CHAPTER TWO

THE DECISION TO COMMENCE WITH THE ARMED STRUGGLE

So far the origins and broad development of African political thought between the formation of the ANC in 1912 and the organisation's banning in 1960 have been examined. Next, those factors and circumstances during the 1950's and early 1960's that, according to Nelson Mandela, had a particular bearing on the decison in 1961 to finally break with the established non-violent policies of the ANC, in favour of a policy supporting armed struggle and revolutionary violence against the state must be focused on. In this chapter the factors and circumstances specifically referred to by Mandela in his famous but controversial statement during the Rivonia Trial in 1964 will be analysed. As controversial as Mandela's statement may be, it is the only 'primary' source available on the subject and as such it is almost indispensible to anyone wishing to study the origins of Umkhonto. There is simply no other source available that has a better explanation as to why Umkhonto was formed in November 1961. But having said that, it should be pointed out that not everything Mandela told the court in 1963 was accepted as the truth. On the contrary, his statement could not be subjected to cross-examination by the prosecution, with the result that he never had to prove any of the claims he made. In the limited space of this chapter each of the factors referred to by Mandela in his 1963 statement will be critically examined in order to determine to what extent they contributed to the decision to move to revolutionary armed violence in 1961.

1. NELSON MANDELA ON THE REMOTE AND IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE ARMED STRUGGLE

At his second trial in 1964, which is commonly referred to as the

Rivonia Trial, Nelson Mandela gave the following reasons as to why he and his followers thought it necessary in 1961 to adopt a policy of revolutionary armed violence in direct defiance of the existing non-violent policies of the ANC:

> In 1960 the Government held a Referendum which led to the establishment of a Republic. Africans who constituted approximately 70 per cent of the population of South Africa, were not entitled to vote, and were not even consulted about the proposed constitutional change. All of us were apprehensive about our future under the proposed White Republic, and a resolution was taken to hold an All-in-African Conference to call for a National Convention, and to organise mass demonstrations on the eve of the unwanted Republic, if the Government failed to call the Convention.
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> ... The Government's answer was to introduce new and harsher laws, to mobilise its armed forces, and to send saracens, armed vehicles and soldiers into the townships in a massive show of force designed to intimidate the people. This was an indication that the Government had decided to rule by force alone, and this decision was a milestone on the road to Umkhonto.
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> ... the hard facts were that fifty years of non-violence had brought the African People nothing but more and more repressive legislation and fewer and fewer rights. It may not be easy for this Court to understand, but it is a fact that for a long time the people had been talking of violence - of the day when they would fight the White man and win back their country ...
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> When some of us discussed this in May and June of 1961, it could not be denied that our policy to achieve a non-racial State by non-violence had achieved nothing, and that our followers were beginning to lose confidence in this policy and were developing disturbing ideas of terrorism.
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> ... by this time violence had, in fact, become a feature of the South African political scene. There had been violence in 1957 when the women of Zeerust were ordered to carry passes; there was violence in 1958 with the enforcement of the Bantu authorities and cattle culling in Sekhukuniland; there was violence in 1959 when the people of Cato Manor protested against pass raids; there was violence in 1960 when the Government attempted to impose Bantu Authorities in Pondoland. Thirty-

> nine Africans died in these Pondoland disturbances. In 1961 there had been riots in Warmbaths, and all this time ... the Transkei had been seething mass of unrest. Each disturbance pointed clearly to the inevitable growth amongst Africans of the belief that violence was the only way out - it showed that a Government which used force to maintain its rule teaches the oppressed to use force to oppose it. Already small groups had arisen in the urban areas and were spontaneously making plans for violent forms of political struggle. There now arose a danger that these groups would adopt terrorism against Africans; as well as Whites, if not properly directed.(1)

To what extent Mandela's statement, which was widely published during the Rivonia Trial, had an influence on the thinking and views of other African leaders in the underground in the early 1960's is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty. Yet much of what he had to say was subsequently repeated by others in the liberation movement, such as Joe Matthews and Oliver Tambo. In an article that appeared in 1969, entitled "Armed Struggle in South Africa"(2), Joe Matthews, who was one of the leaders of the Youth League in the 1940's and 1950's and one of the chief supporters of the Mandela Plan, made it clear that long before the ANC was banned in 1960, there was already a steady belief among many in the ANC that the South African government had no intention of ever adhering to the peaceful demands of the ANC and Blacks in general.

> The massacre of Sharpeville in 1960, which was far from being the worst in South African history, highlighted the determination of the white privileged minority to resist any change in the status quo. As a result of these conditions, the question of whether armed struggle should be adopted, came to a head in 1961. This followed the crushing of the strike movement [at the end of May] the same year against the establishment of a White Republic. The conditions which made armed

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1. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 167 - 168. See also Supreme Court, Transvaal Division, Case 65/64, The State against N. Mandela and others, Statement from the dock. pp. 11 - 14.
2. J. Matthews, Armed Struggle in South Africa, (Marxism Today 13 (9), 1969, p. 271).

> struggle the correct choice at that stage were many. But the major conditions [that contributed to this decision] were that:
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> a. there were no prospects of achieving liberation by the methods of the previous fifty years;
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> b. the struggle of the previous period had created big mass organisations and a leadership capable of gaining the allegiance of the people for armed struggle and with the ability to carry out the planning, preparation and overall conduct of the struggle;
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> c. the independence movements in Africa had, particularly in 1960, swept across the continent and by 1961 stood close to the borders of the unliberated White controlled countries in the South. This was a vital factor for it meant that the opportunity now arose which had not existed before - of bases at which our people could obtain the training and facilities for conducting armed struggle.

Oliver Tambo too agreed with these views. In an article published in 1974 entitled "The Black Reaction [to Apartheid]", Tambo[3] set out his views on the conditions and circumstances that gave rise to the ANC's decision to adopt a policy supporting armed resistance. In an overview of developments in South Africa since the end of the Second World War, Tambo placed a great deal of emphasis on the election of the Nationalist government under Dr. Malan to power in 1948. From this point hence, he stated, "the policy of segregation and white dominance identified as apartheid, became characterised by the increasingly violent enforcement of this foul policy". He went on to say that opposition to the policies of the nationalist government were not confined to Blacks only but were shared by Whites who felt that apartheid was a recipe for violence and the sort of provocation that might enbroil the country in bloodshed. Tambo went on to say that these developments, together with the government's reaction to the rural unrest in Sekhukhuneland, Zeerust and Pondoland, as well as the failure of the end of May strike action planned by the ANC which followed the Pietermaritzburg All-in-Conference of March 1961, all contributed to the

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3. O. Tambo, The Black Reaction, (Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion 4 (3), 1974, pp. 4 - 5).

> decision to introduce a higher level of struggle. Shortly after Sharpeville, it was announced that the struggle had entered a violent phase. This announcement was accompanied by acts of organised violence, sabotage, and the training outside South Africa of hundreds of activists in preparation for the armed phase of the struggle.(4)

Presumably Tambo was referring here to the period after the formation of Umkhonto in November 1961, because no combat training of ANC members apparantly took place prior to 1962.

1.1 The Rural Unrest of the 1950's and the Early 1960's

According to Mandela, the incidents of rural unrest and violence that broke out in the mid-1950's and which, as in the case of the Pondoland and Cato Manor revolts, lasted until the early 1960's, had a deep effect on the thinking and decisions of ANC leaders. As far as they were concerned the unrest was the direct result of the government's racial policies.(5) The government, on the other hand, blamed the unrest on the ANC's anti-government policies.

(a) The Zeerust Riots

One of the first areas where rioting broke out in 1957, was in the Bafurutse (also spelled Bahurutshe or Lehurutshe) reserve in the Zeerust district of the Western Transvaal. Most sources(6) on the

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4. Tambo, The Black Reaction, (Issue: A Quarterly Journal of Africanist Opinion 4 (3), 1974, p. 5). See also Dawn, Souvenir Issue, 1986, pp. 1 - 6.
5. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 168. See also H. Barrell, MK, p. 8.
6. For detailed discussions of the Zeerust riots see: H. Balk, Report of the Commission of Enquiry into the recent unrest and disturbances in the Linokana and other native areas in the district of Marico and in the native areas in the adjoining districts, Pretoria, 1957.12.4, (Unpublished Report); Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 275 - 279; M. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 66; The Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg, 1958.03.10); C. Hooper, Brief Authority, pp. 78 - 277; J. Fairburn, Zeerust: A Profile of Resistance, (Africa South, December 1958, p. 38); Z. Sonkosi, African Opposition in South Africa from 1948 - 1969 (Unpublished Phd Thesis, Free University, West-Berlin, Sept. 1975), pp. 220 - 223.

Zeerust riots, as the unrest in the Bafurutse reserve became known, argue that the situation was brought about by the government's persistent desire to extend the pass or reference book system for Africans to women in the Bafurutse reserve and adjacent areas. Although the Bafurutse reserve was relatively close to the rich labour markets of the Pretoria-Witwatersrand area, the reserve and its people had been left largely unaffected by the political and economic development of this area. This remained largely the case until 1957 when the Department of Native Affairs (DNA) decided to inform the people of the reserve that they were going to extend the pass system to African women in the area. An unpopular measure at best, the announcement by the DNA became a hotly debated issue with the result that by the time that the first mobile pass units began to arrive in the reserve, feelings were running high in opposition to the pass issue. The reserve's opposition to passes for women was fully shared by the leader of the reserve, Chief Abraham Moiloa, who formally disassociated himself from the entire pass issue in March 1957.(7)

As a result of these developments, most women in the reserve stayed away from the mobile pass units, with the result that the DNA called a public meeting of all the adults in the reserve on 4 April to clear up whatever misunderstanding there may have been about the issuing of passes. At this meeting Chief Moiloa was publicly stripped of his office and expelled from the reserve.(8) Needless to say, this action by the Chief Native Affairs Commissioner did not solve the problem but only aggravated it. The news of the Chief's dismissal quickly spread to the surrounding areas and the nearby Reef where many of the reserve's men were employed as migrant workers. Within a week of Chief Moiloa's dismissal more than a hundred and fifty men had arrived back in the reserve to add their opposition to the pass issue. A special meeting of all the inhabitants of the reserve was subsequently convened at which the pass system for women was rejected.

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7. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 274 - 275; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 66.
8. Balk, Commission of Enquiry, pp. 13 - 14; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 66.

At the same meeting it was also decided to place eight tribesmen, whom it was believed were responsible for Chief Moiloa's dismissal, on trial. They apparently complained to the local Native Affairs authority about the way in which the Chief executed his duties. Their anger was primarily directed at Chief Moiloa's uncle and three of his supporters. At the "trial" that followed, the eight men were first severely beaten and then sentenced to death. When the police heard of the planned execution, they intervened. In the ensuing investigation 25 tribesmen were arrested and later brought to trial on charges of attempted murder.

Shortly after these events wide-spread violence broke out in the reserve. Buildings and institutions associated with the authorities and the State, such as schools, churches and Bantu Affairs offices, as well as the people who worked there were attacked. Schools were boycotted and in the end all schools had to be closed as a result of it.(9)

From Bafurutse the unrest and violence rapidly spread to the adjacent areas. Local chiefs and headsmen such as Chief Alfred Gopane, who tried to co-operate with the local Department of Native Affairs out of fear for his position, was soon brought to heel by the rioters who arrived in busloads from Johannesburg to protest against the pass system for women. According to the findings of the commission of enquiry that was subsequently appointed to examine the causes of the unrest, a number of the men who arrived from Johannesburg in the reserve in April wore the colours of the ANC and gave the ANC-salute at meetings.(10) Many of the women apparently responded with similar salutes and ANC-slogans.

The unrest continued over the next four months with men and women constantly arriving in the reserve from the Reef to attend meetings and to give their support. By October most of the public services such as the postal service, the Railway bus service and the telephone

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9. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, pp. 66; Balk, Commission of Enquiry, p. 14.
10. Balk, Commission of Enquiry, pp. 14 - 16.

service to and from the area had broken down.(11) In an attempt to restore order and to prevent any further damage from taking place, the police were instructed to seek out the agitators who were causing the unrest and arrest them. Unfortunately, the manner in which this was done only aggravated the situation. According to Tom Lodge,(12) the police's intervention into the unrest in the reserve was done in such a heavy-handed manner that it only increased the resistance instead of alleviating it. He points out that these actions, together with night raids on villages and the homes of tribesmen, created a climate of terror throughout the area.(13) While it may be difficult to prove or disaprove both Lodge or Hooper's claims of heavy-handed police action, the government's determination to extent the pass system to African women and the presence of police units in the Bafurutse reserve undoubtedly added to the hightened tension among the local people. If one adds to this acts such as night raids on villages and an intimidating attitude, both for which the South African police has been repeated criticed over the years, it is not difficult to understand the Africans' mood in the reserve. On the other hand, the police were called in to assist the DNA with the implementation of the pass system and as such had a duty to perform which they probably knew from past experience was not a popular one with the local African people.

