

POLITICS OF SEPARATION

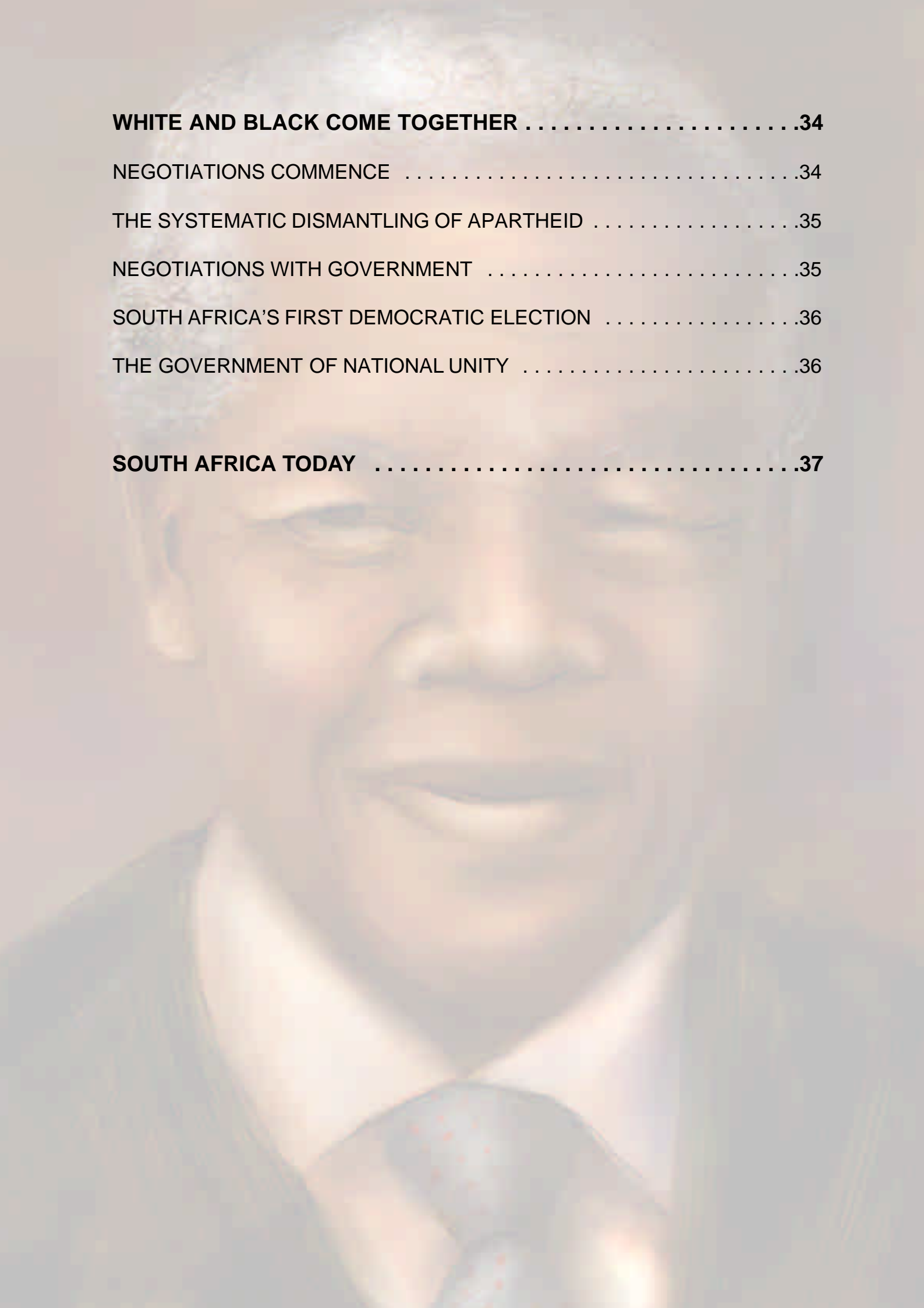
WHITE SOUTH AFRICA: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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BLACK SOUTH AFRICA: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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A faded, light-colored portrait of Nelson Mandela, showing his face and upper torso. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a blue tie with small red and white polka dots. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

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WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

After the Anglo-Boer War, the main concern of the British was to resettle the scattered population and get things back to normal again as rapidly as possible. To this end, they contributed some money but the amount was hopelessly inadequate and the depression and severe drought of 1903 only made matters worse.

The economy of the Transvaal was in a parlous state and Britain was hesitant to become too deeply involved with the problems of the area. In 1906, the Liberal Party won the election in Britain. The Liberal Party was more sympathetic to the plight of the Boers and self-government was granted to the Transvaal in December 1906. The Orange Free State became independent in 1907. The Cape Colony had had self-government since 1872 and Natal had had its own parliament since 1893.

The leaders of the various colonies were convinced that unification would be the best option for the region and, at the Intercolonial Conference of 1908, decided that the four colonies should form a political union. In Natal and the Cape Colony, Africans and Coloureds had always been allowed to vote, albeit subject to certain conditions. This situation was left unchanged for the time being and was not extended to the other two colonies. Dutch and English were adopted as the official languages of the Union. The Union of South Africa came into being on 31 May 1910. The parliament of the Union of South Africa was officially opened on 31 October 1910.

THE RISE OF WHITE POLITICAL PARTIES

During 1910, there were a number of Labour parties active in South Africa. These parties united in January 1910 to become the New Labour Party under the leadership of Colonel Creswell. The party drew its support primarily from the mineworkers and was mainly an English party that favoured racial separation and the development of homelands for the Africans.

In May 1910, in Bloemfontein, the Unionist Party of the Cape and the Constitutional Party of the Free State merged to form the Unionist Party. Their leader was Dr Jameson. The party aimed to strengthen the economy of the country by improving mining and commerce.

It was a purely English party that was in favour of retaining ties with Britain. The party felt that South Africa should remain part of the British Empire.

After the election of 1910, Afrikaner leaders sought to unite the different Afrikaner parties and, in 1911, a congress was held at Bloemfontein with this aim in mind. The South African Party (SAP) was formed with General Louis Botha as its leader.

The two most important political leaders who emerged after 1910 were Generals Botha and Hertzog. These two leaders had serious disagreements on a number of important issues. General Botha felt that the rift between the Afrikaans- and English-speaking communities should be healed by closer cooperation and his policy became known as the one-stream policy. General Hertzog, on the other hand, advocated a two-stream policy, i.e. that each group should strive to maintain its own culture and language.

Because of the internal strife in the party, General Botha eventually resigned as Prime Minister. The Cabinet was dissolved and a new Cabinet, which excluded General Hertzog, was formed, in January 1914,

Hertzog and his followers formed the National Party, which was destined to play a significant part in the future politics of South Africa.

THE REBELLION OF 1914

In 1914 Britain declared war on Germany and asked South Africa to invade the German colony of South-West Africa. When General Botha and his parliament agreed, many Afrikaners rebelled because they did not want to assist the British government so soon after the Anglo-Boer War. The rebellion was suppressed and South Africa subsequently invaded South-West Africa.

The rebellion of 1914 was a civil war in which brother fought against brother. This caused deep wounds in the Afrikaner community that took years to heal. In some circles it also intensified the hatred towards the British and promoted the growth of Afrikaner nationalism.

THE NATIONAL PARTY COMES TO THE FORE

On the death of General Botha, General Smuts became Prime Minister. However, the South African Party could not gain a majority in the 1920 elections and was forced to unite with the Unionist Party. The South African Party (SAP) government became progressively weaker, mainly because of the economic depression of 1920 and the mineworkers' strike of 1922. The National Party, on the other hand, became increasingly stronger and, as a result of forming a coalition with the Labour Party, won the election in 1924. General Hertzog became the new Prime Minister.

After General Hertzog had assumed office as Prime Minister, he found it difficult to accept that South Africa, as a British dominion, was still subordinate to Britain. Hertzog applied to the British government for sovereign status for its dominions. Following his request, the dominions were allowed to control their own domestic and foreign affairs. South Africa immediately formed its own Department of Foreign Affairs. By 1939, South Africa had diplomats in all European countries. However, together with Canada, Australia and New Zealand, South Africa still remained a dominion of Britain and could thus not become a republic within the Commonwealth without permission from the British monarch.

Until 1930 things ran smoothly for the National Party. The economy prospered and unemployment was virtually non-existent. However, in 1930, the worldwide economic depression also affected South Africa badly. A severe drought worsened conditions for everyone. Prices fell, people went bankrupt and many lost their jobs. All these problems caused Hertzog to lose much of his support and he had no choice but to form a coalition with General Smuts. In 1934, the two parties joined to form the United South African National Party. Those members who were unwilling to form a new party decided to remain as the National Party and chose Dr D.F. Malan as their leader.

