

SENIOR CERTIFICATE SYLLABUS

RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID

*A. Ehlers
Department of History
University of Stellenbosch*

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1. FROM PASSIVITY TO ACTION: ATTEMPTS AT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MASS RESISTANCE IN THE FIFTIES

1.1 Background

The resistance to apartheid after 1948 was a continuation of the reaction of non-Whites in the previous decades against their increasing exclusion from political, economical and social rights since 1910. In the history of resistance politics the year 1948 has not acquired the stature of a turning point that it has in White politics. The forties as a decade, however, represents an important watershed between the passivity of the thirties and the greater vigour and radicalisation of resistance politics in the forties. Industrialisation during and after the Second World War and the impoverishment in rural areas and black reserves stimulated black urbanisation tremendously. The shortage of housing, transport, social welfare services, as well as the high juvenile crime rate and the poor education to which urbanised black people were subjected, led to an increase in popular protest actions. Black political organisations had to take into account the grassroots protest among the new black urban labour class in the forties. They were forced to review their strategy, tactics and methods of resistance.

1.2 The ANC and the Programme of Action

The African National Congress (ANC) as the leading political organisation within resistance politics did not escape the radicalising influence of the forties. This radicalisation took place mostly under the influence of the organisation's newly-established Congress Youth League (1943) with its stress on the ideology of Africanism. Anton Lembede, Peter Mda, Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela were some of the Youth League members who took a lead in the process. They propagated an exclusive black nationalism, according to which black people, as the original and therefore legal owners of South Africa,

had to strive for national self-determination for black people. Co-operation with other groups like Coloureds, Indians and the South African Communist Party was rejected. Strong stress was laid on a more militant and vigorous approach to the achievement of the abovementioned aims and the mobilisation of the masses (of which the urbanised Blacks formed an important part) was seen as a prerequisite for the success of protest politics.

The Congress Youth League (CYL), with its younger generation of Blacks, accused the ANC of too readily giving in to suppression, of being poorly organised and advancing the interests of the black elite only. The CYL therefore wanted to act as a pressure group to ensure, through the use of more militant techniques, the abolition of discriminating legislation and the establishment of a black nation that would be able to govern South Africa.

Although not all factions within the ANC were well-disposed towards the CYL with its preponderant Africanist school of thought, the CYL gained influence in the course of the forties. The acceptance of its political philosophy - formulated in the Programme of Action - by the ANC's annual congress in 1949 represents the high point of its influence within the ANC. See Document 2 on p. 49.

The Programme of Action was the most militant declaration of principles (up to that stage) accepted by the ANC and was the final break with the reconciliatory approach of the previous decades. The programme stated clearly that the ANC had to strive for national liberation, political independence and self-determination, and insisted on the rejection of White domination, White leadership and all forms of segregation. The means to be applied to achieve these aims included, among others: the establishment of a

national fund and a national press, an Action Committee that had to organise a boycott of all "separate" political institutions based on colour, as well as a national protest against the reactionary policies of the government. Black economic empowerment by means of more black entrepreneurs, the development of the reserves and the control of labour unions was also demanded. Black education had to be improved through the creation of bursary funds, labour union teaching programmes and a national centre for education. Cultural activities had to be advanced through a National Academy for Arts and Science. The novelty and influence of the **Programme of Action** lay mostly in the stress on the importance of the mobilisation of the masses and the use of strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and non-co-operation as methods to achieve the aims of the programme. The immediate value of the **Programme of Action** was that, while it provided a formula that satisfied the Africanists, the document also provided enough other elements with which other groups that differed from them could identify.

After 1948 the new determination of the ANC and other resistance groups and their commitment to more vigorous action was, however, confronted with an equally determined National Party (NP), which, according to the principles of apartheid - to an important degree supported by the already established structures and legislature of the segregation era - wanted to re-structure South African society on a racial basis, with a resultant further loss of democratic rights for non-Whites.

The implementation of apartheid was not meekly accepted by the non-Whites, however, and both lower and middle classes were involved in the urban as well as the rural resistance. This resistance became embodied in a variety of protest actions that were typical of the increasing bitterness against White domination. In March 1950 the ANC and some of its allies held a **Defend Free Speech Convention** in Johannesburg, with Dr J.S. Moroka as chairman. On this occasion it was announced that 1 May 1950 would be regarded as **Freedom Day** and non-Whites were requested not to turn up for work on that day. This action was a protest against attempts by the government to push through the **Suppression of Communism Act**. The **Freedom Day** protest did not carry the unanimous support of the ANC and was seen by especially CYL members like Mandela and Tambo as an attempt to divert attention from the **Programme of Action**. Not all workers took part in the strike, and those who went to work were protected by the police against the wrath of the strikers. Clashes between police and strikers led to the death of 18 Blacks.

In reaction to the loss of life on 1 May, the ANC in collaboration with the **South African Indian Congress (SAIC)** appealed to all non-Whites to regard 26 June, 1950 as a **National Day of Protest and Mourning** and not go to work on that day. A Joint Planning Committee would be responsible for co-ordinating the actions of the two organisations. The protest showed a more nationalistic colour than the events of 1 May. The reaction to this first national stay-away varied from region to region, with the best response in the Eastern Cape. Although many Blacks were still reluctant to co-operate with Indians and White Communists, the co-operation between the ANC and the SAIC paved the way for even greater future co-operation between the two organisations.



Leaders of the Defiance Campaign in 1952.
Mandela (centre) with Yusuf Cachalia (right) of the SAIC and the leader of the first batch of defiers (left).