Nonetheless, as a result of the above conditions and the inability of the police and the DNA to find a solution to the unrest, the reserve was in a virtual state of war by the beginning of 1958. This eventually prompted the government to prohibit by means of a proclamation (Proclamation no. 52 of 1958) Africans not living in the Bafurutse reserve from entering the area without special permission. The proclamation also made it illegal for anyone in such a prohibited area to make any statement or to do anything that could be construed

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11. Balk, Commission of Enquiry, pp. 21 - 22.
12. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 276.
13. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 276. See also C. Hooper, Brief Authority, pp. 100 - 277.

as an act of subversion or interference with the authority of the State, which included the authority of chiefs and local headmen.[14]

Proclamation 52 of 1958 was subsequently followed by Proclamation 67 of 1958.[15] In terms of the latter proclamation, the ANC and all its associated members were banned from the Marico district. Also banned from the region were Chief Boaz Moiloa, who had refused the chieftainship following Chief Abraham Moiloa's dismissal and expulsion from the area. The Reverend Hooper and his family were also removed from the reserve by the State who claimed that Hooper, who was an outspoken opponent of the pass-system and the government, had played an active role in persuading the women of the reserve not to accept the reference book system.[16] As a result of these and other measures introduced in 1958, order was restored to the region by the end of the year. By that stage, however, hundreds of tribesmen and women had fled the reserve in search of a more secure environment. Some had sought temporary refuge on the farms of nearby European farmers, while others had crossed the nearby border into Bechuanaland. Exactly how many left the reserve between 1957 and 1958 is not clear and will probably never be known for certain. Figures quoted, ranged from as few as 250 to several hundred. The official point of view was that the exact figure of those who had left the reserve could not be determined but that it was doubtful whether more than 700 people out of a reserve population of 34 000 were away at any given time. This estimation included the fact that a fair portion of the population in the reserve was almost permanently away from home due to contract work or for other purposes.[17]

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14. Government Gazette (Extraordinary), no. 6026, Proclamation 52 of 1958, February 1958, pp. 1 - 2. See also Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, pp. 32 - 33; and Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, pp. 68 - 69.
15. Government Gazette (Extraordinary), no. 6032, Proclamation 67 of 1958, 1958.03.17, p. 1. See also Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 70; and Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 33.
16. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 70.
17. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 71.

These migrant workers, although away from the Bafurutse reserve for long periods of time, nonetheless retained their contact with the local people and as such they formed a vital link between the people in the reserve and the ANC and its various organs in the urban areas such as those in the cities and urban areas of the Transvaal. The exact role that the ANC played in the Zeerust riots will be discussed later in this chapter.(18)

(b) The Sekhukhuneland Riots

The second major incident of rural unrest that broke out in the 1950's and which was referred to by Mandela as having had an influence on the thinking of the ANC leadership in the early 1960's was the Sekhukhuneland unrest of 1958. Like the Zeerust, the Sekhukhuneland disturbances also developed out of the government's determination to implement its policies in the region; in this case the system of Bantu authorities. Although the Sekhukhuneland riots were as disruptive as those in the Zeerust area they were, however, less well documented or researched into. No official commission of enquiry such as that appointed to investigate the Zeerust riots was ever introduced into the Sekhukhuneland unrest. Nonetheless, sufficient information is available both in the form of newspaper reports and the reports of the Institute of Race Relations from which to trace the general causes and impact of the unrest.(19)

The Sekhukhuneland reserve is situated more or less midway between Pietersburg and Middelburg in the Eastern Transvaal and is the home of the Bapedi and the Bakone tribes. Like the people of the Bafurutse reserve, the Bapedi and the Bakone lived in scattered villages throughout the reserve under the control of their respective

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18. Although researchers such as Tom Lodge and others have attributed little of the unrest in the Zeerust area to the influence and activities of the ANC it was recently claimed in an article published by Peter Delius entitled Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt, that the ANC indeed played a major role in the Zeerust unrest situation. For a discussion of the role of the ANC see pp. 68 - 76 of this chapter.
19. House of Assembly Debates, 1958.07.18, col. 514; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 73.

chiefs and headsmen. Of the two tribes the de facto suzerainty of the Bapedi people had for many years been accepted in the region and at the time of the unrest the Paramount Chief of the Bapedi, who acted on behalf of the reserve, was Chief Moroamoche Sekhukhune.(20)

With a view to the establishment of the Bantu Authorities system in the Sekhukhuneland reserve, the South African government had since the early 1950's been attempting to resettle the Bakone tribe in the south of Sekhukhuneland. These attempts had not been very successful. As a result, by 1954 the DNA was still trying to complete the resettlement of the Bakone people. By that stage, however, a considerable body of ill-feeling towards the DNA had developed among the people of the Sekhukhuneland reserve. Although the DNA had tried to attribute the tension in the reserve to the Bapedi's reluctance to give up their "domination" over the Bakone people, there was a great deal more to the tension than being the result of a feud between two tribes. As was the case in Zeerust, much of the resentment that manifested itself in Sekhukhuneland in the mid-1950's came as a result of the government's renewed attempts to establish its policies in the region. Although the measures introduced by the government such as the reduction of livestock was meant to stop the over utilization of the existing grazing lands, it was not seen as such by the people of the reserve. They saw it as just another way of interfering in their lives and to control their activities.(21)

Although the DNA attempted to explain the need for the system of Bantu Authorities to the people of the reserve on a number of occassions, the entire concept was rejected at a tribal meeting in 1957. Thus, with the tribesmen refusing to accept the system of Bantu Authorities and the government determined to proceed with its implementation, the stage was set for confrontation. By the middle of 1957 relations between the local chiefs and the DNA had reached

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20. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 73.
21. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 73.

These migrant workers, although away from the Bafurutse reserve for long periods of time, nonetheless retained their contact with the local people and as such they formed a vital link between the people in the reserve and the ANC and its various organs in the urban areas such as those in the cities and urban areas of the Transvaal. The exact role that the ANC played in the Zeerust riots will be discussed later in this chapter.(18)

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19. House of Assembly Debates, 1958.07.18, col. 514; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 73.

an all time low with both sides refusing to give an inch. In an attempt to remove some of the obstacles to the implementation of the Bantu Authorities system, Arthur Phetedi Tulare, the tribal secretary of the Bapedi and Godfrey Sekhukhune, a relative of Paramount Chief Moroamoche Sekhukhune, were deported from the reserve because of their opposition to the Bantu Authorities system.(22)

With Godfrey Sekhukhune and Arthur Phetedi out of the way, a renewed attempt was made by the DNA to convince the other chiefs to accept the Bantu Authorities system. This time they had more success but still not everyone supported it, and by August 1957 widespread unrest had broken out in the reserve. On 30 November Paramount Chief Moroamoche Sekhukhune was suspended from office for a month. This suspension was later extended to three months on the grounds that his conduct was unacceptable to the DNA. During this time the South African police arrested several tribesmen on charges related to the unrest. Yet these measures produced no real success, with the result that the unrest continued until March 1957, when Proclamations 52 and 67 of 1958 were applied to this region as well.(23)

The application of Proclamations 52 and 67 did not, however, bring about an immediate end to the rioting which now had centered on the deposition and deportation of Chief Moroamoche to Cala in the Transkei. His replacement, Chief Kgobalela Sekhukhune, was unacceptable to the Bapedi and the Bakone who flatly refused to co-operate with the new Paramount Chief. In the weeks and months that followed, the government tried to defuse the situation by arresting recalcitrant tribal leaders and replacing them with their own choice of leaders. Instead of improving the situation, these developments only led to more riots and violence in the region. As a result, a reign of terror existed in the Sekhukhuneland reserve by the end of 1958 and beginning of 1959. The homes of "collaborators" were sacked and burned by tribesmen, while trading stores and vehicles were

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22. The Star (Johannesburg), 1957.04.11; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 73.
23. The Star (Johannesburg), 1958.07.29; Cape Times (Cape Town), 1958.03.12; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 75.

destroyed. As was the case in the Bafurutse reserve, many Africans left the reserve in search of safety.[24]

Although some semblance of order was eventually restored to the region, the Sekhukhuneland reserve remained tense well into the 1960's. Although no official commission of enquiry was appointed to investigate the causes of the unrest in the reserve, the introduction of Proclamations 52 and 67 of 1958 indicate that the government was of the opinion that the causes which led to the Zeerust riots earlier in the year were also responsible for the Sekhukhuneland unrest. As for the role of the ANC in particular their is clear proof that it was behind the unrest and that it took advantage of the situation that existed in the reserve (See pp. 69-70).

(c) The Cato Manor (Natal) and Eastern Pondoland Disterbances

Two further areas of unrest referred to by both Mandela in 1963/4 and Tambo in 1974, that contributed, albeit indirectly, to the decision to move towards armed struggle in 1961 were Cato Manor in Durban, and Eastern Pondoland in what is today the Republic of Transkei. As was the case with the Zeerust and Sekhukhuneland riots, the Cato Manor riots and the unrest in Eastern Pondoland were widely reported in the daily press. In addition scholars such as Tom Lodge, Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn M. Carter have also dealt with the events in their research on the subject of Black political development in South Africa. The Pondoland riots were also the subject of a Department of Bantu Affairs (DBA) investigation. A book written by a prominent member of the ANC, Govan Mbeki, namely South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt also provides a useful and important insight into the Pondo unrest.

(i) The Cato Manor Disturbances, 1959 - 1960[25]

In June 1959 serious rioting broke out in the African township of

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24. The Star, (Johannesburg), 1958.07.30; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958, p. 75.
25. There was also serious rioting in Cato Manor in 1954 during which time 142 people lost their lives and some 1 087 were injured. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1957 - 1958,

Cato Manor in Durban. The immediate spark that set off the rioting was a "clean-up" campaign conducted by the Durban municipal police in the township to root out and destroy illegal shebeens and backyard breweries. These illegal shebeens and breweries not only produced concoctions that were at times lethal in content, but they also presented unfair competition to the municipality-owned beer halls in the townships around Durban. In reaction to police raids, the African women in the township of Cato Manor, many of whom made a living out of the illegal trade in liquor, invaded the municipal beer halls - first in Booth Road and then elsewhere in Cato Manor - smashing virtually everything inside these halls. As a result the halls had to be closed and guarded by members of the municipal police force. These events took place on 17 June 1959. In the days immediately following the outbreak of the unrest, numerous other beer halls were attacked and forced to close, thus rendering them inoperative as sources of revenue for the Durban Municipality. An attempt by the Director of the Department of Bantu Administration to address a crowd of some 2 000 African women on 18 June produced no solution to the problem. On the contrary when the women refused to disperse when ordered by the police to do so, a baton charge was executed that not only failed but which was followed by wide-spread unrest and violence in Cato Manor. From Cato Manor the rioting, burning of buildings and stonethrowing rapidly spread to the other African townships around Durban. A great deal of property, mostly municipal and government, were destroyed in the unrest, with criminal elements having a field day.[26]

These incidents of unrest and rioting continued over the next few weeks with the result that many buildings had to be placed under almost permanent police guard to prevent them from being burned down or damaged. All beer halls were temporarily closed, while transport and other services to and from the townships were suspended. Services to Cato Manor in particular, such as public health, sewerage and water were suspended for seven weeks because the safety of municipal

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26. The Daily News (Durban), 1959.06.17 - 19; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1958 - 1959, p. 132.

workers could not be guaranteed. During this time numerous arrests were made and thousands of liters of illegal liquor and beer were destroyed by the police. After these developments an uncertain quiet settled over the area, but by the time that things were beginning to quiet down in Durban, rioting was developing in other parts of Natal.(27)

In August 1959 a large crowd of African women demonstrated at various beer halls in an around Pietermaritzburg. During the course of that month schools and other public buildings were burned down. At the same time unrest also broke out in other Natal centres such as Harding, Ixopo, Inanda, Umtwalumi, Wartburg, Camperdown, Estcourt and Port Shepstone. In most of these latter areas, the unrest centered around African opposition to government policy in the region.

By early January 1960, unrest and rioting had again flared up in Cato Manor outside Durban. The general causes were the same but this time the police's liquor raids on the township led to wide-spread unrest and eventually the death of nine policemen when they were cornered in a hut in Cato Manor and hacked to death by an enraged mob. The resentment that the women of Cato Manor had for the South African and municipal police directly contributed to the renewed unrest and the death of the nine policemen. It apparently started when a policeman accidently stepped on the foot of an African woman. Although he apologised to the woman, the tension and resentment in the area was so intense that it was enough to set of the violence.(28)

In the subsequent clampdown by the South African police on the township, several hundred Africans were arrested. Of these 65 were eventually committed for trial on charges of murder. At the same time a four-week ban was placed on all public meetings or gatherings

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27. The Daily News, (Durban), 1959.06.09; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1958 - 1959, p. 132.
28. Horrell, Days of Crisis in South Africa, Factual Paper, no. 5, SAIRR, Johannesburg, 1960, p. 3; House of Assembly Debates, 1960.01.25, cols. 300 - 301; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, pp. 50 - 51; The Daily News, (Durban), 1960.01.25 - 30.

in the area. A call for an immediate Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances by the official opposition was turned down by the government as "unnecessary". Instead, the Minister of Justice was instructed to appoint a "committee" to enquire into the causes of the unrest, and to make suggestions as to how a similar event could be avoided in future.(29) Although attempts were made to trace this particular report, it could not be located nor is it certain if the committee was ever appointed. As for the role of the ANC in the unrest, the government believed that it played a major role in the events, a conviction that was born out by the promulgation of Proclamations 52 and 67 of 1958.

(ii) The Pondoland Disturbances

The areas in Pondoland were serious rioting and unrest broke out in early 1960 were the eastern districts of Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki which borders on the province of Natal in the north and Transkei in the south. Unlike the incidents of unrest and rioting discussed so far, the Pondoland unrest was unique in that it was well organised right from the beginning, which suggest that some form of organisation or organisations were behind the unrest.(30)

As has been the case in the areas discussed so far, the Pondo revolt of 1960 had both its remote and immediate origins in the opposition among sections of the Pondo people to the South African government's determination to apply its racial policies to the region. In terms of its origins, the causes of the 1960 unrest can be traced back to the introduction of the Rehabilitation Scheme in the 1940's and the system of Bantu Authorities in 1956. In both these cases strong resentment from the local Pondo people were registered. In an attempt to overcome some of the opposition to its policies, the new government of Dr. Malan in 1948 began to forcibly remove local African leaders from the region and replace them with Africans who were more

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29. House of Assembly Debates, 25 January 1960, col. 381; Horrell, Days of Crisis in South Africa, p. 4.
30. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 279. See also Z. Sonkosi, African Opposition in South Africa from 1948 - 1969 (Unpublished Phd, Free University, West-Berlin, Sept. 1975), pp. 223 - 224.

prepared to co-operate with the government.(31) But these measures, as was the case in Zeerust and Sekhukhuneland, presented no long-term solution and in the end they were largely responsible for the violence that followed.