After his resignation as Prime Minister, General Hertzog joined the National Party under the leadership of Dr Malan. When Hertzog and Malan found it difficult to work together, Hertzog left to form the Afrikaner Party. He died in 1942.

Smuts' United Party did very well in the election of 1943. However, problems arose during the Second World War, when Smuts neglected domestic affairs and became too deeply involved in war issues. In 1945, he was involved in establishing the United Nations Organisation, of which South Africa also became a member.

After the war, Smuts was faced with many problems. Returning soldiers had to be resettled and this caused housing problems in the cities. The shortage of food also caused major dissatisfaction. In addition, the Afrikaners were dissatisfied because they felt that Smuts was placing Britain's interests above South Africa's. A number of political parties also disagreed with Smuts' policies regarding African, Coloured and Indian people and felt that he was too liberal. Smuts lost the election of 1948 and Malan became Prime Minister.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

When the Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State lost their independence after the Anglo-Boer War, many people continued to cherish the republican ideal and, after 1948, the republican ideal became part of the National Party's constitution. Malan included people in his cabinet who were staunch supporters of this idea, among them C.R. Swart and J.G. Strijdom. The Afrikaans-speaking community in general was also in favour of a republic while the English-speaking community, on the other hand, was in favour of maintaining close ties with Britain. Malan did not think it wise to antagonise these people and therefore did not insist on a republic. He did however start loosening the ties between Britain and South Africa by passing a law that prohibited dual citizenship.

In 1954, Malan retired as Prime Minister and Advocate J.G. Strijdom succeeded him. Under his leadership, the country started to move faster in the direction of a republic and he cut many of the remaining links with Britain. In 1957 the South African flag was recognised as the only flag and "God save the Queen" was no longer sung in South Africa. The naval base at Simonstown was also taken over from Britain. In 1958, the words "On Her Majesty's Service," which had been used on official documents, were replaced by the word "Official".

Advocate Strijdom died in 1958 and was succeeded as Prime Minister by Dr H.F. Verwoerd. He felt that the time had finally come for South Africa to become a republic. A referendum on the issue was held in 1960 and the majority of people voted in favour of a republic. Permission was granted, but South Africa wished to become a republic within the Commonwealth. When this was refused because of its policy of Apartheid, South Africa chose to withdraw from the Commonwealth.

On 10 May 1961, South Africa became a republic and Advocate C.R. Swart became the first State President.

THE ROOTS OF APARTHEID

Verwoerd is often referred to as the father of Apartheid. While he was still Minister of Education, he openly declared that African children could not expect to receive the same quality of education as that enjoyed by white children. The Bantu Education Bill of 1953 predestined black children to the life of servants. African children were subjected to an inferior education and, to make matters even more difficult, they were taught in Afrikaans, which they regarded as the language of the oppressor.

When Verwoerd became Prime Minister, he set about passing even more laws that would cause deep divisions between black and white. But South Africa was already being ruled by an “apartheid” system, even before Verwoerd came to power. The Verwoerd government merely made it official. Non-whites did not have the right to vote and black and white did not mix socially. The Separate Amenities Acts (1953) prohibited non-whites from using amenities such as restaurants, parks, cloakrooms, trains, etc. that were allocated to whites. Separate entrances at railway stations and separate queues at post offices became commonplace. Children of different races could not attend the same schools. Most universities were also segregated. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949) made marriages between whites and non-whites illegal. A forerunner of this act was the Immorality Act of 1927 that prohibited sexual intercourse between whites and Africans.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 made residential separation compulsory and was one of the most hated laws of the Apartheid era. People were evicted from their homes by the thousand, which fuelled racial tensions even more. Non-whites were forced to carry passes that the police could demand to see at any time, to verify whether the carrier of the pass was legally entitled to be present in a particular area.

Eventually, it became progressively more difficult to explain the fact that Africans and other people of colour had no rights in their own country. Under the leadership of Verwoerd, a plan was masterminded to enable the Afrikaners to hold on to white supremacy without appearing to the outside world to be too harsh. However, there were also those people who honestly believed that the best solution to the problems of both black and white was to be found in the Homelands Policy.

THE HOMELANDS POLICY

The African Homelands were independent states within the borders of South Africa. These homelands or Bantustans, as they were commonly referred to, were allocated to the separate ethnic groups. It was hoped that the groups would be satisfied with having homelands of their own and would lose interest in the politics of the rest of South Africa.

Dr Verwoerd was assassinated on 6 September 1966, before he could see his Homeland Policy being implemented. It was under the leadership of Advocate B.J. Vorster, his successor, that the Homeland policy came to fruition.

In 1976, the Republic of Transkei became the first independent state. Its first State President was Kaiser Matanzima. President Lucas Mangope became the first State President of the independent state of Bophuthatswana. He was elected on 6 December 1977.

The Republic of Venda came into being in September 1979. Its State President was elected on 13 September 1979.

The Republic of Ciskei was established on 4 December 1981. Its first President was Lennox Sebe.

In addition to the abovementioned completely autonomous states, six other self-governing states were established. KwaZulu, with its Chief Minister Gatsha Buthelezi, was intended to be the home of all Zulu-speaking people.

The state of Qwaqwa was governed by Mr Mopeli and the state of Gazankulu by Professor Ntsanwisi. Lebowa became self-governing under the leadership of Dr Phatudi. Chief Minister E.J. Mabuza became the leader of KaNgwane, the homeland of the Swazi-speaking people. Chief Minister Simon Skosana led the self-governing state of KwaNdebele.

When Vorster succeeded Verwoerd, he continued to promote the policies of Apartheid in the same way as his predecessor. However, he was slightly more lenient and was prepared to enter into dialogue with other groups. Unfortunately, his political convictions were too strong to allow for any significant political changes. He did have personal meetings with Chief Leabua Jonathan (Prime Minister of Lesotho), Sir Seretse Khama (President of Botswana) and Prince Dlamini of Swaziland. He also attempted to improve relationships with other African countries but did not have much success, owing to his adherence to the Apartheid policy.

Vorster also had to deal with the Soweto unrest in 1976. He opted for the use of force and, when he resigned as a result of the "Information Scandal" (some of his ministers were involved in the misappropriation of funds intended for propaganda purposes), South Africa was still very much ruled by Apartheid.

WHITE LEADERS WORK TOWARDS REFORM

P.W. Botha became the next leader of South Africa. To him should be given credit for taking some important first steps towards political reform. He had been Minister of Defence in the government of Advocate Vorster since 1966. Earlier, as Minister of Community Development and of Coloured Affairs, he allowed the forced removal of the Coloured population from District 6, a suburb of Cape Town.

Mr Botha became Prime Minister in 1978 and State President under the 1984 constitution. Under his leadership, the government imposed a State of Emergency, similar to martial law. The government felt that this was the only alternative to the growing problem of violence and lawlessness in the country. Under Botha's government, provision was made for a Coloured House of Representatives and an Indian House of Delegates. This allowed people belonging to these groups to take part in political decision-making. Botha was also the first to start negotiations with Nelson Mandela while the latter was still in prison. On behalf of the government, he offered to release Mandela if he would publicly renounce violence as an alternative to negotiations. At the time, Mr Mandela could not see his way clear to agree to this condition..

Botha resigned the Presidency early in 1989 and left the National Party in April 1990. He had become totally disillusioned with the party after his erstwhile supporters had forced him out of the Presidency. Those who turned against him believed that his policy of reform had lost momentum.

F W De Klerk was elected State President in August 1989. He had been a Member of Parliament since 1972 and had become a member of the Cabinet in 1978. He had held a number of Cabinet posts under the leadership of both Vorster and Botha and had served as the leader of the National Party in the Transvaal.

When De Klerk became State President, he pushed reform forward by unbanning all the banned political organizations on 2 February 1990. This paved the way for the inevitable election of the African National Congress (ANC) as the governing party, as the ANC could now function as a legitimate political party. Nelson Mandela, together with other political prisoners, was released from prison. De Klerk was later appointed as one of the Vice-Presidents in Mandela's Government of National Unity.

These two leaders jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize for what they had achieved in South Africa.

BLACK SOUTH AFRICA: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

The second half of the nineteenth century brought with it the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand, which played an important role in the urbanisation and subsequent detribalisation of the African population. As Africans became less loyal to their tribes, they started to think of themselves as Africans and not as people belonging to specific ethnic groups or tribes. Black political protest had already started in the Eastern Cape during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The social and political structure of the country changed when independent African chiefdoms were incorporated into the political structure of the Cape Colony and missionaries and teachers brought Africans into contact with European culture. As a consequence, a new African elite was created.

New ideals developed out of a newly formed social structure among Africans. The African Press, started by Christian missionaries, also became an important tool in the hands of editors such as John Tengo Jabavu, Walter Rubusana, Mark Radebe and John Dube. Jabavu, Rubusana and Dube were the first African leaders and used the African Press to awaken political consciousness in black people. They were in no way militant, probably because they were the products of mission schools, but they did believe that Africans should enjoy the same rights as their white counterparts. This idea was also being widely propagated by many of the independent black churches.

