CHAPTER ONE

THE DRIFT TOWARDS ARMED STRUGGLE 1912 - 1960

Although the South African Liberation Movement under the leadership of the ANC in partnership with the South African Communist Party (SACP) only resorted to revolutionary armed struggle in 1961, following the banning of the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in April of the previous year, the drift towards the radical left in Black political thinking that eventually gave rise to the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the armed struggle became increasingly noticeable from the mid 1940's on. The aim of this chapter is to trace the broad circumstances and factors that led Black leaders, both in and outside the ANC in the two decades preceding the banning of the ANC in 1960, to apply increasing pressure on the established leadership of the ANC and Black political thinking in general to structurally turn the ANC into an underground organisation and sanction a policy that would permit the ANC to move away from its more than 40 year-old policy of non-violent protest to one that would actively support revolutionary violence against the state.

To fully understand the political changes that took place in Black politics and the philosophy surrounding it after 1960, a brief examination of the history of Black political protest between the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the banning of the two major Black (African) political organisations, the ANC and the PAC in April 1960 is essential. This chapter will pay particular attention to the period 1945 to 1960, since these years witnessed a major shift in Black political thinking and development.

1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS (SANNC) AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO 1940

The first clear signs of a national political awakening among South Africa's African people came in the years immediately following the end of the South African War in 1902 and the formation of the Union in 1910. Faced with the prospect of a new constitution that was more European than African in origin and in which they faced total or partial exclusion from any effective role in the Country's political future, many of South Africa's leading African leaders, with the active support of a number of Whites, the most notable among them being W.P. Schreiner, began to campaign for an alternative draft South Africa Bill that would be more representative of Black political aspirations. During the early months of 1909 a number of meetings were held in various parts of South Africa to elect African delegates to a "Native" Convention in Bloemfontein to discuss the South Africa Bill drafted by the all-White National Convention, and its implications for Blacks, but more in particular for the country's African population. In the end, some thirty-eight delegates from various parts of South Africa attended the Native Convention at the Waaihoek Location near Bloemfontein between 24 and 26 March, 1909. At this particular meeting the exclusion of most Blacks from the franchise in terms of the draft provisions of the South Africa Bill were severely criticised while those clauses which contained reference to the colour bar were outright rejected by the delegates. In an attempt to sustain the protest generated by the convening of the Native Convention a resolution was adopted by the meeting which turned the Convention into a permanent body known as the South African Native Convention (SANC) under the presidency of Dr. W.B. Rubusana. Over the next two years the Convention, in keeping with the resolutions adopted in March 1909, regularly met but by 1911 it was becoming increasingly apparent that it was not the right forum to bring about the necessary national unity among South Africa's awakening African leaders and regional organisations. This development had to await the arrival of Pixley Ka I. Seme, a Zulu lawyer, trained at Colombia, Oxford, and Middle Temple, in South

Africa in 1911.[1] According to Andre Odendaal[2] it appears that the first real initiative for a truly national representative conference was made by Seme shortly after he had joined the ranks of the SANC. By the middle of 1911, writes Odendaal, ambitious new plans inspired by Seme, were afoot to strengthen the national movement so that it could function more effectively than before. An important part of these plans was that the organisation should incorporate not only the educated elite, but also the traditional leaders with their mass following, their symbolic importance - and their financial sufficiency.

The immediate result of this new development and thinking was the convening of a "Native" Congress at Bloemfontein from 8 to 12 January 1912, and the subsequent establishment of the South African Native National Convention (SANNC) of which the name was later shortened to African National Congress or ANC in 1923. The formation of the SANNC (hereafter referred to as ANC or 'Congress') in 1912 was by all standards a momentous event in the political history of South Africa, if not in the broader political history of the African continent. It marked the first time in the history of South Africa that African leaders of various political persuasions had managed to set aside their differences and come together for the common purpose of establishing a single national forum through which they could, as one unified nation, address the South African government on their common grievances and problems.[3]

From its founding in 1912 until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the new organisation and its leadership were faced with a series of ever increasing problems that would adversely effect its overall performance as well as the support it would eventually receive from the country's African leaders and the growing African labour force after 1918. The first serious problems to face Congress after 1912, was the 1913 Land Act which proposed to limit African land ownership to a mere 7,3 percent of the entire country.[4] From

---

1. A. Odendaal, Vukani Bantu, pp. 258; T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa. A Modern History, pp. 260-261.
2. Odendaal, Vukani Bantu, p. 259.
3. Odendaal, Vukani Bantu, p. 273.
4. P. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 44 - 52.

1913 to the end of the First World War the ANC actively campaigned for the withdrawal of the Land Act or at least, to have it altered to allow for greater land allocation to Africans, but without any success. With the Land Act at the basis of its new segregation policies, the Union government was not prepared to withdraw or alter the Act. The British government too, proved reluctant to intervene in South Africa's internal affairs. Even an offer by the ANC leadership to ignore the land issue for the duration of the war, and to give its full support to the South African war effort, by raising 5 000 Black troops to do active service in South West Africa as a sign of their willingness to co-operate with the South African government, met with no positive response.(5)

The second major problem that faced Congress and its leaders in the inter-war years and, to a very large extent also in the post-1945 period, was the chronic shortage of money to administer its affairs. This started shortly after the end of the First World War when the chiefs, which formed the financial backbone of the ANC, began to leave the organisation in direct response to its failure to effectively oppose the 1913 Land Act. In the years that followed, as more and more chiefs left Congress, the organisation found it increasingly difficult to meet its financial commitments. This, in turn, had a direct effect on the ANC's membership and organisational structure.(6)

A third important factor that compounded the ANC's problems in the inter-war years was the rise of two rival organisations shortly after 1918. The first was Clement Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) formed in 1918, and the second was the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which was formed three years later. As a result of the rapid industrial development that followed the end of the First World War in 1918 there was a desperate need for some form

---

5. M. Benson, The African Patriots, pp. 32 - 33; Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 1, p. 64; Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 52 - 53.
6. For an in depth discussion of the ANC's financial problems in the inter-war years as well as after 1945, see Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 209 - 218 and Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 40 - 45.

of labour movement/organisation that could see to the needs of the rapidly growing Black labour market. The ANC, beset by internal problems, a virtually bankrupt treasury and a shrinking membership was simply too weak to meet the new demands that were being made on it by the rapidly growing Black labour market. In step Clement Kadalie and the ICU and, for the next decade or so, it effectively challenged the leadership position of the ANC among South Africa's African people. The formation of the CPSA in 1921 further weakened the position of the ANC by reducing its already weakening membership.[7]

Although the CPSA was a much smaller organisation than the ICU it was also far more radical and militant than the ICU which became its main target in the inter-war years. Due to the weakened position of the ANC and the fact that it had no effective labour contingent, the CPSA initially paid very little attention to it. It was only after it had successfully helped to destroy the power of the ICU in the late 1920's that the CPSA began to pay increased attention to the ANC and its activities. But although Josiah Gumede's election to the ANC presidency in 1927 gave the CPSA a foothold in the organisation, this was only a temporary victory, for in 1930 Gumede was replaced by the more conservative and anti-communist P.K.I. Seme.

Unfortunately for the ANC Seme turned out to be a poor choice, at least in 1930. He was by that stage too old to really provide the ANC with the sort of dynamic and flexible leadership that it needed to pull it out of its almost two decades of decline. "Just as in 1910", writes Mary Benson, "so now all over the country, Africans who were aware of what was happening were looking for a dynamic leader(ship)".[8] But even the timely collapse of the ICU by the beginning of the 1930's and the reintroduction of the Hertzog Bills in their modified form by the mid 1930's could not shock the ANC back into life.

---

7. E. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, pp. 175 - 178, 210 - 211; Benson, The African Patriots, pp. 60 - 61; Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 178. See also H. Bradford, Mass Movements and the Petty Bourgeoisie: The Social Origins of ICU leadership, 1924-1929, (Journal of African History 25, 1984, pp 295-310).
8. Benson, The African Patriots, p. 79.

As a result Congress remained politically weak until at least the beginning of the 1940's when Dr A.B. Xuma took over the presidency. From here onwards the ANC began to show signs of a gradual revival and a new militancy.

Disillusioned with Seme's poor leadership and the ANC's weak position politically conscious Blacks around the country began to campaign for a more dynamic and militant leadership to direct their protest against the exclusively White government. In their search for a solution they turned their attention to Prof. D.D.T. Jabavu of Fort Hare University College. Perhaps the most senior Black academic in South Africa at the time, Jabavu suggested and convened an All African Convention (AAC) in Bloemfontein on 16 December 1935. The aim of the AAC was to unite opposition to the reintroduction of the Hertzog Bills which, among others, had called for the effective removal of Africans from the Common Voters Roll in the Cape Province to bring them in line with the status of Blacks in the rest of the Union, as well as the creation of a Native Representative Council (NRC) with advisory but no legislative powers.[9]

Although the AAC represented an impressive gathering with some 500 delegates in attendance (some sources place the number of delegates at 400[10]) who were in general agreement that immediate action was needed to stop the Hertzog Bills, it nonetheless failed in its original purpose. The AAC not only proved to be totally ineffective in the face of White political unity - the Hertzog Bills eventually received overwhelming parliamentary support - but the delegates to the meeting were in complete disagreement as to the form that their action should take. As far as the younger and more radical delegates at the Convention were concerned, strong and sustained militant action was needed to stop the Bills from implementation. These 'radical' views were not, however, shared by the majority of older delegates who, despite the Bills' grave implications for Blacks, remained strongly in favour of the more moderate policies of the ANC that called for the representation of grievances to the authorities. "The 'big guns' of the Convention", Edward Roux later wrote, "were

---

9. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, p. 289.
10. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 119.

all for continued negotiation and moderation".[11] The outcome of this policy of moderation was that the Hertzog Bills were passed into Law the following year, thereby furthering the government's policy of racial segregation and at the same time, laying the basis for the 'apartheid' policies of the Malan government after 1948.

