

Inkatha does not enjoy the support of South African Churches which are affiliated to the S.A.C.C.

2. The National Cultural Liberation Movement (Inkatha) as a non-violent liberatory movement which believes in negotiation wishes to applaud the current talks between South Africa and Angola on the one side and South Africa and Mozambique on the other.

For too long a time has a war or near war situation existed between South Africa and its neighbours and this was a cause of great concern to us.

It is to be hoped that the current climate of detente and rapprochement is allowed to take root and develop further.

With great hopes for the future

this Central Committee expresses its faith that all concerned will appreciate the value of dialogue and negotiation without any side resorting to armed force in a search for a formula for peaceful co-existence in South Africa.

3. This Central Committee wishes to express concern at the apparently deteriorating personal relations between the President of Inkatha and the Prime Minister of South Africa, as evidenced by the failure of the President of Inkatha to attend a luncheon with the Prime Minister and other black leaders in Cape Town.

We call on all peace-loving South Africans to do all in their power to facilitate and encourage dialogue between the President and the Prime Minister for the good of South and Southern Africa. We re-

main-convinced that the future of this country will only be a just and peaceful one if the two most powerful leaders of South Africa in the persons of Mr P.W. Botha and Prince M.G. Buthelezi are encouraged to search together for a just solution to our political problems.

4. This Central Committee wishes to endorse the condolences expressed by the President to the families and next-of-kin of all South Africans of all colours who were victims of the recent floods either by losing their lives or their property. We further wish to endorse the President's gratitude to all organisations and instances that have come forward to donate in cash and kind in order to alleviate the suffering of the flood victims.

## THE ORIGIN OF AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC)

### THE ORIGIN OF AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (ANC)

At the present time no authoritative history of the rise of the African National Congress exists. However it is necessary for every member of Congress to have some idea of the basic trends of development in the tortuous path trodden by the A.N.C. in the past forty five years.

#### ULUNDI BATTLE 1879

At the end of the nineteenth century the last war between the African tribes and the European invaders was fought. By defeating the Zulu people at the battle of Ulundi the (1879) Whiteman had virtually completed his conquest of the African sub-continent. Diamonds had been discovered some 12 years earlier in Kimberley and the struggle to integrate the African into the economy of a state had begun. Sir George had already accomplished much in the Eastern Cape, especially after the Nongqause episode when

thousands of starving Africans had rushed into the Cape Colony in search of work.

#### THE LESSON OF AFRICAN UNITY

By this time therefore (i.e. about 1880) there was beginning to be some heart searching among the Africans of different tribes. Various leaders among the small educated group which had already emerged by then were asking themselves whether the struggle could be won on a tribal basis with a tribal aim and objective. After the defeat of the formidable Zulu by the arms of the Europeans it became clear that there was something missing in the organisation of the African people. Very dimly at first it was realised that the source of the difficulty was the absence of unity among all the Africans throughout Southern Africa. Each tribe had fought a virtually isolated battle and was defeated in isolation. The lesson of African unity was beginning to be

learnt but further disillusionment was to come before the lesson could sink in.

#### ETHIOPIAN CHURCH MOVEMENT

The first organisational expression of the idea of African unity occurred in the Ethiopian Church Movement which was very powerful about the last decade in the nineteenth century. The Ethiopian Church Movement which is still a force today largely in welfare work had a programme for the building of an African Christian Nation out of all the tribes in Africa. The first struggles of a modern type were led by this church.

#### BAMBATA REBELLION - 1906

But the Bambata rebellion of 1906 was still a heroic battle on a tribal lines although fighting against a very modern scourge the poll tax. Again the Zulus were defeated because they had failed to mobilise the bulk of African

opinion behind them. This idea of African was unity still in advance of thinking among the people.

At that stage South Africa consisted of four distinct colonies each following its own policy in regard to the Africans in its area. It is thus natural that the Africans in each colony formed associations or organisations on a provincial basis. There was no national organisation uniting Africans throughout Southern Africa. It must be said that the Whites had also not yet learnt the advantages of unity and were themselves still disunited in the main organisations. The immediate result of this meeting was the sending of a delegation to England to protest to the Imperial government against the passing of the S.A. Act. Needless to say the British government, though polite, paid little real attention to the delegation, instead it advised the Africans to return to the Union and co-operate with the government.

