

**THE struggling people scored a major victory over the apartheid system when the regime was forced to unban the African National Congress (ANC) and other political organisations in February this year.**

The South African Communist Party (SACP) was also unbanned after 40 years of illegality. Since its unbanning the ANC has begun a massive recruitment campaign to sign up members throughout South Africa.

The history of South Africa is full of heroic struggles waged by the oppressed black majority since white settlers arrived in 1652. These struggles took various forms depending on the grievances of the people and the type of weapons they had at different times.

At the centre of these struggles was the dispossession (theft) of the land of the African - their basic means of creating wealth. By 1900 the fierce land battles were over. The guns of the white settlers had won out against the spears and knobkerries of the warriors.

By the end of the Wars of

Dispossession, African leadership in the Boer Republics and the British colonies of the Cape and Natal had realised the struggle for power would happen in the political arena rather than on the battlefield.

At the same time the English and Afrikaners buried their quarrels to further oppress and exploit black people. In 1909 English and Afrikaner whites formed a National Convention which recommended to the British Government the four provinces be united as one - the union of South Africa.

**Delegation to Britain**

The African people challenged this racist move by sending a delegation to Britain in 1909 to oppose the formation of the racist union. Their pleas fell on deaf ears.

The racist constitution of the Union of South Africa in 1910 gave whites political and economic power at the expense of the oppressed blacks.

Faced with repression African people realised their power lay in unity to liberate themselves. Regional congresses in all the four provinces were formed to oppose racial discrimination.

This movement resulted in a South African Native Convention

held in Bloemfontein from 24 to 26 March 1909.

On 8 January 1912 representatives of Africans from the four provinces and Bechuanaland gathered in Bloemfontein to form the South African Native National Congress as the ANC called itself from 1912 - 1925.

**Peaceful methods**

Key among the aims of the ANC was to unite all Africans - irrespective of tribal divisions - in one political organisation. The ANC committed itself to use constitutional and peaceful methods to fight for the democratic rights denied to the black majority.

This defensive approach was because of the conditions of the time. The reality the ANC was facing was that white superiority was imposed on blacks through sheer force of arms.

The year after the formation of the ANC the government legalised land robbery by passing the Land Act of 1913. This Act gave 87% of the fertile land to whites while blacks were condemned to the barren reserves constituting 13%. This robbery condemned Africans to landlessness and poverty. They

The development of



Today and yesterday: a proud history of struggle

# ANC - the long march to freedom

manufacturing industry around the thirties meant thousands of former peasants were forced to migrate to industrialised centres of South Africa.

It was from this emerging industrial working class that a new breed of ANC leadership came forward.

Co-operation between the ANC and SACP started during this period. With the formation of the Hertzog - Smuts coalition government in 1933, Africans in the Cape Province were removed from the voters roll in 1936. The notorious Hertzog Bills excluded Africans from the common roll and set land quotas at 13%.

#### African unity

To fight these issues, the ANC called in December 1935 for unity. The All African Convention (AAC) was formed, and attempted to oppose the Native Trust Land Bill of 1935 and expose the role of imperialists in Africa.

Influenced by the 1942 Atlantic Charter on post-war settlement, the ANC formulated the African Claims to independence or a bill of rights. These were adopted by the Annual Conference of the ANC at Bloemfontein on 16 December

1945.

This Bill Of Rights called for one man one vote, the recognition of African trade unions, the abolition of the colour bar and pass laws, freehold tenure rights, and equal education. It was sent to General Smuts, the Prime Minister, who refused to meet with the ANC.

#### The Youth League

The 1940's marked a turning point in the ANC with the formation of its Youth League in 1944. The Youth League brought fresh life to the ANC with militant action. Under the dynamic leadership of Anton Lembede and Nelson Mandela, ANCYL geared itself to transforming the ANC.

The Youth League with a African nationalist ideology adopted the Programme of Action in 1949. The emphasis of the Programme was on self-determination, rejection of white domination and the need for mass action.

These principles were adopted by the ANC at its annual conference. A new Executive including President General Dr. J S Moroka and Secretary General Walter Sisulu were committed to mass action.

In 1948 the National Party won the elections. Repression followed fast. In 1950 the notorious Suppression of Communism Act was introduced, and this effectively outlawed the SACP. The oppressed turned to mass action and defiance.

#### Mass action

On 26 June 1950, the ANC called for a one-day national strike to protest against increased repression. This National Day of Protest gave birth to South African Freedom Day - 26 June.

The Nats became even more determined to root out any form of peaceful protest by Africans.

Blacks lost hope of ever achieving their freedoms through the racist white parliament. They charted their own free South Africa by convening the Congress of the People.

#### Freedom Charter

It was at this historic congress attended by 3 000 people's delegates, at Kliptown on 26 June 1955, that the Freedom Charter was adopted.

The racist regime responded to the democratic demands embodied in the Freedom Charter by charging 156 leaders of the Congress Movement with High Treason. This fake trial came to nothing after four and half years (1956 - 1961) when all were acquitted.

The ANC advanced the fight against racial tyranny by organising a nation wide campaign in 1959 - 60.

By March 1960 when the ANC campaign was gaining momentum its splinter group - the Pan Africanist Congress formed in 1959 under the influence of black chauvinism - called for protests outside police stations on 21 March.

This led to the Sharpeville massacre and the ultimate banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960. The racist regime declared a state of emergency and detained over 20 000 anti-apartheid activists.

#### Armed struggle

In the face of this heavy repression the ANC had no alternative but to counter the violence of the apartheid police and army. In 1961 ANC and SACP members formed Umkhonto we Sizwe with Nelson Mandela as the Commander-in-chief.

The period of armed struggle had begun.

In 1963 the police arrested



**Mineworkers are joining the ANC**

eight leaders of the liberation movement at Rivonia near Johannesburg. Mandela was brought from Robben Island to join Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Ahmed Kathrada, Reymond Mhlaba, Rusty Bernstein, Denis Goldberg, Elias Motsoaledi and Andrew Mlangeni and face 193 charges of sabotage.

The following year all were sentenced to life imprisonment except Bernstein. The External Mission of the ANC under O R Tambo became the leadership.

#### Freedom

The fall of colonial regimes in Southern Africa around 1974 inspired millions to intensify their struggle. The Soweto student uprising marked a turning point as the youth filled the ranks of ANC soon to return as guerillas.

The period 1984 - 86 saw militant mass action mounted against apartheid under the United Democratic Front. The ANC/SACP alliance became virtually unbanned under the leadership of the ANC as the liberation movement scored victories over apartheid.

This culminated with the unbanning of the ANC, SACP and other organisations. Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders were unconditionally released.

## ANC policy

Today the ANC has launched a major campaign to recruit members. ANC policy is embodied in the Freedom Charter. As a matter of policy the aims and objects of the ANC are:-

1. To unite the people of South Africa, Africans in particular, for the complete liberation of the country from all forms of discrimination and national oppression.
2. To end apartheid in all its forms and transform South Africa as rapidly as possible into a united, non-racial and democratic country based on the principles of the Freedom Charter.
3. To defend the democratic gains of the people, and advance towards a society in which the government is freely chosen by the people according to the principles of universal suffrage on a common voters' roll.
4. To fight for social justice and eliminate the vast inequalities created by apartheid.
5. To build a South African nation with a common patriotism and loyalty in which the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the people is recognised.
6. To promote economic development for the benefit of all.
7. To support the cause of national liberation, development, world peace, disarmament and respect for the environment.