1.3 The Defiance Campaign

In an effort to give effect to the **Programme of Action** the ANC, SAIC and the **Franchise Action Council** (an organisation that campaigned for the retention of the Coloured franchise) decided to launch a mass protest action in 1952 against the discriminatory legislation of the government. The ANC addressed a formal request to the government on behalf of its allies to recall the pass laws, the Group Areas Act, the Separate Representation of Voters Act, the **Suppression of Communism Act**, the **Bantu Authorities Act**, and the regulations regarding the control of livestock reduction in the homelands before 29 February, 1952. If the government did not heed the request a **Defiance Campaign**, during which these laws would deliberately be infringed, would be launched. See document 3 on page 51. A fund-raising

campaign under the slogan **One Million Shillings by the end of March 1952 for Freedom** was launched to fund the defiance campaign. In his answer to the ANC request the Prime Minister, Dr D.F. Malan, declined the request and also stressed that strong action would be taken against instigators.

The defiance campaign, which took the shape of a large-scale deliberate infringement of apartheid regulations, was launched on 26 June, 1952. In the following months thousands of people, mostly black, in cities and big towns infringed pass laws, occupied waiting rooms and railway carriages for Whites, used entrances for Whites at post offices, ignored the evening curfew, entered locations without permits and occupied benches reserved for the use of Whites. When trespassers were arrested they offered no resistance, and pleaded guilty in court. They refused to pay fines and chose imprisonment. Their aim was to fill the prisons and make the administration of the country impossible.

The leaders of the defiance campaign initially succeeded in controlling their followers. The first three months therefore passed without violence. But the second half of the campaign was characterised by several outbreaks of violence in which both Blacks and Whites died. The outbreak of violence upset the plans of the leaders of the defiance campaign. Firstly, they realised that arson, stone-throwing and the murder of innocent people would not advance their cause. The killing of innocent people shocked the Whites, and the defiance campaign was blamed for causing racial friction. Secondly, the use of fire-arms by the police, the heavier punishments being passed by courts for transgressors of the law, the arrest of several leaders of the defiance campaign in Transvaal and the Eastern Cape, and the proclamation announcing heavy punishments for people who incite others to transgress laws, contributed to a dampening of enthusiasm for the defiance campaign. After having been maintained for approximately six months, the campaign petered out at the end of December 1952.

In judging the defiance campaign one could easily come to the conclusion that it was a complete failure and that the immediate aim, namely to force the government to recall a number of discriminating laws, was not achieved. Such laws, on the contrary, were supplemented by further discriminatory laws, in the course of the next few years. In evaluating the defiance campaign, though, one must look beyond the immediate aims. It is a fact that the government immediately equipped itself better to suppress similar defiance campaigns in the future. The Public Safety Act (No. 3 of 1953) empowered the government to proclaim a state of emergency in any part of the

country if it thought that the public safety was threatened. The Criminal Law Amendment Act (No. 8 of 1953) prescribed heavy punishments for people who transgressed laws by way of protest or who encouraged others to do so. But the campaign also engendered positive results for protest politics in general and the ANC in particular. The strong growth in membership of the ANC was the most important result of the defiance campaign. By the end of the campaign the ANC could claim a membership of 100 000. The increase of ANC branches was, however, more noticeable. On the eve of the campaign there were 14 ANC branches in the Cape Province; by 1953 this number had increased to 87.

The ANC further succeeded in ridding itself of its more conservative spokespersons. The election of Albert Luthuli as its president to replace Dr Moroka was indicative of this process. The acceptance of Nelson Mandela's M-plan - an attempt at improving control of the movement by the establishment of a hierarchy of smaller units within the ANC - was a further consequence of the resistance campaign and the stricter legislation resulting from it. The plan could, however, not be implemented immediately because of a lack of finances and full-time organisers. The introduction of a more effective organisational structure, which was indispensable for the management of a mass movement within a legally hostile environment, however, was begun.

Support for the resistance movements from within White ranks, though still insignificant, was a further positive consequence of the defiance campaign. The most important example of the participation by a number of Whites - among whom was Patrick Duncan, son of a previous Governor-General of South Africa - was in Germiston on December 8. Apart from this example, direct White participation in the campaign also led to a re-orientation of the White political left wing through the establishment of the Liberal Party and the South African Congress of Democrats (SACOD) in 1953. Unlike the Liberal Party, SACOD was strongly communist orientated and an official ally of the ANC. The campaign also advanced the feeling of unity among Blacks, Coloureds and Indians, and saw the first significant participation of Indians in a campaign led by Blacks. The political consciousness of non-Whites was also stimulated.

The protest campaign further created sympathy abroad for the struggle against apartheid. In October 1952 the situation in South Africa was debated in the General Assembly of the United Nations, while organisations like the **Americans for South African Resistance** and the **United Citizen's Committee for**

Solidarity with South African Resistance were established in the USA.

1.4 Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter

Further developments in the fifties must be viewed against the background of the social, political and economic environment in which non-White political organisations had to operate. For non-whites the government attempts at large-scale social restructuring



Nelson Mandela in traditional dress.

along the lines of the apartheid model meant greater government control over the non-White urban population; educational, trade and property restrictions; laws that impeded resistance; unemployment; and poverty. In black ranks the government's conduct estranged middle-class Blacks, encouraged Blacks to participate more readily in political mass movements, and allowed the needs of the lower-class Blacks to carry more weight in black political organisations. In these circumstances organisations like the ANC no longer made participation in existing political structures their

major aim but strove for a profound transformation of the existing social order. The meeting of the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter adopted at this meeting was an attempt to give form to an alternative for the existing social order in South Africa.

The proposal for a national convention representative of all groups in South Africa, with the aim of adopting a Freedom Charter for a democratic South Africa of the future, was put forward by Prof. Z.K. Matthews (President of the ANC in the Cape Province). The ANC, looking for ways in which to maintain their newly-won support, accepted the proposal in 1953 and gave orders that the co-operation of the SAIC, South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO) and SACOD be sought. At a joint meeting of these organisations in March 1954 the Congress Alliance (the name under which the alliance would later be known) came into being. The Congress of Non-European Trade Unions (SACTU) joined the alliance only later. A National Action Council was formed to make arrangements for putting Matthews's proposals into action.

