

# Let us speak of freedom

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## WE CALL THE FARMERS OF THE RESERVES AND TRUST LANDS.

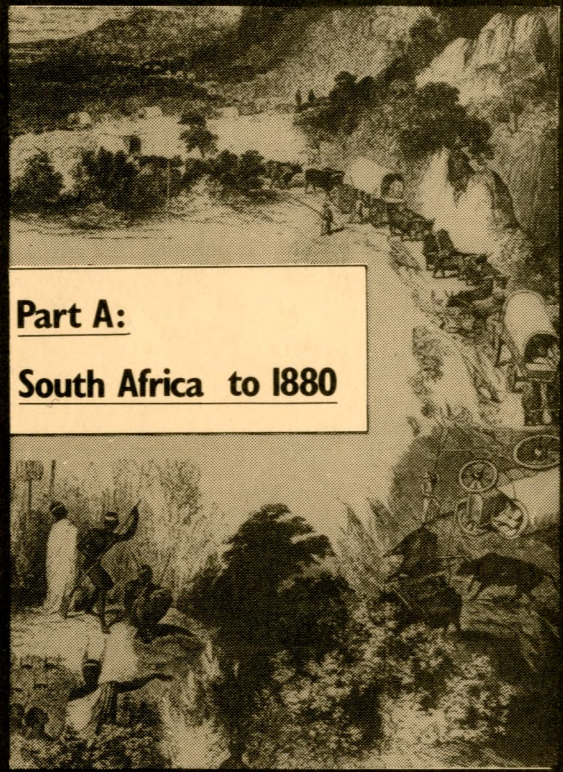
Let us speak of the wide land, and the narrow strips on  
which we toil.

Let us speak of brothers without land, and of children  
without schooling.

Let us speak of taxes and of cattle, and of famine.

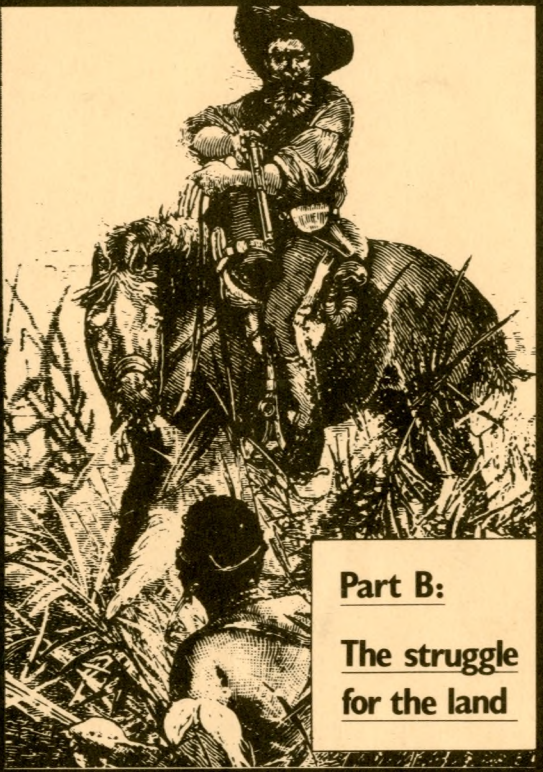
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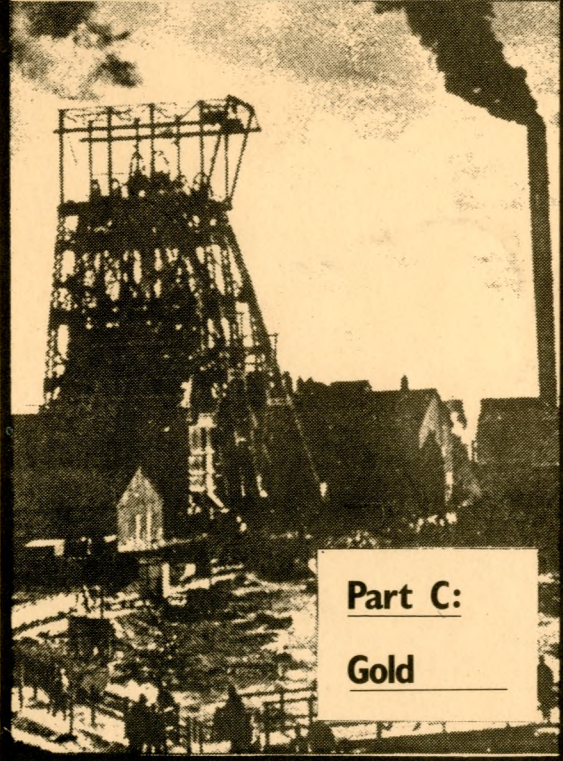
**Part A:**