Africans had always enjoyed political rights in the Cape as well as in Natal but, during this time, the Afrikaner also experienced a new awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism. This resurgence was to play an important role in the future of Africans in the country, because in time the Afrikaners would make momentous decisions concerning the political status of their African counterparts.

A major area of discontent, even in the nineteenth century, was the pass system. Africans had to show their passes on demand to prove that they were legally permitted to be in an area. One of the first attempts at protest by Africans was in connection with the pass laws. In 1889, a deputation of men consisting of John Tengo Jabavu, Elijah Makiwane and Isaac Wauchope went to the Cape to inform Parliament of their discontent. Their protest was successful and the Pass Bill was dropped in favour of a less rigid Vagrancy Act. But this proved to be only a small achievement, since, when the nineteenth century drew to a close, Africans were still very much in a position of servitude in the country of their birth.

THE RISE OF AFRICAN POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

The turn of the century saw the outbreak of the Anglo - Boer War in 1899. Many Africans in South Africa were overjoyed when the British won because they believed that they would be able to become equal citizens under British rule. This, however, did not come about. The Treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the war, made no provision for any change in the status of Africans in either the Free State or the Transvaal. The main concern of the British after the war was to resettle the scattered population and get things back to normal again as quickly as possible. The British government provided money to achieve this goal but none of this reached the African population. The money was mainly used to compensate white farmers for their loss of property and to bring people back to the Witwatersrand, since the area around Johannesburg had become almost totally deserted.

Africans in the (now British) colonies of the Free State and the Transvaal, were not about to resign themselves to the situation without making their discontent known. In the Orange River Colony (former Orange Free State), four African political organisations emerged: the ORC Native Congress, the ORC Native Association, the Becoana Mutual Improvement Association and the Native Committee.

The aim of these organisations was to improve the lot of Africans in the Orange River Colony.

Transvaal also had a number of African organisations that aimed to achieve unity among black South Africans. Among these organisations were: the Transvaal National Natives Union (Johannesburg-based, founded by William Letseleba and formerly known as the Basutu Committee), the Transvaal Native Congress (founded by Jesse Makgothe as the Transvaal Branch of the SANC), the Transvaal Native Vigilance Association (Pietersburg-based, founded by Simon Phamotse), and the Transvaal Native Landowner's Association (founded by Edward Tsweu).

A prominent organisation in Pretoria was called the Transvaal Native Organisation. It was founded in 1905 and Sefako Mapogo Makgatho became its leader in 1906. Makgatho became a household name when he seated himself in a railway carriage reserved for whites. He was asked to leave but politely refused. After being assaulted, he laid charges against his assailants and one man was found guilty of assault. After this incident, better coach facilities for blacks were arranged.

The mutual concerns of these organisations centred on the conditions under which Africans had to live in their locations (townships), the fact that they could not own property and the bad treatment received at the hands of police, specifically in their enforcement of the pass laws.

The first truly significant African political organisation in pre-unification South Africa was formed in the Cape Province. The name of this organisation was the South African Native Congress (SANC) and its spokesman was the well-known John Tengo Jabavu. This organisation was formed to support the White Progressive Party in its fight against Afrikaner politics in the Cape Province. The SANC held annual conferences and established branches in several areas, including the Transvaal.

It submitted petitions to the governments in the Cape and Britain, complaining about such things as the disparities in education grants between Africans and whites. Two other organisations in the Cape were the Transkei Native Vigilance Association (founded by Enoch Mamba) and the Transkeian Territories African Union. The oldest African political organisation in Natal was the Funamalungelo, which was absorbed by the Natal Native Congress (NNC) in 1900. The NNC (founded by Saul Msane and Martin Lutuli) was not in favour of friction with the government of Natal. It did, however, protest against the Native Administration Bill, which it saw as detrimental to the well-being of the African people.

The first prominent political organisation to represent Coloureds was the African Political (later People's) Organisation (APO). By 1909, the APO had about 100 branches all over the country. The organisation grew rapidly under the leadership of Dr Abdullah Abdurahman.

BLACK OPPOSITION TO THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA (1910)

At first, black South Africa seemed to be apathetic about the coming unification of South Africa but, when a National Convention was formed to discuss the issue, Africans became worried because all its members were white. When the Constitutional Bill was published in 1909, it became clear that non-whites would be even worse off than before. There was widespread protest by Africans from different parts of the country. A joint African convention, later known as the South African Native Convention, was organised by a Mr Mafikela. It took place in Bloemfontein and leaders such as Walter Rubusana, A. K. Soga, (both representing the Cape-based SANC), John Dube from Natal and Chiefs Montsioa and Molema (representing British Bechuanaland) were present. Transvaal and the Orange River Colony were also well represented. Coloureds representing APO were also in attendance. This was a significant convention because it was the first time that Africans representing different ethnic groups had united in an effort to make their voices heard around the country. The South African Native Convention accepted in principle the unification of South Africa, but was opposed to any form of colour bar. It also decided that the onus was on the British Government to ensure that black and white would enjoy the same privileges in the new Union.

The Cape Native Convention under the leadership of Jabavu also rejected the colour bar clauses in the draft constitution of the Union. It was supported in its stance by the APO. A number of whites agreed that the proposed segregation would be disastrous to racial relations in South Africa and signed a petition in this regard to the British parliament. Among them was W.P. Schreiner, who led a delegation to Britain to plead the cause of the Africans in South Africa. All opposition to the draft constitution of the Union fell on deaf ears.

South Africa became a union in 1910 and General Louis Botha, who firmly believed in upholding the colour bar, became its Prime Minister.

SANNC (1912 – 1919)

In 1912, Seme convened a conference in Bloemfontein and a new organisation was formed. The organisation was named the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) and was the forerunner of the current ANC. Five provincial branches were established in order to ensure representation from all corners of the country. John Dube of Natal was chosen as the first president of the SANNC and Sefako Makgatho, Walter Rubusana, Alfred Mangena, Thomas Mapikela, Meshach Pelem and Chief Stephen Mini were chosen as vice-presidents. During this historic conference, the government was requested to make some changes, e.g. to withdraw the Natives Land Bill, under which many Africans lost the right to remain on farms belonging to white farmers.

Africans were being forced to move into reserves allocated by the government and were not satisfied with this arrangement. The SANNC sent a delegation to Britain to enlist the support of the government against the Bill in question but, according to the British, they could do nothing because South Africa was now a self-governing dominion.

When the SANNC was founded, its members were naive enough to believe that they could win the whites over. They were not militant in the least and only wanted equal rights. Although the SANNC strengthened the joint protest against discrimination on the basis of colour, it did not succeed in making any real difference to the lives of the African people in South Africa. This was not for lack of trying: it even sent a delegation, consisting of Reverend H.R. Ngcayiya, R.V. Selope Thema, L.T. Mvabaza, Josiah T. Gumede and Sol T. Plaatje to the peace conference in Versailles at the end of World War I and, after the conference in Versailles, the delegates went to London for a meeting with the British Prime Minister. Mvabaza and Plaatje did their utmost to convey to the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, the poor position of the African in South Africa. The British Prime Minister did contact General Smuts in this regard, but the latter's Department of Native Affairs was not sympathetic in its consideration of the complaints made by the delegation.

While in England for the meeting with the Prime Minister, the delegation used its time to speak to as many people as possible. Plaatje then went on to Canada and the United States and, as spokesperson for the SANNC, addressed numerous meetings with regard to the position of the African in South Africa. Although he gained the sympathy of audiences, there was not much that they could do. This was to be the last deputation for the next forty years.

SPECTATOR POLITICS

During the 1920's, there was widespread dissatisfaction among the Africans in South Africa regarding issues such as the pass system and the low salaries paid to African workers. Towards the end of March 1919, hundreds of Africans went to the pass office in Johannesburg to hand in their passes. This anti-pass campaign was followed by a general strike in the Johannesburg area. Strikes, demands for wage increases and Union activities were prevalent under Africans before and after the turn of the century.

During the 1920's, the SANNC had three different leaders: S M Makgatho (1917 - 1924), Reverend Z R Mahabane (1924 - 1927) and Josiah T Gumede (1927 - 1930). At its annual conference in 1923, the name of the organisation was officially changed to the African National Congress (ANC). At this conference, the organisation officially declared that it believed that the intention of the government was to permanently enslave all Africans. Bitterness was taking root, even more so because Africans were not allowed to buy property anywhere in South Africa.