In an effort to draft a truly democratic document, organisations from all over the country were invited to submit proposals and ideas. Several regional and local conferences were also held to formulate demands. The final composition of the Freedom Charter was undertaken by a small anonymous committee. The most likely author of the document was Lionel Bernstein, a white member of the SACOD. Since thousands of copies of the draft charter were already printed, the ANC working committee could not make any changes to it after their perusal of the document. Neither Matthews nor Luthuli had access to the charter ahead of the Congress of the People.

The Congress of the People was held on 25-26 June, 1955 at Kliptown, south of Johannesburg. Approximately 2 888 representatives, the majority of whom were Blacks, attended the meeting. On the second day the police disrupted the meeting and confiscated all available documents since they regarded the meeting as a plot involving possible high treason. This action did not, however, prevent the meeting from discussing the clauses of the Freedom Charter and approving of the document as a whole. See document 4 on page 53.

The Freedom Charter envisaged a democratic and multiracial society in which everyone would have equal access to wealth, education and the legal system. The document tried to accommodate as wide a spectrum of interest groupings as possible. How the

new social order was to be achieved, however, was not spelled out. The **Congress of the People** and the Freedom Charter were important milestones in invigorating the resistance groups. Non-Whites were made more politically conscious, and were now beginning to participate in the formulation of an alternative society for the future. The Freedom Charter provided a workable practical alternative to the government's apartheid model. Ideals were now distinctly formulated, even though there was no clarity about **how** to implement it.

Due to the opposition of the Africanists the Freedom Charter was not immediately accepted as official policy by the ANC. The Africanists were strongly opposed to all the clauses that stipulated rights and guarantees for all ethnic groupings in South Africa. According to them South Africa belonged to the black people, and the other groups could only be accepted on terms laid down by the black people. They therefore rejected the principle of multiracialism. The Africanists were also especially opposed to the part played by other organisations in the leadership of the **Congress of the People**. The structure of the **National Action Council** with its equal representation of participating organisations was, despite their numerical equality, unacceptable to them. They saw the **National Action Council** as a mechanism through which the ANC could be influenced and even managed by the non-Blacks. As a result of the Africanist opposition the Charter was not approved at the ANC's annual congress in 1955. It only became official ANC policy four months later at a special conference in April 1956.

1.5 The High Treason Trial

The government disapproved of the militant direction taken by the ANC and other members of the

Congress Alliance in the fifties. The acceptance of the Freedom Charter was viewed by the government as bordering on high treason. In September 1955 the police searched the houses of all the prominent resistance leaders and confiscated a great many documents. After prolonged and careful study of these documents, 156 people, White and non-White, were arrested in December 1956 on a charge of high treason. Among them were Albert Luthuli, Prof. Z.K. Matthews, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela (of the ANC), Dr J.M. Naicker (President of the SAIC) and A. Kathrada, L. Bernstein, Beyleveld, M. Kotane and J. Slovo (of the South African Communist Party (SACP)). The accused were freed on bail but forbidden to attend political meetings. After a preliminary hearing that dragged on for more than a year the state withdrew its charge against 65 of the accused. The hearing of 30 of the remaining 91 only began in November 1960. In March 1961, more than four years after the accused appeared in court the first time, judge Rumpff delivered his verdict. He ruled that there was no proof that the accused had wanted to overthrow the government forcefully and he therefore released them. The charge against the remaining 61 people was then also withdrawn.

The arrest of so many people, the long drawnout court case and the eventual verdict damaged the government's reputation abroad and raised great sympathy for the resistance movements. The long periods spent together in custody by the leaders of these movements strengthened the feeling of solidarity among them. On the negative side the leadership core of the resistance movements were immobilised for a long period and their attention and powers absorbed by the court case, to the definite detriment of the resistance movements.

TEST YOUR SKILLS

1. You are a domestic working for a sympathetic employer. Your family and friends demand that you join the Defiance Campaign. What should you do? (10)
2. You are the Minister of Justice faced with a Defiance Campaign. How would you handle the situation? (10)
3. Would you describe the Defiance Campaign as a success? (5)
4. Explain in one or two sentences the significance of the Congress of the People and the adoption of the Freedom Charter. (5)

*Essay type questions at the end of the text on pages 84-85
Each of the documents referred to have their own set tasks.*

READ YOUR ANSWERS IN CLASS AND DISCUSS THEM.

[30]

2. FROM PROTEST TO ARMED RESISTANCE

2.1 Conflict in ANC ranks: the establishment of the PAC

One of the most important events in the resistance politics of the fifties was the conflict in ANC ranks between the Africanists and the Charterists (supporters of the Freedom Charter), which in 1958 led to a split in the organisation and the establishment of the **Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)** on 6 April, 1959.

By 1958 the CYL was divided into two camps, with the non-Africanists dominating the Africanists. The heartland of the latter was the CYL of Orlando, with persons like Potlake Leballo, Zeph Mothopeng and Peter Raboroko as their most important representatives. The Defiance Campaign, the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter intensified the Africanists' criticism of ANC policy. *The Africanist* became the mouthpiece of the Africanists in November 1954 and was the main channel for criticism of the ANC policy.

The ANC's acceptance of the principle of multiracialism and its implications for black nationalism went against the grain of the Africanists with their narrowly exclusive nationalism. ANC co-operation with other racial groups, as embodied in the **Congress Alliance**, was unacceptable to the Africanists. The important role allocated to Whites especially gave offence. They were also strongly anti-communist. They saw communism as anti-democratic, a danger to their ideal of national self-determination, and they regarded communists as people who do not practise what they preach, accusing them of substituting the Freedom Charter for the Programme of Action. Co-operation with other white organisations such as the Black Sash was also disapproved of. According to Africanists the co-operation of Whites was aimed at guiding black political protest in such a manner that White interests would still be protected and secured. White co-operation therefore, according to them, damaged the effectiveness of the black political movement. Whites, and specifically the Afrikaners, were held responsible for the poor social, political and economic position in which Blacks found themselves. Hatred towards Whites therefore became one of the sources of Africanism.

