Workshop on South Africa in the 1940s
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# Transcontinental Connections: Alfred B Xuma and the African National Congress on the World Stage

By

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> We feel that the world has a special responsibility towards us. This is because the land of our fathers was handed over to South Africa by a world body. It is a divided world. But it is a matter of hope for us that it at least agrees about one thing – that we are entitled to freedom and justice.
> -Toivo ja Toivo, SWAPO leader, Transvaal Superior Court, 2/1/68

## Introduction

The struggle for equality in South Africa has taken many forms over the centuries providing various watersheds and pivotal moments, to which historians point throughout South Africa's history. Consequently, much of the literature on South Africa identifies 1948, the year of Apartheid's formalization, as just such a watershed year.[1] In an effort to better understand the establishment of Apartheid as the official doctrine of governance, events in the years preceding the 1948 general election warrant considerable attention, specifically the crucial period between the end of World War II, in 1945, and the 1948 election. In particular, I have examined the role played by the country's most dominant resistance movement, the African National Congress (ANC). Furthermore, during this crucial period the interplay between Alfred B. Xuma, leader of the ANC, and South African Prime Minister Jan C. Smuts serves as an allegory for the monumental shift in power South Africa and indeed, the world experienced in the aftermath of World War II.

Xuma's transcontinental connections with allies within the African-American community demonstrate a Pan-African consciousness that was quickly emerging throughout the Atlantic world.[2] Pan-Africanism catalyzed cooperation between Africans and African Americans, rendering a powerful alliance in the global fight against systemic racism. The special relationship between the Council of African Affairs (a political action group headed by Paul Robeson and Max Yergan) and the African National Congress centered around their shared belief in Pan-Africanism and its utility in the fight against racism and imperialism. Armed with a Pan-African consciousness the alliance between the Council of African Affairs and the ANC would challenge South Africa's white regime at the

United Nations Lake Success Conference in November-December 1946. The issue their challenge addressed was Prime Minister Smuts' proposal to annex South West Africa.[3] Thus, the question of annexation brought both protagonists, Xuma and Smuts, to New York to make their case before the newly formed world body, the United Nations Organization (UNO). Interestingly, none of the South African parties at the UNO came from the area commonly known as South West Africa. In fact, both Xuma and Smuts partisans were debating the fate of a foreign land with distinct linguistic and cultural heritage. Thus, it is not necessarily South West Africa that was of primary importance, rather, the idea of South West Africa in the minds of South Africans, both black and white.

On December 14, 1946, the United Nations General Assembly voted thirty-seven to zero against South Africa's annexation of South West Africa.[4] The author of the United Nations Charter Preamble and the darling statesmen of the allied powers, the Right Honorable Gen. Jan C. Smuts, was defeated by a combination of radical African Americans and leaders of his own marginalized African population. This defeat not only infuriated and embarrassed Smuts, but also, in his own words, contributed considerably to his political downfall.[5] Many historians have commented on this ironic turn of events; however, none have acknowledged the central importance of a Pan-African ideology, strengthened by the shared experience of the Second World War, in creating an opposition capable of defeating Smuts on the world stage. Furthermore, this decision was the first in a long string of United Nations Resolutions on South West Africa that continued to embarrass South Africa and shed light on its racist domestic policies.[6] From this point forward all of South Africa's actions, with regard to South West Africa, increasingly were subject to international condemnation by the UNO, contributing to the 'pariah state' self-image that plagued South Africa, throughout the Apartheid era.7

Many scholars view Alfred B. Xuma's presidency of the African National Congress (1940-1949) as a bridge between the "Old Guard" and the emergence of African Nationalism within the ANC Youth League.8 While in some respects this characterization remains valid, a closer examination of Xuma's visit to the United Nations in October-November of 1946 reveals several factors that complicate viewing him as a transitional figure. This argument follows the hitherto dominant line of analysis, to some extent, but I focus on Pan-African influences as crucial to Xuma's success at the United Nations Organization and the importance of the new arena that the UNO provided for contesting South Africa's racial policies.

Methodology

The writing of history has traditionally been the analysis of change over time in a specific place at a given time. This project takes a somewhat different approach. By focusing on a specific moment in time, but viewing this moment from various competing perspectives, my analysis avoids the tendency to see

events through a nationalist paradigm. My research attempts to understand the internal developments of South Africa within the dynamics of the Atlantic World. The coexistence and cross-fertilization of various streams of thought across national borders is paramount. Xuma's trip to New York represents the interconnections, not only between the various factions of black resistance, but also between white and black political thought. Xuma and Smuts trips to New York provided a space in which these seemingly opposing personalities came face to face, literally. Finally, the scholastic Apartheid of South African historiography, between European, African American, and African scholars, leaves troubling blind spots in the historical narrative. By combining these narratives at a specific time and place a more nuanced picture of South Africa's racial politics on the eve of Apartheid is rendered possible. I term this methodology a transnational approach, one that focuses on the interplay between movements, connections, and continuity as much as change. The choice of topic lends itself dramatically to this approach by offering a shared arena where these various political and ideological forces came together in time and space.