2. BLACK POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1940: A MILITANT ANC

Most important among the events that marked the development of Black political thinking and action in the first years after 1940 were the adoption of a new revised constitution for the ANC in 1943 and the formation of a Youth League movement for young African men in 1943 - 1944. After its formation the Youth League brought increasing pressure to bear on the more conservative leadership of the ANC to move towards a more militant solution of South Africa's racial problems. This new mood in the ANC was clearly reflected in the various documents adopted by the Youth League dealing with aspects such as policy and programme, aims and objectives and what it understood under the term 'African Nationalism'.[12] These documents were also significant in that for the first time since the formation of the ANC in 1912, a positive attempt was being made by the organisation's younger leadership to clarify and define the ANC's position and role in Black politics.

The first important document adopted by the ANC in 1941 was The Basic Policy and Platform of the African National Congress.[13] This was followed by a second and even more important document on aims and

---

11. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, p. 289.
12. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 87 - 88, 168 - 171; Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 278-279.
13. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 168 - 171. (Document 24, "The Policy and Platform of the African National Congress", Statements by Dr. A.B. Xuma in Inkululeko (Freedom), August, 1941.)

objectives entitled Africans' Claims.[14] Considered to be the most significant document adopted by the ANC since the constitution of 1919, Africans' Claims in its call for the repeal of all discriminatory legislation directed at Blacks, became the basis for most ANC documents on policy after 1943.[15]

But of more significance for the ANC's political development in the post 1940 period was not so much the adoption of a much revised constitution in 1943, but the establishment of a Youth League movement in the same year.

Led by a new breed of young and militant Africans who demanded immediate and definite action against racial discrimination in South Africa, the Congress Youth League (CYL) became a very, if not the most important, pressure group effecting policy and programme within the ANC leadership.

Many of the ANC's most prominent leaders after 1945 (and PAC leaders after 1959) entered the organisation's leadership core through their membership of the CYL. Some prominent names that come to mind here are Nelson R. Mandela, Walter M. Sisulu, Jordan Ngubane, Anton M. Lembede, A.P. Mda, V.V.T. Mbobo, Oliver Tambo, D.W. Bopape, W.Z. Conco, Joseph (Joe) Matthews, P.P.D. Nokwe, A.E. Letele, R.M. Sobukwe, M.B. Yengwa and Dr. James L. Zwelinzima Njongwe.

(a) The 1943 Constitutional Reorganisation of the ANC

The 1919 constitution and the organisational structure it has prescribed for the ANC had become largely outdated by the beginning of the 1940's due to the various changes and adjustments that had taken place in the ANC since its inception in 1912 and the demands

---

14. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 209 - 223 (Document 29, "African Claims and South Africa", including "The Atlantic Charter from the Standpoint of Africans within the Union of South Africa" and "Bill of Rights" adopted by the ANC Annual Conference).
15. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 278 - 279.

made on it by the new breed of young and better educated African leaders. The declining interest of the chiefs and the need among Africans for more dynamic and militant action against White minority rule in South Africa, together with the need for an organisation with a mass basis, prompted Dr. Xuma to appoint a special committee to revise the old ANC constitution shortly after he became president in 1940.(16)

One of those who served on the committee revising the 1919 constitution was a young White advocate, Abram Fischer. Besides being a brilliant academic, Fischer was also an Afrikaner and a communist. In the years that followed the adoption of the revised constitution by the ANC in 1943, Fischer became increasingly involved in the development of Black political thinking in South Africa through his membership of the Communist Party.

The constitution of 1943 (see diagram on following page) offered several important administrative improvements on the old one. In the first place it was much shorter and more simplified than the 1919 document. In contrast to the old document which covered some twenty three typed pages, the new document consisted of only three pages. It was specifically designed to streamline the organisation and administration of the ANC. It was hoped that the revised version would provide for a structure that would make the ANC more effective in its dealings with the South African government.(17) Structurally, the ANC however retained basically the same organisational hierarchy that was established by the 1919 constitution. In terms of this the National Conference remained the most senior and most important organ of the ANC. This was followed by the other well known organs such as the Provincial Conferences, Provincial Committees, Branches and individual members.

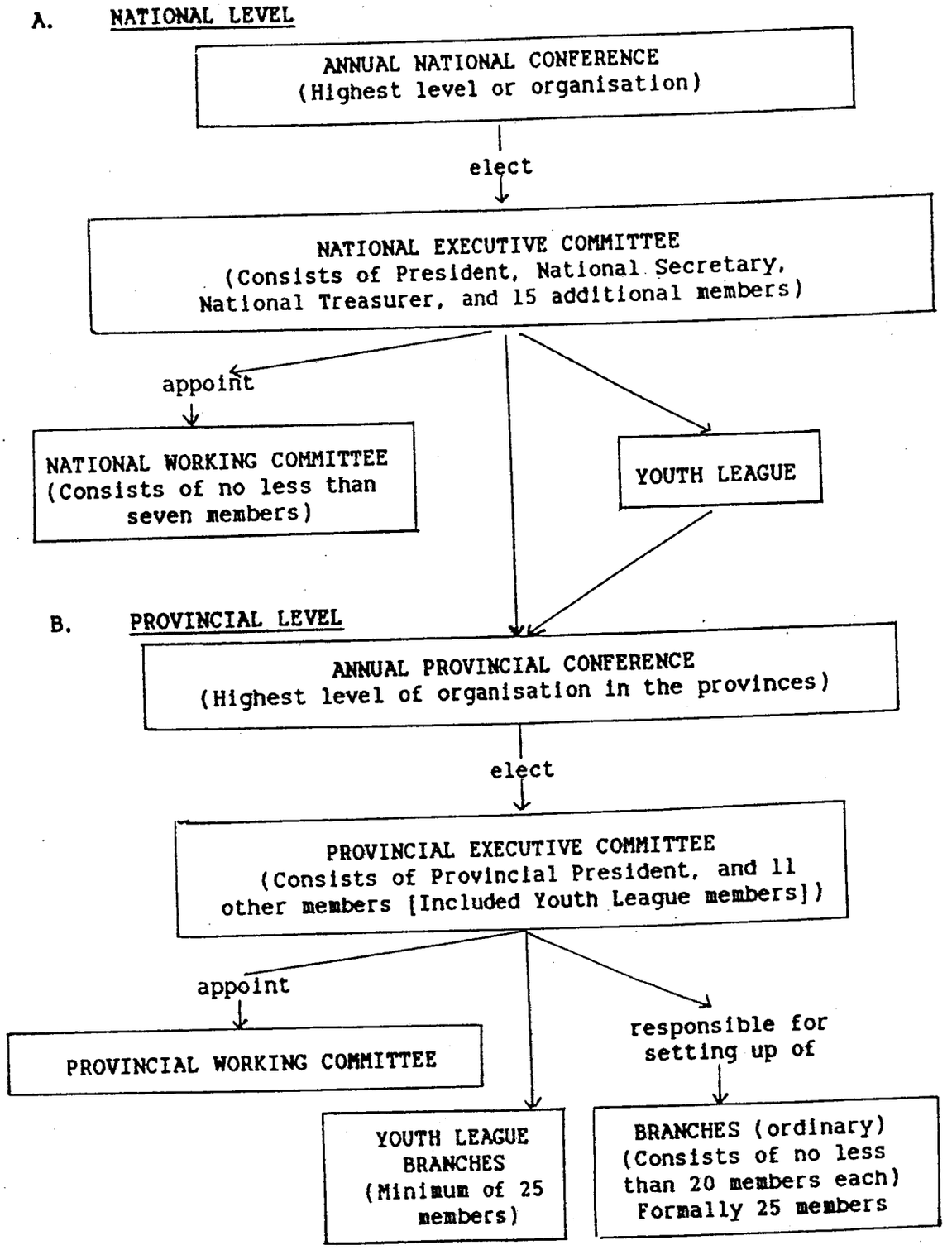
The changes that were introduced were largely aimed at removing obsolete organs and at improving the relationship between the various

---

16. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 84 - 85; Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 379.
17. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 209 - 210.

DIAGRAM A

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE ANC ACCORDING TO ITS 1943-CONSTITUTION



levels of the organisation, as well as providing greater central control over the lower levels of the ANC. One important change made to the structure of the ANC was the removal of the Upper House or the House of Chiefs. With the withdrawal of the chiefs from the ANC following the organisations failure to remove or reform the 1913 Land Act, the Council had become obsolete. Attempts to revive it had proved to be largely unsuccessful with the result that in the end it was decided to abolish it.(18)

The disappearance of the chiefs from the ANC not only demanded a change to the organisational structure, but also to the structure of the organisation's income. "Financial assistance from the chiefs", writes Peter Walshe, "was an important factor in Congress' ability to survive its initial organisational hazards".(19) With the gradual withdrawal of their support from the ANC during the inter-war years the chiefs placed the ANC in a precarious financial position, a situation that was partially responsible for its poor performance in the years following the First World War. The initial hope that the chiefs would become the true link between the ANC and the rural African masses in South Africa had long faded by 1940. As a result, other means and methods had to be found to link the organisation and its aims to the African rural masses in the country and at the same time improve its ailing financial position.(20) All this, it was hoped would change with the revised constitution.