A further implication of the ANC's acceptance of multiracialism was spelled out in the first lines of the Freedom Charter, namely that South Africa belongs to all who live there. Africanists rejected this tenet and claimed that Africa belonged to Blacks only. They

exerted themselves to win Africa for the Africans; the other groups were immigrants, who had to fall in with the interests and conditions of the Blacks. The Africanists' claim on Africa was based on the fact of their having had their origin in Africa, and for that reason they were the owners of the whole of Africa.

Against this background the differences in ANC ranks came to a head in November 1958 at the annual ANC congress in Transvaal, after certain Africanists were refused admission to the conference. In April 1959 the dissatisfied Africanists broke away from the ANC and established the **Pan Africanist Congress (PAC)**, with Robert Sobukwe as its President-General. In his presidential address Sobukwe spelled out the basic principle of the new movement. The PAC stood for a government by Blacks for Blacks; all those whose loyalty lay with Africa and had accepted the principle of Black majority rule were thereby included. Whites, however, were excluded seeing that they had benefited materially from the existing order and could therefore not identify completely with the black cause. Multiracialism, in so far as it implied irreconcilable differences among ethnic groups and an insistence on minority rights, was rejected. According to Sobukwe there was only one race, the human race. As far as South Africa's international position was concerned, Sobukwe supported the principle of non-alignment and the creation of a United States of Africa.

The PAC was thus founded in direct opposition to the ANC's principle of multiracialism. In spite of attempts by the ANC to belittle the PAC, the latter would remain a permanent feature of South African resistance politics.

2.2 On the road to Sharpeville: The last phase of peaceful resistance

The purpose of the PAC was the termination of White supremacy in South Africa. According to the PAC this aim could only be achieved through struggle, as no liberation was possible without bloodshed. In July 1959 Sobukwe announced that the PAC would begin a campaign against the pass laws, with the aim of liberating South Africa by 1963. The growth of the PAC, however, was not as rapid as expected; the aim was 100 000 members by July 1959 but by August 1959 there were only 25 000 members belonging to campaign with the purpose of achieving more courteous treatment of Blacks in everyday life. The 101 branches. In August the PAC launched a status

idea was to exorcise all signs of a slave mentality amongst Blacks. Sobukwe was of the opinion that acceptance of inferior treatment would be a sign that as if the government had greater control over the organisation than ever before.

Blacks endorsed their inferiority. This campaign did not satisfy the ordinary PAC members' need for more vigorous action. When therefore the ANC decided in December 1959 to begin a resistance campaign against the pass laws on 31 March 1960, the PAC decided to put their pass law campaign into action too, but to begin theirs ten days earlier, on 21 March, 1960. According to Robert Sobukwe, it would be but the beginning of a resistance campaign that had to increase in fierceness to such a degree that the PAC could take over the country within three years. The approach of the ANC and the PAC to the pass law campaign was totally different. The ANC planned a series of demonstrations on days of symbolic significance, the distribution of pamphlets and labour unrest. The PAC plan was very specific: on a day to be appointed by their leaders all black men had to leave their passes at home and present themselves at their local police station for arrest. By staying away from work they had to paralyse the country's economy and administration. All that was needed was for the leaders to set the pace and a spontaneous general uprising would follow.

Under orders from the PAC, groups of Blacks in several parts of the country burned their passes on 21 March, 1960, then went to the nearest police station and asked to be arrested. In most of the residential areas the protest action proceeded peacefully and the police either arrested the Blacks involved or ordered them out of the way. In Sharpeville near Vereeniging, though, and in Langa near Cape Town, the campaign ended in bloodshed.

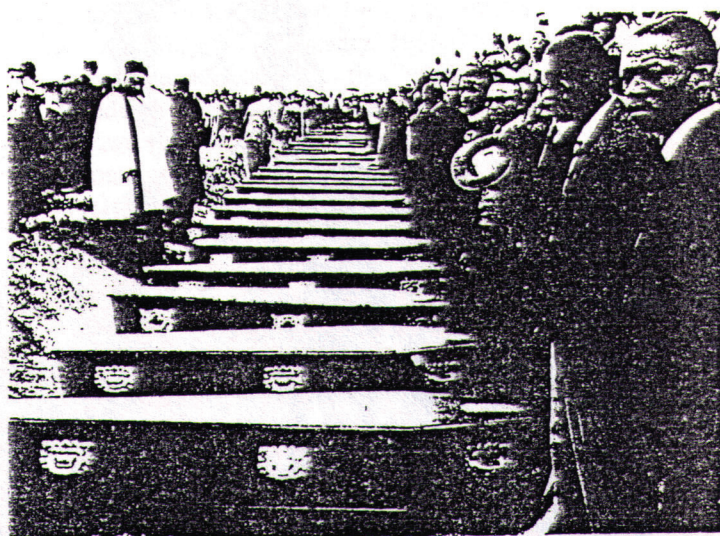
In Sharpeville approximately 10 000 Blacks crowded together around the police station. The police felt threatened and opened fire with machine guns. In the process 69 people were killed and 178 wounded. The post mortem revealed that the majority of those who had died of bullet wounds had been shot from behind; in other words, the first were fired at when they had already been fleeing.

In Langa, too, the police shot at demonstrators on that same day. The death toll there, however, was much lower - two Blacks were killed.

Events at Sharpeville elicited strong reaction abroad and the police conduct was condemned as unnecessarily violent. In South Africa, too, the events at Sharpeville were deplored. The President of the ANC, Albert Luthuli, appealed to all Blacks to

stay at home on 28 March 1960 as a sign of mourning for those who were shot dead at Sharpeville and Langa. The appeal was widely obeyed and more than three-quarters of the Blacks in the Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth areas stayed away from work on that day.