When J B M Hertzog became Prime Minister, things became even bleaker for the black man in South Africa. The new Prime Minister believed in complete segregation on all levels: territorial, economic, political and educational. Hertzog's government passed a number of Bills during the 1930's. These Bills, known as the Hertzog Bills, caused much misery for the Africans, specifically the Bill that made provision for further restrictions on the occupation of certain areas by Africans. In 1927, another Non-White conference was organised through the initiative of the APO's Abdullah Abdurahman. Other conferences followed in 1930, 1931, and 1934. At these conferences, the Hertzog bills were consistently rejected. Africans, Coloureds and Indians believed that direct representation of all groups in Parliament would be a necessary prerogative for harmonious cooperation between black and white. Without it, Africans would remain nothing but spectators on the political pavilion. They might be busy on the pavilion with politics amongst themselves, but they would forever be excluded from the main arena.

In 1935, an All African Convention was held in Bloemfontein. Approximately 400 delegates attended, representing the ANC, the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), various Industrial and Commercial Unions (ICUs), the Native Advisory Boards, African religious groups and African Vigilance Associations. Jabavu was elected Chairman and Dr A B Xuma as Vice President. Selby Msimang became General Secretary and J S Moroka, Treasurer. Other members of the executive committee were Z K Matthews, John Dube, A W G Champion, Mahabane and Mofutsanyana. The All African Convention denounced the Hertzog Bills and proposed full political rights for all Africans. In 1936, an AAC delegation held talks with Hertzog but to no avail. It was becoming ever clearer that moral appeals to the liberal conscience would not bring the African people any further.

When James Calata became Secretary-General of the ANC in 1936, the ANC lost some of the passivity that it had acquired during Seme's term of office. The ANC was resuscitated by the inclusion of new members such as A B Xuma, Z K Matthews and J B Marks. This coincided with an upsurge in African Nationalism brought on by the war in Ethiopia. The idea of black people defending their country against white imperialists stirred the hopes of Africans in South Africa. They believed that if it was possible elsewhere it would also be possible in South Africa.

The CPSA inspired the formation of the Non-European United Front in 1933. Moses Kotane, Bill Andrews, Cissie Gool and Yusuf Dadoo were prominent leaders and were from different racial groups. In the same vein, the Reverend James Calata advised the ANC to be responsive to whites who wanted to further African interests. From 1929, Joint Councils (which included white representatives) regularly organised National European-Bantu Conferences. During these conferences, matters of importance to African interests were discussed. These councils might have promoted goodwill but they could also not show any significant achievements. No matter how hard they tried during the 1920's and 1930's, Africans remained spectators in the field of politics. They were knocking on a bolted door, which no one would open. It was soon realised that different methods would have to be devised to get the attention of the people in power.

THE RISE OF AFRICAN ASSERTIVENESS

During the Second World War, South Africa experienced phenomenal economical growth. Continuous industrial growth led to more urbanisation but conditions in the cities were less than ideal. Proper housing for the masses did not exist, sanitary conditions were bad and salaries paid to Africans were low. The dissatisfaction among Africans was demonstrated by the wage demonstrations in Pretoria (1942) and by the series of bus boycotts between 1940 and 1945 in the township of Alexandra. The outbreak of the war led to the downfall of the Hertzog government, which supported neutrality, and the Afrikaner Nationalists had to make room for the pro-war government of Jan Smuts.

During the war years, the ANC was infused with new vigour. The spirit that had been infused in it by the election of James Calata as Secretary-General in 1936 was renewed by the replacement, in 1940, of the President-General Z R Mahabane by A B Xuma. His wife, a black American woman, became the leader of the ANC's Women's league. When Xuma came to power, he was faced with an organisation that existed in name only. He did what he could to remedy the situation and started by drafting the aims of the ANC with regard to the political, social and educational climate of the country. These aims were published in a number of newspapers, accompanied by a plea to join the ANC so that everybody could work together to attain them. In an attempt to smooth out differences of opinion and to invigorate local branches with a new sense of excitement and energy, Xuma visited all the provincial branches of the ANC. Xuma also gave the organisation more credibility by persuading a number of black academics to join the ANC.

Another important change under the leadership of Xuma was the replenishment of the organisation's finances. In December 1943, the ANC had enough money to open a permanent office in Johannesburg.

The ANC's new adopted constitution of 1943 made provision for anybody who wanted to subscribe to the aims of the Congress, to join the organisation. Prior to 1943, membership had been open to Africans only.

Now firmly on a path of non-racialism, the ANC made a study of the Atlantic Charter drawn up between the United States and Great Britain in 1941. The charter referred to the inalienable right of all people to have a choice in the formation of the government under which they had to live. The ANC felt that, in accordance with this statement, black South Africans should also have the right to vote for or against a South African government. The Atlantic Charter Committee of the ANC drafted a Bill of Rights and handed it to Prime Minister Smuts. Copies of the booklet containing the draft were sent to overseas contacts.

After the war, Xuma once again involved the ANC more directly in international propaganda by attending the first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946. It was Xuma's intention to put forward the views of the ANC with regard to the racial discriminatory policies of the Smuts government. Xuma did succeed in making some international friends and gaining international sympathy for the plight of the Africans in South Africa. The ANC furthermore became involved with the Pan African Movement. Mark Hlubi and Peter Abrahams represented the ANC at the Pan African Congress in 1945 in Manchester, England. Here, they met certain African politicians who turned out to be of great importance in the years that followed. Among these were Kwame Nkrumah (Gold Coast), Dr Azikiwe (Nigeria), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Kamuzu Banda (Nyasaland).

Contacts were renewed at the conference in Dakar (Senegal) in 1947.

During the 1940's, Africans became progressively disillusioned with the total lack of consideration for their ideals. The Natives Representatives Council, which was a remnant left over from the Hertzog government, became less moderate in its criticism of the government. Much bitterness existed among council members after the 1946 African Miners' Strike because they felt that they had been ignored in their attempts to promote communication between the workers and the government. The council was eventually scrapped because Africans became disinterested in its existence. Paul Mosaka, a black businessman and one of the members of the council, emphasised the importance of white support for the furtherance of the African cause. He thus went ahead and formed a new political organisation, the African Democratic Party. Together with other likeminded Africans, he advocated a policy of mass protests and demonstrations.

THE INDIAN POPULATION BECOMES INVOLVED

At the same time, the Indians in South Africa also embarked on a passive resistance campaign in imitation of Mohandas Ghandi's campaign in India. Since the government was not really interested in their opinions, the Indians decided that they would no longer oppose talking to anti-government organisations. In 1947, Dr Naicker and Dr Y M Dadoo (president of the Transvaal Indian Congress) and A B Xuma (president of the ANC), issued a joint statement concerning the importance of the cooperation between all Non-Whites in their fight against the government. Unfortunately, relations between Indians and Africans reached an all-time low during the Durban Riots in 1949. An Indian man injured an African youth and the ensuing violence escalated until 142 people had lost their lives. Some Africans also disliked the Indians because they were being exploited in the Indian shops from where they bought. The Durban riots left deep wounds between Africans and Indians that took years to heal.

THE FORMATION OF THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE

During the annual conference of the ANC in 1942 it was decided that a Youth League should be formed to further the aims of the organisation among the African youth of the country. The Transvaal branch of the league was formed in Johannesburg in September 1944. Anton Lembede was elected President. Oliver Tambo became Secretary, Walter Sisulu Treasurer, A P Mda Organiser and David Bopape and Nelson Mandela were elected members of the Executive Committee. The Youth League flourished under the leadership of Lembede, who today is also hailed as the father of Africanism. He proclaimed that Africans should be proud of their heritage and realise that they are called to a God-given task to be part of the tapestry of mankind. Lembede did not propagate cooperation with like-minded whites, because he believed that Africans were not only capable of solving their own problems but that they could do so better than anybody else.

The Youth League adhered to the belief that South Africa should be freed from racial segregation and that Africans should enjoy equal rights in every sphere of life. The Congress Youth League (CYL) drew up an action programme and established a fund to support the liberation struggle. It planned to distribute propaganda material and to use strikes, boycotts and civil disobedience as weapons in its war against Apartheid. A medical doctor, Dr James Moroka, became the new President of the ANC and also adhered to the proposed strategies. Walter Sisulu became the new Secretary-General of the party and the ANC was firmly placed on a new, more assertive path.

AFRICAN MASS CAMPAIGNS

During the 1950's, mass campaigns directed at the government became commonplace. These campaigns were undertaken by a number of different African organisations. The ANC was still an organisation to be reckoned with, although Lembede had died and his successor A P Mda had to resign for health reasons. Nelson Mandela, a staunch anti - Communist during the 1940's, took over the leadership of the Youth League. In the 1950's, he changed his mind about Communism and the ANC became a strong ally of the Communists. A number of Communists were elected into key positions in the ANC. J B Marks became President of the Transvaal branch of the ANC and Moses Kotane, who held the position of Secretary-General of the CPSA, was elected to the executive committee of the ANC. In 1950, Dr D F Malan banned the CPSA and the Communists decided that it would be better for them to dissolve their own party to prevent legal consequences. The fact that many of these Communists found a new home in the ANC had a significant influence on that organisation.