South West Africa

With the formation of the League of Nations, South Africa began to administer the territory of South West Africa under the League of Nations mandate system, established in 1920.[9] Administering through a mandate was not the Union's preference. Prime Minister Smuts attempted to annex South West Africa following World War I, but was rebuffed by the League of Nations. Yet, Smuts never relinquished his personal belief that South West Africa was and always would be a necessary appendage to the Union and should be treated as a fifth province. Ruth First, in her careful study, entitled simply, South West Africa, makes this point clearly:

> In 1920, when the permanent Mandate committee first went to work, General Smuts, though familiar with the wording of Article 22 in the League Covenant, could have had little intention of observing its spirit. Still firmly fixed in his mind were all the arguments for regarding South West Africa as a mere extension of South Africa … He approached the problems of the mandate as an exercise in veiled annexation.[10]

Just two years after beginning to administer the mandate the South African parliament granted South West Africa's 35,000 white settlers full citizenship in the Union of South Africa. In fact, throughout the inter-war period, the process of annexation never ceased. In 1935 the all-white South West African parliament requested annexation, in 1939 the South West African police force was incorporated into the Union, following which Cape Province Law governed the territory.

Clearly, South Africa had no intention of shepherding South West Africa out of colonization and towards self-determination; rather their designs were those of annexation. But why would South West Africa be of such interest to South

Africa's ruling population of two million whites? Simply put, incorporation was economically, ideologically, and strategically in line with the world Smuts and white South Africa wished to create. Upon taking over South West Africa he acknowledged the "conscientious work" of Germany in laying the foundation in South West Africa for, "an enduring European civilization on the African Continent, which is the main task of the Union."[11] Xuma himself noted the importance of this ideal to Smuts, likening Smuts' ambitions to those of the recently vanquished Adolph Hitler, "This is the method adopted according to General Smuts, to maintain the supremacy of the Europeans. As you will agree, the idea of maintaining the supremacy of one race over the other is 'Aryanism' 'Herrenvolkism'. Whether it is in Germany, Italy, or in South Africa, it is fascism or nazism."[12] In May 1945, Smuts confirmed Xuma's suspicions when he proclaimed the Union's northern border was the Mediterranean Sea.[13]

In addition to South African ideological and territorial motives, the Union was deeply entrenched economically in South West Africa by 1945. By 1941, South West Africa owed the union over 2.7 million pounds and the South African Railways system had lost 5 million pounds in the territory. The 1946 Yearbook cites Sir Charles Dundas, who summarized the economic relationship between the two: "the territory (South-West Africa) has until now, never been self-supporting and is today heavily in debt to the Union.[14]" Yet despite the ongoing problem of deficit, South West Africa provided a large reservoir of cheap labour, offered large tracts of land, and shared a border with the Union for almost five hundred miles. The sole representative of black South Africans from the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, Senator Hyman Basner believed the desire to annex South West Africa was driven by the need for cheap labour in the newly discovered gold mines of the Orange Free State.[15]

There can be little doubt South Africa had strong ties to the region and its incorporation was an issue that deeply affected the Union. South West Africa, by 1946, served as a template, or possibly a parable, for the racial conflict brewing in South Africa. Its importance to the Smuts regime is difficult to overstate, thus, opposing annexation became a pivotal issue for those opposing Smuts and his policies. For both black and white South Africans, South West Africa offered a relatively neutral playing field to internationalize their domestic disputes. Buckeley, writing in 1946, summarized it best when he wrote; "the future of South West Africa is the most momentous political and territorial issue before South Africa since Union."[16]

## The World War II Context

The Smuts regime had a long history of interest in South West Africa for a variety of reasons; yet, this does not answer fully the question why Xuma and the ANC would campaign so passionately against annexation. Considering the domestic injustice black South Africans endured did they need to take on the plight of four hundred thousand South West Africans? To understand the ANC, and

in particular Xuma's rejection of South West Africa's incorporation within the Union one must understand the Second World War from an African perspective. On August 14th, 1941 United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed on the contents of what became known as the Atlantic Charter. This document contained a set of principles the Allied forces were ostensibly fighting to achieve. The Atlantic Charter claimed the rights to democracy and self-determination would be extended to all the people of the world after the war ended. While the Allied powers may not have intended the document as a promissory note to the colonized peoples of Africa, Xuma and the ANC took the document's contents seriously.[17]

In response to the Atlantic Charter, Xuma assembled a collection of Africans to analyze the Charter, with respect to their current situation.[18] Response came in the form of a pamphlet entitled, African Claims, which summarized the ANC position with respect to the Atlantic Charter. They made note of General Smuts' repeated assurance that the post-war world would be based upon Atlantic Charter principles.[19] The committee proceeded to take each point of the Atlantic Charter and use it as a springboard to both criticize South Africa's policies and issue demands for any post-war settlement. Indeed, as early as 1943, the ANC was pinning much of its hopes on Allied victory and the terms of any subsequent peace process. Although South West Africa was not directly cited in the pamphlet, the authors of African Claims were clearly anticipating the question of annexation. African Claims follows the Atlantic Charter point for point, offering concrete examples of how each issue raised in the Charter should be applied to the African situation.