In sharp contrast to the lengthy statement on aims and objectives included in the 1919 constitution, the 1943 document broadly described the ANC's aims as "the unity of the African people" and "the advancement of their interests", through the eventual full participation of Africans in the government of South Africa.(21) No mention was made of a struggle against colonial rule or of national

---

18. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 204 - 208 (Document 29(a), "Constitution of the ANC").
19. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 210.
20. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 210 - 211.
21. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 204 - 208 (Document 29(a), "Constitution of the ANC").

liberation for independence. The emphasis was rather on selfdetermination and participation in the political process making in the country.

In addition to the abolishing of the Council of Chiefs, important changes were also made to the organisation's membership. Having lost the active involvement and financial support of the chiefs, the new constitution, in an attempt to provide the ANC with a more secured financial basis, opened the organisation's membership to "any person" over the age of seventeen who is willing to subscribe to the aims of Congress and would abide by its constitution and rules.(22) The 1919-requirement, that members must be of "the indigenous" or "aboriginal races of Africa"(23) was thus omitted from the new constitution. This effectively opened the ANC theoretically to people of all races. But in spite of this "broadening" of the ANC's membership structure, the organisation remained largely an African organisation with Africans as its leaders. As far as membership of other organisations were concerned, the new constitution retained the provisions of the 1919 document which allowed any organisation whose aims are in harmony with that of the ANC to become an affiliated member of the ANC upon application to either the Provincial Committee or the newly introduced National Working Committee (NWC).(24)

At the branch level of organisation, membership was reduced from the existing level of twenty five members for a single branch to twenty members. This did not, however, affect the provisions which determined the number of branch delegates to both the provincial and national congresses which was retained at one out of every twenty members. The practice of encouraging individual members to attend the Annual Conferences at both the Provincial and National level as

---

22. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 206.
23. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 1, pp. 76 - 82 (Document 23, "Constitution of the South African Native Congress, September 1919", extracts typewritten, 29 pages).
24. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 206 (Document 29(a), "Constitution of the ANC").

observers was perpetuated while all affiliated bodies were allowed to send one delegate out of every one hundred members to the above conferences.

Since the Youth League had not been established by the time that the new constitution was adopted in December 1943, no provisions regarding its position within the national structure of the ANC were included in the constitution. The little that is known, however, indicates that the Youth League did not duplicate the organisational structure of the ANC but that it consisted primarily of separate branches, served by branch committees, and that some of its leaders served on the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the National Congress. Representation on the provincial and national levels were allowed on a basis that was comparable with that of the ordinary ANC branches. Beyond this very little is known about the actual structure of the Youth League. The impression is, however, that the League and its leaders acted as a think-tank or a sort of brain-trust within the ANC's National Executive Committee, where they effected decisions with regard to matters on policy and programme. At the provincial level supervision of the Youth League branches appeared to have been under the control of the Provincial Committee and in particular, its Executive Committee.(25)

Of more significance were the changes introduced to the actual administration of the ANC. It was done to increase the effective authority of the National and Provincial Executive Committees over the various organisational divisions under their control. To excellerate and streamline the functions of the ANC, a new organ, the National Norking Committee (NWC) was introduced. The task of the NWC was to take control of the day to day affairs of the ANC between sessions of the NEC.(26)

---

25. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 380.
26. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 206 - 207 (Document 29(a), "Constitution of the ANC"); See also Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 381.

A further important change introduced by the new constitution was that effecting the election procedures of both provincial and national executives. Unlike the old procedure, whereby executives were elected from candidates nominated by the presidents of the provincial and national conferences, the new procedure made provision for the direct election of executives at the full discretion of the annual conference.

In this way the powers of the provincial presidents, as well as that of the President-General over the choice and election of executive officers, were effectively curtailed. The powers of the President-General was further curtailed by a general proviso which stipulated that all decisions, except those amending the constitution, should be decided upon by a majority vote.[27] For the rest, the hierarchy of authority in the ANC was retained without change.

Theoretically thus, the revised constitution of 1943 represented a major improvement on the old constitution of 1919. But as is so often the case with a new idea, its implementation and execution is dependent on the ability of humans to bring it about, with the result that in practice many of the old and deep-seated problems often remains unsolved. According to Peter Walshe[28] the ANC's chronic shortage of money, even after the introduction of the 1943 constitution, remained and was to a large degree responsible for the organisation's constant ills and persistently poor performance between the mid 1940's and the time of its banning in 1960.

Moreover, the exercise of overall authority in the organisation still depended, to a great extent, on the specific ability and the degree of personal authority that a specific national president and the organisation's Secretary-General could exert; as well as their status and standing in the organisation and the National Congress, and the former's ability to personify or symbolise the liberation struggle.[29] In short, therefore, the success of the ANC depended

---

27. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 381 - 382.
28. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 382.
29. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, pp. 208 - 258, 382 - 385, 398.

not so much on its organisational structure and how well it functioned, but rather on the amount of support that its leaders could command among the masses upon whom the organisation depended for its very existence. A strong and wise leadership would help to strengthen the ANC while a weak and indecisive leadership would lose its adherents and thus weaken the position of the organisation.

(b) The Role and Influence of Pan-Africanism and the Move Towards Greater Militancy in Black Politics

The revival in African political thinking that came with the election of Dr. Xuma to the presidency of the ANC in 1940, and the formation of the Youth League with its strong emphasis on African nationalism as the predominant power in African politics, closely coincided with similar political developments elsewhere on the African continent.

The increased awareness of international affairs, writes Peter Walshe, re-awakened a general interest of the movement of colonial peoples towards independence and a particular concern with the African continent.(30) Although primarily an Afro-American development up to the outbreak of the Second World War, Pan-Africanism and its slogans of "Africa for the Africans" and its "Back to Africa Movements" firmly arrived on the African continent via the Manchester Congress of 1945. Perhaps the most significant event in the history of Pan-African development since the beginning of the twentieth century, the fifth Pan-African Congress held at Manchester in October saw for the very first time a large contingent of Black leaders from Africa gathering outside the continent. Among those who attended the Congress were several of Africa's most promising young African leaders. From the Gold Coast (later the independent state of Ghana) came Kwame Nkrumah, J. Annan, E.A. Ayikumi and others, all destined to play an important role in that country's struggle for independence. From Nigeria came S.L. Akintola, and from Kenya Jomo Kenyatta who played a major role in the Mau Mau revolt and later

---

30. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 332.

became Kenya's first Prime Minister. Sierra Leone was represented by the later famous trade union leader, Wallace Johnson, while from South Africa came the Coloured poet and novelist Peter Abrahams, who, like George Padmore, had come to turn his back on communism. The ANC was represented by Mark Hlubi.(31)

The Manchester Congress offers many clues to the development of the struggle for national liberation in both Africa and South Africa after 1945.

> Its expression of 'We demand for Black Africa autonomy and independence, so far, and no further, than it is possible in this One World for groups and people to rule themselves subject to inevitable world unity and federation',(32) is characteristic of the attitude of post war African political thinking and demands in South Africa. 'We find', writes Colin Legum, 'the new spirit awakened by Pan-Africanism - a farewell to patience and to the acceptance of suffering: We are not ashamed to have been an age-long patient people. We continue willingly to sacrifice and strive. But we are unwilling to starve any longer while doing the world's drudgery, in order to support by our poverty and ignorance a false aristocracy and a discarded imperialism.'(33)

The Manchester Congress also for the first time introduced the concept of political violence into African political thinking. Determined to be free from colonial domination, the African leaders made it clear that if the Western world was still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in their efforts to achieve freedom "even if force destroys them and the world". "But pending the 'last resort' Congress opted for POSITIVE ACTION based on Ghandi's teachings" of passive resistance.(34)

---

31. C. Legum, Pan-Africanism. A Short Political Guide, pp. 31 -32; see also J.H. Clarke (ed.), Pan-Africanism and the liberation of Southern Africa. A Tribute to W.E.B. du Bois, Introduction, pp. 41 - 50.
32. Legum, Pan-Africanism, p. 32.
33. Legum, Pan-Africanism, p. 32.
34. Legum, Pan-Africanism, p. 32.

These views were clearly echoed by the policies and programme adopted by the ANC and the Youth League after 1945. This inclination to look to the north for support, argues Peter Walshe,[35] was the result of a realisation that Africans could not longer hope to achieve fundamental reforms through consultation with the South African authorities. The majority, it was felt, would have to liberate themselves from the pattern of racial repression by mass organisation and probably extensive passive resistance. Pan-Africanism, as it developed in South Africa, was therefore closely linked to the new radicalism within the ANC, that was highlighted by the emergence of the Congress Youth League.

The introduction of the new constitution in 1943 and the formation of the Youth League the following year did not bring about an immediate or drastic rise in ANC membership. In 1945 the organisation (and this included the Youth League) had a total membership of some 4 176 spread over approximately 69 branches. The majority (about three fourths) of these branches were in the Transvaal.[36] Two years later in 1947 the ANC's membership had risen to some 7 000 members.[37]

Exactly how accurate these figures are is difficult to say, since they only reflect those members who paid their subscriptions regularly and who were officially registered with the organisation. Many never paid their subscriptions but still considered themselves members of the ANC. Others again left the organisation without informing the local branches.