### **AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS IN 1912**

The delegation returned to the Union and the people comprising it were among those who sponsored the formation of the African National Congress in 1912.

This organisation, from the outset, set itself the task of building out of the numerous tribes of Africa a single united nation. The African National Congress was thus the expression in organisational form of the desire of the Africans to fight their struggle as a single nation. Today when we look back on the year 1912 we cannot but admire the courage and amazing self-confidence the founders of Congress must have had to cherish, announce and work for the realisation of such a vision.

### **AFRICAN NATIONALISM**

The significance of this organisation lies not so much in what it did as in the fact that from the very beginning it based its whole programme on African Nationalism. Admittedly the crystallisation of African Nationalism as a conscious ideology was yet afar off. Years of trial and error were required before that could be achieved; and

other organisations besides Congress were to share in the achievement. But the Congress by reason of its fundamental basis was destined to make by far the largest contribution, on the political sphere at any rate, towards the creation of a conscious and independent National attitude among the African people. That the founders of Congress were themselves not fully aware of the fundamental principles of Nationalism can be seen in their coupling of the demand for self-determination with the sending of delegations to Britain to seek redress from the Whitemans injustice in S.A.

### **"NATIVE LIFE IN S.A."**

In 1913 the Congress sent the first delegation to Britain to protest against the passing of the Land Act (1913). An excellent account of the agitation Congress set up against the bill is given in a book entitled "Native Life in S.A.", the author of which, Sol. T. Plaatje, was Secretary-General of Congress at the time. The members of the first deputation of the Congress were Dube, rubusana, Msane, Mapikela, and Plaatje. They returned to S.A. having accomplished very little materially. Any interest they might have aroused in Britain having evaporated at the beginning of hostilities in 1914.

At the close of the war, however, yet another delegation was sent to Europe (1919). This time the delegation was sent to the peace Conference at Versailles to claim the right of self-determination for the African people. Incidentally at the same time was a deputation led by Dr Hertzog, which went to claim a similar right for the Afrikaners. Both delegations would not be heard by the Nations of the World, and they were told that the only representation recognised for S.A. was that of Smuts and Botha.

### **TO BE WISE AFTER THE EVENT**

It is the fashion today to decry these efforts by the leaders of Congress in the past. Where this attitude is not born of malice, it is the result of falling into the error which has been the downfall of

many a historian. The weakness arising out of the tendency to look at events in the past through the spectacles of the present. It is easy to be wise after the event.

### **THE HERCULEAN ATTEMPTS**

Far from deriding the efforts of those men we should see in them the herculean attempts of leaders of a people barely introduced to methods of modern political necessary in the political development of the African people. If these men had not, for instance, gone on these deputations abroad, and hereby demonstrated the futility of seeking help from foreigners, we would probably, even now be thinking of sending delegations to Europe, a practice that is far from dead in the history of political struggles even today.

In South Africa itself the African National Congress was engaging in two big battles. The first was the agitation against the law to impose pass system on women.

### **THE YEAR 1919**

The year 1919 marked a high point in the struggle against the pass system. The immediate cause of the trouble was the attempt to impose the pass system on African women. In the Free State, particularly, the women by adopting the method of passive resistance were successful in getting the whole matter dropped by the Government. In the same year a serious attempt was made under the leadership of the Congress to obtain a total abolition of the pass system. But in spite of great heroism the campaign did not result in any weakening on the part of the authorities and the struggle against the pass system remains a chronic ailment on the South African political scene.

### **1920 MINE STRIKERS**

The second big battle in which Congress engages at this time was the campaign for higher wages on the mines. In February 1920 about 40,000 miners came out on strike. Inevitably there was bloodshed and the strike was ruthlessly crushed by the police. In these battles the names of R. Msimang, L.T. Mvabaza, D.S. Lentaka and H.