In the residential areas of Langa and Nyanga near Cape Town the inhabitants did not go to work on the following days either. The atmosphere in these residential areas, where the PAC had considerable influence, continued to be tense. On 30 March 1960 a young student, Philip Kgosana, led a march of approximately 30 000 Blacks into the heart of Cape Town. At the police station on Caledon Square Kgosana met senior police officers and promised to lead the demonstrators out of the city in exchange for



Funeral of some of the Sharpeville victims

a promise that the Minister of Justice would negotiate with him. Kgosana kept his part of the promise, but on his return for his appointment was placed under arrest.

The government reacted to the threat to law and order by proclaiming a state of emergency in 122 of the country's 265 districts. Approximately 11 500 Blacks were arrested and units from Civil Defence were called up to isolate the residential areas of Langa and Nyanga from the outside world. The Illegal Organisations Act (No. 34 of 1960) was passed outlawing the ANC and the PAC. The anti-pass law campaign proved a total failure, and it rather looked like a total failure. The significance of the Sharpeville crisis for resistance politics, however, was much more far-reaching than merely the failure of a pass law campaign. R.W. Johnson is of the opinion that the

Blacks did not utilise fully the revolutionary political and social circumstances that reigned at the time. According to Johnson the safety vacuum that arose in the country areas as a result of the concentration of hundreds of policemen in the urban centres to counteract the crisis was not utilised for a revolution in the country areas. According to Tom Lodge, however, the resistance groups were not ready and fully equipped to utilise the crisis. Shortcomings of the PAC leadership were revealed. The vagueness of their strategy did not prepare their followers properly for the inevitable confrontations with the police. Their insistence on peaceful protest did not equip their followers to react to the government violence. The inability to organise properly was a further



Mandela in London in 1962.

shortcoming. Lodge is also of the opinion that many urban Blacks continued to think in terms of protest rather than resistance. He does not, like Johnson, regard the Sharpeville crisis as a lost opportunity. For him the value of the chain of events lies in the fact that it constituted a turning point in the history of resistance politics, when protest finally went over into resistance and non-White politicians were forced to begin to think in terms of a revolutionary strategy.

The government's measures to counter the crisis succeeded and the resistance campaign gradually subsided. By the end of August the state of emergency was abrogated. The leaders of the PAC were taken to court on a charge of inciting other people to destroy their passes. Robert Sobukwe was

sentenced to three years' imprisonment and some of his lieutenants were also jailed. The leader of the ANC, Albert Luthuli, was found guilty of burning his pass and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

The banning of the ANC and the PAC meant that Blacks no longer had at their disposal an organisation that could speak on their behalf. To provide for this void about forty black leaders decided in Johannesburg in December 1960 to convene a congress that would negotiate with the government. The negotiations were also timed to coincide with the proclamation of the republic - a process in which Blacks were not consulted at all. At the 'All-In African Conference' that was held in Pietermaritzburg in March 1961 it was decided to request the government to convene a national convention to write a new constitution for South Africa. If the government refused an appeal would go out to Blacks not to work on 31 May 1961 (Republic Day) and the following two days.

The All-In African Conference formed a National Action Committee, with Nelson Mandela as secretary to co-ordinate proceedings. A letter to the Prime Minister, in which the resolutions taken by the conference were set out, was ignored by the government. The Action Committee therefore announced a strike for 29 to 31 May. The strike did not succeed in preventing the progress towards a republic. A second request for a national convention was forwarded shortly after and the Prime Minister was warned that if it was not heeded, a full-scale nationwide campaign among Blacks against co-operation with the government would follow.

2.3 Armed Resistance and the Rivonia Trial

The decision by the government to ban the ANC and the PAC resulted in these two organisations beginning to function underground in April 1960. The ANC was not caught unawares by the banning. The National Executive Committee had already discussed such a possibility at the beginning of 1960 and decided that if they should be banned they would continue the struggle underground. It was also decided to implement the M-plan, designed by Mandela in the fifties. Furthermore a number of ANC members were sent abroad to represent the organisation there. A more sensitive matter was the option to adopt violent means in their resistance to apartheid. In June 1961 Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and a number of other ANC members founded **Umkhonto we Sizwe** (Spear of the Nation). It would be a separate organisation, but subject to the political guidance of the ANC. Mandela led the new

organisation, which developed into the military wing of the ANC. **Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK)**¹ was a multiracial organisation that included White and non-Whites. It focused on sabotage and was not interested in terrorism or killing people. It nevertheless prepared itself for guerilla war. **Umkhonto we Sizwe's** headquarters was on a small farm, Lilliesleaf, in Rivonia, about 20 km north of Johannesburg. Here the **National High Command** planned sabotage against the government.

The use of force as a political tool was not supported with equal enthusiasm by all in the ANC. Albert Luthuli, President-General of the ANC, continued to support peaceful resistance and disapproved of the use of violence. As an organisation the ANC therefore never accepted violence as a policy in the early sixties. The organisation did, however, show understanding for those supporters of the ANC who favoured violence as an option, and it was in this spirit that room was left for the establishment of an organisation like MK.

There is a difference of opinion whether MK accepted the violent option through a positive decision and afterwards forced it upon the masses, or whether they merely gave expression through the use of violence to the spirit and approach that had already been accepted by the masses in the early sixties. Supporters of the latter view point out that through the use of violence to suppress resistance in the fifties (with Sharpeville as the outstanding example), the government ripened and prepared the masses for resisting state violence with liberation force. The numerous requests by grassroots supporters of the ANC leadership for arms to offer resistance to state suppression is cited as further support for this view. The decision to use force as a political weapon was also influenced by events abroad. The success achieved in Algiers and Cuba with this tactic encouraged the ANC to follow a similar approach in South Africa.

MK launched its first acts of sabotage on the Day of the Covenant, 16 December 1961. On this day several buildings in Durban, Port Elizabeth and Johannesburg were damaged by explosives. To prepare for a future guerilla war the ANC turned abroad. Mandela was the delegate to a conference of the **Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central and Southern Africa in Ethiopia**. Realising

that he would probably not have been issued with a passport for the journey he secretly slipped across the border between South Africa and Botswana. The purpose of the journey was to mobilise support for MK in Africa and to negotiate possible training facilities for Umkhonto recruits. The journey was exceptionally successful for he met several African leaders and received promises of moral and financial support. He also made arrangements for the training of recruits from South Africa in the techniques of guerilla warfare. In July 1962 he was back in South Africa, but his underground activities came to an end two weeks later when the police arrested him in Natal.