The early 1950's brought with them serious clashes between the police and Africans. In January 1950, a black policeman attempted to arrest another African who was illegally in possession of liquor and a crowd of Africans attacked him. When other police cars arrived on the scene, the angry crowd stoned them. The event took place in Newclare, Johannesburg and, about two weeks later, rioting resumed in the same area. It was obvious that Africans felt a deep resentment towards the mainly white police.

The Council of Action of the ANC informed the government that it would not be prepared to cooperate any further. A Defend Free Speech Convention was held on 26 March 1950. At this convention, the Communists suggested that 1 May (May Day) be celebrated as Freedom Day. The proposal was met with mixed reaction. There were a number of marches held on that day in some of the townships in and around the area of Johannesburg. Unfortunately there were incidents of violence and 18 Africans died.

The tragic deaths on May Day and the Suppression of Communism Act were the reasons for a number of meetings among African leaders in the months to follow. The ANC called for a National Day of Protest on 26 June to commemorate those who had died on 1 May 1950. The South African Indian Congress supported this idea and a joint committee, chaired by Walter Sisulu (ANC) and Yusuf Cachalia (SAIC), was formed to oversee the activities planned for that day. The response among Africans was not as good as had been hoped for; one of the reasons being that the government had threatened that those who stayed away from work would lose their jobs. Also, many Africans were not ready to work alongside Indians and white Communists. Nevertheless, the way had been paved for a closer alliance between Africans, Indians and white Communists.

The Coloureds became a new ally in 1951. The Franchise Action Council, which consisted mainly of Coloureds, could identify with the grievances of Africans, as they too had become voiceless after being removed from the common voters' roll when the National Party came into power in 1948.

THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN

During a joint conference in July 1951, at which the ANC, the SAIC and the FRAC were present, it was decided that Non-Whites should aim their mass campaigns against the pass laws, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. A Defiance Campaign was called for, but the ANC did not feel ready to participate because of internal problems. Its President, A W G Champion, did not get along with the Youth League. This problem was solved when Albert Luthuli succeeded Champion. The ANC in Natal had other problems, because the Indians and Africans still did not get along. The 1949 riots had not yet been forgotten.

The Prime Minister of the time, D F Malan, did not sympathize with the aims of the Defiance Campaign. The leader of the SAIC, Dr Y M Dadoo, invited all whites who believed in true democracy to participate in the campaign. Volunteers were recruited to break certain laws in a disciplined fashion. The Campaign started on 26 June 1951 with Africans entering townships without valid permits. Others would sit on park benches allocated to whites only. Others would stand in European (white) queues and others would enter through whites-only entrances at railway stations. During the subsequent court proceedings, the volunteers pleaded guilty and received light sentences. Drastic steps were taken to stop this deliberate defiance of the Apartheid laws. Under the Public Safety Act of 1953, people could be imprisoned for a maximum of three years or could receive up to 10 lashes for similar offences.

The Defiance Campaign had to be suspended but although it was not successful, it caused panic in government circles and showed the laws for the ridiculous ideas that they were. The Campaign also stimulated solidarity among Africans in South Africa and made fools of the National Party.

The Defiance Campaign received widespread international coverage. In the United States, an organisation, "Americans for South African Resistance", was called into being to publicise the campaign. Although the ANC in Natal did not take part in the Defiance Campaign, its branch leader, Albert Luthuli, became President of the ANC at the end of 1952.

The status quo was being threatened and, to counteract this danger, the government passed two new laws during the 1953 parliamentary session. The Public Safety Act empowered the Government to declare martial law and to detain people without trial and the Criminal Laws Amendment Act made provision for capital punishment for offenders. The Government infiltrated spies into the ANC and the ANC reciprocated. Members of the security police informed the ANC leadership when and where police raids would take place.

THE BANTU EDUCATION ACT

The next campaign was focused on opposition to the implementation of the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The Act stipulated that African education would become the responsibility of the Minister of Native Affairs. Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Bantu Education, who later became Prime Minister, publicly made the following statement, "There is no place for the Bantu in the European Community above the level of certain forms of labour... The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. For that reason, it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community." What this meant was that Africans were only good enough to be trained as manual workers and were consigned permanently to the status of servants.

This unfortunate statement was used as a tool in the hands of Verwoerd's opponents, who called the Bantu Education Act the Slave Education Act. The African population was understandably furious. Trevor Huddleston, an Anglican priest based in Sophiatown, also condemned the law in very strong terms.

The Bantu Education Act came into operation on 1 April 1955 and widespread resistance to the Act soon turned into a boycott campaign. The ANC contemplated a weeklong school boycott but, during its annual conference in December 1954, the ANC requested parents to withdraw their children from school indefinitely. Most parents were not willing to do this, but Verwoerd's threat that their children would never be allowed back to school intimidated those parents who did withdraw their children. This forced most parents to send their children back to school. The campaign ended in failure but, like the Defiance Campaign, it had far-reaching results, most importantly, the radicalisation of thousands of Africans.

THE WESTERN NATIVE RESIDENTIAL AREAS REMOVAL SCHEME

The next campaign was the campaign against the government's Western Native Residential Areas Removal Scheme. This scheme aimed to eliminate the black residential areas of Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale. Non-Whites living in these areas were to be removed to Meadowlands (now part of Soweto). Most of them did not want to move because they believed that they would lose their right to own property. Dr Xuma, who owned a medical practice in the area, declared at a conference that, "Africans ... regard themselves as human beings, entitled to certain rights and object to being treated as something second-rate, removable at the will of others". The protesters decided on a Gandhi-style passive resistance campaign.

In June 1954, the ANC held a "Resist Apartheid" conference in Johannesburg. During this meeting, it voiced its solidarity with the victims of the Removal Scheme. In the end, it was not able to achieve anything and the first removals took place a few months later, 2 000 policemen being present to oversee operations, and the victims had no choice but to pack up and leave.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER

As well as the mass campaigns, the Congress of the People, held in June 1955, played an important part in black politics in the 1950's. It was suggested that a Freedom Charter be drawn up by the people for the people and South Africans of all races and creeds were invited to make a contribution. The charter was intended to be a declaration of human rights and all South Africans would be encouraged to uphold its ideals. The most important issue that was decided upon was the demand for a one-man, one-vote system.

The Charter was to be approved finally on 25 and 26 June at a Congress of the People in a multiracial village near Johannesburg. However, the police broke up the meeting and the delegates were interrogated. The leadership of the ANC became even more convinced that harsh methods would have to be implemented to win the struggle for freedom.

The Freedom Charter soon became the cornerstone of ANC policy and covered many issues, such as African landownership, wealth distribution and voting rights. The campaign around the Freedom Charter brought people together to discuss their difficulties and their ideals for the future.

WOMEN ON THE MARCH

Another important event in the 1950's was the march organised by the FSAW (a multiracial Federation of South African Women). Shortly after the ANC Congress of the People, the National Party government announced that, as from January 1956, all African women would have to carry passes with them. At the end of October 1955, approximately 2 000 women marched to the office of the Prime Minister at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. The government ignored the women and they responded by arranging another march in August 1956. This time, 20 000 women marched to the Union Buildings to protest against the pass laws. Lillian Ngoyi requested an audience with the Prime Minister but he refused. The women then stood in silence for 30 minutes after which they sang a Zulu song, which included the following words; "You have struck a rock once you have touched a woman".

As was the case with all the other campaigns, this campaign did not achieve its aim but it politicised thousands of African women and the courage of these women served to inspire future generations.

THE TREASON TRIAL

The South African government became very concerned about the growing militancy of the African people. Militant campaigns followed, one after the other, and the South African government and police never knew what to expect next. The government blamed the ANC for the campaigns and, when the Freedom Charter was accepted at Kliptown, the government considered this a form of treason. During September 1955, the dwellings of many protest leaders were searched in an attempt to find evidence to prove treason. Fifteen months later, 156 people were arrested on charges of suspected treason. Among these people were: Luthuli, Tambo, Sisulu, Mandela (all members of the ANC), Naicker and Kathrada (SAIC) and Kotane and Slovo (SACP). The case dragged on for nearly four years and many of the initial charges were withdrawn. The trial ended in 1961, all the accused being found not guilty of treason.

The Treason Trial generated much international publicity and sympathy for the accused. Overseas organisations donated funds to help the accused and their families. During the trial, the accused were forced to spend most of their time in each other's company, which forged lifelong bonds of friendship and solidarity.