Since its adoption of the Bantu Authorities System in 1965 the DNA had been trying, as it was doing elsewhere, to have the system adopted by the people of Pondoland. Although it had success in some regions, others such as the Lusikisiki and Bizana regions flatly refused to support the system. They also refused to co-operate with tribal chiefs and local leaders who supported the system or who co-operated with the government authorities in having the system implemented. Their dissatisfaction was particularly directed at their Paramount Chief, Chief Botha Sigcau whom they felt were more interested in serving the hand of the government than the needs of his people. His appointment to the position of Chief Magistrate for Umtata in 1958 and his favouritism to those who supported him, soon led to open resentment and a decline in law and order as people began to oppose his decisions and authority in the region.(32) (Botha Sigcau was appointed Paramount Chief of the Pondo tribe in 1939 following the death of his father in 1937. According to Pondo custom Botha Sigcau was not eligible to succeed his father although he was the eldest recognised son. Although Botha Sigcau's second brother, Mandlonke, was previously appointed to the Paramountcy, he had committed suicide in 1937. Tribesmen then expected the third brother, Nelson, to be selected for the Paramountcy, but instead Botha Sigcau was appointed by the government to the position.(33))

In his analysis of the Pondo revolt and its causes, Govan Mbeki later

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31. G.M. Carter, T. Karis and N.M. Stultz, South Africa's Transkei, The Politics of Domestic Colonialism, p. 12; G. Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 118 - 120.
32. Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasant's Revolt, pp. 119 - 120; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, pp. 39 - 47.
33. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, pp. 43 - 44.

wrote that

> this concern in the heart of tribal justice was one of the main reasons for the breakdown of the whole tribal structure, and for the subsequent development of a new system (of authority) during the Pondo revolt. Many chiefs and headmen found that once they had committed themselves to supporting Bantu Authorities, an immense chasm developed between them and the people ...[34]

In the months that followed the appointment of the Chief Botha Sigcau to the Chief Magistracy of Umtata, attempts to discuss and explain the system of Bantu Authorities to the people came to nothing as most Pondos refused to co-operate, and in the end some of the tribesmen began to resort to violence to express their dissatisfaction with local chiefs and headmen who supported the system of Bantu Authorities. As a result, units of the South African police were sent to Pondoland to protect the property and the lives of those tribal leaders who co-operated with the DNA. Although the arrival of the police in Pondoland was an inevitable consequence of the unrest and attacks on pro-government tribal officials, it only aggravated an already tense situation. Alienated by some of their leaders' pro-government stance and support for its policies, many Pondos began to turn their attention to secret meetings and a secret organisation known as "Intaba" (the Mountain) or "Ikongo" (Congress). The Intaba or Ikongo apparently obtained its name from the fact that its meetings were held mostly on top of hills or mountains to detect the arrival of unwanted guests such as the police in time.

As a result of this breakdown in communications between the Pondo people and many of their tribal leaders in areas such as Bizana and Lusikisiki, more and more tribesmen began to turn their attention to the authority of the Intaba. Consequently by May 1960, Intaba was in the process of establishing itself as an alternative political authority in these areas of Pondoland. Needless to say, it was vehemently opposed to any form of government policy, especially the

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34. Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasant's Revolt, pp. 119 - 120.

system of Bantu Authorities. It exerted whatever pressure it could on local chiefs and headmen to reject the system. Neither the DNA nor Intaba consented to compromise on their respective positions. As far as the authorities were concerned, Intaba was not the official authority in the region and they therefore refused to debate any of the issues raised by the latter organisation. Intaba's reaction to this was to attack those chiefs and tribal leaders who opposed it. In the violence that followed some seventeen chiefs, headmen or their bodyguards were killed by Intaba or by Intaba supporters. As a result, by the middle of 1960 virtually the entire tribal authority had broken down in the Bizana and Lusikisiki areas.(35)

Police reinforcements were sent to Eastern Pondoland from Durban and surrounding areas to deal with the unrest. At the same time a series of meetings were convened in the area to allow people to air their grievances. It was also announced that a departmental committee of enquiry would be appointed by the DNA to investigate the causes of the unrest and grievances. The findings of this committee of enquiry was made public in October 1960. All this, however, did little to stop the rioting and hut-burning in the area. In fact, the apex of the revolt came shortly after the findings of the departmental committee of enquiry were made known. The DNA did its utmost to inform the inhabitants of Eastern Pondoland about the findings of the commission. This was inter alia done through the holding of public meetings. The first of those was held on 11 October. According to Press reports(36) the Chairman of the committee reported that while many of the people's complaints were found to be justified, these were not brought to the attention of the authorities through the local magistrates or the Chief Magistrate at Umtata. Instead the report critisized the people for wasting time and money in employing attorneys and by holding secret meetings. The report also condemned the intimidation of law-abiding Pondos by those in opposition to the Bantu Authorities system and the damage caused to their property.

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35. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 280 - 281.
36. The Star, (Johannesburg), 1960.10.11; The Rand Daily Mail, (Johannesburg), 1960.10.12; For a detailed discussion of these reports and the findings of the departmental committee of enquiry into the causes of the Pondo unrest see Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, pp. 45 - 47.

The report further stated that the local people in Pondoland had been seriously misled in that they were told that the government was against them. This was not so, it claimed. The government was anxious to govern the various tribes according to their own laws and through their own chiefs and councillors.

In dealing with the various complaints of the local people, the departmental committee found that the people were not properly consulted about the Bantu Authorities System and that it had been forced on them. It also found that when tribal authorities were formed, the old customs of the tribes who resided at Bizana were not observed in all respects and that the people of Bizana had every right to resent this.

With regards to the complaint that the Paramount Chief of Eastern Pondoland did not consult the people when nominating members of tribal authorities it was found that there was consultation, but that mistakes were made in the nomination of members of tribal authorities. These mistakes, it was pointed out, were not deliberate. The membership of tribal authorities was often too small when it came to the appointment of people. Some locations had no representation while others again had insufficient. More important, the committee found that the laws and customs of the tribes concerned should have been observed, and they should have been given an opportunity to say whom they wanted on the Bantu Authorities. It was also agreed that headmen who were not heads of tribal authorities should not be allowed to try cases.

There were however a number of other grievances, the committee found, that could not be attributed to the Bantu Authorities System. One of these was the rehabilitation scheme, the fear of which was unfounded. The government, it pointed out, never undertook rehabilitation, stock reduction, fencing or control of ploughing, unless "the people asked for these measures".(37)

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37. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, p. 46.

As far as increases in taxation, stock rates, health rates and in the general, levy were concerned, these were found to be necessary because of increased expenses. With regards to reference books and labour bureau complaints, the committee found that hardships were sometimes experienced, but that these were due to non-complaince with the law, and that the many advantages of the reference book system had not been fully explained to the people. On Bantu education, the committee found that the syllabuses were better than they had been before and that the education offered by it was in no way inferior.

A second meeting of tribesmen where the findings of the departmental committee was made known was called at Flaggstaff on 12 October 1960 and a third meeting was held at Lusikisiki on the following day. During the latter meeting a spokesmen for the local Pondo, having listened to the findings of the committee, stated that they did not want the system of Bantu Authorities, nor did they want their chiefs and headmen because they had not been appointed according to tribal custom.(38)

Shortly afterwards, on 25 October 1960, a mass meeting of about 6 000 was held at Inzizi Hill near Bizana to discuss the findings of the committee. At the end of the meeting a resolution was adopted in which the committee's findings were rejected. At the same time it was decided that no taxes would be paid as a sign of opposition to the Bantu Authorities system.(39)

Unable to restore order and stability to the area through normal police activity and fearful that the unrest might spill over into neighbouring Tembuland and even Natal, the government declared a state of emergency in the area in November 1960. This was done in terms of Proclamation 400 of 1960 which was amended by Proclamation

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38. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, p. 46.
39. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1959 - 1960, p. 47.

413 on 14 December 1960.[40]

At the same time, the powers of the four Paramount Chiefs in the region, namely Chiefs Botha Sigcau, Victor Poto, Sabata Dalindyebo and Kaiser Matanzima, were increased to deal with the unrest situation and the local Pondo's opposition to the Bantu Authorities System. By this stage however, hundreds of locals had been arrested by the police for numerous offenses ranging from refusing to pay taxes, to murder and arson. By the end of January 1961, more than 4 769 people had been arrested in Eastern Pondoland in connection with the unrest and violence in the region.[41]

(d) An evaluation of the causes of the unrest and the role of the ANC in it

There are two basic points of view as to the causes of the unrest and rioting that broke out in the 1950's in the areas mentioned above and referred to by Mandela at the Rivonia trial in 1963. On the one hand are the views and opinions of the ANC and those organisations and individuals who support its aims and objectives. They, in their opposition to the government and its racial policies argues that the ANC as an organisation had little or nothing to do with the unrest and that the blame must be laid at the door of the government which was determined to implement its racial policies and was prepared to use force if necessary to do it. On the other hand and diametrically opposed to the above are the views of the government and its supporters who claim that the unrest was the direct result of the activities of the ANC which local grievances to ferment unrest and rioting in the rural areas. Unfortunately for both the ANC and the South African government, history has shown that the causes for

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40. Government Gazette (Extraordinary), no. 6582, Proclamation R400 of 1960, 1960.11.30, pp 1 - 8; Government Gazette (Extraordinary), no. 6594, Proclamation R413 of 1960, 1960.12.14, pp. 1 - 2; Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1961, pp. 43 - 44; and Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasant's Revolt, pp. 123 - 124.
41. See The Rand Daily Mail, 1960.11.23; The Star, (Johannesburg), 1961.02.24; House of Assembly Debates, 1961.01.27, cols. 224 - 225.

political unrest and rioting are never as symplistic or one-sided as the two sides try to make out. On the contrary, political unrest often has complex and controversial origins in which both sides normally have a responsibility. From the facts available on the unrest it is clear that both the ANC and the government had a fair share in the outbreak of the rural unrest of the 1950's. There can be little doubt that in each of the regions discussed above, the government's policies and its determination, not to mention its heavy-handedness to implement them, led to great resentment among the local population. These factors together with local grievances over a wide range of subjects such as taxes, dipping regulations, cattle culling and an unsympathetic DNA created a fertile atmosphere for the ANC and its leaders to further their aims and objectives against the government.

Although the unrest in Sekhukhuneland was never dealt with in the same detail as the unrest in Bafurutshe in 1958, the state has maintained that the ANC and its supporters were behind the unrest. The ANC on the other hand has denied any official involvement in the rural unrest of the 1950's. However, resent research by Peter Delius into the Sekhukhuneland reserve has proved that the people of the reserve had both direct and constant contact with the ANC and its alliance organisations such as the SACP both before and during the unrest.[42] Delius found that many of the migrant workers from Sekhukhuneland were members of the ANC and the SACP in the urban areas where they worked. Although these migrants who joined the ANC and the SACP were always a small minority, they played a crucial role as brokers between their own fellow migrant workers and wider movements. They were in constant contact with and accepted by these two worlds. As such they were able to communicate the concerns of migrants to the ANC and to translate the sometimes abstract language of ANC (and SACP) politics into terms which had an immediate and powerful resonance for their compatriots.[43]

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42. P. Delius, Sebatakgomo; Migrant Organisation, the ANC and the Sekhukhuneland Revolt, (Journal of Southern African Studies 15 (4), October 1989, p. 601).
43. Delius, Sebatakgomo, (Journal of Southern African Studies 15 (4), October 1989, p. 601).

Delius further claims that a number of figures in the ANC acted as particular magnets for men from Sekhukhuneland in the late 1940's. Probably the most important among these men were Elias Moretsele who was provincial secretary of the ANC in the Transvaal (he succeeded Nelson Mandela to the Presidency of the ANC in the Transvaal in 1953), David Bopape, Godfrey Nkadimeng and Elias Motsoaledi. Godfrey Sekhukhune, according to Delius, played a vital role in the events that lead up to the Sekhukhuneland revolt. Similarly, Motsoaledi and Nkadimeng played a crucial role organizing migrant resistance to rent increases and their support for ANC stay-aways in Johannesburg townships.(44)

The question is: if this was the level of ANC-SACP involvement in the Sekhukhuneland revolt to what extent did these two organisations and its leaders influence the revolt in the Bafurutshe reserve? The commission of enquiry appointed to investigate the latter unrest found that not only could the nature of the unrest in the Bafurutshe reserve be associated with the policy and aims of the ANC, but that unrest broke out shortly after people from the larger urban areas on the reef visited the reserve. In view of these and other factors the commission subsequently found that "there can be no doubt that the African National Congress is primarily responsible for the unrest and disturbances".(45)

The commission further found that the ANC had a vested interest in what was happening in the Bafurutshe reserve and that the organisation gave its full support to the women in the reserve in their opposition against the pass system for women. This was made abundantly clear by the organisation in its literature.(46) At its 46th Annual National Congress held in Durban in December 1958 the ANC's NEC openly applauded the role played by the women in the reserves in their struggle against the pass system. In its review of the ANC's anti-pass campaign since its launch in 1955, the NEC in its annual

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44. Delius, Sebatakgomo (Journal of Southern African Studies 15 (4), October 1989, pp. 601 - 602).
45. Balk, Commission of Enquiry, p. 46.
46. Balk, Commission of Enquiry, p. 46.

report stated that

> "we (the ANC) find that the role played by the African women is most inspiring .... The resistance of the people to this notorious ... system is mounting. Its development takes place in accordance with our statement of policy, namely that it is a prolonged struggle, now taking one form and then another .... The campaign must systematically widen taking different forms at different times in different places.