Although a figure of 7 000 paid up members out of a total of several million Blacks in South Africa tends to reflect on limited popular or mass support for the ANC and its policies, it does not necessarily mean that Blacks in general were opposed to its views and policies, nor that it did not have the support of other Black political

---

35. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 332.
36. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, pp. 85 - 86.
37. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 86.

organisations in South Africa. Ever since Dr. Xuma came to power in 1940, but more so after the Youth League was formed in 1944, meetings and regular contact with other anti-government organisations such as the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the Communist Party were encouraged to strengthen the position of the ANC and to create a united front for action against White minority rule. Perhaps the most tangible example of this development towards multi-racial co-operation came with the signing of the so-called "Doctors Pact" between Drs. A.B. Xuma (ANC), Yusuf Mohammed Dadoo of the Transvaal Indian Congress, and G.M. Naicker of the Natal Indian Congress, on 9 March 1947.(38) This historic agreement became the forerunner of the later Congress Alliance which was a general agreement of co-operation between the ANC and most of the anti-government organisations in South Africa. After the bannings of the ANC in 1960 the Congress Alliance became known as the National Liberatory (or Liberation) Movement.(39)

3. AFRICAN NATIONALISM VERSUS AFRIKANER NATIONALISM

The second major and, in retrospect, perhaps the most important event influencing the development of Black political thinking in South Africa after 1945, was the rise to power of Afrikaner nationalism under the leadership of Dr. D.F. Malan, who firmly believed that South Africa's political future lay in the development of a strict policy of racial segregation. It is generally conceded today that the racial policies of Dr. Malan and his government, which came at a time when increasing demands were being made for greater racial co-operation, represented the turning point in South Africa's political history for many Black leaders in the country.

---

38. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, pp. 265 - 366; Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 92.
39. Information obtained from document entitled "Some facts on the situation confronting the National Liberatory Movement in the final challenge of the power of the White supremacist South African Republic state", p. 1 - 5. (The document is a product of the underground Communist Party. It has no date but from its content it appears to have been issued sometime between 1962 and 1963.)

Having been committed for almost four decades to a policy of non-violence and moderation in their political thinking, the introduction and intensification of a policy of strict racial segregation that promised increasing control over the everyday lives of Blacks in South Africa led many of the younger leaders in the ANC's Youth League, to begin to dispair of a peaceful solution for the country's racial problems and political differences. This change in mood was particularly evident in more radical minded political circles after the banning of the CPSA in 1950. To many of these elements which included amongst them the later prominent leaders of the underground movement and the armed struggle such as Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Joe Matthews and others, the banning of the CPSA was symptomatic of the government's unflexible attitude towards African nationalism and the Black man's demands for greater political rights. To them it was merely a matter of time before the ANC too was banned by the authorities. Although no direct link has been established between the banning of the CPSA in 1950 and the decision to form Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961, there can be little doubt that the events of 1950, had a strong bearing on the thinking of many Black as well as White radical leaders in the country during the 1950's and early 1960's.(40) The banning of the CPSA was instrumental in the decision taken by the radicals in the Congress Youth league and the Communist Party leadership in the early 1950 to provide the ANC with an alternative organisational structure or plan to take it underground should it get banned.

The first direct reaction from the ANC to the banning of the CPSA came from the ANC Youth League in the early 1950's. In terms of the aims and objectives of its 1949-Programme of Action, a special committee consisting of J.S. Moroka, G. Radebe (Secretary), G.M. Pitje, G.S. Ramohanoe and Oliver Tambo was appointed in February 1950 to prepare for a campaign of civil disobedience aimed at discriminatory legislation.(41) Preparation work for the disobedience

---

40. Benson, The African Patriots, p. 171; M. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 22; Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 411; Roux, Time Longer than Rope, p. 389; Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 402.
41. Benson, The African Patriots, p. 171; Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 411.

campaign received an unexpected boost in February 1951 with the introduction of the Separate Representation of Voters Bill. This Bill, which proposed to place all Coloured voters in the Cape onto a separate voters role, brought strong and immediate reaction from the ANC and the South African Indian Congress. Although the Bill had nothing to do with these two organisations, it nevertheless represented to them a further deterioration of Black political rights, and representatives from the two organisations and a number of other leaders met shortly after the introduction of the Bill to discuss means and methods of combating it. The outcome of this meeting was the formation of the Franchise Action Committee (FRAC) to co-ordinate all efforts against the proposed Bill.(42)

In July of the same year the ANC extended an invitation to the executives of the FRAC and SAIC to attend a joint conference to discuss the rising tide of "national oppression".(43) At the end of this meeting a joint resolution was adopted which called for a campaign of passive resistance against all apartheid laws. Amongst the laws that were singled out for special attention was the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Pass Laws, and the Stock Limitation Regulations of 1950. To make the necessary preparation for the proposed campaign of civil disobedience, a five man joint Planning Council (PC) was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. J.S. Moroka. At least two of the five members of the Council were members of the banned CPSA. They were Dadoo and J.B. Marks.(44)

In December 1951, the National Conference of the ANC and the SAIC officially approved the proposed campaign and shortly afterwards a letter was sent to the South African Prime Minister, D.F. Malan, informing him and his Cabinet of the conference's decision. The government was given until February 1952 to repeal all discriminatory legislation. Should it however fail to heed to these demands a

---

42. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 411; Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 22.
43. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 402.
44. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism, p. 402; Roux, Time Longer than Rope, p. 389.

campaign of mass demonstrations and protest meetings would be called by the ANC and the SAIC.(45)

When the government showed no intention of adhering to the demands of the organisers, the campaign was officially launched on 26 June 1952. The actual history of the Defiance Campaign is of little importance here. What is important is the fact that it failed and had to be called off by the organisers some five months after it was launched.(46)

Although the campaign was well supported it largely failed because of opposition from both the government as well as African pressure groups such as the Africanists in the Youth League who were strongly opposed to the League's co-operation with other racial groups.(47) Although the opposition of the Africanists probably influenced others not to support the campaign, their role in its failure should not be over emphasised as they only had a small following in 1952. Of greater importance, however, was the extent to which the government stepped in to stop the campaign, and protect its apartheid policies. This led many radical leaders in the ANC and the Youth League to believe that the government had no intention of ever giving in to Black political demands, even if these were propagated from a platform of non-violence and moderation.

This feeling of despair and helplessness that manifested itself among many African leaders following the failure of the Defiance Campaign, was substantially strengthened in 1953 by the introduction of the Public Safety Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Both these Acts empowered the authorities to deal with unrest situations more effectively in future. The first Act empowered the government to declare a state of emergency in the country as a whole or in any specific area, while the second Act created two new categories of

---

45. M.P. Naicker, The Defiance Campaign Recalled, (United Nations Unit on Apartheid, UN, Notes and Documents, 10, 1972, p. 2); Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 413.
46. Luthuli, Let my People Go, p. 117.
47. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 2, p. 424.

offences, namely, inciting anyone to commit an offence by way of protest against any law, and accepting financial or other assistance for organising protest or resistance against the laws of the country.[48]

In addition to these new laws more than a hundred people suspected of activities that could endanger the safety of the State were arrested or served with banning orders by the security police towards the end of 1953. Among those served with such orders were several prominent Black leaders such as Albert Luthuli (elected to the Presidency of the ANC in 1952), Moses Kotane (a listed Communist), Oliver Tambo, Florence Masomela, James Calata, R. Desai, A.M. Kathrada, I.A. Cachalia and numerous others.[49] Through the arrest and banning of these top leaders of the ANC and Congress Alliance the government unwittingly paved the way for the more radically minded to both strengthen their position and increase their influence over the decisions if not the policy directions in the ANC and the Congress Alliance. The fact that the radicals were actively at work were borne out by the formation of the multi-racial South African Peace Council in Johannesburg on 21 August 1953; the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) in Cape Town on 12 September, and the predominantly White, pro-communist Congress of Democrats (COD) on 10 October 1953. The latter was nothing else but a front for the banned Communist Party. A number of well-known communists and former members of the banned CPSA such as Brian Bunting, Ben Turok, M. Harmel, Jack Hodgson and others served on the leadership structure of the newly formed COD.[50] Several of these names later became closely associated with the development of the active underground movement and the activities of Umkhonto we Sizwe after 1961.

---

48. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, pp. 23 - 24; Roux, Time Longer than Rope, p. 394.
49. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 25.
50. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 12 - 13; Benson, The African Patriots, p. 197; Debates of Parliament, 1963.04.24, col. 4642. For a more detailed discussion of the COD see P.J. Coetzee, Die Geskiedenis van die South African Congress of Democrats, MA, RAU, 1977.

(a) The Mandela or M-Plan[51]

A further important and often neglected factor reflecting Black political thinking in the 1950's and which undoubtedly also had an influence on developments in the early 1960's was the Mandela or M-Plan. This Plan called for the total restructuring of the ANC to enable it to operate from the underground should it get banned.

Factually, very little is known about the M-Plan, its origins and its structure. Although several authors such as Edward Feit, Karis and Carter, Nelson Mandela and Bruno Mtolo and a number of court records provide information on the M-Plan, it is largely sketchy and incomplete.[52] Even Mandela's speech to the Provincial Congress of the Transvaal ANC in 1953, in which the Plan was revealed for the first time, contains very little information on how the Plan was to function.[53] Reference was also made to the Plan in the 1959 Treason Trial and a number of court cases dealing with ANC affairs since then. Although these latter sources contain useful information, they all underline one peculiar fact, namely, that although the M-Plan was to have been an emergency measure to prepare the ANC for an underground existence, very few in the ANC, including its top leadership structure, really understood what it was all about.[54] Consequently, the discussion that follows is at best a sketchy and incomplete account of the M-Plan.