Thus, while South West Africa is not explicitly mentioned, the larger issue of de-colonization throughout Africa is the crux of the African Claims argument. In reference to the Atlantic Charter's first point (No Aggrandizement) African Claims mentions Abyssinia and the British Protectorates of Bechuanaland, Basutoland, and Swaziland.[20] The words of the charter were applied to specific instances within Africa with specific expectations for any post-war settlement. This is particularly important because it contextualizes the ANC's objections to South West Africa's annexation within the larger goal of African de-colonization. The ANC did not oppose annexation because of particular circumstances relating to South West Africa; rather, the ANC opposed any territorial expansion of South African policy. Xuma fully understood the Smuts regime's territorial ambitions and African Claims was the first blow in a struggle that would continue throughout the Xuma era as ANC President. In reference to the Atlantic Charter's second point (No Territorial Changes), African Claims seems to refer to South West Africa, although never mentioning it by name:

> Further, where territorial changes have taken place in the past and have not resulted in the political and other advancement of the Africans living in those territories or colonies it would be a mistake to continue to maintain the status quo after the war. The objective of promoting self-government for

> colonial peoples must be actively pursued by powers having such lands under their administrative control, and this objective should be a matter of international concern.[21]

This statement contained within the African Claims pamphlet is very similar to a memo Xuma would deliver in November 1946 to the United Nations in response to South West Africa's proposed annexation.[22] Thus, African Claims was calling for a post-war settlement, which was quite different from the settlement Smuts envisioned, and laying the foundation for an eventual conflict on the international stage.

The battle lines, which would be fought in New York in 1946 were drawn out some three years earlier when the war was far from over and the question of annexation not even on the horizon. Walshe sees African Claims as speaking to a dual audience: both the African community and the international community.[23] As early as 1943 Africans had taken keen interest in the work of the UNO. It seemed a forum in which they could challenge their oppressors on a more level playing field and internationalize the problems Smuts had always succeeded in keeping domestic. In this respect, Xuma was working to directly counter Smuts on both the national and international stage, and it seemed to be working. Smuts, who stayed aloof, rebuffing Xuma's many requests for a formal meeting, responded angrily to African Claims in a letter to Xuma. Smuts chastised Xuma, blaming African Claims for exacerbating tensions between whites and blacks in South Africa.[24] Gish claims that Smuts never seriously meant to apply the Atlantic Charter to Africans. Xuma and the ANC, however, did not care much whether Smuts meant to implement the contents of the Charter, but rather, they sought to use Smuts's own words against him in the international forum.[25]

The Atlantic Charter also raised expectations among African Americans, whose experience was analogous to that of black South Africans. Plummer claims that despite reservations, "Afro-Americans nevertheless expressed their agreement with the (Atlantic) charter's fundamental principles."[26] Just as the ANC, under Xuma, understood their struggle within the Pan-African call for de-colonization, so too did African-American leaders begin to see their own struggle. Interestingly, the ties that formed between radical African Americans and the ANC during the 1940s concerned primarily neither South Africa nor America, but rather, South West Africa. The link, at its essence, must be understood as a manifestation of Pan-Africanism stretching beyond national and even continental borders.[27] The shared black experience throughout the Atlantic world of four hundred years of systemic racism was forging transnational links. White South Africa's blatantly racist imperialism in South West Africa, and the export of its doctrines of racial separation served as a focal point for the newly emergent ANC-African American alliance. In response to the scourge of European racism Xuma and others offered the panacea of Pan-Africanism.

While African Claims may seem to the present day observer as a mere exercise in

debate, with no tangible results for the African masses, the ANC rank and file were aware of and quite happy with Xuma's leadership in the War Years. Furthermore, African Claims symbolized and summarized the anticipation within the African community for the post-war era. "It was the hard-working and self-sacrificing President-General of the African National Congress, Dr. A.B. Xuma, who, throughout the war years, has consistently warned his people that the end of the war would mean the beginning of the fight in this country for African security and for full citizenship."[28] It would seem that the events at the United Nations, in 1946, were the result of sustained and careful preparation for the post-war period. The ANC, from its President to its rank and file membership, understood the connection between South Africa's foreign policy and their own material conditions.

When Smuts traveled to San Francisco in April 1945 to begin formulating the United Nations Charter, Xuma wrote him, calling upon Smuts to make good on his wartime promises. He also referenced African Claims, as a statement of African expectations for any peace agreement.[29] Although Smuts did not act on Xuma's claims, Xuma nonetheless did succeed in establishing a sustained, consistent opposition to Smuts, which in effect made the connection between Smuts' lofty international rhetoric and South Africa's repressive Native policy.[30]

Xuma was connecting with his own base in South Africa by highlighting the contradiction between Smuts' international stature and his domestic policy towards Africans. Furthermore, radicals in America began to see opposition to Smuts as a worthy cause they could champion in the post-war period. Plummer claims Pan-Africanists within the African-American movement viewed opposition to Smuts as crucial for several reasons. First, Smuts was well liked by policy makers in the United States, including Secretary of State John Foster Dulles; thus, opposition to him would be a form of protest against the more imperialist elements within America. Second, some African Americans saw opposition to annexation as a means for exposing South Africa's domestic racial policies.[31] Both African Americans and black South Africans saw the gathering in San Francisco as a defining moment in the post-war status of colonized peoples.[32]

Common opposition to Smuts at the United Nations further solidified a bond between the Council of African Affairs and the African National Congress that began years earlier. Max Yergan, founding member and architect of the Council had authored a pamphlet in 1938 entitled, Gold and Poverty in South Africa. Lynch summarizes the Council in the following way: "Radical, Black led and interracial, its goal was to enlighten the public about Africa and to promote the liberation of the continent."[33] Philosophically no other term than Pan-African can adequately describe the Council's perspective.[34] Furthermore, Pan-Africanism unified the Council and the ANC in their joint efforts at the United Nations in way a more nationalistic ideology could not. They opposed annexation as an expansion of white South Africa's racist doctrine that

threatened black people throughout the world, not just in South West Africa.