It went on to say

> We need not (necessarily) have the people in the reserves joining the ANC. In view of many difficulties we should (rather) create a core in every reserve which will be useful in whatever action we may decide on.(47)

The same report also saluted the "women freedom volunteers from ... Zeerust, Sekhukhuniland ..., Durban, Pietermaritzburg", in their struggle against the pass system.(48)

Similarly as far as the unrest in Durban and Eastern Pondoland were concerned, the State claimed that while some of the grievances of the people were legitimate reasons for dissatisfaction, it nonetheless kept the ANC or elements of the organisation responsible for the unrest and violence in these two regions. Both the South African police and the Secretary of the Department for Bantu Administration and Development, Dr. W.W.M. Eiselen, blamed the unrest on the ANC. In a statement to the press on 21 August 1959, Eiselen made it clear that the unrest should be viewed against the background of

> the sustained and exaggerated criticism of everything the State does for the benefit of the Bantu and the feeling of uncertainty and confusion caused by it among the broad masses. Subversive organisations made dexterous use of that uncertainty and confusion. They struck in places where control was necessary for the welfare of the

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47. Report of the National Executive Committee of the ANC, 46th Annual National Conference, Durban, December 1958, pp. 15 - 17 (Authors Collection).
48. Report of the ANC's NEC, 46th Annual National Conference, p. 7 (Authors Collection).

> community, such as slum clearance, influx control, distribution of labour, etc. They [the subversive organisations] represented these factors as oppressive measures.(49)

In support of his argument and as proof that the unrest was not spontaneous but planned, Eiselen pointed out that in presenting their grievances to the authorities, the women of Cato Manor and those in Pondoland always raised the same complaints and the same slogans in the same order.(50)

In the case of the Pondoland unrest, the departmental committee of enquiry into the unrest found that while many of the complaints of the Pondo people were justified, the fact that these complaints were not sufficiently attended to by the local tribal leaders, were skillfully exploited by elements of the ANC who arrived in the reserve shortly before the unrest started. Additionally, according to a report that was made to the Bantu Affairs Commissioner at Bizana on 11 July 1960, one of the leaders of the Intaba, Mtetunzima Ganyile, was a self-confessed leader of the ANC.(51)

Allegation of ANC involvement in Eastern Pondoland also came from Chief Makosanke Sigcau, a half brother Chief Botha Sigcau. According to him the ANC was actively involved in the unrest and its causes.(52) Although Makosanke Sigcau's claims of ANC involvement were primarily based on circumstantial evidence as was the case with most of the "evidence" of ANC involvement contained in other reports on the unrest, the ANC leader Govan Mbeki later, in his book on the Pondoland riots, confirmed much of what the authorities had been claiming about the role of the ANC in the riots. He wrote:

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49. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1958 - 1959, pp. 145 - 146. See also The Star, (Johannesburg), 1959.10.21.
50. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1958-1959, pp. 144.
51. Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria: Departmental Committee of Enquiry. Pondoland Disturbances: Statement by Chairman, Chief Bantu Affairs Commissioner of the Ciskei, J.A.C. van Heerden, 1960.10.11, pp. 1 - 4, 39 - 41.
52. Transvaal Archives Depot, Pretoria, Departmental Committee of Enquiry, Pondoland Disturbances, 1960.10.11, p. 58.

> The Pondoland struggle had its origins in local grievances, and in the initial protest the Pondo people limited their demands to issues of immediate concern. At first their methods of struggle were traditional ... the holding of meetings, deputations ... and written petitions. Very early on, new features made their appearances, and the aim of the resistance became the attainment of basic political ends. Towards this end the movement adopted the full programme of the African National Congress and its allies as embodied in the Freedom Charter. Consequently, the struggle in Pondoland became linked with the national struggle for liberation, and brought alive ... the vital need for linking up the struggles of the peasants with those of the workers in the urban areas ....[53]

Mbeki's interpretation of the causes of the unrest, at least as far as it concerned events in Eastern Pondoland, were not however officially shared by the ANC or by researchers sympathetic to the aims of the organisation. As far as the ANC was concerned, the unrest in Zeerust, Sekhukhuneland, Cato Manor, and Pondoland were primarily the result of the government's determination to proceed with the implementation of policies that were unacceptable to the African people. In a statement released on 24 August 1959 in reaction to Eiselen's report on the unrest in Cato Manor and elsewhere in Natal, the ANC President, Albert Luthuli, made it clear that the unrest was not an organised event, as Eiselen had claimed, but had been spontaneous and local in nature. He pointed out that the ANC had many members in various communities throughout the country and that it was natural for these members to take part in demonstrations concerning their everyday lives and activities. He then listed what he considered to have been the main causes of unrest, namely influx control, passes, increases in rent, higher taxes and new regulations regarding the filling of dipping tanks in rural areas by women without payment.[54]

The ANC's account of the unrest and its causes were shared by the Liberal Party of South Africa which, in an article in its mouthpiece

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53. Mbeki, South Africa: The Peasants' Revolt, pp. 128 - 129.
54. Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1958 - 1959, p. 144.

Contact, stated that while it had become government and municipal policy to blame everything on the ANC, it has yet to find a member of the ANC who knew how the unrest started. The new militancy, it claimed, had taken everyone by surprise, not least the Africans themselves. The unrest in Natal, the organisation pointed out, was merely the outcome of the government's policy of apartheid. According to the article the Liberal Party had warned the authorities for years that its policies would eventually lead to large scale violence.(55)

Similarly, the government's claims of ANC involvement in the rural unrest was rejected by Tom Lodge, a researcher at the University of the Witwatersrand. In his book Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945, Lodge argued that the unrest was not the result of ANC activity but that it was brought about by the African women in the reserves' opposition to the limitations imposed upon them by the pass system. With regard to the Bafurutshe Reserve, their prime concern, he argued, was for the effect that the pass system had had on the integrity of the African household, a concern that was shared by the menfolk of the reserve. He went on to say that while the constant accusations of ANC affiliation might have helped to promote identification with and sympathy for the ANC among the Bafurutse, the ANC's leadership in Johannesburg was not only slow to react to the unrest in the reserve but was largely ignorant of it. He claimed that an "ANC branch had existed in Zeerust location since 1947 but it appears to have been inactive during the rebellion and Congress officials sent down from Johannesburg were unaware of the existence of any local ANC members." Lodge does however admit that in general "external contributions to the struggle were important in determining its course: the experience of urban protest brought home by migrants influenced the form of resistance ...".(56) He further admitted that while on the whole the influence of the ANC in the countryside was limited, the ANC leaders of the 1950's were nonetheless conscious

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55. P. Brown, The ANC is not behind the disturbances, (Contact 2 (19), September 1959, p. 7).
56. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 279.

of the extent of the popular unrest in the countryside and from 1955 "there were references to an organisation called Sebata Kgomo (a traditional Sesotho call to arms) .... Nevertheless", he pointed out, "by 1959 the ANC's Transvaal rural membership was reported to be in decline following the sealing-off of Sekhukhuneland ... and Marico reserve by the police".(57)

Lodge more or less holds the same view with regards to the role of the ANC in the Pondoland and Natal revolts. In reference to the first, Lodge argued that while it cannot be denied that the Pondo leaders had contact with the ANC during the unrest in the region, "these external influences should not be exaggerated", since much of the Pondo revolt "stemmed from the lack of local familiarity with bureaucratic forms of political mobilisation".(58)

In reference to the unrest in rural Natal, Lodge argued that while ANC influences had once been unusually widespread in the region and local ANC leaders were swift to perceive the opportunities for channeling the rural unrest into organisational activity much of this was however prevented from developing by the prohibition of the movement in March 1960.(59)

Thus, according to Lodge, although the ANC in the urban centres had contact with the people in the reserves and were aware of the underlying dissatisfaction in these areas, it did not play a major role in events and was therefore not responsible, as the government claimed, for the unrest and rioting that broke out.

Perhaps a more objective assessement of the role of the ANC in the unrest is that held by Karis and Carter. According to them it can be argued that while some of the rural opposition to the introduction of passes for African women in 1957 were fanned on by leaders of the ANC, this was not the only cause of the unrest and that it is

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57. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 290.
58. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 283.
59. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 290.

extremely difficult to determine the exact extent of the ANC's involvement in it.(60)

What remains important of course is the fact that Mandela saw the rural unrest of the 1950's early 1960's as a milestone on the path towards the adoption of violence and the formation of Umkhonto in 1961. These developments which, according to Mandela, were the result of government policy, convinced many in the ANC Alliance that non-violence and the politics of passive resistance had no further purpose to serve.(61) Yet even at this late stage there was still a large number of conservative leaders in the ANC who were not yet sufficiently convinced that the time had come for the ANC to abandon its policies of non-violent protest in favour of a course of armed resistance and a clandestine existence.

2. THE "WINDS OF CHANGE", SHARPEVILLE AND THE BANNING OF THE ANC

If the rural unrest of the 1950's was a determining factor in the planning of the radicals to force the ANC into a more militant direction, then the events of early 1960 provided them with the proof needed to put into operation the necessary machinery to bring this about. Two events that had a lasting effect on the thinking and actions of many African and Black leaders in South Africa in these years and which seemed to have changed the course of South African history in an almost permanent fashion, was the one-day anti-pass campaign launched by the Pan-Africanist Congress on 21 March 1960, and the subsequent banning of both the PAC and the ANC as a direct result of it. Both these events had a profound influence on the development of Black/White relations after 1960. It also marked the beginning of South Africa's economic and political isolation by the international community. Although the ANC had nothing to do with the Sharpeville riots as such and in fact turned down an invitation from the PAC to join it in its anti-pass campaign, the banning of the organisation in April 1960 has since been held out in virtually each and every ANC publication and statement on the armed struggle

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60. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 281.
61. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 168 - 169.

and the history of the organisation, as one of the main reasons why it adopted a policy of violence in 1961. As Francis Meli so aptly put it in his recently released history of the ANC, the events of 1960 and 1961 represented a "turning point" in the history of the ANC.(62)

2.1 Harold MacMillan's "Wind of Change" Speech to the South African Parliament, February 1960

A factor not mentioned by Nelson Mandela or any of the other African leaders, but which must have had a considerable impact on their thinking in early 1960, was the widely publicised speech made by Harold MacMillan, the British Prime Minister, when he addressed the combined houses of the South African Parliament on 3 February.(63) Having just completed an extensive tour of the African continent, MacMillan, to the applause of the official opposition but the indignation of the South African government, told Parliament, and in effect the people of South Africa as a whole, that in view of the major "wind of change" that was blowing throughout Africa, its policy of apartheid and racial discrimination was outdated. It was, he said, morally unacceptable to the British government and the British people as a whole. In view of this he warned the South African government that Britain was no longer prepared to sacrifice her friendship with Africa in favour of South Africa's racial policies.(64)

Such open and severe criticism of the South African government's policies by a country that has always had close ties with South Africa and its people and who in the past have largely turned a blind eye to the government's policies of apartheid, undoubtedly had a strong influence on the thinking of Black leaders in South Africa.(65) To many of them in MacMillan's criticism of the South African government's racial policies and treatment of Blacks in general must have seemed like tentative recognition by the international community of the legitimacy of their struggle against racial

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62. F. Meli, South Africa Belongs to us, pp. 140 - 144.
63. The Cape Times (Cape Town), 1960.02.04.
64. The Cape Times (Cape Town), 1960.02.04.
65. D.W. Kruger, The Making of a Nation, 1910 - 1961, p. 324.

discrimination and their exclusion from the political process in the country.

2.2 The Sharpeville Incident, 21 March 1960

The unrest of March 1960 had its origins in the anti-pass campaign of the newly established Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which was designed to force the South African police and the government to either take appropriate action to stop the campaign or capitulate give in to its demands. In either case, violence would almost certainly have broken out, something the PAC's leadership must have been fully aware of considering the outcome of similar campaigns in the past. Whatever the merits of the case, the PAC's "status campaign" against passes led to widespread rioting and chaos shortly after it started, partly because the organisation's leadership had no control over the crowds that supported the campaign. In the end the police, in fear of their lives, opened fire on a large crowd at Sharpeville, estimated at between 10 000 and 20 000, killing 67 Africans and wounding almost 200 others.[66]

The Sharpeville shooting sparked of some of the worst rioting and violence South Africa had ever seen. In the days and weeks that followed, the unrest spread to most parts of the country as supporters of the ANC and the PAC, as well as criminal elements took advantage of the situation.

Gail Gerhart, in her study of the organisation and the events of 21 March, writes:

> PAC leaders optimistically hoped that the campaign would unfold into widespread disciplined acts of civil disobedience. Realistically, however, they had scant grounds for supposing that the campaign would actually develop in this way. The number of people who felt bound by PAC instructions was

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66. The Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg), 1960.03.22. See also C.J.B. le Roux, Die Pan Africanist Congress in Suid-Afrika, 1958 - 1964, pp. 162 - 177, For a further assessment of the impact of the Sharpeville incident on Black political thinking, see African National Congress of South Africa, A Short History, 1971, pp. 16, 18, 22, 23.

> small, as the thin popular response on March 21 showed .... In contrast to the small number of Africans prepared to respond in a disciplined way to the PAC's initial call, there stood a much larger number of unruly action-orientated youths yearning to strike out at symbols of White authority in any possible way and on any pretext. Predictably, once a tense crisis situation had developed, this violence prone element became uncontrolable, eventually providing the police with all the necessary justification for massive counter-violence.(67)

This pattern was later to recur in the Soweto riots of June 1976.