Apparently the idea to re-organise the ANC into a closely knit

---

51. See also Chapter seven.
52. E. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa 1960 - 1964, pp. 67, 98 - 102, 105, 107 - 8, 112 - 113, 118 - 120, 123, 124, 138, 160, 258, 323; E. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa. A Case Study, (The Journal of Modern African Studies 8(1), 1970, pp. 57 - 63); Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 35 - 40, 106 - 115; N. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 21 - 31, 142 - 189; M. Benson, Nelson Mandela, pp. 58 - 59, 92, 109; Nelson Mandela, The Struggle is my Life, pp. 4, 40; B. Mtolo, Umkhonto we Sizwe. The Road to the Left, pp. 15 - 18, 23 - 29.
53. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 21 - 31.
54. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 35 - 38.

organisation with a highly centralised leadership and command structure, did not have its origins with Mandela after whom the Plan was named but with A.P. Mda, who was a president of the Youth League. It seems that Mda, who was closely associated with the Africanist faction in the League, was in strong support of a cell based centralised structure for the ANC to help the organisation overcome its many structural and leadership problems.[55] To what extent Mda's idea had the support of the Youth League as a whole is not known but it appears that a number of the more radically minded leaders in the movement showed a considerable interest in the idea. In a letter written by Joe Matthews to his father, Prof. Z.K. Matthews, then a visiting lecturer at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, in January 1953, he informed his father that he had attended a secret meeting of the top leaders of the ANC and the SAIC, half of whom were banned, at which the future of South Africa was discussed and planned with "cold-blooded realism". Matthews did not explain what he meant by "cold-blooded realism", but having promised his father a more informative letter at a later date, he went on to say that:

> Broadly speaking the idea is to strengthen the organisation (presumably the ANC) tremendously, [and to] prepare for the continuation of the organisation under conditions of illegality by organising on the basis of the cell system.[56]

Matthews also expressed the wish for a continuation of the Defiance Campaign and its widening into a mass campaign of industrial action. Although the ANC witnessed a phenomenal increase in membership during the Defiance Campaign (its membership rose from about 7 000 to about 100 000[57] between 1952 and 1953) the campaign never developed into a mass campaign of industrial unrest because the government prevented it from happening.

---

55. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 36 - 37.
56. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 36.
57. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 36; Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 61; Benson, The African Patriots, p. 186.

Thus, although the campaign turned out to be a failure in terms of the aims and objectives it set out to achieve, it was nonetheless a success in that it effectively helped to boost African support for the ANC and increased the organisation's membership almost twelve-fold. The Defiance Campaign was also successful in that it served as a sort of barometer of Black grievances in general and African dissatisfaction in particular. It also came to represent a turning point in the relationship between Blacks, but again, particularly between Africans and the government on the issue of racial segragation and Black political rights.

Encouraged by the failure of the Defiance Campaign and the phenomenal increase in ANC membership, Nelson Mandela, with the support of others in the ANC, presented the Transvaal ANC at its annual provincial congress in September 1953 with a document in which he called for the immediate reorganisation of the ANC. The document entitled "NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM" was however read on behalf of Mandela since he could not attend the conference due to the fact that he was serving a banning order.(58)

The document, which started with the history of the South African liberation struggle in 1912, emphasised that ever since then, year after year,

> The African people have discussed the shameful misdeeds of those who rule the country .... Year after year they have raised their voices to condemn the grinding poverty of the people, the low wages, the acute shortage of land, the inhuman exploitation, and the whole policy of White domination. But instead of more freedom, repression began to grow in volume and intensity ... Today the whole country knows that their labours were not in vain .... Today the people speak the language of action .... The year 1952 stands out as the year of this upsurge of national consciousness. In June of that year (the) African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress ... took the plunge and launched the campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws ....

---

58. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 20; Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 106 - 115.

It was an effective way of getting the masses to function politically, a powerful method of voicing our indignation against the reactionary policies of the Government .... The entire country was transformed into battle zones where the forces of liberation were locked in immortal conflict against those of reaction and evil .... It was against this background ... that we held our annual provincial conference in Pretoria in October last year .... Today we meet under totally different conditions .... Between July last year and August this year, [1953] fortyseven leading members from both Congresses in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Kimberley were arrested, tried; and convicted for launching the Defiance Campaign .... A proclamation was passed which prohibited meetings of more than ten Africans and made it an offence for any person to call upon an African to defy .... The Government [also] passed the so-called Public Safety Act which empowered it to declare a state of emergency and to create conditions which permit of the most ruthless and pitiless methods of suppressing our movement. Consequently, the document went on to state, the 'old methods of bringing about mass action through public mass meetings, press statements, and leaflets calling upon the people to go into action have become extremely dangerous and difficult to use effectively.[59]

As a result of these conditions the struggle of the oppressed people ... is gravitating towards one central command. Our immediate task is to consolidate these victories to preserve our organisations [presumably Mandela was referring to the ANC and SAIC], and to muster our forces for the resumption of the offensive. To achieve this important task the national executive of the African National Congress in consultation with the National Action Committee of the ANC ... formulated a plan of action popularly known as the "M" Plan. The highest importance is attached to it by the national executive .... Instructions were given to all provinces to implement the "M" Plan without delay. The underlying principle of this plan is the understanding that it is no longer possible to wage our struggle mainly by the old methods of public meetings and printed circulars. The aim is:

To consolidate the Congress machinery.

---

59. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 21 - 24.

> To enable the transmission of important decisions taken on a national level to every member of the organisation without calling public meetings, issuing Press statements and printing circulars;
>
> To build up in the local branches themselves local congresses which will effectively represent the strength and will of the people.
>
> To extend and strengthen the ties between the Congress and the people and consolidate Congress leadership.[60]

Although it does not actually say so, there can be little doubt that the aims of the M-Plan was to restructure the ANC into a cell-based organisation with a centralised leadership and structure that would be in full control of the organisation's various divisions down to the lowest level. To Mandela and others in the ANC the problems and dangers facing the ANC necessitated the immediate implementation of the Plan and the need for this was impressed on everyone in the ANC.

> "I appeal to all members of the Congress", Mandela told the Transvaal Provincial Conference in September 1953, "to redouble their efforts and play their part truly and well in its implementation. The hard and strenuous task of recruiting members and strengthening our organisation through a house-to-house campaign in every locality must be done by you all."[61]

According to Karis and Carter[62] the M-Plan acquired some false notoriety both within, as well as outside the ANC which stamped it as a secret plan designed to enable the organisation to operate underground, when, in fact, there was no effort to keep the plan and its objectives a secret. Nevertheless, the plan's long term aim was undoubtedly to restructure the ANC into a close-knit underground organisation through mass membership under the direct control of a hierarchy of leaders who could effectively transmit policy and decisions from the national to the grass roots level.[63]

---

60. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 28.
61. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 28 - 29.
62. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 36.
63. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 36 - 37.

Theoretically, these changes, if they were successfully implemented, would have meant a more streamlined, but also probably a more radically minded ANC leadership who would have been prepared to challenge the authorities in open and violent confrontation should there ever be a need for such action. In practice, however, in only two branches, one in the Port Elizabeth area and the other in Cato Manor near Durban, where support for the ANC was particularly strong, some progress had been made with the implementation of the M-Plan.(64) Most ANC branches and regional leaders were either not prepared or were unable to support the plan and its proposed changes. In fact, the failure of the radical leaders to successfully promote and implement the M-Plan featured regularly in the ANC's annual and provincial reports between 1953 and 1959.(65)

Among the reasons given for the ANC's failure to have the M-Plan implemented were: that the plan had been inadequately explained; that there was no money to appoint full-time organisers to see to its implementation, and that morale was often very low. A poor understanding of the M-Plan and its implications was particularly evident in Natal where apparently very few of the ANC's top leadership knew exactly what it was. At a meeting held some time in 1963 to set up a new regional committee to oversee the organisation's activities in the province, members of the new leadership were asked what they knew about the M-Plan and to explain it. Many admitted to having heard of it but knew too little about it to explain it.(66)

In 1954, a mere year after the M-Plan was first officially presented to the ANC in the Transvaal, the National Executive Committee of the ANC reported that despite the urgency of the matter little progress had been made with the implementation of the M-Plan. The report stated:

---

64. Supreme Court, Transvaal Division, Case 65/64, The State against N. Mandela and others, Evidence of Zizi Njikelane, 1964, pp. 4 - 21, 24 - 30 (court case on Microfilm from Microfile); Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, p. 111.
65. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 156 - 157 (Document 7(b), "Report of the National Executive Committee").
66. Durban Regional Court, Case R:C 139/1964, The State against Pascal Ngakane and 24 others, Evidence of Elias Kunene (in camera), 1964, pp. 33 - 34.