While the relationship between the ANC and the Council of African Affairs stood at the very center of opposition to South West Africa's incorporation into the Union, further emphasis needs to be given to Xuma's strong attraction to the Pan-Africanism that African Americans figured so heavily. While Gish, in his biography of Xuma, gives these connections serious consideration, his overall understanding of Xuma's ANC emphasizes connections to America in general, rather than to Pan-Africanism in particular.[35] While my appraisal of the relevant sources does not necessarily contradict Gish, it appears to me that the more logical link is with Pan-Africanism. On these grounds the ANC mobilized the successful challenge of the Smuts administration before the United Nations. Significantly, Pan-African connections extended well beyond the Council of African Affairs.

Xuma's support of the 1945 Pan-African Congress was inextricably linked to his vision of the post World War II situation. In writing to the Pan-African Congress in October 1945 Xuma proclaimed, "people of African descent must come and work closer together with a view to put full weight for interracial and international goodwill."[36] In the same letter Xuma refers to the importance of African Claims and its applicability to the black experience the world over. Although Xuma did not attend the conference he was well aware of its proceedings, it is doubtless he would have taken notice of Norman Leyes attack on Trusteeship. The Pan-African Congress Manifesto spoke strongly against South Africa's racist policies, "The fifth Pan-African Congress, represents millions of Africans and peoples of African descent throughout the world, condemns with all its power the policy towards Africans and other non-Europeans carried out by the Union of South Africa." It went on to attack the notion of Trusteeship: "The claims of 'partnership', 'trusteeship', 'guardianship', and the, 'mandate system', do not serve the political wishes of the people."[37] Although Xuma did not attend the 1945 congress, the parallels between his own arguments against trusteeship in 1946, at the UNO, and those of the 1945 congress demonstrate the transnational nature of opposition to the Smuts regime and its policies.

The Question of Annexation

In January of 1946, General Smuts began talk of incorporating South West Africa into the Union on grounds that it would make for more efficient administration of the territory politically, strategically, and geographically. It was not until November 4, 1946 that Smuts formally called for incorporation claiming it was in the best interest of South West Africa's Native population and that the vast majority of the territory's natives were in favor of incorporation. The South African government had "polled" South West Africa's population by allowing tribal officials to cast block votes for all those under their control. Ultimately survey results were rejected by the UNO.[38] In Smuts' personal

correspondence he reveals great reticence about the issue of incorporation and acknowledges the prospect of stiff opposition, "… South West Africa figured on the list of our discussions and it is evident that I am going to have much trouble over these items which concern South Africa."[39] Just weeks before this letter Smuts wrote Deputy Prime Minister J. H. Hofmeyer acknowledging that "pressure groups in New York and Washington will be extremely active and tiresome."[40] Not only was Smuts aware that members of the UNO may object to incorporation, but he also acknowledged the important role non-governmental organizations, such as the Council of African Affairs, would have on the debate. Yet it appears unlikely that Smuts was aware Xuma, as a representative of the ANC, would also be lobbying the United Nations in New York.

On January 28, 1946 Xuma had cabled the UNO opposing annexation. Significantly, Xuma's telegram linked the issue of annexation to South Africa's Native policies, a link that would continue to complicate issues for the Smuts regime throughout the coming months. By April 1946 the issue of South West Africa had become a domestic issue amongst the Union's 8 million natives. They saw the United Nations discussion of this issue as an opportunity for "the African community to do all in its power to educate the outside world – in particular the United States and the USSR on the exact position of Africans in the Union and in the mandated territory itself."[41]

By May 1946 the alliance between the ANC and the Council of African Affairs was taking shape. Paul Robeson organized a massive rally on June 6, 1946 in Madison Square Garden, focusing on the racist policies of South Africa and the question of annexation. During the rally Robeson read a telegram from Xuma describing the situation in South Africa.[42] Indeed, the black South African press took notice of the meeting and viewed it as an important event.[43] Interestingly, in October the African American press began linking the struggle against South Africa's white government with the African-American struggle in the United States. On October 19, 1946 the Chicago Defender not only mentioned the Mine Strike of August, but also quoted Robeson as saying "South Africa's gold economy is directly dependent upon United States favor."[44] By not only criticizing South Africa, but also highlighting American economic interests in South Africa Robeson anticipates the American divestment movement that would ultimately place great pressure upon the Apartheid regime decades later. Also, in October 1946 Robeson wrote the ANC again and encouraged Xuma to protest South Africa's bid to annex South West Africa at the United Nations.[45] Xuma, with help from South Africa's Indian National Congress, accepted Robeson's invitation and began making arrangements to travel to the United States.

