialism and domination...and a myth...We are fighting against the Calvinist doctrine that a certain nation was specially chosen by God to lead, guide and protect other nations. That is our fight.

More significantly he promised potential participants a liberated and United States of Africa by 1963.<sup>159</sup>

Opponents of the PAC's pass campaign were as agile in exploiting the aftermath of the shootings as they were in condemning it. The deaths would have been left relatively unheralded had it not been for the ANC mobilising its internal and international propaganda machinery and keeping the world's attention focused on South Africa, according to Magubane.<sup>160</sup> From Magubane's perspective Sharpeville owes its significance to the ANC, because it placed Sharpeville on the internal and international agenda when an issue was needed to focus attention in and on South Africa.

Despite his generally dismissive tone Magubane does concede that Sharpeville did trigger an upheaval that was felt in virtually every major town in South Africa, even though "there was no revolutionary core body" to give impetus to the events that had been set in motion by

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158 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 311.

159 Appendix B, Launching Speech, Sunday March 20, 1960, by Philip Ata Kgosana, in PA Kgosana, Lest We Forget. An Autobiography, pp. 103-104.

160 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 313.



Sharpeville.<sup>161</sup> Another observer saw the event as unique because it was the first countrywide uprising aimed at seizing power.<sup>162</sup> Dube accords significance to the event for initiating armed resistance and finally drawing the battle lines that "ended all equivocation and vacillation as to self-determination and Black majority rule in Azania."<sup>163</sup> All of the preceding sentiments involve the question of violence and force. With the suggestion that violence was the only feasible policy option had now been demonstrated by the PAC. Ngubane agrees with this but adds that as significant was the decision as to what form this violent resistance should take. He believes that the PAC then decided on guerilla action while the ANC opted for sabotage.<sup>164</sup>

This chapter commenced with the idea that the introspection that had resulted from the failure to successfully oppose the Hertzog Bills had called for new directions to be followed. Therefore it is ironic that these new directions should culminate in events that would once again call for a realignment in Black thinking and thus also Black perception of their position in the past. The reassessment was not merely to re-tread the paths of the past. The review of the past would be undertaken in the knowledge that "The old book has closed and a new one begun"<sup>165</sup>, as Biko said in using the words of Paul Sauer

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- 161 BM Magubane, The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa, p. 315 and 316.
- 162 M Pheko, Apartheid..., p. 98.
- 163 D Dube, The Rise of Azania..., p. 92.
- 164 JK Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 136-137.
- 165 S Biko, "We Blacks", in A Stubbs (ed), Steve Biko - I Write What I Like. A Selection of His Writings, p. 35.