> Year after year, we have complained about the inefficiency of our machinery; the lack of proper co-ordination between branches and the provincial committees on the one hand and the provincial committees and the National Executive Committee on the other hand. Instructions are not properly carried out; most of the correspondence is not attended to and as a result people are not properly informed about Congress Affairs .... We have shamefully failed to implement the "M" Plan.(67)

Some five years later the situation with regard to the implementation of the M-Plan was still very much the same. With the exception of the already mentioned areas of Port Elizabeth and Cato Manor in Natal, virtually no significant effort had been made to have the M-Plan implemented. In its report to the Annual National Congress of the ANC in Durban in December 1959, the ANC's NEC again informed the delegates present, that little or no progress had been made with the implementation of the plan and that there was an urgent need for the situation to be rectified.(68)

What is significant about this entire development is the fact that even in the Transvaal where the M-Plan was first introduced and Mandela was the leader of the local provincial division of the ANC, virtually no progress had been recorded with the implementation of the plan. Surely, as Provincial President of the ANC, Mandela should have had no problem in convincing the local leadership to implement the plan. Yet, there is every indication that he found it impossible. Feit gave a number of reasons for this state of affairs.(69) In the first instance the plan, he argued, was more applicable to large urban areas than rural areas. Its divisions of cells, and cell-committees based on streets and blocks made it thus largely unsuitable for a rural area where the population was sparse and thinly spread around the country-side.

---

67. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Progress to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 156 - 157 (Document 7(b), "Report of the National Executive Committee").
68. ANC document (Author's collection), Executive Report submitted to the ANC's Annual National Conference, Durban, December 1959, pp. 11 - 12.
69. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, pp. 101 - 102.

In the second place, the Plan's call for a streamlining of the existing ANC structure was resisted by some of the leaders in the organisation who, having built up a power base for themselves in the organisation over the years, were reluctant to relinquish their positions. The M-Plan, if it was to be diligently applied, would have meant the dissolution of the old system of branches and branch committees and their replacement with much smaller and more streamlined organisations that would have less authority and serve directly under the central command in Johannesburg. This reluctance by provincial and regional leaders to relinquish their positions in favour of a reorganisation in accordance with the M-Plan was also evident in the Youth League. In some instances, such as Port Elizabeth, local ANC and Youth League branches only dissolved themselves after numerous visits from national leaders such as Vuysile Mini and Nelson Mandela himself in 1961. In other areas such as Natal the local ANC branches and committees flatly refused to reorganise themselves in accordance with the M-Plan.(70)

A third possible factor singled out by Feit was the very rigid view that the ANC's NEC had of the M-Plan. The Plan had to be uniformly applied everywhere. If there was any difficulty in applying it in a particular region or area the matter had to be referred back to the NEC who would then have sent an NEC member to investigate and report on the situation. In practice, however, this was very seldom done. What happened was that in most instances the provincial and branch organisations of the ANC either rejected the M-Plan outright or they adopted from it only those aspects that suited them. Natal was probably the only area in the country where the two structures remained relatively separate from one another. In appears that Albert Luthuli, and those who still supported him, were not in favour of the M-Plan and the changes it envisaged for the ANC. Luthuli neither openly discredited the Plan, nor did he ever openly attach his approval to it. There is not a single document to show that he ever gave his personal support to the Plan or called for its implementation. This is rather strange considering that the NEC,

---

70. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, pp. 102 - 103.

according to Mandela, gave its full support to the Plan.[71]

According to Karis and Carter,[72] who remain the most informative commentators on the issue, there were apparently serious doubts among many of the older generation of leaders, such as Albert Luthuli and Prof. Z.K. Matthews to name but two, about the proposed changes and aims of the Plan. Both Luthuli and Matthews, in spite of their opposition to the South African government, were committed to a policy of non-violent action. This was in sharp contrast to the views and ideals of Mandela and the "M" Plan.

"Mandela's rhetoric, on the other hand", states Karis and Carter, "was open to inferences that violence was ultimately unavoidable; ..."[73]

4. THE CONSTITUTION OF 1957

One aspect that held close association with the aims and objectives of the M-Plan and the question of its implementation after 1957 was the new ANC constitution that was adopted in the same year. In terms of the M-Plan a complete revision of the 1943 "Xuma-Constitution" was necessary for the ANC to survive into the future. It needed a sound organisational foundation and a strengthening of its ties with the African masses. A draft constitution to facilitate these changes was presented to the NEC in December 1952, almost a full year before Mandela introduced the M-Plan in 1953. The new draft constitution, which became known as the "Tambo-Constitution"[74] was initially unacceptable to the NEC and referred back to Oliver Tambo and the constitutional committee for a rethink. Over the next few years the draft constitution circulated in many versions among the provincial and branch organisations of the ANC. In the process it was extensively altered before it was finally accepted by the NEC in 1957. An

---

71. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, p. 103.
72. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 37 - 38.
73. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 37 - 38.
74. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 35, 37.

interesting aspect of the various drafts was that they were not so much concerned with central ANC policy, aims and objectives, as with particular points of view. So, for instance, could one draft be identified with the Cape Province and in particular the points of view of ANC leaders in the Eastern Cape, while another for its provision for a shift in power from the provinces to the national headquarters of the ANC in Johannesburg, was more directly identified with the Transvaal and the M-Plan.(75) Most of the younger Youth League leaders in the Transvaal, as well as a fair number in the Eastern Cape, particularly in the Port Elizabeth region, believed that the new constitution, in the words of Joe Matthews, would "tighten up the organisation and give the national executive the power to enforce the policies of the organisation throughout the country".(76)

The latter views were, however, not shared by the older leaders in the ANC who quietly resisted any changes that would eliminate provincial authority and unduly centralise control in Johannesburg. Just as tension between the Cape and the Transvaal often marked white Afrikaner politics, so did African leaders from outside the Transvaal often harbour a mistrust of what was seen to be the more extreme approach of Transvaal leaders. In a "confidential" letter to T.E. Tshunugwa, the ANC's national organiser, on 6 February 1956, Prof. Matthews had the following reservations about one of the drafts of the new constitution that was circulating at the time. He wrote:

> The danger in this new constitution proposed by the Eastern Cape is the abolition of Provincial conferences. There will be too much centralisation and I am sure it will kill the whole organisation in a few months [not years] time .... This is another Transvaal move intended to hide their deficiencies. They think that in this way they will be able to hold off the Cape Branches with their better financial organisation. They are supported in this by some of our Cape leaders who do not see what is behind this move.(77)

---

75. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 37, 279.
76. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 37.
77. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 38.

As leader of the ANC, Luthuli had strong doubts about the real aims and objectives of the proposed new constitution. Shortly before an ANC special conference held at the end of March 1956, Luthuli privately warned that he may have to seriously consider whether he can honourably continue to act as President-General of the ANC. He later elaborated on these views in a letter to Dr. Arthur Letele, the organisation's Treasurer-General on 22 March (1956). In this Luthuli made it clear that he felt strongly about "abolising in any new Constitution the Provincial level in our organisational structure. I do not like overcentralisation", he wrote. "Power must be shared or else you create dictators."(78)

Clearly, therefore, the proposed constitution and the envisaged changes to the organisational structure of the ANC did not carry the anticipated support of the older generation of Congress leaders. By 1957 a clear division had developed between the radical and relatively younger leaders of the ANC and Youth League and the older, more traditional, leaders as to the future direction that the ANC's policy and structure should take.

As a result of these conditions and the fact that many in the ANC were in disagreement with the views of the radicals that the ANC was in mortal danger of being outlawed by the government, the draft that was eventually accepted by the ANC in 1957 turned out to be more of a victory for the moderates and the cause of moderate thinking in the ANC than for the radicals and those in support of the M-Plan. Thus, although the constitution reflected a minor shift towards the sort of centralisation called for by Mandela and his M-Plan, the document remained conservative in nature by retaining much of the cumbersome structure of the 1943 constitution. Although the new constitution served the needs of the conservative, relatively older generation of leaders in the ANC by the end of the 1950's, it certainly did not do the same for the younger and more radical minded leaders of the Youth League, who considered it an out of date, if not reactionary

---

78. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 38.

document.(79) Instead of taking a backseat to the older leadership in 1957, the adoption of the constitution only made the radicals more determined than ever to impose their more militant and radical thinking on the ANC and Black political thinking in general. As such the 1957-constitution undoubtedly served as an important milestone on the road to the formation of Umkhonto in 1961.

5. THE ANC CAMPAIGNS OF THE MID- AND LATE 1950'S AND THE FAILURE OF NON-VIOLENT PROTEST

A further factor that undoubtedly also had an influence on the thinking of the radicals both in and out of the ANC, and which probably had a bearing on their shift towards political violence in 1961, was the general failure of the ANC directed campaigns of the 1950's to bring about meaningful political changes based on the policy of non-violence and moderation. Following the failure of the Defiance Campaign of 1952, the ANC's National Executive in keeping with the principles of the 1949-Programme of Action, together with the remaining members of the Congress Alliance, drew up plans in 1953 for three major campaigns of protest. These campaigns were designed to start in 1954 and reach their climax in 1955.

The first and most militant of these campaigns was aimed against the forced removal of some 58 000 African people from the western areas of the city of Johannesburg for resettlement elsewhere.(80)

The second campaign was aimed against the newly introduced Bantu Education Act of 1953, a measure which potentially had a more profound and far-reaching influence on Black thinking than any other measure passed by the government of Dr. Malan since it came to power some five years earlier.

---

79. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 279.
80. E. Feit, Conflict and Communication. An Analysis of the Western Areas and Bantu Education Campaigns of the African National Congress of South Africa, pp. 109 - 112; See also Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 19 - 20.

The third important development that influenced Black political thinking and development in the mid 1950's was the campaign aimed at the convening of a truly national representative Congress of the People, to adopt a freedom charter for all the people of South Africa. Of the three campaigns, the last one had the most profound and lasting influence on the direction and future of Black politics in South Africa.