THE HOMELAND POLICY

In the year in which the Treason Trial started, Parliament passed the "Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act", which made provision for Africans to be divided into eight separate ethnic Bantustans. This policy implied that 13 per cent of the country would now be occupied and governed by 70 per cent of the people. The intention was that two-thirds of Africans, who lived in so-called white areas, would have to take up citizenship in tribal homelands, which meant relocation to remote areas.

It was hoped that the different ethnic groups would develop an affinity for their own homeland and their own culture and that they would no longer be interested in the politics of the rest of South Africa. Many Africans did find a home within the borders of their own homeland but, for the greater part, the homelands did not succeed in soothing the rising anger of the African people. As a matter of fact, in many instances, this policy was recognised as just another method of robbing the black man of that which rightfully belonged to him.

Black people who lived outside the borders of their allocated homelands had an allegiance to the place of their birth and they felt the need to enjoy basic human rights in and around their work place and their actual place of residence.

Under the leadership of Advocate B J Vorster, the Homeland policy came to fruition and in 1976, the first Bantustan was established. The project continued until 1981 when the last Homeland came into being.

THE PAN AFRICANIST CONGRESS (PAC)

Lembede's principle that only Africanism could save the Africans from destruction drew much support during the 1950's. The Africanists were not in favour of cooperation with any non-African organisation or person. They were also anti-Communist and were not concerned when the Suppression of Communism Act was introduced in 1950. The Africanists were militant in their belief that Africa belonged to the Africans and felt irritated by the passive resistance of the SAIC. Africanists soon formed a strong organisation in Orlando, (Johannesburg, Soweto) under the leadership of P K Leballo. Other important Africanists were Mda, Robert Sobukwe and J N Pokela. The following words of Sobukwe described how he felt towards white liberals who took up the cause of the African: "They (sympathetic whites) present us with programs which protect their sectional interests. If I am building a house, if there is a friend who wants to help me, I expect him to bring building materials with him to come and help me. I do not like him coming with already drawn-up plans which will affect my original scheme." With regard to the white National Party government, Sobukwe boldly declared that it was like a thief in control of stolen possessions.

Because of the differences in attitude between the Africanists and the ANC, it became impossible for them to work together. In 1958, at the annual conference of the ANC, a number of Africanists, including Leballo, were refused entry. They reacted by holding an impromptu meeting outside the conference hall at which they decided to break away from the ANC. Leballo and Josias Madzunya took the lead in the formation of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in Orlando in April 1959. Robert Sobukwe was elected as the first President-General. Leballo became National Secretary and Abednego Ngcobo, the Treasurer. The PAC was the first major political movement that constituted a challenge to the ANC. At the time of the split, the ANC did not feel threatened by what had happened but the PAC did succeed in becoming a major role player in African politics.

With its policy of "Africa for the Africans", the PAC seemed intent on destroying white supremacy in South Africa. Sobukwe lectured his followers that they had to respect themselves if they wanted others to respect them. This was the very essence of Steve Biko's future philosophy of Black Consciousness. Africans should be proud of their heritage and they should not accept insults from anybody.

THE ANTI-PASS CAMPAIGN AND THE SHARPEVILLE MASSACRE

In 1959, under the leadership of Robert Sobukwe, the PAC decided to launch an anti-pass campaign. At a press conference on 18 March 1960, Sobukwe called on all Africans to stay away from work on 21 March. They were to leave their passbooks at home and give themselves up at the nearest police station. The PAC leader in Cape Town, Philip Kgosana, also called on his supporters to join the campaign.

On the designated day, 21 March 1960, a crowd of 3 000 Africans surrounded a police station at Bopholong near Vanderbijlpark. At first, the police used batons and teargas to drive them off but, when rocks were thrown at the police, they opened fire and two protestors were killed.

In the township of Sharpeville, an even bigger crowd surrounded another police station. The crowd was shouting and the police were reminded of an incident in Cato Manor near Durban, in January 1960, when an African mob killed 9 policemen in similar circumstances. When the fence around the police station gave way, the police panicked and fired shots into the crowd. Sixty nine Africans were killed and approximately 180 wounded.

In the Cape Peninsula, police also opened fire after stones had been thrown at them in Langa. Two Africans lost their lives.

The world was outraged. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange plunged and capital started to flow out of the country. The massacre at Sharpeville created a new situation in South Africa. The PAC had suddenly moved to the forefront of the struggle and Robert Sobukwe became a hero overnight. The leadership of the ANC held an all-night meeting to plan an appropriate response to the Sharpeville massacre. The ANC organized a National Day of Mourning for the Sharpeville victims. A crowd of fifty thousand people gathered at Langa to protest and rioting broke out all over the country.

The anti-pass campaign once again did not achieve its original aim but the police were widely criticised and South Africa and its "draconian white government" were once again the talk of the international community

In response to the countrywide riots, the government declared a State of Emergency. South Africa was now under Martial Law.

MARTIAL LAW

Martial Law in South Africa handed the ultimate power to government and the police. On 30 March, Nelson Mandela and a number of his colleagues were illegally arrested and taken to Newlands police station. The prisoners were later formally rearrested in terms of the State of Emergency and subsequently incarcerated in the Pretoria local prison.

The State of Emergency was lifted at the end of August 1960 and all the detainees were released.

BANNING

On 24 March 1960, in an attempt to quell further incidents of violence, the government prohibited all public meetings. Police raids were carried out against prominent African leaders of the resistance. At the time, Albert Luthuli was in Pretoria to give evidence at the Treason Trial and he called on all Africans to stay at home on Monday, 28 March, to mourn the dead. Thousands of Africans stayed at home on the burial day.

On 30 March 1960, approximately 30 000 Africans marched from Langa and Nyanga to the centre of Cape Town. The PAC leader in Cape Town, Philip Kgosana, led his people out of the city because senior police officers had promised him that if he did, the Minister of Justice would afterwards negotiate with him. When Mr Kgosana returned for his appointment, he was immediately arrested. On 8 April 1960, the Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoerd, banned both the PAC and the ANC, an act that was strongly condemned by the international community. The United Nations Security Council called on South Africa to abandon Apartheid. South Africa's government was now firmly set on a path of self-destruction, as all potential channels of communication had been closed down. It was only a matter of time before African frustration and bitterness would explode.

The banning of the ANC and the PAC created certain complications, e.g. collection of membership fees would be impossible and so would legal communication amongst members and the leadership.

However, since the ANC had suspected that it would only be a matter of time before it was banned, the Executive Committee of the ANC had made contingency plans. The different branches already knew that, should it be banned, the ANC would continue to operate underground. The M-Plan drafted by Mr Mandela in the fifties would now come into being. This plan allowed for the formation of secret cells through which the organisation would continue to exist. The plan was difficult to implement because the eyes of the police were everywhere and, at the time of the banning, a number of ANC leaders were in police custody. The ANC sent a few other leaders out of the country to solicit the help of the international community.

When it became known that the Union of South Africa would become a republic on 31 May 1961, the ANC feared that things would become even worse for the Africans in the country. A conference was convened in March 1961 in Pietermaritzburg, which was attended by delegates representing different social, political, religious and sporting bodies. There were many complaints about the deteriorating racial relations in the country and the fact that Africans could not vote for or against the proposed republic. The conference compiled a letter to the Prime Minister but it was ignored.

THE ARMED STRUGGLE

The leaders of the ANC became even more disillusioned and realised that the government would never negotiate with them. In June 1961, the ANC decided on a course of violent resistance. A few of the leaders, among them Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela, formed Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation) or in short, MK. It was decided that Mandela would lead MK as a separate organisation but that its political guidance would come from the ANC. In time, this organisation became the military wing of the ANC. MK had its headquarters at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia and it was here that it decided to start the campaign of violent resistance with sabotage. It wanted to limit loss of life as long as possible in order not to increase racial intolerance. The decision of the ANC to choose violence as an option was strongly influenced by the war in Algeria where African rebels succeeded against French forces in Algeria. Fidel Castro's success in Cuba also gave it hope. If these rebels could succeed against a powerful enemy, so could the ANC.

Nelson Mandela was sent to visit a number of African states to solicit financial support for the training of MK members. Training was needed for the next step, guerrilla warfare against the South African government, and it was hoped that African states would provide the training facilities. Mandela himself received his military training in Algeria. At the Pan African Congress in 1962, Mandela met a number of heads of state. He also went over to England to meet Oliver Tambo and to have discussions with the leaders of both the Liberal and the Labour parties. On his way back, he stopped over in Tanzania to meet the first MK recruits who were about to commence their military training.

When Mandela returned to South Africa, he was arrested for inciting illegal strikes and for leaving the country without a passport. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

The government's answer to the ANC's acts of sabotage was the General Law Amendment Act. This law gave police the authority to arrest people suspected of political offences, without a warrant, and to keep them incarcerated for up to ninety days without a trial. This term could be extended after expiration for three times consecutively. This implied that people could be thrown into jail for nine months at a time without a proper trial. The following words are part of Walter Sisulu's reaction to this law as it was broadcast over Radio ANC in 1963: "We warn the government that drastic laws will not stop our struggle for liberation. Throughout the ages men have sacrificed - they have given their lives for their ideals. And we are also determined to surrender our lives for our freedom. In the face of violence, men struggling for freedom have had to meet violence with violence."