2.3 The State of Emergency and the Banning of the ANC

In an attempt to deal with the unrest situation effectively, the government banned all public meetings in 24 magisterial districts on 24 March. This was followed by a general state of emergency being declared in 122 of the country's 265 magisterial districts on 30 March. Between the latter date and 2 April, the government also placed the entire Citizen Force, the Permanent Force Reserve, the Citizen Force Reserve, the Reserve of Officers and the whole of the Commando forces on standby.(68)

In addition to these measures, the government temporarily suspended the pass system to prevent innocent Africans from having their documents confiscated and burned and also introduced legislation into Parliament to have the PAC and the ANC banned. The banning came into effect on 8 April and has been renewed year after year ever since - a period of thirty years - until the organisations' recent unbanning by the government on 2 February 1990.

As pointed out above, the banning of the ANC and the PAC, despite the fact that the ANC had little or nothing to do with the outbreak of the unrest on 21 March, was a turning point for many in the

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67. G.M. Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa, p. 239.
68. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 41.

organisation. It effectively brought to an end a number of moral and political issues that had been pending since the early 1950's. With the banning of the ANC the position of the radicals in the organisation became much more secure. Similarly it also gave them the moral justification to finally abandon the old non-violent principles of the ANC. In a way, therefore, by banning the ANC with the PAC, the government was to a large degree responsible for the deterioration in relations that took place between itself and South Africa's African leaders after April 1960. It can also be argued that through its indiscriminate actions it was also partially responsible for the decision by the radicals in the underground to resort to a policy of armed struggle, in that it left them with no other alternative to voice their grievances. The recent unbanning of the ANC together with all other anti-apartheid organisations that had been proscribed by law over the years, is clear proof of the fact that previous governments had made a mistake in banning radical organisations as a means of destroying or controlling them.

The banning of the ANC in April in 1960 led to two major decisions. One was to set up a Mission in Exile to solicit financial and moral support for the ANC in South Africa; while the other was to move what remained of the organisation and its leadership underground. The National Executive Committee was temporarily turned into an Emergency Committee to guide the organisation through these difficult times. The leader of the latter Committee was Nelson Mandela and it was under his leadership that the ANC decided in 1960 to ignore the ban placed on it and to move the liberation struggle underground. In a statement released by the newly formed Emergency Committee on 1 May, the ANC's underground leadership made it clear that:

> The attempt to ban the African National Congress, which for half a century has been the voice of the voteless African majority ... is a desperate act of folly, committed by a Parliament that does not contain a single African. We do not recognise the validity of this law, and we shall not submit to it. The African National Congress will carry on in its own name, to give leadership and organisation to our people until freedom has been won and every trace of the scourge of racial discrimina-

tion has been banished from our country.(69)

Similarly, Mandela told the court in 1963 that:

> My colleagues and I, after careful consideration, decided that we would not obey this decree. The African people were not part of the Government and did not make the laws by which they were governed. ... for us to accept the banning was equivalent to accepting the silencing of the Africans for all time. The ANC refused to dissolve, but instead went underground. We believe it was our duty to preserve this organisation which had been built up with almost fifty years of remitting toil.(70)

2.4 The Republican Referendum of October 1960 and the Orlando Consultative Conference

An aspect specifically singled out by Mandela as having had a significant influence on their thinking and decision to form Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961, was the all-White referendum for a Republican government held in October 1960. A basic event, no different from similar developments in White politics in the past, the October referendum would probably have passed without much Black attention was it not for the government's poor timing. Coming, as it did, shortly after the riots and unrest of March 1960 and against the background of MacMillan's "Wind of Change" speech in Parliament, the idea of a Republican constitution for South Africa in which Africans and Blacks in general will have no better political future, was seen as an insult to Blacks and their demands for political rights. It also portrayed the government as being indifferent to the grievances of the Black majority in the country. Consequently, the decision to hold the referendum in October and its subsequent outcome which registered White support for a Republican form of government, convinced many in the underground movement that there was little hope of the government ever listening to their complaints and demands in a peaceful manner.(71)

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69. Statement by the Emergency Committee of the ANC, (Document), 1960.04.01, p. 1 (author collection).
70. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 166.
71. S. Uys, The Referendum and After, (Africa South in Exile, January - March 1961, pp. 6 - 12); I.J. Blom-Cooper, Referendum for a Republic, (Africa South in Exile, October - December 1960, pp. 42 - 45).

In stating the case of the ANC at his trial in 1963, Mandela told the court that although Africans constituted approximately seventy percent of all people in South Africa, they were not consulted in the October referendum about the political future of the country. He said:

> All of us were apprehensive about our future under a proposed White Republic, and a resolution was taken to hold on All-in-African Conference [in 1961] to call for a National Convention [to adopt a democratic constitution representing all the peoples of South Africa].(72)

Thus, as far as the leaders of the ANC were concerned, the African people's position in 1960 had not only deteriorated but there was little hope of any improvement in their situation under the proposed Republican form of government that was to come into power on 31 May 1961. These developments called for a major meeting of all affected parties in order to debate the situation and to devise new strategies. Such a meeting was held in Orlando, Johannesburg, in December 1960.

2.5 The Orlando All African Consultative Conference

The idea for a general consultative conference of African leaders to discuss the crisis in African politics, appears to have come from Congress Mbata, who was a staff member of the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1960. Shortly after the state of emergency was lifted at the end of August, an urgent appeal was made to the Inter-denominational African Minister's Federation (IDAMF) to convene a meeting of all African leaders in South Africa to discuss the crisis in African politics. The IDAMF was however too busy with important church matters at the time to immediately adhere to the call and in the end it was left to Albert Luthuli, Z.K. Matthews, Duma Nokwe, W.B. Ngakane and the Reverend N.B. Tantsi, to organise the meeting. Under their patronage invitations were sent out to a wide spectrum of

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72. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 167.

African leaders and organisations, including the PAC and the Liberal Party of South Africa. Several sportsmen, businessmen and Church leaders were also invited to the conference to make it as representative as possible.[73]

In response to the invitations that were sent out, some thirty-six African leaders attended the first day of the Conference which was held in the Donaldson Orlando Community Centre, Orlando, on 16 December. A number of prominent leaders who were invited to the conference could not attend the proceedings due to previous engagements or because they were serving banning orders. Among the latter were three of the sponsors of the conference - Albert Luthuli, Duma Nokwe and Z.K. Matthews. Matthews could not attend due to "business reasons".[74]

The main theme at the meeting, which stood under the chairmanship of the Reverend Tantsi (W.B. Ngakane was the recording secretary), was the need for co-operation and unity among the various African leaders and organisations in South Africa to face the new restrictions placed on Black politics by the government. Paul Mosaka summed up the mood of the conference when he told the delegates that "Unity must be achieved at all costs. We should no longer cry for equality, ... we must say, we want to rule".[75]

Although the conference was disrupted by the police who raided the event on the first day, it nevertheless proceeded to adopt a number of important resolutions that, among others, called for African unity to bring about:

a. the removal of the scourge of apartheid;
b. the immediate establishment of a non-racial democracy, and;
c. the effective use of non-violent pressure against apartheid.[76]

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73. Karis and Carter (eds.) From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 353; Contact, 1960.12.31. For a list of the leaders who attended the conference see The Rand Daily, (Johannesburg), 1960.12.18, as well as Contact, 1960.12.31, p. 4.
74. Contact, 1960.12.31, p. 4; New Age, 1960.12.22.
75. Contact, 1960.12.31, p. 4; New Age, 1960.12.22.
76. Contact, 1960.12.31, p. 4; New Age, 1960.12.22.

The above resolutions were significant in that, in their call for a non-racial democracy through non-violent protest, it clearly reflected the more conservative views of the older generation of African leaders, rather than the radical views of the up and coming younger generation of African leaders. Although their views were not represented in the resolutions of the conference, they were determined that it would be by the time of the All-in-African Conference planned for early 1961. In order to make the necessary arrangements for the latter conference, a thirteen-man Continuation Committee was appointed by the consultative conference. The chairman of the committee was Jordan Ngubane, a well-known African journalist and member of the Liberal Party of South Africa.(77)

2.6 The Continuation Committee and the Planning of the All-in-African Conference

The series of events that finally convinced Mandela and his fellow radicals in the underground to abandon almost fifty years of non-violent struggle in favour of an underground armed struggle and to form Umkhonto, began with the planning of the All-in-African Conference in Pietermaritzburg, Natal, in March 1961 and ended with the failure of the end of May strike action to disrupt the Republican celebrations.

Although the Orlando consultative conference went out of its way to restore unity in African politics - a development that was reflected in the composition of the Continuation Committee - the major difference between the Africanists and the Charterists which led to the establishment of the Pan-Africanist Congress in 1958, was too deep to be breached in such a superficial manner. Moreover, the determination of the radicals in the ANC to make their views felt at the proposed All-in-African conference that was to be held at Pietermaritzburg in March would eventually help to split the Continuation Committee apart.

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77. Contact, 1960.12.31, p. 4.

Almost from the very minute that the Continuation Committee was formed, the diverse political views of its various members presented problems. The thirteen members of the Continuation Committee were: J. Ngubane (Chairman and Liberal Party delegate), Julius Malie (Liberal Party), H.J. Bengu (Liberal Party), Joe Molefe (PAC), D. Nokwe (ANC), G. Mbeki (ANC) and Alfred Nzo (ANC). The remaining six members of the committee, namely Paul Mosaka, J.C. Mbata, B. Rajuili, W.B. Ngubane, the Reverend Tanzi and Mark Shope (SACP, SACTU) were independents representing a broad spectrum of African political views.(78)

The PAC who had only one representative on the committee quickly felt itself outnumbered by the other representatives, particularly by the ANC representatives and their Communist Party allies, whom it later claimed, were in control of the committee. Like the PAC, the Liberal Party's representatives on the committee also complained about what they considered to be the dominant influence of the ANC and the Communist Party in the activities and decisions of the Continuation Committee. The apprehension among the PAC and Liberal Party delegates grew increasingly stronger as the committee proceeded with its planning of the All-in-Conference. They complained that important decisions were taken without the knowledge or the consent of all the members of the committee. During the course of February 1961, for instance, an important pamphlet announcing the Pietermaritzburg conference was distributed without the prior knowledge of the non-ANC and non-communist members of the committee. Although not a major offence in itself, it did help to make the non-ANC members of the Continuation Committee wonder about their true function in the committee. Many, but in particular the PAC and the Liberal Party delegates, felt that the committee was nothing more than a facade for the ANC and the Communist Party to promote their ideals and plans.(79) They were strengthened in their fears by the sudden availability of large sums of money of which the origins could not be

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78. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 355. See also Contact, 1961.02.11, p. 3.
79. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 355. See also Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, pp. 168 - 170. See also Contact, 1961.02.11, p. 3.

determined. Lavish parties were organised for members of the Continuation Committee. According to Ngubane, "never in the history of African nationalism had so much money been available to the ANC".(80)

Ngubane, like the Africanists, came to belief that the money that were made available to the Continuation Committee to plan the All-in-Conference, came from sources outside the ANC. He later wrote:

> There was, however, something very peculiar about this money. First, it did not come through the hands of the treasurer elected by the committee. Second, no proper statements of accounts were given. When the committee pressed for these, shoddy, unprofessional documents that meant absolutely nothing were handed in. Third, no receipts were requested in return for money paid out to delegates. Finally, the real source of the money was never revealed .... Naturally, the mystery surrounding the funds started tensions in the Continuation Committee.(81)

As a result of these and other conditions, the Africanists were the first to leave the Continuation Committee. They argued that the committee was committed to actions that were not part of the mandate granted to the committee by the Orlando conference in December. Once the PAC members had left the committee, the "invisible hand", later rumoured to be the SACP who received part of its funds from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), became even more noticible in the actions of the Continuation Committee. According to Ngubane, it was widely rumoured at the time that the funds for the Continuation Committee came directly from the Soviet Union via the British High Commission territories of Basutoland and Bechuanaland and that it was handled by Joe Matthews on behalf of the ANC and the SACP in Maseru, Lesotho.(82) Matthews apparently controlled all ANC-SACP funds from Basutoland until 1965, when with the collapse of the underground movement inside South Africa, he moved to London to join the External Mission of the ANC-SACP alliance. He subsequently

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80. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 170.
81. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 170.
82. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 170.

became editor of Sechaba, the official mouthpiece of the ANC.(83)

This "invisible hand", claimed Ngubane, was not interested in genuine African unity; its main aim was to advance its own ideological ends. This became increasingly apparent in the kind of literature that was sent out by the committee on the proposed conference. In these documents, the emphasis was no longer on African nationalism, but rather on the role of labour. This sparked off some stormy debates between the Liberals and independents on the one side, and the ANC-SACP delegates on the other. During these debates the entire issue regarding the funding of the Continuation Committee featured prominently on the agenda. Allegations that the Communist Party was behind the funding of the committee and thus the real power behind it, was denied by the ANC and SACP delegates.(84)

The final clash between the various factions in the Continuation Committee came in March when the Liberals, supported by the independents, called for the postponement of the Pietermaritzburg conference in order to solve the problem left by the PAC's rejection of the committee. When their request was turned down, the same group called for negotiations because they believed that the walkout by the PAC members had altered the basis on which the Continuation Committee had been established and that the United Front expressed and set up by the Orlando conference was no longer represented by the Continuation Committee. But this request too was turned down. Hereafter, writes Ngubane, events rapidly developed towards a crisis point that eventually led to the resignation of the Liberals and most of the independents from the Continuation Committee.(85)

After the walkout by the Liberals and the independents, the ANC and the SACP radicals had a free hand to proceed with the planning of the

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83. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 4, p. 79.
84. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 170 - 171.
85. Ngubane, An African Explains Apartheid, p. 171.