**South Africa to 1880**



**Part B:**

**The struggle  
for the land**



**Part C:**

**Gold**



**Part D:**

**The spear falls**

1



OKAY, COMRADES, I THINK WE ARE ALL GATHERED HERE FOR OUR FIRST DISCUSSION. MAYBE THE YOUNG COMRADES CAN EXPLAIN TO US WHY THEY WANT TO TALK TO US ABOUT THIS LONG HISTORY OF OUR STRUGGLE.

THE CAPE TOWN  
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JA, SAHIE AND I ARE AT BUNTEHEUWEL HIGH. WE'VE JUST BEEN ELECTED TO THE SRC. I THINK AS LEADERS WE NEED TO BE CLEAR.



ALSO ANOTHER THING IS THIS ISSUE OF WORKING WITH OUR PARENTS AND OTHER OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY. SOME OF THE STUDENTS DON'T SUPPORT THIS IDEA. THEY SAY THAT THE OLD PEOPLE KNOW NOTHING AND THEY'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING TO FIGHT AGAINST THE SYSTEM. THEY KEEP SAYING THINGS LIKE IF OUR PARENTS STOOD UP FOR OUR RIGHTS YEARS AGO THEN WE WOULDN'T BE IN THIS MESS TODAY. I DON'T THINK THAT'S RIGHT, BUT I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY.



WE, IN GUGS ARE TRYING TO TAKE UP THIS PEOPLE'S EDUCATION THING. EVERY WEEK WE'RE TRYING TO RUN A PROGRAMME BUT WE'RE OFTEN FAILING BECAUSE WE'RE HAVING TO RELY ON OUTSIDERS. SOMETIMES THESE PEOPLE LET US DOWN, OR THERE'S A ROAD-BLOCK OR SOMETHING.



SO NOW WE'RE THINKING THAT WE MUST DO THIS THING OURSELVES



AND YOU, COM?

UH, JA, I HAVE A BIG PROBLEM YOU SEE, THERE 'RE HARDLY ANY UDF PEOPLE AT MY SCHOOL AND EVERYONE KEEPS ATTACKING ME ABOUT MY POSITION. MY PROBLEM IS THAT I CAN'T REALLY EXPLAIN THINGS WELL - I JUST KNOW THAT I SUPPORT THE UDF + THE CHARTER. I GET SO MAD TRYING TO JUSTIFY MY POSITION THAT SOMETIMES I END UP HITTING THE GUYS.



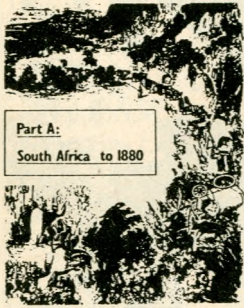
YO COMRADE, I KNOW WHAT THESE PEOPLE ARE LIKE WHEN THEY COME WITH THEIR NONSENSE BUT WE CAN'T WIN BY GIVING THEM A CLAP



ME AND COM 2, WE'VE BEEN IN THIS STRUGGLE FOR A VERY LONG TIME. IT WOULD TAKE MANY MANY NIGHTS TO TELL YOU ALL OUR STORIES, SO LET US START WITH OUR LECTURES NOW -