THE RIVONIA TRIAL

In July 1963, the liberation struggle would change forever. On this day, the police raided Liliesleaf Farm and enough incriminating evidence was found in the form of propaganda leaflets, maps and documents detailing plans for sabotage and revolution, to enable a watertight treason case to be prepared. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathadra, Lionel Bernstein and Bob Hepple were caught red-handed while they were discussing Operation Mayibuye. This operation comprised military resistance against the whites. After the raid on Liliesleaf Farm, police were in possession of the ANC blueprint for guerrilla warfare in South Africa. More arrests followed and, on 12 June 1964, the Rivonia Trial came to an end. Sentences of life imprisonment were imposed on Sisulu, Mbeki, Mhlaba, Kathrada, Mandela, Elias Motsoaledi, Andrew Mlangeni and Dennis Goldberg.

The following is an extract from a statement by Albert Luthuli which was read in the Security Council of the United Nations after the verdict was known: “They (the sentenced men) represent the highest in morality and ethics in the South African political struggle without their leadership, brotherhood and humanity may be blasted out of existence in South Africa for long decades to come.....” He furthermore appealed to the outside world to take a stand against Apartheid and against those who enforced it. “This is an appeal to save these men, not merely as individuals, but what they stand for. In the name of justice, of hope, of truth and of peace, I appeal to South Africa’s strongest allies, Britain and America.....to take decisive action for full-scale sanctions that would precipitate the end of the hateful system of Apartheid.”

After the arrests, the sabotage campaign dwindled out. Wilton China tried to continue the campaign by bombing a number of police stations but he could not get hold of enough dynamite. He was arrested in October 1964 and also sentenced to life imprisonment. When Bram Fischer was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in 1965, all underground activities of the ANC and the CPSA virtually ceased.

POQO

The PAC also quietened down temporarily in the aftermath of the banning. With their leader (Sobukwe) in custody, the organisation had to be rearranged and readjusted in order for it to function underground. A military wing with the name Poqo was established. It is a Xhosa word that means “Alone”. P K Leballo, who now acted as the organisation’s leader, devised a strategy for the overthrow of the government, which involved that, if necessary, Africans would be intimidated in order to assure their loyalty and secrecy. Terror would be unleashed upon the white government and all who supported it, be they black or white. Well-planned attacks would be perpetrated against whites countrywide until the government gave in to the pressure.

Poqo consisted of cells of 10 persons each. Only men were allowed to become members and members were identified by two vertical cuts on the forehead. The headquarters in both Langa and Johannesburg would be linked with Maseru, in the independent country of Basutoland (Lesotho), where Leballo had established his headquarters. Unlike MK, only Africans could belong to Poqo. MK used explosives in an attempt to destroy the infrastructure and general symbols of Apartheid, but Poqo supporters were more vicious in their attacks. They wanted to kill the whites before taking over the country and trained a guerrilla force for their planned fight against the white government.

Towards the end of 1962, some Poqo members attempted to start a campaign of terror in Paarl in the Cape. The plan was to attack a police station in Paarl and then, when all the policemen were out of the way, they would attack the town and kill all the whites. The plan miscarried because the police opened fire when they were attacked with pangas, knives and axes. A number of Poqo members were killed and the others ran back home to the location of Mbekweni, but not before killing two whites and damaging property owned by whites.

In February 1963, Poqo members attacked and killed five white road workers in the middle of the night. Poqo also killed three Transkeian chiefs because the government had appointed them. The Transkei declared a State of Emergency and arrested more than 3 000 suspected Poqo members. After this, Poqo's activities in the Transkei came to an end and they lost further ground when the organisation was banned in the High Commission territories of Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland (Lesotho, Botswana and Swaziland).

THE YOUTH TAKE CONTROL

Africans were now in a situation that looked quite hopeless. Their leaders were in jail, most of them incarcerated on Robben Island. Courts meted out the strictest punishment for any politically incorrect move. The most important black political organisations were banned and the government was not interested in negotiation. The older generation did not seem to have the energy to continue the struggle. Fear gripped the hearts of black people everywhere. If they did not blend into the system, there would be no mercy shown by either the police or the courts. Most of these people felt completely defeated, many slipping back into a state of servitude. Others remained defiant but it was a defiance that they could not acknowledge openly.

Because of the general attitude of apathy among the older generation, the younger generation took charge. There was an enormous uprising among the youth of Soweto in the 1970's. They were militant and without fear. They burned their books and schools and arranged marches. They showed their contempt for the police quite openly by pelting their vehicles with stones. Black universities and colleges were also up in arms.

The youth's political interests were mainly stimulated by university students' organisations, such as the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), the Progressive Students' Organisation, the University Christian Movement (UCM) and the South African Students' Organisation (SASO).

Steve Biko was elected as the first President of SASO. This organisation encouraged students not only to consider their own plight but also to become involved with black issues in general. During one of its meetings, the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) was established. The BPC was very open in its denouncement of foreign investment and in its support of sanctions and the isolation of South Africa in general. SASO and the BPC were completely opposed to the Black Homelands in South Africa. They saw these states as tribal concentration camps. SASO and BPC formed the core of the Black Consciousness Movement. This movement acted as an important catalyst in black schools for the June 1976 uprising.

A spirit of Black Consciousness had gripped the nation and the Black Consciousness Movement started to gain ground among the people. Black Consciousness was more of a philosophy than a physical movement and taught Blacks that they would first have to liberate themselves from their psychological sense of inferiority before they would be able to rise in confidence and liberate themselves from oppression. This philosophy could easily be accommodated within the boundaries of ANC policy.

The apathy that had existed a short while ago was no more. But, sadly, the youth's anger took its toll upon those closest to them as well. Many of the youth became so bitter and twisted that even their parents lived in fear and did not dare to cross their own children.

THE SOWETO UPRISING

The Soweto uprising started on 16 June 1976. A student march was planned for this day, starting early in the morning from Naledi Secondary School. As pupils of this school marched through the streets of Soweto, pupils from other schools joined in. A confrontation between the police and the marching students took place in Vilakazi Street near Orlando West Secondary School. The police were confronted by nearly 6 000 students and many of the students pelted them with rocks. The police retaliated by using teargas. When the police decided that their lives were in danger, they opened fire. Two pupils, Hector Petersen and Hastings Ndhlovu, were killed and 11 more were wounded. After this tragedy, the students went on a rampage. A Bantu Administration Board building was set alight and two white civilians were killed.

Riots spread like wildfire to the rest of Soweto and to practically all the other townships in the country. Adults were intimidated by the black youth to support the uprising. Schools were burnt to the ground and school and consumer boycotts were organised. Many casualties and deaths occurred during the continuing riots and subsequent violent confrontations between the police and the angry crowds.

The uprising started in Soweto because the South African Students' Movement (SASM) had its head office there. SASM had been very successful in raising the political awareness levels of the youth, especially due to the fact that conditions in the classes were far less than acceptable. Classes were overcrowded, teachers were not properly trained and there were not nearly enough books. The students were also dissatisfied because they were forced to accept Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. The Afrikaans issue acted as a detonator for the uprising and the uprising spread to nearly every corner of South Africa as the poverty and suppression of Africans acted as fertile soil. The uprising was really about the venting of black anger against the racism of the government.

During these turbulent times, many black South Africans left the country in order to get an education overseas, but most did not have this choice. These people are still referred to as "the lost generation" because many of them forever lost the will or the opportunity to receive a decent education.

The uprisings did have some positive results for black people. Afrikaans ceased to be the compulsory teaching medium and the prospect of free education for blacks became a reality. Many whites also became more understanding towards blacks because they became more aware of their difficulties. New African housing schemes were launched and private African home ownership in urban areas was allowed again.

The uprising furthermore set an organisational proliferation into motion. New organisations such as the Teachers Action Committee, the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO), the Committee of Ten (in Soweto) and the Soweto Action Committee came into being. It was as if Africans had gained momentum. Some rapid strides towards freedom had been made, even though negotiation was still not an option.

In 1978, P W Botha succeeded B J Vorster as Prime Minister and started using strong-arm tactics to control the chaos in the country.

SMALL STEPS TO CHANGE

But those who served in parliament were not immune to the soft voice of their conscience. More and more whites realized that things would have to change, but it was still a frightening thought. In November 1983, Coloureds and Indians became part of PW Botha's Tricameral Parliament. Most Africans saw this as a ruse to separate the Coloureds and Indians from the Blacks and an overwhelming majority of Indians and Coloureds boycotted the election. It cannot, however, be denied that this decision paved the way for further concessions. Whites now had the opportunity not only to adjust but to evolve politically to the extent that a one-man, one-vote system would in time be voted in. However, before true democracy eventually came into being, South Africans would still have to struggle through the volatile eighties.