The Western Areas Campaign had its origins in the decision by the government to resettle the people of the Black townships of Sophiatown and Martindale. The idea of doing so was not new nor popular with the Johannesburg City Council. The issue had been simmering in the Council ever since the idea was first raised by the government in the late 1940's, early 1950's. As a result of the reluctance of the Johannesburg City Council to do anything about it, the entire issue regarding the future of the people of Sophiatown and Martindale was eventually taken out of its hands by the government in 1952. Prompted by this development and the determination of the State to proceed with the removal of the people of Sophiatown and Martindale, the ANC in 1954 hurriedly set into motion plans for a campaign to oppose the removal. A number of mass meetings were convened around the Witwatersrand. These meetings were well attended but they eventually became bogged down by secondary issues such as low wages, poor living conditions, high transport costs, the pass laws and police raids. These issues, while important to Blacks in the Western Areas, had nothing to do with the original purpose of the campaign, with the result that in the end it failed to achieve its objectives.(81)

The second campaign which was aimed against the Bantu Education Act of 1953 fared no better.(82) Here too, as in the case of the Western Areas Campaign, the question of Bantu Education had been receiving the attention of the ANC for a number of years. Yet in spite of its objection to the proposed Act, no specific steps were

---

81. Feit, Conflict and Communication, pp. 109 - 112.
82. Feit, Conflict and Communication, pp. 153 - 154. For a more detailed discussion of the ANC's campaign against the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the local response to it see Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 121 - 134.

mooted or adopted by the ANC leadership to counter the Bantu Education Bill when it became law. Consequently, when the Bantu Education Bill did become law in 1953, the ANC lacked the necessary strategy and unity to oppose it. Individual Congress leaders used every opportunity to speak out against the new Law, but beyond this very little was done to effectively oppose it. This remained more or less the case until December 1954, when the idea of a school boycott was raised for the first time. According to Edward Feit,(83) the reason for the ANC's slow reaction to the 1953 Act was probably the fact that:

> Africans were apprehensive, fearing on the one hand, a reduction in the standards of African education, but eager on the other to have their children in school. Congress followers were, by and large, a minority and would have to induce the majority to follow their behests.(84)

Perhaps a more accurate explanation of the situation facing the African parent and the ANC was that given by Albert Luthuli, who wrote that:

> The choice before parents is almost an impossible one - they do not want Bantu Education and they do not want their children on the streets. They have to choose between two evils, and no rule of thumb indicates which is the greater.(85)

Consequently, the ANC leadership was faced with a situation which saw some accepting the new legislation on the basis of "a rotten education may be better than none", while others rejected it outrightly as "unacceptable and inferior". "As it turned out", Luthuli wrote in 1962, "some places were fully prepared and others utterly unprepared for boycotts. That was our dilemma".(86)

Of the three major campaigns called for by the mid 1950's the third,

---

83. Feit, Conflict and Communication, p. 157. See also Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 121 - 134.
84. Feit, Conflict and Communication, p. 157. See also Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 121 - 134.
85. Luthuli, Let my People Go, p. 132.
86. Luthuli, Let my People Go, p. 132.

namely the Congress of the People convened at Kliptown in June 1955, turned out to be the most successful. The aim of the Congress of the People, as Z.K. Matthews had pointed out in his presidential speech to the Cape Provincial Congress of the ANC in 1954, was to consider the entire question of convening a "National Congress" that would be truly representative of "all the people of South Africa", "irrespective of colour, creed or race", to draw up a "Freedom Charter" for a "democratic" South Africa of the future.(87)

Matthews' idea of a national congress was enthusiastically adopted by the ANC at its Annual National Congress later in the same year and in June 1955, after invitations were sent out to more than two hundred organisations, including the ruling National Party, a total of 2 884 delegates representing the widest possible spectrum of political opinion in the country gathered at Kliptown just outside Johannesburg to adopt a truly representative "Freedom Charter" for all the people of South Africa. Allegedly drawn up by Joe Slovo and Abram Fischer (the latter later became the leader of the underground South African Communist Party after Slovo had left the country in early 1963), the Freedom Charter with its strong socialistic (some say Marxist(88)) character not only became the very foundation upon which the ANC leadership based their organisation's political aims and objectives after 1956, but it also effectively came to reflect the growing mood of radical thinking within the organisation and its allies.(89)

Although the adoption of the Freedom Charter represented a clear victory for the radicals both in the ANC as well as those outside it, particularly those in the banned SACP, the document was not appreciated everywhere. The South African government, for instance,

---

87. New Age, 1954.12.16; See also Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 56 - 63.
88. The Daily News (Durban), 1990.02.14 (Concern over outdated policies), p. 10; For a more detailed analysis and discussion of the Freedom Charter and Umkhonto's relationship to it, see Chapter nine of this study.
89. Bureau of Information, Talking with the ANC, Pretoria, 1986, p. 5; See also G. Ludi and B. Grobbelaar, The Amazing Mr. Fischer, p. 10; The Daily News (Durban), 1990.02.14 (Concern over outdated policies), p. 10.

labelled it a revolutionary document which has at its aim the political, social and economic transformation of South Africa through forces of violence.(90) The Africanists faction in the ANC and the Youth League objected to the Charter's multi-racial basis as a watering down of African nationalism.(91) The Africanists believed that the Charter in its call for a "multi-racial" government of South Africa that would be both "democratic" and "socialistic" was in direct conflict with the Pan-African ideal of "Africa for Africans" and the 1949 Programme of Action. The Africanists claimed:

> The preamble to the Programme speaks the language of the Africanists. It speaks of 'national freedom', 'independence' and 'White domination' .... The fundamental principles of the Programme of Action are inspired by the desire to achieve national freedom. By national freedom we mean freedom from White domination and the attainment of political independence ...(92)

An equally strong attack was made on the Freedom Charter by the African journalist, Jordan Ngubane. Influential in Black political circles, Ngubane claimed that the ultimate aim of the charter was to condition the African people for the purpose of accepting communism via the back door.(93)

Both Ngubane and the Africanists' opposition to the Freedom Charter was shared by the South African government who, on the second day of the Congress, raided the proceedings and confiscated all documents pertaining to it. They made a detailed list of all the delegates who were present at the Congress and the first arrests in connection with the raid were made on 5 December 1956. A total of 156 people were eventually detained by the police on a charge of high treason.(94)

---

90. See Chapter nine The Aims and Objectives of Umkhonto we Sizwe and its Relationship to the Freedom Charter.
91. P.N. Raboroko, Congress and the Africanists: The Africanists Case, (Africa South 4 (3), April - June 1960, pp. 24 - 27, 28 - 32).
92. Raboroko, Congress and the Africanists (Africa South 4 (3), April - June 1960, p. 28).
93. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 99 - 100.
94. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 19 - 21, 72 - 75, 80; See also Luthuli, Let My People Go, pp. 145 - 154 and Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 31.

The preparatory examination of the accused began on 19 December 1956. Charges against sixty-one persons, including Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, as well as a number of former card-carrying members of the SACP were soon withdrawn. A revised indictment against the remaining 91 in the trial which by now had become known as the Treason Trial was introduced in January 1959. Despite this new indictment, the trial continued for another two years until all the remaining accused were eventually also found not-guilty and discharged by the court on 29 March 1961.[95] Although the trial was a clear and resounding victory for the ANC in general it was an even bigger success for its more radical leadership who effectively used the opportunity brought about by the absence of many of the older and more conservative leaders, due to their involvement in the trial, to strengthen their own positions and to establish closer ties with their radical compatriots in the SACP, the SAIC, the COD and other radical left-wing organisations.

Thus as a result of the trial a new generation of younger and more radically minded leaders rose to prominence in Black politics between 1957 and 1961. In addition, the trial also helped to foster closer relations between the Congress Alliance and the White liberal movement in South Africa. Karis and Carter writes:

> Sympathetic Whites accepted the heavy burden of obligation to provide for the defence and the care of the accused and, to some extent, the care of their families. But while liberals sought closer relations with Africans, left-wing Whites and Indians sat day after day in the unsegregated dock of a segregated court-room, closely identified as fellow accused with the African opposition.[96]

These developments brought new ties that would serve as an important basis for developments in the early 1960's.

Moreover, as the trial dragged on year after year, argues Nathaniel

---

95. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 31.
96. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 274.

Weyl, "it gave South African Communist leaders the world-wide publicity they needed and, moreover, enabled them to appear to be the victims of facist injustice."(97)

The Treason Trial therefore played an important part in the shift towards violence after 1960, by giving those who championed such a course of events a sense of belonging; in other words, a sense of unity in the struggle against the racially oppressive policies of the South African government.

This drift towards closer co-operation between the radicals in the ANC and the political left was borne out by what Nelson Mandela, one of the founding members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, had to say about the relationship between the aims and objectives of the ANC and the SACP at his trial in 1964. In his controversial but much quoted statement to the court, Mandela acknowledged the fact that there has often been close co-operation between the ANC and the Party and that both organisations support the Freedom Charter. He further explained that communists have always played an active role in the struggle against colonialism because the short-term objects of communism would always correspond with the long-term aims of freedom movements. This pattern of co-operation between communists and non-communists, he said, had been repeated in the National Liberation Movement of South Africa.(98)

It is ironic therefore that the South African government in its attempt to stamp out communism between 1950 and the beginning of the 1960's did more to cement the cause of the radical left and to consolidate their position through its heavy-handed efforts than destroying it. The court's verdict in March 1961, that, while there was evidence of a strong left-wing tendency in the ANC, the communists were not in control of it and that the state had failed to prove that the ANC intended to achieve its aims through violent means,(99) was thus an important victory for the radical left.