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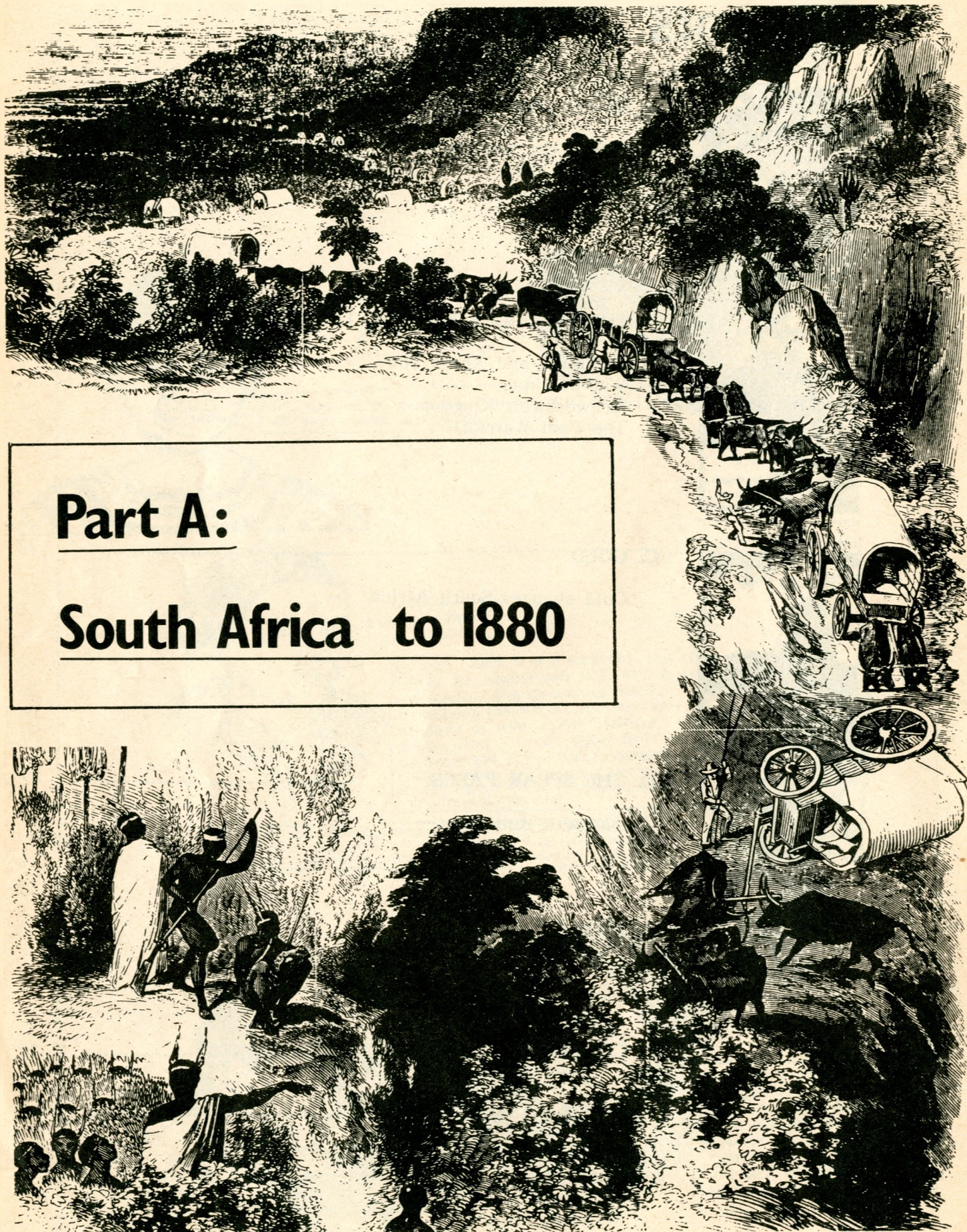
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**Part A:**  
**South Africa to 1880**



The struggle reaches back to the days of the first white settlement in our country.

In this chapter we will look at some of these traditions of our struggle. We will learn more about the people who were in South Africa when the settlers came, and how they fought bravely to live in peace on their land. We will also read about the many changes that happened, particularly after diamonds and gold were discovered and how people continued to struggle against the new conditions that made their lives even harder.

## Before the settlers

When Jan Van Riebeeck arrived in Cape Town in 1652, there were already people living in the area. These people were called the Khoi (pronounced gooi). Another group were the San. The Dutch could not speak the language of the people so they called them "Hottentots" and "Bushman".



A Khoi woman



Khoi settlement

Many other groups lived in the Eastern and Northern parts of what is today South Africa. These were the Sotho and Nguni people who had been living in these areas for over 2000 years.



**HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE 1652...**  
 ... People were living happily in South Africa.

**1** The khoikhoi had lived here for 5000 years

Ngoni & Somo lived here for 2000 years

**2** IN THE 1400's... Merchants in Portugal want to get spices & other goods from India & Africa. They sent out ships, and in 1497 Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape. Later, they are followed by other countries

**3** 1652

The Dutch East India Company sent Jan van Riebeeck to open a refreshment station at the Cape

**4** 1657

Jan van Riebeeck allows some of his men to start farms on the banks of the Liesbeeck River. The khoikhoi fought back. The first big war between the khoikhoi and the Dutch was in 1659/60, and the second war was in 1672-1677.