A few months later he was charged with encouraging people to strike in May 1961 and with leaving the country illegally in January 1962. He was found guilty and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Mandela's imprisonment was a great blow to his followers, since ANC members had more and more become used to looking to him to take the lead. MK continued to canvass recruits for military training. In May 1963 MK distributed a pamphlet in which it stated with pride that the organisation had already committed more than 70 acts of sabotage. The government reacted by extending the powers of the police to arrest people without a warrant and imprison them without a trial. The period of imprisonment without trial was extended from the original 12 days in 1962, to 90 days in 1963 and 180 days in 1964. On 11 July 1963 the police searched a farm house in the vicinity of Rivonia and ascertained that they had come upon the MK headquarters. Among those arrested here were six members of the **National High Command**. With the aid of documentary evidence acquired here the police could also round up members of the organisation elsewhere. A mass of documents that cast an extremely important light on MK activities was found. One particular document was captioned **Operation Mayibuye** (Operation Give Back), i.e. the giving back of Africa to the Blacks. This document included a blueprint for a guerilla campaign.

The police discovery at Rivonia created panic in MK ranks. Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, Ahmed Kathrada, Lionel Bernstein, Dennis Goldberg and Bob Hepple were arrested at Rivonia.

1 The abbreviation MK, generally used to refer to Umkhonto we Sizwe, is derived from the Xhosa word "Amadelakufe", which means "they who do not fear death". This term was used to refer to the volunteers who led the protest actions of the **Defiance Campaign** in 1952.

Several persons fled the country. Eventually ten persons - among which well-known ANC leaders like Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, white communists like Lionel Bernstein and Dennis Goldberg, as well as A.M. Kathadra, Raymond Mhlaba, James Kantor, Elias Motsoaledi and Andreas Mlangeni - appeared in court in October 1963 on charges of sabotage, attempts to start a guerilla war and the advancement of communism. The accused steadily refused to impart any information that might result in the arrest of more people, and thereby created a precedent that would be followed in future court cases in South Africa in which members of the resistance movements were involved. Where the opportunity presented itself the accused used the court as a public political platform to explain and put into perspective the policy directions, aims and motivations of the ANC, MK and the broad resistance movements. On Friday, 12 June 1964, Judge Quartus de Wet acquitted two of the ten, Kantor and Bernstein, and sentenced the rest to life imprisonment. The police action against MK and the Rivonia trials were traumatic experiences for the accused and for MK members, who probably did not anticipate properly the implications of their opting for violence and the state's reaction to this. By eliminating the leaders MK's back was to a great extent broken.

Although the sabotage activities of MK were continued by Wilton Mkwayi with the aid of the SACP, their intensity was considerably diminished. After the arrest of Mkwayi in October 1964 and Abraham Fischer (leader of the SACP underground activities) in 1965 the sabotage campaign of MK came to an end - and with that the underground activities of the ANC and SACP in South Africa just about petered out.

The ANC experienced the termination of the sabotage campaign as a setback. The sabotage, terrorism and openly revolutionary protest were counter-productive. It provided the government with valid arguments for its suppression of resistance movements and the elimination of resistance leaders. While the government dealt with the internal armed attack of the ANC with ease, the ANC was driven to the verge of destruction. Its future now depended on its small foreign wing that increasingly took over the leadership of the organisation after the Rivonia trial.

Like the ANC the PAC also had to make adjustments after its banning to be able to function underground. A military wing called **Poqo** (which means pure) was founded under the leadership of P.K. Leballo. Like MK, **Poqo** also wanted to overthrow the white regime in South Africa forcefully, but in its composition and methods it differed considerably from the former.

Poqo was an exclusively black organisation that was not accessible to Whites. It focused on sabotage and terrorism and wanted to conduct a reign of terror through murder and carnage that would enable it to take over power in South Africa by 1963. **Poqo's** standard coat of arms was the panga.

Within two years **Poqo** grew into the strongest black underground organisation ever in South Africa. The organisation was especially strong in the Western Cape, with its centre in Langa near Cape Town. The other PAC stronghold was in Johannesburg, and both were linked with Maseru, where Leballo established his headquarters in 1962.

In the course of 1962 **Poqo** murdered several Blacks in Langa and Paarl, but it was the **Poqo** cell in the Mbekweni residential area near Paarl that first turned to large-scale violence. With the purpose of freeing from prison a few of their mates who had been arrested for murder, about 250 **Poqos** marched upon the prison and the police station one night in November 1962. When they were checked by the police in the main street of Paarl, they attacked everything in sight with knives, pangas, axes and iron bars. Shops were set on fire, windows broken, two Whites murdered and chop and stab wounds inflicted on several others. The police shot and killed five of the rioters.

However, the failed attack in Paarl did not discourage **Poqo** altogether. The strong Langa branch, which had already caused a Transkei chief, Cqolosa, to be murdered about a month before the Paarl event, continued its resistance in the Transkei. Its target was the chiefs who expressed themselves in favour of separate development. In December 1962 **Poqos** murdered chief Dalesile in the Transkei, and several bands of **Poqos** left Langa with the purpose of killing Chief Kaiser Mantanzima. In February 1963 **Poqo** murdered five Whites in a roadworkers' camp on the Bashee river. That same month chief Deliwe was murdered by a **Poqo** unit.