THE VOLATILE EIGHTIES

In December 1982, MK set off explosions at Koeberg Nuclear Power Station outside Cape Town. Many bombings followed. In May 1983, MK used a car bomb to target a military office in the city of Pretoria. Nineteen people were killed and more than two hundred were injured. This bombing was carried out in retaliation for the killing of forty-two people by the South African military at an ANC outpost in Maseru, Lesotho.

Inevitably, ordinary citizens got caught up in the violence. Whites were afraid that a bomb might explode while they were dining out or shopping and blacks were fearful because they had to cope with excessively militant elements in the townships. Solidarity was often forced upon people in cruel and ruthless ways. Blacks were forced to boycott white shops and if they did not comply, they were forced to eat or drink whatever they had bought. Blacks who did not participate in stay-aways or strikes were intimidated and victimised by their own people. The so-called “necklace” method struck fear into the hearts of everyone and was used to kill suspected traitors and police informers. The “necklace” was a petrol-soaked tyre that was put around a victim’s neck and set alight. Many people would often join in stoning, kicking and beating the burning victim. Words can never be found to adequately describe the agony and horror of such a death.

The country was in turmoil. Whites started preparing for emigration and blacks would often just grab the bare essentials before leaving their homes, preferring to sleep outside in the wind and rain to escape the violence in their neighbourhoods. Often they would return to find their homes burnt to the ground. Mobs perpetrated horrible crimes and individuals within the crowd would participate without considering the consequences. Individuals who tried to intervene would often become targets themselves and people soon learned to look the other way. Black South Africans were living in a lawless society, constantly in fear of their lives. Drastic change was needed as South Africa was destroying itself from within.

The anti-Apartheid struggle had succeeded in capturing the attention of the world and the country was in turmoil. Still, the government was not ready to talk to the ANC on an equal footing, despite the pressures building from the outside as well as the inside. But change was soon to come.

WHITE AND BLACK COME TOGETHER

On 31 January 1985 the State President, P W Botha, offered Mandela his freedom, provided that he unconditionally rejected violence as a political instrument. Mr Mandela did not accept this condition and reiterated his demand for the immediate unbanning of the ANC, the release of all political prisoners and the total dismantling of Apartheid.

The government was at last willing to talk, but neither the ANC nor the government was prepared to come to the negotiation table unless the other party was prepared to make significant concessions. In 1985, Mandela made it known to representatives of the British Commonwealth, that if the government withdrew the army and the police from the townships, the ANC might agree to a temporary suspension of the armed struggle.

Unfortunately, the government chose this time to launch air raids on ANC bases in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This move thwarted all efforts to move negotiations forward and, on 12 June 1986, the government imposed a State of Emergency.

NEGOTIATIONS COMMENCE

By this time, Mandela was in regular written communication with the government and several meetings followed. The government suggested appointing a committee of senior officials to lead discussions with Mandela and the ANC leadership agreed to this. The first meeting took place in May 1988 at the Officers' Club at Pollsmoor Prison, Cape Town.

Meetings with the committee continued, but Mandela was still pressing for a meeting with P W Botha. In January 1989, Botha suffered a stroke and in February he unexpectedly resigned as head of the National Party, but retained his position as State President and Mr Mandela finally had a meeting with him.

In August 1989, Botha resigned as State President and F W de Klerk was sworn in as acting State President. One of the first things he did was to affirm his commitment to political reform. He was a pragmatist and knew that change was not only necessary but inevitable. He eased restrictions on political gatherings and allowed a march in Cape Town to protest against police brutality.

THE SYSTEMATIC DISMANTLING OF APARTHEID

It seemed that things would now change for the better. Mandela immediately wrote a letter to de Klerk, requesting a meeting. On 10 October 1989, the government announced that seven political prisoners would soon be released. Among them were Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mahlaba, Andrew Mlangeni and Walter Sisulu. No bans were imposed on them and as free men they were allowed to speak out on behalf of the ANC. The systematic dismantling of Apartheid had begun.

South African beaches were opened to all races and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act was repealed. There was no longer any segregation in public facilities such as theatres, parks, restaurants or buses. De Klerk seemed to be truly committed to reconciliation in South Africa.

On 2 February 1990, de Klerk announced the lifting of the bans on the ANC, PAC, the South African Communist Party and thirty-one other illegal organizations. The freeing of political prisoners who had not taken part in violent activities, the suspension of capital punishment and the lifting of various restrictions imposed by the State of Emergency, were also initiated. The time for negotiation had arrived. De Klerk's speech in Parliament on that fateful day changed the course of history in South Africa.

On 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison and South Africa rejoiced. The final step had been taken to open up the way for negotiations to start taking place.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT

Talks between the government and the ANC did not get off to a good start although both had made some concessions. The ANC decided to suspend the armed struggle and the government lifted the State of Emergency, but there was still much cause for disagreement. The ANC believed that certain elements in the government and the police were overtly sympathetic towards the Inkatha freedom Party (IFP) and, during this time, there was much talk about a so-called "Third Force" that was attempting to disrupt negotiations by fanning violence in the country. Violence was particularly prevalent between the IFP and the ANC.

After more than a year and a half of "talks about talks", the real talks eventually began on 20 December 1991. The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) presented all the significant political role players in South Africa with an opportunity to take part in the negotiations. The ANC called for an interim Government of National Unity (GNU) to oversee the transition to a new non-racial, democratic South Africa. The PAC boycotted the talks because it believed that the ANC and the NP were conspiring to set up a multi-racial government.

The IFP also declined to take part, on the grounds that it wanted three delegations to be representative of the Zulus: one to represent Inkatha, one to represent the KwaZulu government and the third to represent the Zulu king, King Zwelithini. This was not permitted.

Despite all these hiccups, CODESA 2 started on 15 May 1992. Negotiations eventually stalled and the ANC and its allies agreed on a policy of mass action consisting of strikes, demonstrations and boycotts.

The government finally agreed to accept a single, elected constitutional assembly which was to adopt a new constitution and which was to serve as a transitional legislature for a new government. A five-year GNU was agreed upon in principle. All parties polling more than 5 per cent in the election would be proportionally represented in the Cabinet. After five years, this government would become a majority rule government. It was decided that the country's first one-person, one-vote election would take place on 27 April 1994. With the date set, people felt encouraged once again and negotiations gained momentum. The IFP, PAC and even the all-white Conservative Party were now taking part in the negotiations.

SOUTH AFRICA'S FIRST DEMOCRATIC ELECTION

In South Africa's first democratic election, held on 27 April 1994, the ANC polled 62,6 per cent of the national vote, just short of the two-thirds majority needed to push through a final constitution without support from other parties.

THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY

The Government of National Unity faced a daunting task - to shape a new, truly democratic South Africa where rights and freedom would no longer be dependent on skin colour. It had to try and undo decades of damage done by the previous government. Cooperation was sometimes made difficult when the political parties did not agree, but the wounds left by Apartheid were so deep that it was inevitable that problems would arise from time to time. The NP eventually came to feel that it would be better able to serve the interest of its supporters by withdrawing from the Government of National Unity.

Some blacks felt - and still feel - that their personal circumstances have not changed much and whites complained about issues such as affirmative action in the workplace and corruption in government departments. But the advantages of true democracy are obvious. Blacks can now live a life of dignity and whites can at last start letting go of the guilt and shame of the past.

SOUTH AFRICA TODAY

Since the 1994 elections, South Africa has been welcomed back into the international fold with open arms. Exports are rising and the government is doing its utmost to accommodate the growing interest from global companies to invest in the country.

Some of the most daunting problems that South Africa faces at the moment are rising new imports, the increasing demands and actions by strong labour unions that are reducing productivity and increasing the cost of labour, and the high crime level. The policies that are needed to right the wrongs of the past, such as Affirmative Action, are also creating problems. Those whites who are leaving the country because they fear for their future prospects are creating a “brain drain” because they are creating a much-needed skills gap. Illegal immigrants and unemployment are also growing problems.

However, the government has policies in place to address all these problems. The economic policy revolves around the Reconstruction and Development Programme and advocates self-help, sustainable development and investment for the common good.

The current President of South Africa is Thabo Mbeki. Much will be expected of him in the light of what has been achieved by his predecessor. He is known as a strict leader and one who demands the best performance from his people. He is also an enthusiastic advocate of the “African Renaissance”, the ideal that Africans should replenish their country and take their future into their own hands.

Meanwhile, the people of South Africa are learning to get to know and respect each other. Laws and rules are being made to help right the wrongs of the past but the main force behind the change is the people, who are truly trying to create a better South Africa.