**5** 1700 → 1800

**TREKBOERS**:- As the khoikhoi are defeated, the boers move onto their lands. By the 19th century, they have pushed their way to the Eastern Cape

**6** 1806 British defeat the Dutch in a war & they take over her colonies, including the Cape.

Britain is a powerful industrial country. They have colonies all over the world & always army to protect their 'gains'

**7** By the 1800's, it was not only luxury goods & slaves that the European countries wanted. They also wanted rubber, precious metals, & other things for their factories. They began competing with each other to conquer the people in Africa, Asia & the Americas.

**8** In 1882, these European countries had a conference, & decided to divide the world up between them.

**9** Here is Africa in 1882, before the conference. The black areas all still belong to the African people

\*South Africa\* was given to the British. By now, between the British & the Boers, all the independent African kingdoms had been defeated.

**10** Here is Africa after the conference, in 1914



## Land is important

For all of these people, the most important thing in their lives was the land on which they grazed their cattle, grew crops or hunted for food. Without land people would go hungry and die. But the land did not belong to any one person. Each group of people shared the land. People seldom starved if there was food and nobody was ever unemployed.

## Chiefs

Nearly all the groups had a leader, or a chief. The chief was a powerful man, or sometimes, woman. Often he could use his power to build up his wealth. Ordinary people had to give gifts or a portion of their crops; young people often had to serve in his army. But, although he was often richer than the rest of his people, the shared way of living generally prevented the chief from becoming too rich at their expense. If people did become too dissatisfied, they simply moved off and settled on new land.

## Women

Women had to work harder than men. Not only did they have responsibilities at home, but they did most of the work in the fields. The more women a man married, the more workers he had.



Women did most of the agricultural work



## The settlers



Jan van Riebeeck puts the Dutch flag on South African soil

When Jan van Riebeeck arrived, without asking, he simply squatted on the land that belonged to the Khoi people. From that day, there was conflict. First small battles and then whole wars were fought with the Khoikhoi. The settlers had one big advantage in these wars - guns. After they had defeated the KhoiKhoi, they did not stop. They had become greedy for the rich and fertile land in South Africa.

By the mid 1700's the settlers had reached what is now called the Eastern Cape. But still they did not stop. For the next 100 years, no less than 10 wars were fought with various groups of the Nguni people on the Eastern Cape frontier. The settlers' greed for the rich land and fat cattle of the Nguni was the cause of these wars.

## British rule

In 1806, the British took over from the Dutch at the Cape. Britain was a far more powerful capitalist country than Holland. Their guns were backed up by wealth and a growing industrial power. Many new settlers began to arrive from Britain and they pushed more and more people off the land. It was the British, backed with their guns and power, who finally defeated the Xhosa tribes on the Eastern frontier.