All-in-Conference. Although there is very little documentary evidence to substantiate Ngubane's claims of communist influences and control over the Continuation Committee, these allegations are probably not far-fetched when viewed against the broader canvas of Black political development since the banning of the ANC in 1960, and the failure of the radicals to have the organisation converted into an effective underground organisation for armed struggle. What is more, the banning of the ANC in 1960 not only left the organisation and its leaders without an underground structure to use, but it actually forced them to make use of the existing underground cell system of the SACP which was extensively overhauled in 1960-1961 to accommodate the new responsibility placed on its shoulders, namely, to guide the liberation struggle and to accommodate the radical leadership of the ANC both in terms of organisation and funding. In July 1960 a roneod leaflet was distributed to select addresses in Cape Town in which it was stated that a new communist movement had been established inside South Africa called "The South African Communist Party" (SACP), to replace the old Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) which was banned in 1950.(86)

Ngubane's interpretation of events in 1961 and his allegations of Communist influences in the Continuation Committee as being the major reason for the collapse of African unity at a time when it was desperately needed to sustain the liberation struggle, is not fully shared by Tom Lodge and Karis and Carter. According to Lodge, Ngubane's allegations were somewhat exaggerated and it was likely that neither the PAC nor the ANC had any sincere desire for African unity, especially where this meant making concessions to one another.(87) There may be truth in Lodge's argument, since it is no secret that the ANC and the PAC - ever since the split in 1958 - had refused to accommodate one another's interpretations of African Nationalism and the role of non-Africans in the liberation struggle. The Africanists have been particularly inflexible on the role and position of non-African communists and communists in general in the

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86. Contact, 1960.07.30, p. 2.
87. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 232.

liberation movement. Unfortunately, Tom Lodge failed to elaborate on his claim that Ngubane's allegation of communist influence in the Continuation Committee was an exaggeration of the situation.

Karis and Carter also failed to provide empirical evidence that could help to solve the problem. In reaction to what Ngubane had said about communist influences in the Continuation Committee, they thought it "ironic" that he should attribute the funding of the committee to the Communist Party as they had it on good authority that the money that was made available to the committee came not from the Soviet Union or any other communist sources, but from non-communist sources such as African governments and the Liberal Party in South Africa.(88) Unfortunately, they failed to reveal the identity of their source.

As far as the PAC's criticism of the Continuation Committee was concerned, Karis and Carter argued that the PAC was upset because it suspected that plans were afoot "to build up Mandela" as a hero of the African people in opposition to its own leader, Robert Sobukwe, who was in prison at the time.(89) This explanation fits in with that given by the ANC in March 1961 as to why the PAC delegates left the Continuation Committee. According to the ANC, the PAC had been searching for an excuse to leave the Continuation Committee from the moment it was established in December 1960. The reason for this was that the Cape leadership of the organisation was not in favour of the proposed All-in-Conference. Although no mention was made as to who the Cape leaders were who objected to the All-in-Conference, it was later suggested by the African newspaper, The World, that the instructions to Joe Molefe to withdrew from the Continuation Committee came directly from Robert Sobukwe in prison.(90)

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88. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 355.
89. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 355.
90. The World, (Johannesburg), 1961.03.11. See also Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, p. 54; B. Bunting, Towards a Climax, (Africa South in Exile 5(4), July - September 1961, p. 60).

2.7 The Pietermaritzburg All-in-African Conference, 25 - 26 March 1961

Although the departure of the PAC, the Liberal Party and the independents from the Continuation Committee left it virtually without members, the powers behind the committee nevertheless proceeded with the planning of the All-in-Conference. Even the arrest of the remaining members of the committee shortly before the conference, did little to side-track the preparations for 25 March. As a result, the conference was able to take place as scheduled.(91)

The All-in-Conference opened on Saturday 25 March in the Edendale Health Committee Hall outside Pietermaritzburg and was attended by 1 398 delegates representing 145 different organisations. Although the conference started in the Edendale Health Committee Hall, it was shortly afterwards transferred to the Plessislaer Indian Hall when it became rumoured that the original venue was bugged by the police.(92)

Although the number of delegates who attended the conference was impressive, they turned out to be less representative of the spectrum of Black political thinking than what was initially hoped for. Nonetheless, given the difficult circumstances under which the planning of the conference took place as well as the differences amongst members of the Continuation Committee, the simple fact that the organisers could muster almost 1 400 delegates was no small achievement - even if most of those present were members or supporters of the ANC and the SACP. Only three members of the PAC and seven members of the Liberal Party were present at the conference. Why they were at the conference is not clear; it can only be assumed that they were there as observers in a non-official capacity.(93)

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91. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.
92. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.
93. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.

A breakdown of the delegates attending the conference reveals that the majority of them were representing anti-pass committees, residents' associations, workers' unions and cultural clubs. Most of these came from the Reef. Some fifty delegates came from Cape Town, while a fair amount (the number is not known) came from Natal where the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) had a strong following.(94)

The highlight of the conference was undoubtedly the unexpected appearance of Nelson Mandela. Although he was under banning orders from the government, he was able to attend the conference due to the fact that his banning order had expired a few days before the conference and had not yet been renewed by the authorities.

The excitement surrounding Mandela's appearance at the conference clearly reflected the significant role that he had come to play in the underground by that time. This was later confirmed by the fact that most of what he had to say was subsequently adopted by the meeting as part of its main resolutions. Like many revolutionaries of the time, Mandela sported a full beard in "the new nationalist fashion".(95) Exactly what was meant by the "new nationalist fashion" Contact magazine did not explain, but it probably referred to the habit among members of the underground ANC to grow beards as part of their disguise and newly founded status as revolutionary underground leaders. The sporting of full beards was a common future of guerrilla leaders such as Fidel Castro in Cuba, and the South American revolutionary leader, Che Guevara. Revolutionary leaders such as Castro and Guevara not to mention those in African countries such as Algeria, had a deep-seated influence on the thinking of African leaders in South Africa by the beginning of the 1960's. Jackie Grobler in his book A Decisive Clash? A short history on Black protest politics in South Africa 1875 - 1976 writes that an American commentator noticed that "Che Guevara's analysis of the Cuban revolution was like a bible to the leaders of Umkhonto".(96)

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94. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.
95. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.
96. J. Grobler, A Decisive Clash? A short history of Black politics in South Africa 1875 - 1979, p. 130.

As the first delegate to speak at the conference, Mandela's speech contained two important issues, namely the need for unity among African leaders and people in South Africa, and the convening of a national convention elected on an equal basis irrespective of race, class or creed to draw up a democratic constitution for a multi-racial South Africa of the future. He outrightly rejected the newly adopted Republican constitution as a fraudulant document based on the will of the minority. He further made it clear that a Republican form of government would not bring any improvement to the African's position in the country but instead, would help to intensify the government's policies of racial segregation and discrimination. It was therefore important for the conference to adopt a course of action against the new Republican constitution. The fundamental rights of democracy, Mandela told the delegates, were being kept from the majority of the people in South Africa and those who dare to demand it were either "shot down, deported or persecuted" as has happened at Sharpeville, Zeerust and Pondoland. He said:

> The government refuse to meet the grievances but think only in terms of brute force. ... If we do not act, we will betray the people of Pondoland, Zeerust, and Sekukhuniland. Our course is to fight shoulder to shoulder for the great ideal - the liberation of all the oppressed people in South Africa. ... If we are united, the government is powerless; and if we put forward a militant plan of action, we can prevent the nationalist government from doing anything unless the people give their concent.[97]

Mandela then warned that should the government

> refuse to call the convention, we call upon the African people to refuse to co-operate with such a republic or with any form of government which rests on force and repression. The government, although it is determined to use force, is weak both internally and internationally. We know that our victory will be won by militant campaigns launched in this country by us and guided by us. You must be inspired by the knowledge that our cause is strong and invincible and that your struggle is supported in all parts of the world where freedom is invincible.[98]

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97. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.
98. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5.

Subsequently, a resolution rejecting the Republican constitution and calling for a national convention was adopted by the conference. The resolution which was undoubtedly the most important adopted by the conference read in part as follows:

> We demand a National Convention of elected representatives of adult men and women on an equal basis, irrespective of race, colour or creed, or other limitations, to be called by the Union Government not later than May 31st.
>
> We demand that the Convention shall have sovereign powers to determine, in any way the majority of delegates [who] shall decide [on] a new non-racial democratic constitution for South Africa.
>
> We resolve that should the minority Government refuse the demands of representatives of the united will of the African people:
>
> (a) We will stage country-wide demonstrations on the eve of the Republic. We shall call upon Africans not to co-operate or collaborate in any way with the proposed Republic or any form of government which rests on force to perpetuate the tyranny of the minority;
>
> (b) We also call on all Indians, Coloureds and democratic Europeans to join forces with the Africans in opposition to a regime which is bringing disaster to South Africa. We further decided that in order to further the objects of this conference, the conference (A) elects a national action committee; (B) instructs all delegates to return to their areas and form local action committees.[99]

2.8 The National Action Council (NAC) and the End-of-May Stay-Away Action

Following its appointment by the All-in-Conference, the National Action Council (NAC) did not wait for the government to react to the conference's demands, but started almost immediately with preparations for the end-of-May strike. This latter factor is significant in that it provides some valuable insight into the thinking of the ANC's underground leadership at the time. The fact that preparations for the end-of-May strike action began almost immediately after the

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99. Contact, 4(7), 1961.04.06, p. 5. See also Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 632 - 633.

conference, is clear indication that the leaders of the NAC were convinced that the government would never agree to their demands for a national convention. In fact, as the undisputed leader of the underground ANC, Mandela and his associates in the Communist Party probably knew long before the All-in-Conference that the government would never adhere to their (what appeared at the time to be) radical demands. The question then is, why did Mandela and his followers demand a national convention when they were convinced that their demands would not be adhered to, for the government has a long history of ignoring even the most moderate of Black political demands? There can be several explanations for this. One, to prove to the Black community as a whole and to those moderate African leaders in the ANC who still held the belief that non-violent protest would bring about political change that this was a myth. Two, to prove to the international community at large that irrespective of how moderate the demands of the ANC and Black leaders in general were for political change, the South African government had no intention of ever altering its political filosophy in favour of Blacks. This was made particularly clear by the government's reaction to and criticism of Harold MacMillan's speech in Parliament in early 1960.

A third reason for the ANC's radical demands in 1961 was probably to provide the organisation with a legitimate excuse to abandon its policy of non-violent protest in favour of a radical underground armed struggle and closer association with the SACP. The latter argument is partially born out by the fact that virtually all literature released by the ANC on the history of the liberation struggle and the move towards violence in 1961 stressed the fact that the decision to form Umkhonto was only made after the government had refused to adhere to the demands of the All-in-Conference in May 1961.[100] Perhaps the best known of these statements was that

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100. See African National Congress of South Africa, Issued by the ANC South Africa, Dar-es-Salaam, 1963.11.07, pp. 22 - 23; South Africa on Trial, pp. 11, 14. (Author's Collection), np, nd; State Library, United Nations Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, Document 10 1982, African Group at the United Nations Observes 70th Anniversary of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC), pp. 2 - 3; O. Tambo, Plenary Address. Presented at the Sixteenth Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Syracuse, October 31 - November 3, 1973, p. 11; ANC, African National Congress [of] South Africa. A Short History, ANC Publicity and Information Bureau, London, 1971, pp. 18 - 20.

made by Nelson Mandela at his second trial (Rivonia Trial) in 1963. In sketching the developments that led to the formation of Umkhonto in 1961, Mandela told the court that by the beginning of June (1961), after a long and anxious assessment of the South African situation, he and some of his colleagues came to the conclusion that as violence in South Africa was inevitable, it would be unrealistic for them to continue preaching non-violence.(101) A year earlier, during his first court appearance, after he was arrested for having left South Africa without the necessary exist documents, Mandela also told the court that

> "we of the National Action Council, who had been entrusted with the tremendous responsibility of safeguarding the interests of the African people, were faced with this conflict between the law and our consciousness ...
>
> If there was any danger during this period that violence would result from the situation in the country, then the possibility was of the Government's making.
>
> THEY SET THE SCENE FOR VIOLENCE BY RELYING EXCLUSIVELY ON VIOLENCE WITH WHICH TO ANSWER OUR PEOPLE AND THEIR DEMANDS ...
>
> GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE CAN DO ONLY ONE THING AND THAT IS TO BREED COUNTER-VIOLENCE ...(102)

Much of what Mandela said at his trial in 1962 and later again in 1963 was subsequently echoed by researchers on the subject of the ANC and the armed struggle in South Africa. Tom Lodge in his study of Black politics in South Africa made no effort to evaluate the origins of the decision to adopt violence and to form Umkhonto in 1961 beyond the events mentioned by Mandela as having influenced them to move to armed struggle in 1961.(103) Other authors such as the late Francis Meli, who was the editor of Sechaba, in his recent history of the ANC and the armed struggle maintained that the events of 1961 presented a definite turning point in Black politics.(104)

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101. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 168 - 169.
102. What Mandela Said About Dialogue, (Sechaba, July 1971, p. 6) the above quotation can also be found in Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 154. See also Dawn, Souvenir Issue, p. 1.
103. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, pp. 232 - 235.
104. Meli, South Africa belongs to us, pp. 143 - 144. See also "Preparation for Armed Struggle" in African National Congress of South Africa. A Short History, 1971, pp. 21 - 23.

Although there can be little dispute over the fact that Umkhonto was established only in 1961 and that the first armed action against the state was undertaken towards the end of the same year, indications are that the decision to move towards a policy of violence had been taken a long time before this, but that its implementation was delayed by the fact that a solid core of conservative leaders in the ANC and the liberation movement as a whole were generally opposed to such a development. It was only with the banning of the ANC in 1960 and the government's increasingly unsympathetic attitude towards African political demands that the radicals in the ANC and the underground were provided with sufficient proof to convince their fellow leaders that violence and a change in ANC policy was inevitable. In view of this, Mandela and those who supported him in the underground ANC, must have known well before 1961 that the government would never adhere to any of their demands, however peaceful it may have seemed. Having banned the ANC and committed itself to a policy aimed at the eradication of radical Black demands for political change, the government clearly had no intention of legitimising the ANC or the SACP by agreeing to their demands. To claim thus that it was the Republican Referendum of October 1960 or the government's reaction to the demands of the All-in-Conference in 1961 that finally decided the nature of the struggle for national liberation in South Africa is to put the cart in front of the horses. The truth of the situation is that Mandela and his associates had carefully orchestrated the events that led to the formation of Umkhonto and the beginning of the armed struggle in 1961. In a way this process began in the early 1950's when Mandela presented his Plan for the structural organisation of the ANC to its Transvaal chapter in 1953.