In March 1963 Potlako Leballo (Robert Sobukwe, PAC President, was serving a jail sentence) declared at a press conference in Maseru that **Poqo** and the PAC were one and the same, and that this organisation was ready to aim a knock-out blow at the South African government. Leballo seemingly planned his knock-out blow for 7-8 April, but even before it could happen things went wrong for **Poqo**. The SAP intercepted a number of letters from Leballo to **Poqo** leaders and with the aid of these arrested hundreds of **Poqos**. During the weekend of 7-8 April 1963 **Poqos** did indeed engage in sabotage and terrorism in several cities and towns, but the police was prepared for such an eventuality and arrested

many members of the organisation. By June 1963 3 246 Poqos had already been arrested and were being held.

The arrest of such a large number of Poqos and their detention totally broke the Poqo movement. Potlako Leballo's leadership was criticised and in August 1963 he defected from Maseru to Dar-es-Salaam. The

three-year imprisonment of the PAC's first leader, Sobukwe, ended in May 1963, but the Minister of Justice decided to detain him longer - eventually till 1969. The PAC in South Africa had reached a nadir and would, like the ANC, continue the struggle from abroad.

TEST YOUR SKILLS

1. Write a dialogue between an Africanist and a Charterist explaining their views to each other. (10)
2. You are a policeman inside the Sharpeville police station on the day it is surrounded by 10 000 angry and emotional protestors. Describe your feelings and consider the options open to you. (15)
3. Do you regard the Sharpeville incident as an important event? Give reasons for your answer. (5)
4. You are a young student at university nearing the end of your studies. Your friends approach you to join MK or Poqo. What would you do? (10)
5. You are the Prime Minister of a country faced with terrorism and sabotage, the death of innocent people and the destruction of property. How would you handle the situation? (10)

READ OUT YOUR ANSWERS AND DISCUSS THEM.

[50]

3. THE GROWTH OF INTERNATIONAL RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID

With the banning of the ANC and the PAC in 1960 resistance politics in South Africa entered the international arena. Together with the above-mentioned organisations, groups like the SACP, SACTU, SAIC and the **Non European Unity Movement (NEUM)** continued abroad the struggle against apartheid and for a democratic South Africa. The organisations found themselves in a favourable international climate benefiting from the international aversion to racism and colonialism. The aim of internationalising the struggle against apartheid was to gain support and sympathy for their struggle from governments and nations, to arrange training opportunities for guerilla fighters, to raise funds, to co-operate with anti-apartheid groups in exerting pressure on governments, banks and corporations, and to nourish a general anti-apartheid feeling around the world through the media and anti-apartheid campaigns. The international campaign was an attempt to isolate South Africa on all fronts and to mobilise the entire international community as an ally against the South African government.

3.1 The United Nations

Although international resistance against apartheid only came into its own in the sixties, the South

African government was already familiar with it from a much earlier stage. At an early stage already South Africa suffered attacks in the United Nations (UN). In 1946 the Indian government accused South Africa in the UN of withholding basic human rights from Indians in South Africa and instituted sanctions against South Africa.

In 1948 South Africa found itself in an increasingly hostile international climate - a hostility that resulted from an aversion to its domestic race policy. This hostility nowhere manifested itself more clearly than in the General Assembly (GA) of the UN, where resolutions and speeches against South Africa soon became a neverending stream. In 1952 14 Arabic and Asiatic states placed apartheid on the GA agenda, with the declaration that the policy had created a dangerous and explosive situation that held a danger to international peace and represented a blatant breach of the basic principles of human rights and freedoms. South Africa tried to defend itself by claiming that this was a domestic issue that was no concern of the UN.

Subjected to these constant attacks, South Africa threatened to, and seriously considered, leaving the UN. In 1955 South Africa withdrew from the United

Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO - an UN agency) because of the role this agency played in the criticism against South Africa. In 1956 South Africa decided to be only symbolically present at the UN. The country would vote in exceptional circumstances only and would not take part in debates of the UN. Although, according to the South African government, this threat led to a more moderate attitude by the UN, the hostile resolutions against South Africa still did not diminish. The resolutions formulated in the GA of the UN followed the same pattern throughout the years. Condemnation of South Africa's policy of racial discrimination and its refusal to fulfil its obligations laid down by the UN Charter, followed by requests to relinquish the apartheid policy and co-operate with the UN, continued regularly. Direct UN action against South Africa, however, was handicapped by the sluggishness of the Western states to act more severely against South Africa. In spite of this South Africa's relationship with the outside world was through the years increasingly judged in terms of its race policy. This state of affairs made other governments hesitant about close association with South Africa and led to increasing criticism in international organisations.

3.2 The British role

The British Commonwealth of Nations, the most important international grouping outside the UN, as far as South Africa was concerned, was another forum where South Africa experienced increasing international hostility against apartheid. With the attainment of independence by India, Pakistan and Ceylon and their admission to the Commonwealth as fully-fledged members, the former harmony that reigned in the Commonwealth, gave way to tensions. The new members increasingly influenced the Commonwealth agenda and the body developed into a forum where stress was laid on non-alignment, anti-colonialism and opposition to racial discrimination. The clash between South Africa and the new members of the Commonwealth put Britain in an increasingly difficult position: on the one hand Britain had to handle the demand for racial equality by the new members; on the other hand it was bound to South Africa by historical ties of loyalty. This state of affairs led to tension between Britain and South Africa.

The sixties were characterised by a sharp increase in the international community's hostility - a development strengthened by events in South Africa. During his visit to South Africa in 1960 the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, notified the South African government of Britain's intention to withdraw from Africa and to support the decoloni-

sation process. Macmillan also informed Verwoerd that Britain would no longer support South Africa's argument that its racial policy was an internal affair, beyond the jurisdiction of international bodies.

The dust had hardly settled after Macmillan's visit when the Sharpeville events took place. Apartheid and the South African police action were sharply criticised by the international community, and the withdrawal of international capital from South Africa created an economic crisis. International sympathy for the struggle of resistance movements in South Africa was symbolised by the award of the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize to the ANC President, Albert Luthuli. While international support for the non-violent actions of resistance movements in South



Chief Mangasothu Buthelezi and President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania.

Africa continued, there also began, after 1960, a search for new forms of support for armed protest actions.