Almost immediately following Xuma's acceptance of Robeson's invitation African-American interest in the alliance between Xuma and Robeson increased dramatically. On November 2, 1946 both the Pittsburgh Courier and the New Amsterdam News ran articles commenting on the historical significance of Xuma's trip to the United States. The Pittsburgh Courier commented on the importance

of the trip for solidifying Xuma's support within the ANC: "Despite the feeling of some Africans that Dr. Xuma is 'too slow' they agree that anyone who is able to embarrass Marshall Smuts … at the General Assembly of the United Nations will have done a grand job."[46] The New Amsterdam News also noted the challenge Xuma would pose to Smuts' legitimacy internationally. Both these articles fail to even mention the question of South West Africa and its proposed annexation. Rather, for African American's Xuma's trip and his alliance with the Council of African Affairs are seen more broadly as a transnational fight against racism and imperialism. However, just one week later, John Robert Badger, writing for the Chicago Defender, seized upon the issue of annexation as pivotal to the African American struggle. For Badger the question of annexation was the first step in the long journey towards de-colonizing Africa. Furthermore, Smuts was criticized for, "his usual imperialist hypocrisy."[47] By early November 1946 a great deal of animosity towards Smuts himself can be seen in the editorials of African American papers:

> This recent contradictory role of Smuts is in keeping with the contradiction between what he pretends to be and what he is. He pretends to be a good democrat, with nothing but good will towards everybody. But ask any African native, any one of India's nearly 400 million, what Smuts actually is. They will tell you that he is one of the world's most unregenerate imperialists and racists, who hates black people and brown people as fanatically as Hitler hated them.[48]

The Lake Success Conference would be as much about the deconstruction of Smuts as an internationally revered figure as about the plight of black South Africans.[49]

Thus, by the time Xuma left for the United States on October 21, 1946, a strong relationship had been forged between the African National Congress and the Council of African Affairs. While other historians have acknowledged this connection, the Council's Pan-African nature, and its eloquent spokesperson Paul Robeson receive far less consideration. Lynch has shown that some viewed Robeson and his compatriots skeptically because of their open Marxist sympathies, "They saw in the Soviet achievements … much that was of value to Africans and Asians."[50] Not only was the Council the first Pan-African organization to give material and moral aid to African Nationalists, but also, in subscribing to a Marxist paradigm the Council represented a development in Pan-African ideology. For Robeson and others within the Council class analysis was useful for understanding the problems black peoples faced. With these ideological developments the Council began to distance itself from the more accommodationist position of the NAACP, openly criticizing its leaders W.E.B. DuBois and Walter White.[51] One must remember in the mid-1940s many African American leaders wanted nothing to do with communists and many within the ANC, including Nelson Mandela, were openly hostile to communist influence.[52] Thus, Xuma's alliance with the Council represents a bold step few others were willing to take.

Along with its ideological contributions to Marxism and Pan-Africanism, which had varying degrees of appeal to ANC members, the Council had established itself as a consistent and strident critic of South Africa's racial policies.[53] Furthermore, the Council was an established and accredited observer at the United Nations. In May 1946 the Council, writing to the UNO, called for South West Africa to be placed under United Nations trusteeship given the Union's racist domestic policies.[54] Both practically and ideologically, the Council served as a valuable ally for the ANC and its figurehead Alfred B. Xuma. Robeson greeted Xuma, when he arrived in New York, as if the two were old friends and throughout Xuma's stay the two were often together. On November 8th, 1946 the Council held a welcoming reception for Xuma, treating him 'as a visiting dignitary'.[55] The next two weeks were spent bouncing around New York from one protest to another. In late December Xuma returned to Chicago, where he had previously attended Northwestern University, speaking to the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee he linked his appeals at the United Nations to America's founding forefathers: "My people in South Africa are seeking the constitutional guarantees of Human Rights which Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln fought to win for the people of the United States."[56] Long after Xuma had returned to South Africa, his visit remained important to various African American bodies combating racism and imperialism. Along with being honored by the Council of African Affairs and the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee, the African Academy of Arts and Research (AAAR) awarded Xuma with a certificate of merit. The AAAR, made up primarily of successful West Africans living in the United States, acknowledged Xuma's achievements as part of the larger struggle of de-colonization.[57]

Aside from Xuma's adventures and accolades while in New York, his opposition to Smuts at the United Nations remained of central importance. Furthermore, his continued association with Pan-Africanists seems to have strengthened his resolve on the question of annexation. Other accounts of Xuma's trip focus on the serendipitous meeting between Xuma and Smuts while in New York. The story, which appears in more than one monograph, seems to come from an article from the February 20, 1947 edition of Inkundla ya Bantu. Both present at a Herald Tribune forum in early November 1946, the two men were introduced by one of Smuts' handlers who recognized Xuma at the function.[58] There was a brief, cordial exchange in which, by all accounts, Smuts was noticeably flustered.[59] While this meeting illustrates the direct challenge Xuma was posing to Smuts in New York, it also further highlights a dramatic shift in Smuts position on the world stage. Ultimately, this shift would prove a lasting ramification of Xuma's trip to the United Nations.

Xuma's very presence in New York forever altered the political dynamic in South Africa, between black and white. The new theater of battle created a new space in which the ANC openly contested white hegemony, with important allies from all corners of the World. The court of world opinion was in session and would continue to deliberate on South Africa's domestic policies for the next forty-eight years.