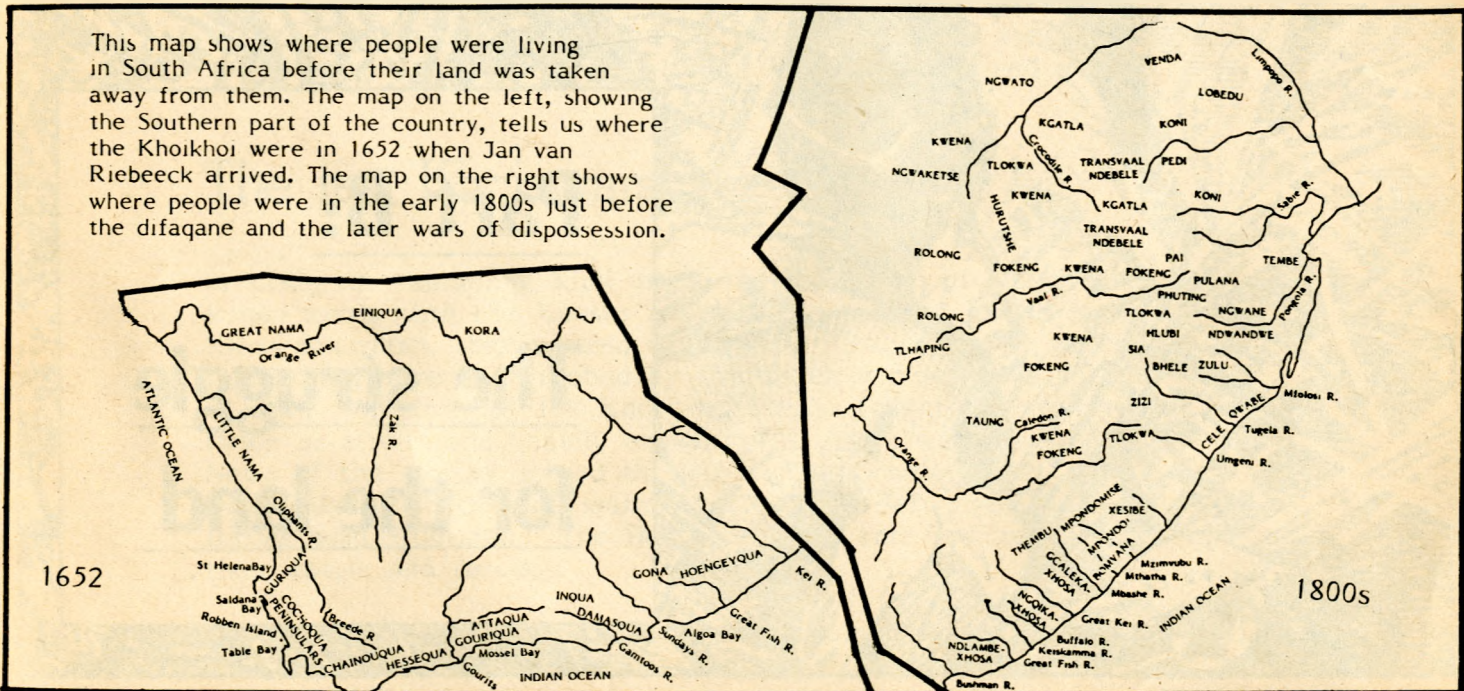
# Trekkers

Also a lot of the early Dutch settlers (boers) did not like being ruled by the British so they kept moving further and further away, finding new land on which to settle. So by the mid-1800s, the British and the Boers had penetrated into nearly all areas of today's South Africa - Natal, the Transvaal, OFS and the Cape. Often the indigenous people did not mind the settlers being on their land: they were not used to these strange customs of individuals owning land. As far as they were concerned the land was there for all to use and it belonged to the people as a whole. Of course, once they found out that the settlers thought that they could just take land away, there were conflicts which often led to wars.