3.3 The role of African states

African countries viewed the resistance movements with great sympathy, as shown when Nelson Mandela attended the congress of the **Pan African Freedom Movement for East, Central and South Africa**. He was received most heartily and support was promised to him from several regions. He also continued his journey to Britain, where he found much support and sympathy for his case. He also used the occasion of this journey to study literature on war and revolution, to attend a military training camp in Algeria, and to

make arrangements for the military training of South African MK recruits.

In Africa anti-apartheid activities increased as more states became independent. Cairo already was a centre for radio broadcasts. This was extended to centres in Dar-es-Salaam and Addis Ababa, and military training camps in Algeria and Tanzania. South Africa's diplomatic ties with Africa decreased in spite of the many new states that came into being. The Egyptian representative was withdrawn in 1961, the South African consul-general was asked to leave the Congo, and South Africa decided shortly before Kenyan independence to withdraw its consul from Nairobi. Former diplomatic ties were replaced by increasing hostility. In Ghana South Africans were refused entrance unless they condemned apartheid; Ethiopia and Liberia brought the South West Africa case against South Africa to the International Court; leaders like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania criticised South Africa viciously, while many states instituted economic sanctions against South Africa.

The entry to the international arena of the newly independent Africa states led to a heightened international awareness of apartheid. The new states were convinced that their case against apartheid was morally justified and they therefore put apartheid high on the international agenda. In this they were supported by the communist states under the leadership of the Soviet Union. The relationship between South Africa and the Soviet Union had never been hearty and further weakened in the late fifties. In 1956 the South African government closed the Soviet consulate in South Africa.

3.4 Boycotts and Sanctions

After Sharpeville and Kennedy's election as American President, American interest in South Africa heightened. Apartheid was more readily condemned and South Africa was held at a distance diplomatically since America was trying to strengthen its ties with the new African states. South Africa ignored a call from Kennedy to relinquish apartheid. America reacted to this by instituting a selective and mainly symbolic arms embargo against South Africa.

An important development in the growth of international opposition against apartheid was the establishment of anti-apartheid movements in the West. These movements came into existence in the late fifties and were especially aided by the Sharpeville events and the arrival of South African political exiles abroad. In reaction to a call from the ANC and black African states the Boycott Movement was founded in London in February 1960 by people

like Trevor Huddleston (an Anglican priest and archbishop), Julius Nyerere (later president of Tanzania), Hugh Gaitskell (leader of the British Labour Party) and labour union leaders. After Sharpeville they extended their activities and changed the name of the organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. As the movement expanded, South Africa's international environment was increasingly influenced by non-governmental bodies, who created a hostile atmosphere abroad through demonstrations, the media and the support of influential public figures.

There were also sustained calls for the application of economic sanctions against South Africa. The anti-apartheid groups and Afro-Asian states saw sanctions as both a moral gesture and a means to undermine apartheid. In 1962 the GA of the UN adopted a resolution in which member states were asked to break off diplomatic ties with South Africa, boycott its products, cease all exports to South Africa and refuse access to its ships and aeroplanes. In 1963, with encouragement from the Afro-Asian states, the Security Council (SC) of the UN appealed to all members to terminate the sale of arms to South Africa. Although it was not an enforceable resolution, and some of the Western states ignored the call, it was a warning to South Africa that international hostility towards apartheid could lead to action.

The growing international opposition to apartheid was also clearly underlined by the hostile reception of South Africa's application for continued membership of the British Commonwealth by especially the new Afro-Asian members of the organisation. Because of the insistence by these states that South Africa's continued membership could only be approved if the country relinquished apartheid, a situation developed within the Commonwealth that made the South African government decide to withdraw its application. In this manner South Africa was just about forced out of the Commonwealth and lost membership of an important international forum. (See the extract from Dr Verwoerd's speech in London in the appendix, document 1, pp. 45-48).

The opposition of African states to South Africa and its apartheid policy was also waged in their own organisation, the Organisation for African Unity (OAU). At the first meeting in 1963 already the members of the organisation undertook to support freedom fighters against colonialism and white minority governments with arms, military training, bases and transit routes. The organisation also founded a **Liberation Committee** to support suppressed groups in their struggle. The OAU further instituted sanctions against South Africa. Apart from

trade boycotts, OAU members also refused to service South African ships and aeroplanes. South African Airways could no longer fly over African states and the route to Europe was therefore increased by 900 km. Although OAU action against South Africa was not always very effective, it succeeded in keeping apartheid high on the international agenda by means of constant criticism and diplomatic pressure.

In the post-Sharpeville period the criticism against apartheid also rose sharply in the UN. For the first time now the South African issue appeared on the SC agenda and South Africa was condemned by Western states. The SC accepted a resolution (supported by the USA, with only Britain and France abstaining) that South Africa's race policy had led to international friction, and that if the policy was continued, it could

become a danger to international peace and security. The USA action certainly constituted a change of attitude, and even Britain shortly after voted for a resolution in the SC in which all states were requested to take steps to bring about an end to the apartheid policy. In 1962 the SC also instituted a Special Committee for Apartheid to initiate and co-ordinate attempts to end apartheid.

International resistance to apartheid therefore gradually increased in intensity after 1948, and while initially this was merely an irritation for the South African government, in the sixties the resistance became a definite threat that increasingly soured South Africa's relations with the outside world and secured it a pariah status.

TEST YOUR SKILLS

You must read Dr Verwoerd's speech in the appendix to assist you with these assignments.

1. Was the international community eager to concern itself with the South African situation? Was there a difference in the approach of different groupings or regions to South Africa? (10)
 2. You are the South African ambassador to the United Nations. How would you respond to efforts to condemn South African policies in the General Assembly? (10)
 3. Why were the United States of America, Great Britain and France reluctant to enter into compulsory actions against South Africa? Why did they eventually change their minds?. (10)
- [30]**

READ YOUR ANSWERS TO THE CLASS AND DISCUSS IT.