Although the names of the members of the NAC were kept a secret, it soon became known that the Chairman of the council was Nelson Mandela (by this stage the undisputed leader of the underground ANC) assisted by at least two others identified as Walter Sisulu and Moses Kotane. Both Sisulu and Kotane were with Mandela when he visited Basutoland in April 1961 to seek the support of Ntzu Mokhehle and his Basuto Congress Party (BCP). Two further ANC members, namely, Dr. A. Letele and Joe Matthews, were also present at this meeting. Matthews, as we

have indicated above, was the ANC-SACP's official contact in the mountain kingdom.[105] It is interesting to note that all four ANC leaders who attended the meeting with Mandela in Basutoland in April were radicals, while at least three - namely Walter Sisulu, Joe Matthews, and Moses Kotane - were members of the banned SACP.

According to Ntsu Mokhehle, the aim of Mandela and the NAC's meeting with him was to establish a working relationship between the BCP and the underground liberation movement inside South Africa, and to solicit its support for the end-of-May strike.[106] It further appears that the NAC needed the printing and distribution facilities of the BCP to print instructions for the strike. The NAC also requested the BCP to send letters from Basutoland to South Africa in which support was expressed for the ANC and the end-of-May strike. It appears that the BCP was also requested by the NAC to use its influence and organisational infra-structure to undermine the constitutional process in Basutoland and to call for the country's immediate independence from Britain. Finally, the BCP was requested not to involve the PAC, which had its exile headquarters in Maseru, in any of its activities. It was under no circumstances to allow the organisation access to its printing press. The reason for this is not clear, but it is possible that the NAC was concerned that the PAC could make use of the press to print anti-ANC propaganda calling on Africans not to support the end-of-May strike. A further reason for the NAC's insistence on no PAC involvement was probably the fact that Mandela and his associates knew that the BCP had strong ties with the PAC leadership in Maseru. Ntsu Mokhehle and the BCP's immediate reaction to the NAC's requests (perhaps "demands" is a better description) is not known, but if later reports and the accusations levelled at the ANC and its leaders by Mokhehle is anything to go by, it was probably not very favourable. At a meeting of the BCP's Youth League in August 1961, Mokhehle lashed out at the ANC leadership

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105. Contact, 4(17), 1961.09.07, p. 3. See also Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 4, pp. 50 - 52, 78 - 79, 106. Contact, 4(17), 1961.09.07, p. 3.
106. Contact, 4 (17), 1961.09.07, p. 3.

and the NAC for trying to "dictate" to and attempting to "conquer" the BCP. In a follow-up interview with the Liberal Party paper Contact, Mokhehle in direct reference to Nelson Mandela and the NAC made no secret of his dislike of what he termed "these so-called freedom fighters who are mostly communist inspired and are interested [only] in crippling nationalist movements by their tricks and infiltrations".(107)

As a result of its dislike for the ANC and its communist partners, the BCP subsequently stated that it had severed all ties with Mandela and the ANC, because of the latter organisation's and the SACP's attempts to establish themselves in Basutoland at the expense of the BCP.(108) How true these accusations were is difficult to determine. They do however fit in with the accusations made by Jordan Ngubane against the ANC and the Continuation Committee. It also fits in with the wider shift in African politics from its insistence on non-violent confrontation with the authorities to closer co-operation with the communist left and the adoption of a policy of violent if not revolutionary confrontation with the State, that had been manifesting itself since the banning of the ANC.

Unable to gain the support of the BCP, the NAC was left to its own devices to organise the end-of-May strike action. One of the first things it did was to set up the necessary machinery to publicise the resolution of the All-in-Conference and to alert the African people to the end-of-May strike. A letter sent to the Prime Minister, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, on 20 April informing him of the resolutions of the conference, was followed by a second letter to the office of the Prime Minister when no reply was received to the first. The second letter also met with no reaction. Mandela later, at his first trial in 1962, severely criticised the government, and in particular the

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107. Contact, 4(17), 1961.09.07, p. 3.
108. The Rand Daily Mail, (Johannesburg), 1961.10.24; Contact, 4(17), 1961.09.07, p. 3.

Prime Minister, for not having responded to the NAC's letters. By not doing so, the minister and the government, Mandela told the court, had fallen "below the standards which one expects from one in such a position".(109)

In addition to the letters sent to the office of the Prime Minister, a letter was also sent to the leader of the official opposition in the House of Assembly, Sir de Villiers Graaff, asking for the United Party's (U.P.) support in convincing the government of the need for a national convention to be called immediately. The letter, which was dated 23 May 1961, read in part as follows:(110)

> In one week's time, the Verwoerd Government intends to inaugurate its Republic. It is unnecessary to state that this intention has never been endorsed by the non-white majority of this country ... it is opposed by every articulate group amongst the African, Coloured and Indian communities who constitute the majority of this country.
>
> The Government's intentions to proceed under these circumstances, has created conditions bordering on a crisis. ... The country is becoming an armed camp, the Government is preparing for civil war with increasingly heavy police and military apparatus ...
>
> We have called on the Government to convene an elected National Convention of representatives of all races without delay, ... We can see no alternative to this proposal except that the Nationalist Government proceeds to enforce a minority decision on all of us with the certain consequence of still deeper crisis, and a continuing period of strife and disaster ahead.
>
> ... A substantial European body of opinion, represented by both the Progressive and Liberal Parties, has endorsed our call. Support for a National Convention has also come from the bulk of the English language press, from several national Church organisations and from many other [sources].

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109. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 136. See also Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 360 - 361.
110. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 634 - 636.

> But where, Sir does the United Party stand? We have to hear from this most important organisation - the main organisation in fact of anti-Nationalist opinion amongst the European Community - or from you its leader. ... It is time for you, Sir, and your Party to speak out. Are you for a democratic and peaceful solution of our problems? Are you for a National Convention? We in South Africa and the world outside, expect an answer.(111)

Like the government, the UP did not officially reply to the NAC's request for support. Having received the NAC's letter less than seven days before the end-of-May strike action, there was probably not enough time for the UP to reply to their request. It is of course also possible that the NAC never really expected any support from the UP. The letter to Sir de Villiers Graaff was clearly written at a time when the planning of the end-of-May strike was already well underway. It is also possible that by this stage Mandela and his fellow radicals in the underground had already decided to form Umkhonto, but that they needed one final example of White inflexibility to convince the world that they were left with no alternative but to adopt a policy of armed struggle.

What is more, the UP, although as critical of the South African government's apartheid policies as the ANC, did not share the same views as the ANC for opposing a Republican form of government. Unlike the ANC, the UP's opposition to a Republic was primarily based on the belief that the adoption of a Republican constitution for South Africa might harm the country's relationship with the British Commonwealth and even lead to greater political and economic isolation of the country. The UP was further concerned that by being insensitive to Black political demands, the government in its adoption of a Republican constitution might only compound an already tense and unpopular political situation, while a majority vote among Whites for a Republic might be viewed by Verwoerd as an endorsement of his apartheid policies for South Africa.(112) Ironically, the

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111. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 636.
112. House of Assembly Debates, 1961.01.22, cols. 293 - 294; House of Assembly Debates, 1961.04.10, col. 4153; House of Assembly Debates, 1961.04.12, cols. 4323 - 7.

fears expressed by the UP later proved to be an accurate assessment of Black reaction to South Africa becoming a Republic on 31 May 1961.

In addition to the letters sent to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the official opposition in Parliament, the NAC also distributed large quantities of pamphlets and "flyers" throughout most of the main centres in the country in the weeks preceeding the strike. In one such a pamphlet entitled "All-in-African National Action Council: An Appeal to Students and Scholars" and signed by Mandela himself, a serious appeal was made to all African "students" and "scholars" to support the resolution for the All-in-African Conference in its call for a National Convention, as well as the end-of-May strike should the government fail to adhere to these demands.(113)

(i) African Opposition to the End-of-May Strike

Opposition to the end-of-May strike planned by the NAC did not only come from the ranks of the government or Whites only organisations, but also from Africans. The strongest African opposition to the strike came from the Africanist movement. Shortly after the NAC had issued its call to the "African Youth" of the country to support its call for a strike on 31 May, the PAC through its underground wing "Poqo" (meaning "pure" or "alone") released thousands of leaflets in which it urged Africans to boycott the NAC (ANC's) anti-Republican demonstrations. In this the PAC openly associated the ANC and the NAC with the banned Communist Party. It stated:

> We, the PAC, say: Do not follow the Congress Alliance. The PAC do not support the Congress Alliance with their present move to a National Convention. We do not want our people to become Russian slaves as the Congress Alliance do.
>
> ... All PAC supporters must go to work and not support the Alliance!(114)

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113. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 633 - 635. See also document entitled "Stay at Home" issued by the NAC, [nd], single page (Author's Collection).
114. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, pp. 639 - 640. See also document entitled "Poqo. Poqo. Poqo." Issued by the PAC, [nd], single page (Author's Collection).

In an attempt to counter the damage caused by the PAC's anti-ANC and anti-strike propaganda, the NAC released a flyer in which it denied the allegations levelled at it by the PAC. In return the NAC called the PAC "agents of the South African police and government". It also attacked the South African police for making use of former members of the PAC to discredit the proposed end-of-May demonstrations planned by the ANC and the NAC. In referring to the PAC pamphlet, the NAC pamphlet stated

> This pamphlet is the work of traitors and police informers. It is a tragedy that people who until last year took part in the struggle of the African people should be now so disheartened and broken down, so scared of militant action that their only reaction to the historical resolutions of Pietermaritzburg is to panic, to desert their own people and side with the police.(115)

2.9 The End-of-May Strike, 29 - 31 May 1961

With the Sharpeville and Langa riots still fresh in its memory, the South African government was determined to prevent the end-of-May strike from developing into a second major unrest situation. What is more, the occasion of South Africa officially becoming a republic on 31 May was an important and dignified occasion and the government did not want to see it marred by country-wide riots and unrest. In order to ensure that the Republican celebrations take place without any violence and large scale unrest, the government set into motion on 3 May one of the biggest and most systematic raids against Black leaders and radicals in the underground, that the country has ever seen. The aim of the raid was two-fold, namely, to find the underground headquarters of the radical left (i.e. the ANC, the NAC and the SACP); and to remove from circulation as many Black leaders as possible before 29 May. The raid which began in the early hours of 3 May, netted more than 10 000 people over the next few weeks.(116)

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115. Karis and Carter (eds.), From Protest to Challenge, vol. 3, p. 638. See also document entitled "Police Agents at Work" issued by the ANC, [nd] single page (Author's Collection).
116. Contact, 4(10), 1961.05.18, p. 4; The Rand Daily Mail, (Johannesburg), 1961.05.25. See also Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 196.

Simultaneously with these developments, the government also introduced a number of additional measures such as the General Law Amendment Act, which allowed it to refuse bail to any arrested person for up to 12 days if this was considered to be in the safety of the country. Although the particular Act was considered to be a temporary measure to deal with the proposed strike at the end of May, it was retained until the mid-1960's.(117)

In addition to the above Act the Minister of Justice, F.C. Erasmus, also placed a ban on all meetings and gatherings with the exception of statutory meetings such as church and other similar gatherings. The ban was designed to remain in power until 26 June but due to the subsequent failure of the end-of-May strike it was lifted on 6 June.(118) The government also placed eleven units of the Union's Commando forces on standby, while all leave for Defence Force officers was cancelled. At the same time a warrant was issued for the immediate arrest of Nelson Mandela. He managed however to evade the police for almost a year and a half. Mandela's ability to elude the police made him a folk hero in the eyes of many African and Blacks in South Africa, and earned him the nickname of the "Black Pimpernel" in the press.(119)

As a result of the preventative action taken by the authorities, particularly the wide-scale raids on leaders and organisations between 3 May and the end of the month, and the call by the Pan-Africanist Congress - the strike which started on 29 May turned out to be largely a failure. Most of the daily newspapers who reported on the outcome of the strike confirmed this.(120)

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117. House of Assembly Debates, 1961.05.29, col. 7249. See also Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, pp. 49 - 50.
118. House of Assembly Debates, 1961.05.22, col. 6832; Proclamation 762, Extra-ordinary Government-Gazette, no. 6693, 1961.05.19, see also Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, pp. 49 - 50.
119. Horrell, Action, Reaction and Counter Action, p. 49; Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, p. 177.
120. Compare the reports on the strike in: The Star, Rand Daily Mail, Cape Times, Die Volksblad, The Diamond Fields Advertiser, The Daily News, The Natal Witness, and The Daily Dispatch for 29, 30 and 31 May 1961. See also Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations, 1961, pp. 37 - 39.

There were those, however, who disagreed with these assessments. Two notable sources here were Tom Lodge and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Lodge argued that the strike had brought about some considerable disruption in industry and commerce in most of the major centres of the country such as Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Port Elizabeth.[121] Although Lodge did not say on what authority he based his assessment of the strike, it appears to be in line with a report released by SACTU shortly after the strike on 16 June. In this report SACTU claimed that the strike had brought about total disruption of the manufacturing industry in the major industrial centres of South Africa.