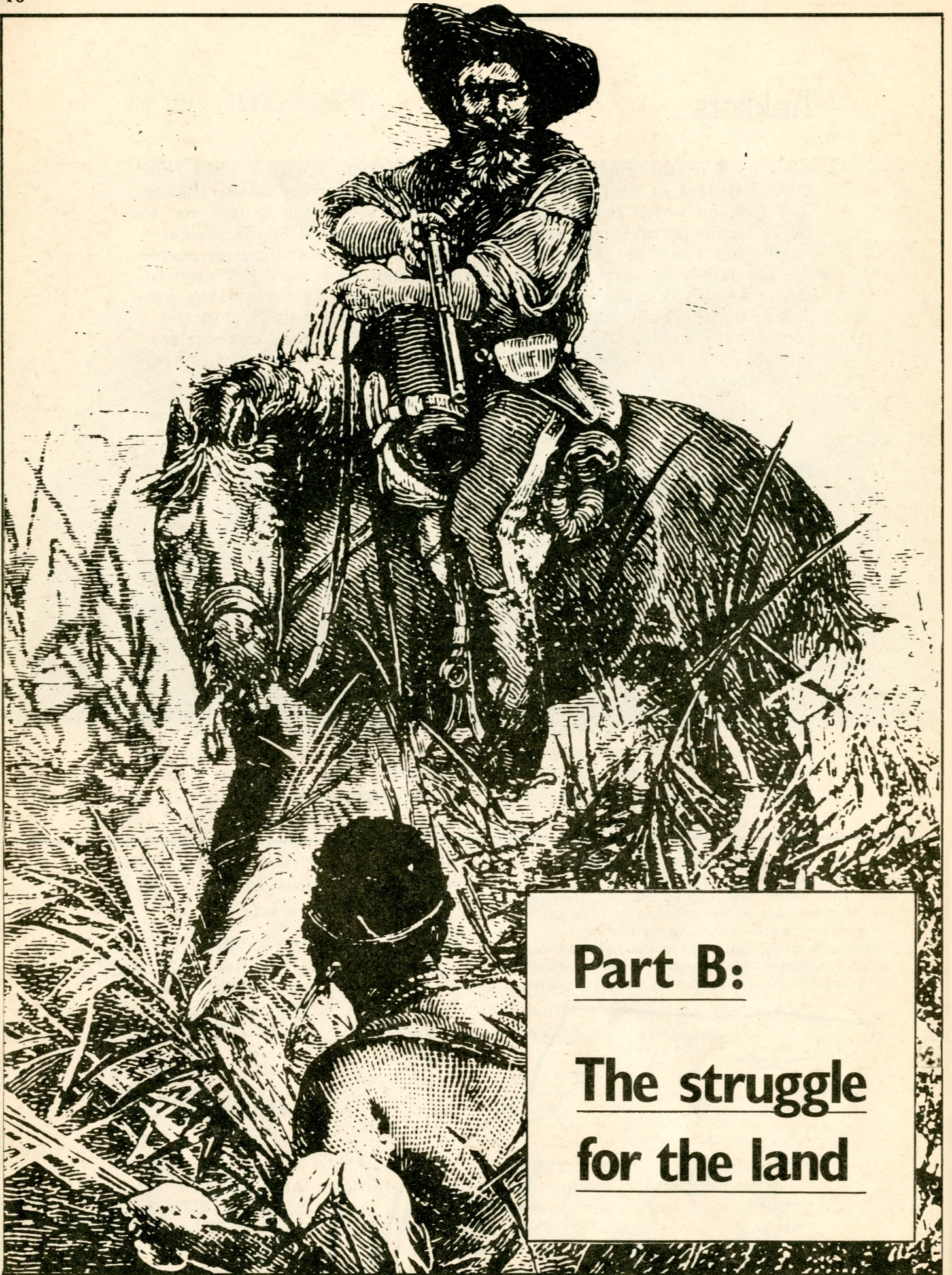
# The difaqane

In the early 1800's as well, there were also other pressures operating on the land question. In what is today Natal, chief Dingiswayo and his successor, Chaka fought a series of battles against fellow Nguni tribes to create a great and powerful kingdom the Zulu kingdom. Many peoples fled from their land to escape the wars. This became known as the Mfecane (the crushing) or difaqane ( forced migration).

The white settlers benefitted from the Difaqane by occupying land that had been deserted. When black farmers returned they found new and strange people on their traditional pastures. Thus the struggle for the land spread from the Eastern Cape to today's Natal, Lesotho, Transvaal, Orange Free State and even further North.







**Part B:**

**The struggle  
for the land**



We have already said that the settlers had one big advantage because they owned guns. But this did not mean that the indigenous people were defeated easily. Our history is filled with heroes who fought bravely on the velds of our country. Even today some of our freedom songs recall the courage and spirit of these early fighters.

In this section, we will recall some of these struggles.

## The Khoi and Xhosa unite

From the time Van Riebeeck arrived, there were numerous skirmishes and battles between the settlers and the Khoikhoi. Not long after Jan van Riebeeck had arrived, he wrote in his diary:

**"Last night it happened that about 50 of these people (Khoikhoi) wanted to put up their huts close to our fortress and when told in a friendly manner to go a little further away, they declared boldly that this was not our land but theirs and that they would place their huts wherever they chose. If we were not prepared to permit them to do so they would attack us with the aid of a large number of people from the interior and kill us."**

But by the late 1700's, most of the Khoi tribes had been defeated. Two major wars had been fought, first in 1659, just seven years after the Dutch had settled in the Cape. The second war broke out in 1673 and the Khoi warriors almost succeeded in driving the Boers right back to the Castle. It was only in 1677 that the Dutch defeated the Khoi chief, Gonnema and his army.