Along with Xuma's mere presence, he also circulated a memo entitled, South West Africa: Annexation or United Nations Trusteeship? The memo systemically outlined the contradiction of Smuts' reputation on the World stage and his domestic policy.[60] Furthermore, the memo succeeded in linking the Union's domestic treatment of "Natives" and the question of annexation, calling upon the United Nations to arbitrate on their behalf:

> In fact non-Europeans in a country like South Africa are a Non-Self-Governing territory requiring special treatment and attention of the United Nations. We oppose the incorporation of South West Africa … into the Union of South Africa because such incorporation would facilitate the extension of South Africa's colour and race discrimination and domination. It would bring under this policy more hundreds of thousands of innocent victims.[61]

This passage captures the essence of Xuma's mission and the crux of the contest over South West Africa. Xuma's objections, as represented by this passage are threefold: he objects to South Africa's treatment of its own African population, he likens annexation to an extension of South Africa's domestic policy, and he calls on the international community to intercede on behalf of Africans in the union and the mandated territory alike. Similar to the language of African Claims, the language of the memorandum reflects that of the United Nations Charter. The debate over annexation became a debate over whether South Africa's domestic policy of racism was an acceptable doctrine in the post-World War II era. Using the question of South West Africa the ANC, with substantial help from the Council of African Affairs, succeeded in internationalizing South Africa's domestic policy.

While it is clear the territory of South West Africa was important to white South Africa, it is equally clear that the debate taking place was increasingly less about South West Africa and more about South Africa's racial policy, or even racism itself. Indeed, upon his arrival in New York Xuma demanded the United Nations place both South Africa and South West Africa under United Nations trusteeship. By shifting the focus from a legal discussion of mandates to a moral discussion of racism the ANC had succeeded by framing the issue in a larger context before the December 14th vote had even been taken.

Reaction in South Africa: An Inverse Ratio

Under Xuma's leadership, the success of the African National Congress was inversely mirrored by the decline of Smuts' political fortunes at home. As early as November 1946 Smuts realized his trip to the United Nations had undercut his legitimacy in South Africa. "Heavy tasks await me in South Africa. Many things are unsettled or have gone wrong. My own mission to the UNO a failure."[62] South Africa's white community, separated from Europe by so many thousands of miles of ocean and land, are an outward looking people constantly looking north for vindication. The defeat of Smuts at the UNO, in large part due to the efforts of his own subjects, was stunning to him personally and his

support at home. Even the African newspaper Inkundla ya Bantu took note of the shift within the white community: “there is a cruel irony that the United Nations Organization created by our philosopher Prime Minister when everything went well, has turned into a very dangerous weapon whose efficacy had been successfully used by the non-European people of the world against him.”[63] Smuts would return home a diminished leader, his reign as Prime Minister and world statesman would never fully recover.

Xuma returned home a victor, both domestically and internationally. While Xuma was still in New York, the annual ANC conference had unanimously re-elected him to his third term as President. Furthermore, numerous letters from ANC supporters, both in South West Africa and South Africa commended Xuma on his trip. One over anxious supporter from South West Africa wrote to congratulate Xuma before he had even left for the United States: “Permit us to be among the first to congratulate and thank you for the militant part you are playing in connection with the incorporation of South-West Africa as a fifth province of the Union of South Africa.”[64] The congratulations continued throughout the time Xuma spent in the United States, but they reached their pinnacle in the months following his return to South Africa.

Of particular interest is a letter from A.P. Mda congratulating Xuma and offering the Youth League’s support for his continued leadership. Lembede’s closest confidant and the leader of the Youth League following Lembede’s premature death in 1947, Peter Mda had written Xuma in January, 1947 demonstrating the continued support of the Youth League into 1947: “We all thank you, doctor, for the (service) you have rendered to South Africa at UNO. Your monumental work over in the states, will go down in history. You have once again come out not only as a nation builder at home, but also as an international diplomat of no mean adroitness.”[65] Thus, the generally accepted view that Xuma’s presidency was falling increasingly out of step with its radical elements seems unconvincing well into 1947. It seems more plausible that Xuma fell quickly from favor following the election of Daniel F. Malan and the platform of Apartheid in 1948. Rather than a gradually increasing swell of discontent, Xuma’s defeat in 1949 is seen more properly as a dramatic repudiation and shift following the events of 1948.

Others wrote recounting how closely they had followed his trip, citing coverage within both the African and the European press in South Africa. Other congratulations came from South West Africa.[66] In February, Xuma returned to Durban where he was received by a large gathering in celebration of his achievements in New York and another gathering in March was arranged for the same purpose. These celebrations termed Xuma’s trip a “historic event” and suggested the people derived great pride from his ability to lobby so effectively: “Sir from the scanty reports in our press, it was quite clear that your task at UNO was a trying one.”[67] The celebrations for his success continued as late as April 1947, with many receptions held in Xuma’s honor; one

invitation to the Bantu Social Institution claimed, "Your historic flight to America and the bold step [you] took, at UNO will ever be remembered by the non-European community of the Union."[68]

Xuma's trip to the United States, largely facilitated by people associated with the Pan-African movement, captivated the imagination of average South Africans and seasoned political activists alike. His presidency, as late as the middle of 1947, seemed to be keeping pace with the more radical elements of the ANC while successfully challenging the white regime both internationally and domestically. Moses Kotane, member of the South African Communist Party and the ANC, who had often criticized Xuma, wrote to acknowledge the work Xuma had done in New York.[69] Praise came from various sub-factions within the ANC, but all acknowledged the importance of Xuma's victory at the UNO. Smuts, on the other hand, returned a battered and beleaguered leader and never fully recovered from the defeat he suffered at the hands of Xuma and Robeson's Pan-African alliance.