> Clothing, textiles, canning, engineering, building, leather, laundry and dry cleaning, civil engineering, ... either closed down completely or remained open with a skeleton staff, SACTU stated. Some industries were closed for all three days. Farm workers, municipal workers, office cleaners and others took part in this type of action for the first time. All students of Fort Hare University stayed away. Students at the Universities of Natal, Cape Town, and the Witwatersrand also demonstrated in sympathy with the workers. Yet, the national and international Press headlined the stay-at-home as a total failure.[122]

The question however is, which of the two views on the outcome of the strike was correct? The government and the press who labelled the strike a failure, or Lodge and SACTU who denied that this was the case? Considering that Lodge's interpretation of the strike is almost identical to the report released by SACTU, which as a labour union had a vested interest in the outcome of the strike action, one is inclined to accept the view of the press and the authorities that the strike was generally a failure. Moreover, the fact that the strike was a failure would help to explain why the radicals in the underground after May 1961 had thought it necessary to abandon all hope of a peaceful settlement in South Africa and adopt a policy of

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121. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 197.
122. Carter and Karis Micro-Film Collection, Reel 14.B, SACTU Special Newsletter, Stay-at-home, May 29th, 30th, 31st, 1961, p. 1. See also Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 197.

armed struggle. If the strike action was the success that SACTU and Lodge have claimed it to be, why then was it necessary for the radicals to form Umkhonto in November 1961? Surely, a successful strike would have removed or at least substantially reduced the need for a policy of violence after May 1961. But since this was not the case, it was either one of two things or both - namely that the strike was indeed a failure, or that the decision to form Umkhonto and to move to violence had been taken long before the end of May. Both appear to be the case.

There are sufficient indications that even if the strike had been a success, the ANC and the SACP would still have gone ahead with the formation of Umkhonto. One can therefore assume that the decision to move to armed struggle was a well concluded fact long before May 1961. As such the May strike was thus merely a formality, a convenient excuse for the radicals to put into motion their plans for armed struggle. Although Lodge disagrees with such a view, he has not sufficiently explained the need for Umkhonto and the armed struggle.(123)

A more convincing view is held by Edward Feit. According to him, the decision to form Umkhonto was taken long before 1961 and was part of a wider plan called "Operation Mayibuye", which had a number of phases or stages of which sabotage and guerrilla warfare represented the latter two phases.(124)

3. SOME EXPLANATIONS AS TO WHY THE STRIKE FAILED

Although there is no consensus on the reasons for the failure of the strike, there is however some broad agreement between the various sources on the factors that could have had an influence on the outcome of the event.

The first source to examine the reasons for the failure of the

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123. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, p. 197.
124. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, (The Journal of Modern African Studies 8(1), 1970, p. 62).

strike was Contact magazine.[125] In its analysis of the strike published almost immediately after the event, the magazine advanced five main reasons as to why it thought the strike had failed. Firstly it believed that the idea or concept itself was too big to be successful. A campaign, it argued, of which the stated aims cannot be reached, does not inspire in the same way as a meaningful objective would. A "general strike", it pointed out, cannot be successful without years of solid trade union work behind it. Equally, if not more important, was the fact that it felt the government held all the cards in a contest which required its opponents to communicate with the masses lawfully, something the NAC could not do.

Secondly, Contact believed that the objective of the strike did not have the right appeal; in other words, the idea of a Republic was too abstract a concept for most Africans to fully appreciate or identify their every-day grievances with. This was also the case with the national convention. While this latter concept was fully understood by the people who demanded it, it is doubtful whether the Black masses who were to support it really understood it beyond the fact that they had to support it for a better future. Exclusion from the republican referendum, argued Contact, was a minor item in the catalogue of African miseries. Nor was the idea of a national convention sufficient reason for a man to risk his job, home or even possible death, by striking for it. Most of them simply could not project the long-term benefits of an anti-Republican strike or what a national convention might hold for them individually.

Thirdly, were the measures introduced by the state to prevent the strike from taking place or at least, from developing into a major unrest situation. According to Contact, the massive steps taken by the police since the beginning of May and the fact that it could detain people for up to twelve days without trial or formal charges, had a major effect on the outcome of the strike. At the same time the underground leadership of the ANC could promise no immediate

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125. Contact, 4(11), 1961.06.11, p. 4.

freedom or economic gain to inspire the African masses to defy the police's actions and to stay home on the 29th.

A fourth reason advanced by Contact, was the general lack of leadership that accompanied the planning and eventual execution of the strike. It claimed that

> many leaders who disappeared early in May and were expected to rally their followers the weekend before the strike simply did not reappear at all. A common attitude was "Why should I suffer if the people who are telling me what to do are not here".

Although thousands of leaflets or flyers were distributed shortly before the strike, they could not serve as an alternative to the physical presence of the strike leaders themselves. Most Africans were used to their leaders taking the initiative in anti-government action. With the banning of the ANC in 1960 all this had changed, and the strike call for May was the first opportunity that Africans had had of finding out that conditions regarding strikes and protest actions were no longer the same, and that their leaders were no longer able to openly lead them into defiance. Contact critisized the NAC and the ANC's leadership for their lack of insight and argued that, since they knew that open meetings and rallies could no longer be held, they should have devised alternative plans to deal with the situation.

The fifth and last reason given by the magazine as to why the strike failed, was the role played by the Pan-Africanist Congress and its call on Africans not to support the strike. It argued:

> The police scarcely needed to leaflet Port Elizabeth from the air with a phoney call from an unheard of African Union telling the people to go to work. The PAC did it for them. The deep divisions [in] African politics were revealed by the PAC's bitter attack through leaflets and whispering. In Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg this had a serious ill-effect on the outcome of the strike.

Some of the points raised by Contact magazine was later also highlighted by Nelson Mandela in his analysis of the strike. In an article published in Africa South in Exile[126] some months after the strike and which was later incorporated in his book, No Easy Walk to Freedom, Mandela concluded that the failure of the strike was effected by a combination of government action, and the "shameful" role played by the press, the radio and European employers in their "unfair" campaign against the strike. He pointed out that

> until ten days before the strike, the press had provided uncharacteristically fair coverages of the campaign, describing it as the most intensive and best campaign ever ... and openly predicting unprecedented success. Then, suddenly and simultaneously, all the newspapers switched their lines. Heavy publicity was given to statements by Government leaders and employers' organisations condemning the strike and threatening reprisals against all who stayed away from work. Statements by the National Action Council were diluted, deliberately distorted or suppressed.

He also accused the government of having encouraged people to declare the strike a failure even before it had started, thereby confusing the people who were to participate in it. In addition, he also criticised the PAC for having added to the confusion by calling on Africans not to support the strike, but instead to go to work. Their actions, he alleged, was one of

> shocking contradiction and amazing confusion. Nothing has been more disasterous to themselves than their pathetic attempts to sabotage the demonstrations. ... But there was something even more disasterous and tragic than their mean and cowardly behaviour in stabbing their kith and kin at a time when maximum unity had become a matter of life and death to Africans. What shocked most people was the extent to which they completely identified themselves with the actions of the police in the repression of the demonstrations ... their main function was to ruin African unity and to break the strike.

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126. N. Mandela, Out of the Strike, (Africa South in Exile 6(1), October - December 1961, pp. 15 - 23). See also Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 94 - 106. The latter article is dated 26 June 1961).

A further factor raised by Mandela and perhaps the most important influencing the outcome of the strike, was the fact that the strike had to be organised under illegal conditions. Although the Pietermaritzburg All-in-African Conference was also organised under illegal conditions, it aims and objectives were very different from that of the end-of-May strike, which included the possibility of a violent confrontation between the strikers and the police. In the past, i.e. before Sharpeville and the banning of the ANC, the prospects of a violent confrontation with the authorities might have served to encourage Africans, particularly the younger generation, to support a protest call by the ANC leadership. But by the beginning of 1961 an all-out confrontation with the police was no longer such an attractive prospect, especially since Sharpeville had shown that the police would not hesitate to shoot. Moreover, strikes and protest actions had yet to produce any tangible political and economic results for Africans.

As a result of the illegal conditions that the NAC thus found itself in, every inch of the planning for the end-of-May strike had to be conducted in a chandestine manner from the underground. This presented many problems, especially because most of the NAC's leaders were not familiar with underground operations. Mandela pointed out that

> key organisations continued right up to the moment of the strike. But, lack of experience in working under illegal conditions ... created dislocation in certain areas, and leaders and organisations were not readily available on the spot to attend to the problems that arose as the anti-strike barrage reached its climax during the fourteen days before the strike.(127)

It was also conceded by Mandela that unlike the Sharpeville demonstrations, the end-of-May strike was not about intense emotional issues such as passes, or about bread and butter issues as has been the case in previous strikes. It was a political strike for fundamental

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127. Mandela, Out of the Strike (Africa South in Exile 6(1), October - December 1961, pp. 15 - 23).

rather than peripheral demands. "... A strike for the right, for the power to solve our bread-and-butter, or mealie meal problems ourselves", he stated. Mandela also pointed out that the day-to-day demands of the African masses could have been more closely linked to and more clearly highlighted by the NAC in its propaganda material for the strike.

An important factor that has not been raised by either Contact magazine or Mandela in their assessment of the strike, was the role or non-role of tsotsi and criminal elements in the planning of the stay-away.[128] The timely removal of these latter elements who had played a significant role in past demonstrations by the police in the weeks before the strike, had significantly deprived the NAC of an important means of forcing Africans to stay at home and thereby turning the strike into a success. Without these tsotsi and criminal elements to threaten them, many Africans felt less compelled to stay at home on the 29th. The tsotsi-element was a typical phenomena of the African township life in the 1950's and 1960's. Usually slightly better educated than the lower class workers, but unable to break into the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, the tsotsis, scornful of their inferior status and their inability to obtain higher paid employment and thus a better social life, often engaged themselves in criminal activities. Those who were unemployed often grouped themselves into gangs of juvenile delinquents and concentrated on acts of a criminal nature. Their value in the underground struggle after 1960 was highlighted by the fact that when Umkhonto in Natal began to experience problems with recruiting people for guerrilla training outside South Africa, it turned to these criminal elements to meet its needs for recruits.[129]

The failure of the end-of-May strike of course also raises another important question, namely the level of real support the ANC had after 1960. Undoubtedly, many Africans must have left the

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128. Gerhart, Black Power, pp. 42, 223 - 224. See also L. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class and Politics in South Africa, p. 425.
129. Mtolo, Umkonto we Sizwe, pp. 82 - 83.

organisation in the post-April 1960 period. Also, without the ability of the ANC's leadership to openly canvas new members, the number of recruits who entered the organisation, particularly the underground, after April, must have been small. Feit in his study of the ANC during these years, has made it abundantly clear that the ANC had many "fair-weather" friends who were quite willing to be part of the organisation while it was legal and the risks involved were small, but the minute the organisation became banned and adopted a clandestine underground existence, they were no longer prepared to risk their lives. As a result, only a small core of die-hards in the end remained in the organisation after 1960. According to Feit, their numbers were probably between 1 000 and 3 000.(130) It is also doubtful whether those recruited after 1960 were more than a handful. Feit argues that the underground ANC came to consist mainly of those who had joined the organisation in the first few months of its illegal existence and that those who joined afterwards remained a distinct minority.(131)

It is of course questionable as to whether the underground leaders of the ANC were really interested in mass support and a mass organisational set-up after April 1960. With the emphasis on underground work and the need for a highly centralised cell-based organisation to conduct the affairs of the ANC after April 1960, the mass-based organisational structure of the ANC was counter-productive to the radicals' decision to form Umkhonto in 1961. Clearly, the figure of 150 000 paid-up members quoted by the ANC's leadership for the period prior to April 1960 could no longer be applied to the ANC after its banning in 1960.(132)

CONCLUSION

Whether the ANC had any direct or indirect influence on it or not, there can be little doubt that the incidents of African and Black

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130. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, p. 100.
131. Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, p. 132.
132. Congress Voice, April 1961, p. 8.

defiance which followed the 1948 election of the Nationalist government of Dr. Malan with its strict policies of racial segregation, systematically contributed to the decision among a section of the ANC's younger and more radical leadership, to take up arms against the state in 1961. The banning of the CPSA in 1950 and the government's determination to oppose Black demands for political change such as the Defiance Campaign and the rural unrest of the late 1950's early 1960's, systematically contributed to strengthening the cause of the radicals in the Congress Alliance and the communist underground. Although influential, the radicals were a distinct minority in the liberation movement. As such the moderates were able to keep them at bay at least up to the banning of the ANC in 1960. From this point onwards the moderates in the ANC rapidly lost control over the cause of Black political development in South Africa. An important contributing factor to this development, and which is not always fully appreciated by historians, was the Treason Trial. The Trial which began in 1958 and dragged on until April 1961 effectively aided the cause of radical Black politics in South Africa in that it removed from the African political arena most of the ANC's moderate leadership. This action left the road wide open for the radicals such as Mandela and those who worked from the underground to begin with the implementation of their well laid plans for a change in the policy and tactics of the liberation struggle. This move towards a more radical approach in the liberation struggle has of course long been propagated by the CPSA and was one of the main reasons why the government decided to proscribe it in 1950. By the time that the Treason Trial was over in April 1961, and the leadership of the ANC was released, the latter organisation had long been transformed into a radical underground movement by a new NEC, now called the "Emergency Committee", which stood under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. From here onwards it was only a matter of time before the ANC with its rather clumsy organisational structure (as it existed before April 1960) was abandoned in favour of a new and more revolutionary organisation to spearhead the liberation struggle. This new organisation was Umkhonto we Sizwe.

In speaking from the dock at his trial in 1963, Mandela justified their decision to move to a policy of violence and to form Umkhonto by saying that

> we felt that without violence there would be no way to open the African people to succeed in their struggle against the principles of White Supremacy. All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle had been closed by legislation, and we were placed in a position in which we had either accepted a permanent state of inferiority or, to defy the Government. We chose to defy the law. ... This was our feeling in June 1961 when we decided to press for a change in the policy of the National Liberation Movement ... As a result of this decision Umkhonto we Sizwe was formed in November 1961.[133]

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133. Mandela, No Easy Walk to Freedom, pp. 169 - 170.