Selby Msimang were among the most prominent.

## **COMMUNIST PARTY OF SOUTH AFRICA - 1921**

Constant failures on the part of Congress to yield immediate contributed to a certain amount of disillusionment among the masses and they were drawn away from the Congress leadership. The masses were not conscious enough, politically to realise that political struggles demanded a constant difficult devotion to a cause and the ceaseless hammering at the walls of oppression before victory could be achieved. Just about this time the I.C.U. was started and two years later 1921 the Communist party of South Africa was found. Also at this time were founded movements like the Joint Councils of Africans and Europeans which were the product of South African liberlistic philosophy. Of these organisations the I.C.U. and the C.P.S.A. were destined to exercise a great influence on African political life and indeed the Communist Party still does. The history of these bodies can, however, be elicited from other sources. They are only interesting to the African Youth in so far as their existence had an effect on the development of the National movement.

## **THE I.C.U. AND THE GOVERNMENT**

The I.C.U. grew within a few years to be a very powerful movement. its significance to us lies in the mistakes it made and in the fact that for the first time it demonstrated the gigantic possibilities of large-scale mass organisation. But the power of the I.C.U. was of short duration because of its loose and diffuse principles of organisation. It was supposed to be a workers organisation, but conditions forced its attention towards politics. The complete lack of understanding of the principles of trade union organisation can be seen in the fact that the I.C.U. brought together in one movement all manner of classes. It was a twentieth century counterpart of the Chartist movement

which had a similarly loose organisation and programme. As regards the political aspect the complete lack of ideology and clear programme were obvious weaknesses. When to these major weakness was added the terrific persecution of the members by the Government and the failure of leadership at crisis-points one can readily understand why the I.C.U. collapsed.

## **A CLARVON CALL BY I. SEME AND D.D.T. JABAVU**

During its years of greatest strength the I.C.U. had almost completely eclipsed the Congress in certain areas. But the latter organisation was built on firmer foundations and the I.C.U. disappeared with the Congress still above ground. The year of the I.C.U. collapse to 1935 is the story of sporadic bursts of political energy here and there; but nothing that is relevant to our story. In 1935 the All African Convention met for the first time. They gathered in response to a joint call issued by I. Seme President General of Congress and D.D.T. Jabavu. I do not propose to deal with the history of the Convention, its failures and subsequent collapse, which came to pass when it got under the influence of Tretskyite ideas. The significance of the Convention to us lies in the fact that for the first time the African intellectuals, as a group, came into political life. Previous to this the Congress, I.C.U. and C.P. did not count large numbers of teachers and university students. Admittedly there had always been a sprinkling of men some of them possessed of the highest degree of intellect and attainment as university graduates, who had always been associated with the struggle. But in the main it remains true that the vast bulk of African educated folk looked down on politics and on the organisations of people. This feeling may or may not have been combined with a selfish desire on the part of intellectuals to safeguard little privileges which the Whiteman allowed them. Even today the majority are not actively engaged in the struggle of the People. Here in the Convention in 1935, however, they came into

politics in large numbers, and their presence meant theoretical quarrels, inactivity, and eventually the desire for a new political home.

## **MIDDLE-CLASS WITH "CLEAN HANDS"**

There are many ways in which the entry of large numbers of Africans educated in the formal sense can be regarded as a calamity. Politics became more and more the affair of the drawing-room and there was far less contact with the masses than formerly. Politics became the business of certain middleclass urban gentlemen with "clean hands". Before this type of gentleman has been ruthlessly swept aside in our movements progress will be slow. And yet intellectuals have considerably strengthened the theoretical equipment of the African National movement. We have learnt that in modern revolutionary struggle it is the fighter who combines sound theory with activity and dynamic contact with the masses who produces great changes. The intellectuals caused more and more attention to be paid to political theory, but they had none of the daring and drive of former fighters for African freedom.