Indeed, the impact of events at the UNO on South Africa's domestic situation was not lost on Smuts himself. Almost immediately after returning from New York Smuts acknowledged the power the UNO defeat had on the collective imagination of South Africans, both black and white:

> I am busy these days to see what can be done to improve European-non-European relations, which are definitely deteriorating. This is due not only to more difficult conditions here … but also to the new wind blowing through the world. The fully publicized discussions at UNO are having a great effect in all directions. We even hear about them from our domestic and farm Natives who really have nothing to complain of, but are deeply stirred by all this talk of equality and non-discrimination. I am anxious to stay this rot and get on to better relations, but it is even more difficult now in view of these native claims, which have just the opposite effect on the European mentality.[70]

The turning of world opinion against South Africa, over the issue of South West Africa, amplified dramatically the internal conflicts within South Africa during the immediate post-war period. In the aftermath of the conference no one was more cognizant of a possible shift to the right within South Africa's white electorate than Smuts. Writing to his friend M.C. Gillett on January 14, 1947 Smuts acknowledged, "My failure at the UNO has been a bitter experience … The opposition naturally rejoices and puts this all to my account, and to the liberalism (!) with which I have led the world astray. Here is the author of the great preamble of the charter, exposed as a hypocrite."[71] Less than two years after the Lake Success conference Smuts was defeated in the general election of 1948 and D. F. Malan instituted Apartheid as the official policy of South Africa.

## Conclusion

At the risk of giving a sweeping conclusion it is safe to say that the events of

November-December 1946 dramatically altered the political landscape in South Africa. White South Africans became increasingly self-conscious, drifting to the right, while world support for their cause energized black South Africans and their leader. On either side of the colour divide, Lake Success served as a catalyst for increased militancy. Xuma, who had endured some criticism for his role in the Miners Strike of August 1946, used his Pan-African international connections to shore up his base at home, at least for the immediate future. Smuts, on the other hand, would come to see his defeat at the United Nations as the first in a string of defeats culminating in the Nationalist victory in 1948. In March 1947 he lamented, "UNO gave me my first great knock and since then others have found the courage and opportunity to administer theirs also."[72]

Xuma, despite his popularity in early 1947, would fall from power in 1949, yet the events described and the reaction amongst the ANC rank and file help to understand Xuma's fall from grace. While some have characterized Xuma's presidency as falling increasingly out of step with the Youth League, evidence presented here displays strong support well into 1947. Indeed, understanding the apparent fallout between Xuma and his more radical elements requires close examination of events in 1948 and 1949, including the election of Malan by white South Africans. Yet, whatever the impetus for ousting Xuma, it is hard to find credence for the argument that he was gradually and increasingly more out of step with the ANC Youth League throughout his Presidency. Indeed, events described here place him at the vanguard of ANC thinking well into 1947. Furthermore, the events surrounding the Lake Success Conference also serve to understand South Africa within an Atlantic if not a world context. It is doubtful Xuma would have enjoyed so much success or Smuts so much embarrassment had it not been for the strong Pan-African links that culminated in the debate over South West Africa.

[1] Patrick J. Furlong, Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1991), 240-242.
[2] The idea of Pan-Africanism can be traced back to at least 1900, when the first Pan-African Congress was held. It is, however, difficult to argue the increased importance and increased prevalence of Pan-Africanism in the post-World War II era.
[3] South West Africa is the territory presently known as Namibia.
[4] Steven Gish, Alfred B. Xuma: African, American, South African (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 149.
[5] Smuts Papers, Vol. 84 No. 28, 31 March 1947; W. K. Hancock, Smuts: The Fields of Force, 1919-1950 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 470-471; Kenneth Heard, General Elections in South Africa, 1943-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 32.
[6] See United Nations General Assembly Resolutions from 12/14/46, 12/6/49,and

10/27/66. There are numerous others but resolutions 2145 and 2146, from 27 October 1966 stand out. For more on resolutions 2145 and 2146 see Rand Daily Mail, 27 September 1967. Along with harsh criticism of South Africa these resolutions revoke the right of South Africa to administer its trusteeship mandate over South West Africa.
[7] See Ruth First, South West Africa (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 20.
8 For examples of this argument see Gail Gerhart, Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 158; Albert Luthuli, Let My People Go (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 108; Nelson Mandela, A Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994) 85-86.
[9] Allan C. Cooper, The Occupation of Namibia: Afrikanerdom's Attack on the British Empire (New York: University Press of America, 1991), 24, 153-155.
[10] First, South West Africa, 96. Emphasis added.
[11] First, South West Africa, 49.
[12] Alfred B. Xuma, "Through Difficult Times", Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 17 May 1945.
[13] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 1 May 1945.
[14] Buckeley, "The Mandated Territory of South-West Africa", 746.
[15] New Amsterdam News, 21 November 1946, 11.
[16] G.V.O. Buckeley, "The Mandated Territory of South-West Africa", 754.
[17] Douglas Brinkley and David R. Facey-Crowther, eds., The Atlantic Charter (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), xvii; James Eayrs, "The Atlantic Conference and Its Charter: A Canadian's Reflections", published in The Atlantic Charter, edited by Brinkley and Facey-Crowther, 165.
[18] Preface to African Claims in South Africa, published in From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of Politics In South Africa, Volume 2, edited by Thomas Karis and Gwendolyn Carter, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 209. It was for this purpose that many of the founding members of the ANC Youth League were recruited into the Congress.
[19] African Claims, Xuma Papers, 16 December 1943 (ABX 431612).
[20] Id.
[21] Id. Emphasis added.
[22] See Alfred Xuma, South-West Africa: Annexation or Trusteeship? (New York: South African Passive Resistence Council, 1946).
[23] Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, 273-274.
[24] Smuts to Xuma, 29 September 1944 (ABX 440929)
[25] Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, 275.
[26] Plummer, Rising Wind, 123.
[27] While the Atlantic Charter and the Second World War serve as an important turning point in inter-continental connections between Africans and African Americans, the Italian-Ethiopian War 1935-36 was an important precedent for the events of the 1940s. Both Carter and Karis and Plummer identify this as an early example of blacks throughout the World uniting in common opposition to European imperialism. Carter and Karis, eds., From Protest to Challenge, 99; Plummer, Rising Wind, 37.