---

97. Weyl, Traitor's End, p. 102.
98. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 179 - 180.
99. The Daily News (Durban), 1961.03.29; See also Benson, The African Patriots, pp. 283 - 284.

6. THE AFRICANIST BREAK WITH THE ANC

Attempts to gain control of the ANC leadership following the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 not only came from the radical left but also from the radical right of the African political spectrum. Encouraged by the incapacitation of the established ANC leadership, Potlako Leballo and Josias Madzunja made an open bid for the leadership of the ANC in the Transvaal in early 1958. Their attempt however failed, and they were consequently kicked out of the ANC in the Transvaal in May 1958. The final clash between the ANC's Transvaal leadership and the Africanists followed a few months later in September at the ANC's Provincial Congress held in Orlando township. Determined not to let the Africanists disrupt the meeting, the congress organisers barred Leballo and Madzunja, together with about a hundred of their followers, from the conference hall on the second day of the proceedings.(100)

Confronted by a large group of ANC youths armed with an array of crude weapons, Leballo and his followers assembled some distance away from the conference hall where they then proceeded to hold their own meeting. At this "meeting" the following resolution was adopted:

> We have consistently advocated African Nationalism, and whenever we have stepped onto a political platform we have expounded that doctrine. In 1949, we got the African people to accept the national building programme of that year. We have stuck honestly and consistently to that programme. In 1955, the Kliptown Charter was adopted by the ANC. We thought it was in irreconcilable conflict with the 1949 programme, and for that reason opposed it. ... We are launching out on our own as the custodians of ANC policy as formulated in 1912 and pursued up to the time of the Congress Alliance.(101)

---

100. C. Motsisi, Madzunja. What makes him tick so loud, (Drum, April to May 1959, pp. 26 - 28). See also C.J.B. le Roux, Die Pan- Africanist Congress in Suid-Afrika, 1958 - 1964 (Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, R.A.U., 1977), p. 68; C. Temba, Africanists cut loose at Transvaal ANC meeting, (Drum, December 1958, p. 31); Umlabeni, Group of 100 Africanists breaks away, (Contact 1 (21), November 1958, p. 4).
101. Umlabeni, Group of 100 Africanists breaks away, (Contact 1 (21), November 1958, p. 4).

Following their break with the Transvaal ANC, the Africanists under Leballo and Madzunja held their first National Conference at Orlando East on 4 April 1959 to discuss the formation of a new Blacks only organisation based upon the principle of undiluted African nationalism as defined by the slogan "Africa for the Africans". Out of this meeting the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) of South Africa was born in April 1959. Robert Sobukwe was its first President and Leballo its Secretary-General. The PAC's first annual conference was held in December 1959 and four months later it was banned with the ANC for its role in the Sharpeville incident of 21 March 1960.[102] Although the Africanists in the ANC represented only a small pressure group within the organisation, their expulsion, coupled with the removal of many of the organisations top but more conservative leaders through the Treason Trial, as well as the numerous restrictions placed on them by the government, effectively paved the way for the take over of the ANC leadership and the national liberation movement by the radicals under Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Joe Matthews, and others after April 1960.

7. CONCLUSION

Although the period between 1912 and the outbreak of the Second World War were formative years in the history of the ANC and Black political awakening, the ANC remained largely an elitist organisation with a relatively small membership. It was politically so weak during these years that even the Communist Party had little interest in it. It was only after the collapse of Kadalie's ICU in the early 1930's and the introduction of the Hertzog legislation in 1935/6 that the Communist Party began to show more than just a passing interest in the ANC. But with the conservative Seme being president of the ANC, a position he retained until 1937, the CPSA had to await the election of a more liberal leader to improve their position in the ANC. This came in 1940 with the election of Dr. A.B. Xuma and

---

102. Le Roux, Die Pan-Africanist Congress in Suid-Afrika, 1958 - 1864 (Unpublished M.A. Dissertion, R.A.U., 1977), p. 125.

the formation of the Youth League in 1943. Although Xuma was not pro-communist as such, he nonetheless, through his more dynamic leadership and emphasis on mass as well as youth organisation, paved the way for closer co-operation between the ANC and other anti-apartheid organisations such as the SAIC and the CPSA.

A major if not thé major factor in this new direction was the Youth League movement. Guided by young, dynamic but above all, militant African leaders, the Youth League was responsible for much of the new direction that the ANC took in the years following the end of the Second World War. Besides the numerous new policy documents that flowed from it, the Youth League was instrumental in the ANC broadening its base from an elitist African organisation to a broad mass-based Black organisation. The first major step in this direction came in 1946 with the signing of the "Doctor's Pact" between the leadership of the ANC and that of the SAIC. Although the "pact" was basically an agreement of co-operation and friendship between the ANC and the SAIC, the impact and influence that the SAIC's radical membership (many if not most of its leaders were members of the CPSA) had on the leadership of the ANC, but more particularly the Youth League, was tremendous. It effectively paved the way for Marxist ideology and radical politics to enter the ANC; a development that was excellerated by two major events after 1947. The first was the election of the National Party of Dr. D.F. Malan to power in 1948, and the second was the banning of the CPSA. As a result of these two developments many African leaders in the ANC, but more predominantly in the Youth League began to alter their views from an anti-communist to a pro-communist stance.

Mandela was one of those who underwent this transformation. By 1951 he, like many others in the Youth League, had become an active supporter of communism. He gave an explanation of how this transformation came about at his trial in 1963/1964. In his by now famous statement to the court, he made it clear that prior to the banning of the CPSA in 1950, joint campaigns between the ANC and the Party were

accepted practice and that African communists could and did become members of the ANC. Senior African communist leaders such as Albert Nzula, Moses Kotane and J.B. Marks, he said, were all members of the ANC prior to the banning of the Party in 1950. He went on to say that, when he joined the ANC via the Youth League in 1944, the accepted policy in the CYL was not to admit communists because it would lead to a watering down of the principles of African nationalism. In terms of this view which was predominant in the League during the 1940's, Mandela was one of those who had called for the expulsion of communist from the ANC's leadership, particularly its National Executive Committee in these years. But by the beginning of the 1950's Mandela had come to accept the views of those who had argued that the ANC was not a political party with only one school of thought, but that it was rather a "Parliament of the African people, accommodating people of various political convictions, all united by the common goal of national liberation."(103)

He went on to point out that, besides the fact that the ANC could no longer afford the luxury of theoretical differences between itself and other groups in their struggle against racial discrimination, communists were the only political group in South Africa who were prepared to treat Africans as human beings, and as their equals, and, who were prepared to work with them for the attainment of political rights and a stake in society. As a result of this, there were many Africans, he said, who equated freedom with communism. Thus, with the banning of the CPSA in 1950 many of these African leaders came to feel that the government was depriving them of the only true ally they had in their struggle for political, social and economic freedom.(104)

Of course with the banning of the CPSA, and the decision by its Central Committee to continue with the organisation from the underground, the ANC and its leadership became of the utmost

---

103. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 180 - 181.
104. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 181.

significance to the survival of the Party. Part of this survival strategy and the closing of ranks after 1950 was the need for the structural reorganisation of the ANC to enable it to operate, like the Party, from the underground should it too get banned. The outcome of this thinking was the Mandela or M-Plan which was presented to the Transvaal division of the ANC in 1953. Unfortunately for the radical leaders in the Youth League, their plans for the reorganisation of the ANC and the centralisation of authority were not shared by the majority of the ANC's conservative leadership both at the national as well as the provincial level of organisation. As a result, attempts by the radicals to have the M-Plan implemented between 1953 and the end of the decade were, with the exception of the Port Elizabeth region in the Eastern Cape and Cato Manor in Durban, largely a failure. This particular development would eventually have a major influence on the thinking of the radicals in the early 1960's not to reform the ANC as they initially planned to do, but to rather form a new organisation along the lines of the M-Plan.

Although the failure of the radicals to have the M-Plan implemented played a major role in developments after 1960, it was not the only factor in the 1950's that had a bearing on the later decision to adopt a policy of armed struggle in 1961. There were other developments prior to the Sharpeville incident and the banning of the ANC that helped to influence the shift to violence and armed resistance. The most important of these developments was undoubtedly the failure of the 1952 Defiance Campaign, as well as the other non-violent protest campaigns led by the ANC between 1952 and 1959. None of these campaigns, which were conducted on the basis of non-violence, achieved any meaningful change to the African's political and economic situation. What is more, the Congress of the People at Kliptown and its adoption of the Freedom Charter, failed to convince the government to have a rethink on its racial policies and to start accommodating Black political aspirations. Instead it stimulated the government to unlease the full force of its legal machinery on the Congress Movement and the leaders of the Congress of the People (and the Congress Alliance as a whole). In its attempt to decapitate the

ANC and to destroy the underground Communist Party, the government not only dismally failed to achieve its aims, but it unwittingly strengthened the position of the radical left wing inside the ANC and the Youth League to the point where they had become the real power by 1961. By this stage, whatever opposition to violence there was in the ANC had been long dealt with. The Africanist, who strongly objected to the ANC's co-operation with the non-African and communist left, were expelled from the ANC in 1957; and with most of the top leaders of the ANC, such as Luthuli, being tied up by the Treason Trial or under banning orders, the stage was set for a complete takeover of the existing leadership of the ANC by the radicals by the beginning of the 1960's.