## **"MORIBUND BODIES"**

When it was proposed that the Convention be formed into a permanent political organisation the older members of Congress immediately opposed the move. They argued that the formation of new bodies was no solution to African problems, but that the duty of all Africans was to endeavour to strengthen the existing organisations. But the Congress men were themselves not united on this issue and the newcomers were of course determined that they were not going to help strengthen any of these "moribund bodies" like the African National Congress. The decision to create a new body was of course the death of the organisation in question. Today big efforts are being made to make this organisation a sort of race relations institute including Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Europeans. It is extremely doubt-

ful of the African people will at this stage in their history lend themselves to this type of political stupidity.

### **CONGRESS JUBILEE IN 1937**

In the Congress itself, in the emotional upsurge caused by the celebration of the Congress Jubilee in 1937 and in the organisational efforts of Dr Xuma were found sources of great strength to the movement. It is the Rev J.A. Calata who toured the country, organising this Jubilee, who re-organised in the same process the A.N.C. and also secured the elections of Dr Xuma to the Congress Presidency.

### **THE OLD GUARD AND THEIR IDEOLOGY**

But there were young men who were dissatisfied with the handling of affairs by the Old Guard. These young men felt frustrated by the vacillating policies of the old leadership. They saw that the future of the country and indeed of Africa lay with the African masses and not with certain urban gentlemen. They felt the need for a more dynamic contact with the masses. They demanded concrete and clear-cut programmes based on correct ideology. Yet those men did not think that to achieve the creation of a powerful, democratic liberation movement, it was necessary to break away from Congress. They realised that the original principle on which Congress was founded together with the concrete experience gained from years of struggle, and a fully developed political ideology, with honest and sincere leadership were the prime necessities for the building of a truly revolutionary movement.

### **ALL AFRICA — NATIONAL ANTHEMS**

These gigantic demands on the part of Youth were indicative of the grave defects that existed within the African National Congress. Yet these men could not remain unmindful of the great contributions Congress had made to the development of the African people. They themselves were intensely Nationalistic and were

therefore inclined to be attracted towards a body whose primary aim was and always had been the unification and consolidation of the Peoples of Africa into one solid and independent Nation. They saw that this organisation working against heavy odds, scoffed at by men of all races in this country, had made significant contribution towards the creation of this independent nationhood. The African National Congress was the organisation which used the term African (in South Africa) with reference to the indigenous peoples; a term which by its amplitude and comprehensiveness indicates to all that we lay claim to All Africa and to unity with our brethren beyond the borders of South Africa. This organisation, too, first adopted and then popularised the National anthems which all Africans take for granted today and hardly realise the origin of. The National anthem is sung throughout the countries along the East coast of Africa up to Tanganyika and will probably spread even further. Through ceaseless propaganda by the "Abantu-Batho" — the Congress newspaper organ from 1912 to 1913 . . . this organisation created and strengthened the National feeling of the Africans and raised the level of political consciousness. Congress produced outstanding literary men such as Dube, Rubusana, Sol. T. Plaatje, Skota and others who wielded their pens to great effect both in African and European languages in the development of our culture. Above all Congress has taught that love of Africa without which no constructive work can be done by any African in Africa.

### **ANC'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STRUGGLE**

These contributions of Congress when measured by materialistic standards might not appear to amount to a great deal. But to those who believe in the existence of the human soul and, therefore, in the National soul, these were spiritual gains without which the Africans could not possibly have retained their humanity and self-respect.

Faced then with this formidable array of contributions to the African cause it is not surprising that the African Youth who saw much that required rooting-out in Congress, also saw a great deal that we had to be thankful for. They therefore determined themselves to work from within the African National Congress. These Youths felt that the historic task of the Youth was to provide Congress with a clear, dynamic and fully crystallised ideology and with a comprehensive programme of struggle for freedom. Prominent among these Youths were; The late Anton Muziwakhe Lembede, who first popularised the concept of Africanism, A.P. Mda, O.R. Tambo, N. Mandela and W. Sisulu. The Congress Youth League which they founded has produced great changes in Congress and the changes it is still doing to produce, first in South Africa and later in Africa are still to startle the world.