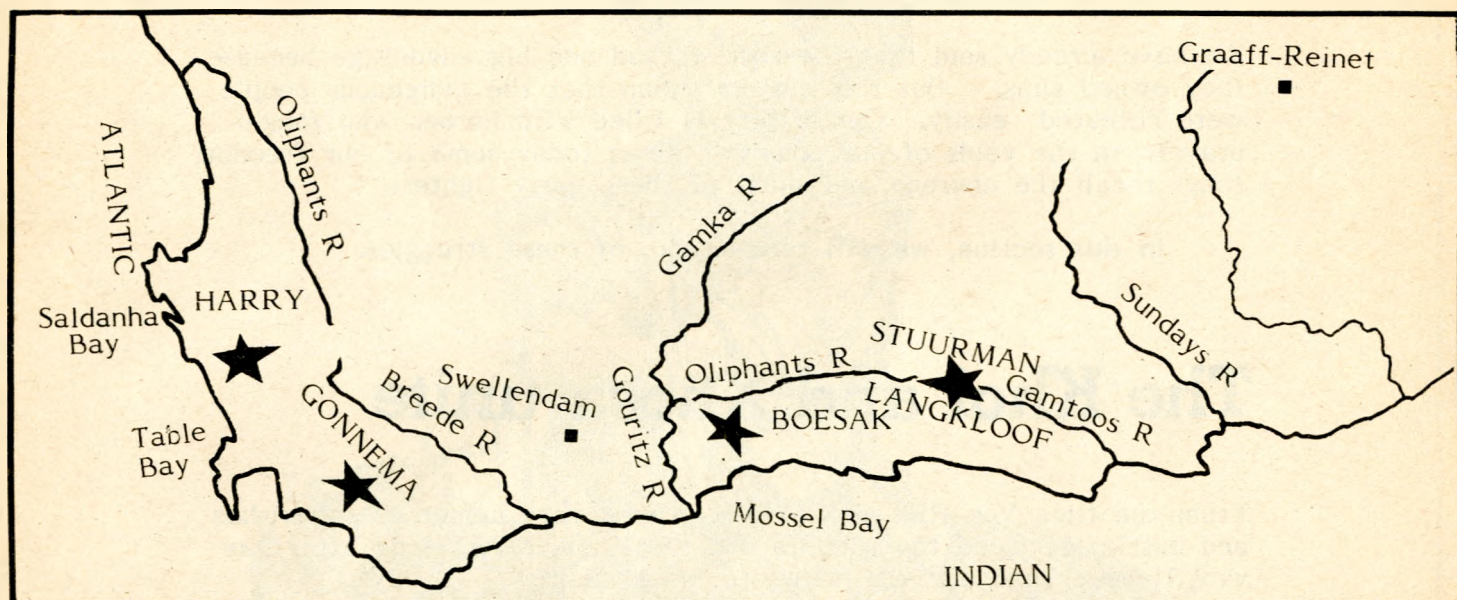
In these and later wars, the defeat of the indigenous people was made easier by their lack of unity. There were many different groups or tribes and there were often old rivalries between them. Thus, during the wars some groups sided with the Dutch or remained neutral.

## The last Khoi wars

In 1799, the remaining Khoi under the leadership of Klaas Stuurman joined hands with the Xhosas and went to battle. In the words of Klaas Stuurman, they wanted to "restore the country of which our forefathers have been robbed by the Dutch and we have nothing more to ask". An army of 150 Khoi and Xhosas fought a Boer army of 300 - twice as strong and heavily armed. The Boers were totally defeated. News of the victory spread throughout the Graaff-Reniet and Swellendam districts and many Khoi servants left their masters to join forces with Stuurman. The Boers panicked and fled, many deserting their cattle and farms.

In 1802, a Khoi/Xhosa army once again defeated the Boers. But later Stuurman was defeated at Langekloof and another Khoi army led





This map shows some of the clashes that took place between the Khoi and Boer armies

by Boesak was defeated at Olifants River. An uneasy peace treaty was signed.

Still the British and Boers were worried. More than anything else they were terrified by the strong unity between the Khoi and the Xhosa. They knew that in the past the disunity between tribes had been one of their strongest weapons. They set about trying to break the Khoi/Xhosa unity. They built townships for the Khoikhoi to break their resistance and to trap their labour. They succeeded in herding Stuurman and his followers onto land far away from their Xhosa friends. In 1803, Klaas Stuurman died while out hunting. All around, the Khoi and Xhosa people mourned the death of this great fighter, who had forged the first Khoikhoi unity with the Xhosa.

Still Klaas's brother, David, continued to defy the Boers and British. He gave refuge to those who were running away from the Boers and the British and did all he could to help the Xhosa people. In 1806, he was led into a trap, surrounded and arrested with his brother Boschman. Like many before and after him, David Stuurman was imprisoned on Robben Island. But he escaped and travelled more than 700 miles to live with his old friends, the Xhosa people. In 1819 he was again arrested. This time the colonial government took no chances. They shipped the great warrior to Australia where he died in about 1828.