[28] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 17 May 1945.
[29] Alfred B. Xuma, Africans and San Francisco, 5/8/45. As seen in Carter and Karis Vol. II, From Protest to Challenge, 224.
[30] Carter and Karis, eds., From Protest to Challenge Vol. II, 69; Benson, The African Patriots, 111-112; Gish, Alfred B. Xuma, 149.
[31] Plummer, Rising Wind, 153.
[32] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal),17 May 1945. Lynch, Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa, 27.
[33] Lynch, Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa, 17.
[34] Plummer, Rising Wind, 154.
[35] Gish, Alfred B. Xuma, 147,181.
[36] Pan-African Congress to Xuma, 21 October 1945 (ABX 451016b)
[37] Pan-African Congress Manifesto, Pan-African Congress to Xuma, 16 October 1945 (ABX 451016b).
[38] Buckeley, The Mandated Territory of South-West Africa, 754. The Union government's consultation with South West Africans were: 208,850 in favor of incorporation, 33,520 against, 56,790 incommunicado.
[39] Smuts Papers, Vol. 80, no. 220. 27 October 1946.
[40] Smuts Papers., Vol. 80. no. 142. 15 October 1946.
[41] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 15 April 1946.
[42] Robeson to Xuma, 1 May 1946 (ABX460501).
[43] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 1 June 1946.
[44] Chicago Defender, 10/19/46
[45] Robeson to Xuma, 4 October 1946 (ABX 461004).
[46] Pittsburgh Courier, 2 November 1946.
[47] John Robert Badger, Chicago Defender, 9 November 1946.
[48] Chicago Defender, 2 November 1946.
[49] Chicago Defender, 19 October 1946; Pittsburgh Courier, 2 November 1946; New Amsterdam News, 2 November 1946.
[50] Lynch, Black American Radicals and the Liberation of Africa, 19.
[51] Plummer, Rising Wind, 126.
[52] Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), p. 87. The history of Anti-communism within the ANC has been downplayed in recent years, due to the eventual alliance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party. In 1946 many African Nationalists, particularly those within the ANC Youth League, felt that Communism was a foreign ideology dominated by whites. Consequently, Mandela, Lembede and other Youth League leaders felt the ANC should avoid too close a relationship with communists.
[53] For example, Council member Alphaneus Hunton had penned three pamphlets criticizing South Africa's colour bar. One entitled "Stop South Africa's Crimes: No Annexation of South West Africa".
[54] Robeson to Xuma, 16 October 1946 (ABX 461016).
[55] Gish, Alfred B. Xuma, 147.
[56] Chicago Defender, 21 December 1946.
[57] Drum (Johannesburg, S.A.), December-January 1953-54.
[58] New Amsterdam News, 9 November 1946.

[59] Inkundla ya Bantu, 20 February 1947. Also recounted in Gish, Alfred B. Xuma, 148 and Mary Benson, The African Patriots, 112.
[60] Alfred B. Xuma, South West Africa: Annexation or United Nations Trusteeship? 12.
[61] Ibid., p. 26.
[62] Smuts Papers, Vol. 80, no. 223, 17 November 1946, emphasis added.
[63] Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 15 November 1946.
[64] Sergeant Z. Thomas to A. B. Xuma, 24 August 1946, as seen in Xuma, South-West Africa, 32.
[65] A.P. Mda to A.B. Xuma, 6 January 1947 (ABX 470106b).
[66] Douglas Simundla to A. B. Xuma, 30 March 1947 (ABX 470330); Seth Mphahble to A.B. Xuma, 14 January 1947 (ABX 470114).
[67] Sophiatown meeting with A. B. Xuma, 16 March 1947 (ABX 470316). Inkundla ya Bantu (Verulam, Natal), 20 February 1947.
[68] Bantu Social Institution to A. B. Xuma, 3 April 1947 (ABX 470403).
[69] Xuma to Kotane, 21 February 1946 (ABX 460221b).
[70] Smuts Papers, Vol. 84, no. 195. 2 January 1947
[71] Smuts Papers, Vol. 84, no. 191. 14 January 1947.
[72] Smuts Papers, Vol. 745, no. 28. 3 March 1947.