## War of unity

With the Khoi defeated, the British and the Boers turned their attention to defeating the Xhosa people. By 1850, over eight wars had already been fought. There were defeats and victories; many heroes had fought and died in battle. The superior gun power of the settlers and the British government had been one of their biggest advantages. But again their other main advantage had been disunity between different



## **Esiqithini - The Island**

The history of Robben Island, or Esiqithini as it is known in Xhosa, is as long as the history of our struggle. Since the early days of resistance, many of our leaders and brave fighters have been banished or imprisoned there.

In 1658, just six years after Jan van Riebeeck had arrived, the first prisoners were taken across the sea to the Island - Harry, Boubo and Jan Cou. Harry had at first been a go-between and interpreter for the Dutch, but later he went back to his people and taught them how to fight more effectively against the Dutch. He urged them to attack in bad weather as the gunpowder got wet, so the Dutch could not use their cannons. Harry escaped by boat from the Island and led his people in the first major war in 1659.

In 1819, the prophet and Xhosa general, Nxele (Makana) was banished to the Island. There he joined other fellow countrymen and several slaves who had been caught deserting their masters. On Christmas Day, 1820, Makana and 30 other prisoners overpowered their guards and escaped by boat. The boat sank just off Blaauwberg Strand. Makana clung to the rocks and encouraged his comrades as they swam to shore. He, himself, could not swim; eventually he was swept away by a wave and drowned.

We will see how the British struggled to break the power of the Xhosa people. Even after they had been defeated, the British still feared that the people would again rise up and take back their land. So, in the late 1850s, they set up military tribunals and convicted many of the Xhosa chiefs. They too were sent to the Island - Siyolo, Mhlala, Kente, Maqoma, Xhoxho, Phato, Dilima, Mate, Stokwe, Fadana and Qwasha. The most important of these chiefs was Maqomo who was sentenced for sending his men to kill a police informer.

They served out their sentences and in 1869 the last of the prisoners, Maqomo, Xhoxho and Siyolo were released. They returned to find their lands lost and their people scattered. The British forbade them from owning land or leading their people again. Maqomo was an old man, but his spirit had not been broken. Twice he defied the British and returned to his old territory near Fort Beaufort. The second time he was sent back to the Island. This time he was alone, completely alone. No-one on the Island spoke his language and he could not speak English. Eventually, in 1873 he died, still a prisoner.

Later Sandile's son, Gonya Sandile, Langalibalele (a Zulu chief) and many others joined the great and heroic tradition of Esiqithini, the Island. Esiqithini - a place of hardship, of cold mists and hard labour but also a symbol of our people's courage and the fear of our rulers.





Sandile

tribes. Time and time again brave warriors were defeated because the enemy had managed to play off one group against another.

But the "War of Unity" on the eastern frontier was different. The unity built by Sandile and his people nearly changed the course of history.

By this stage, the Xhosa people had been pushed as far east as the Kei River. They had lost vast areas of fertile land and thousands of heads of cattle to Boer farmers. But still the people resisted.

## Battle of Boomah Pass

In the 1850's, the colonial government deposed the troublemaker, Sandile, and put a puppet in his place. Sandile was forced to kiss the puppet's feet, before being chased away. Then, determined to make Sandile taste the bitterness of defeat, the British sent 500 troops to attack him and his people. Tramping along, convinced that they would win, the troops entered a narrow gorge. Sandile and his warriors were waiting. They attacked the British troops and gave them a sound beating at Boomah Pass.



Sandile's kraal



There was worse in store for the British. Many Africans had been conscripted into the colonial army. Time and time again they had said "We are willing to follow spoor ( of cattle ) and catch thieves, but we will never fight against our own people". Now they deserted with their guns and joined Sandile's forces. Other Xhosa tribes joined hands with Sandile; Khoikhoi living on mission stations broke away to join the resistance. Even Khoikhoi and Xhosa slaves and workers as far west as the Cape Peninsula deserted their masters and began to make their way East to join the "War of Unity ". Soon Sandile's forces numbered 14000. Then, from the North, Mshweshwe, king of the Sothos, sent messengers to build a great alliance.

But the colonists had the whole of the British Empire to turn to. Troops arrived from Britain and in 1853 the British managed to defeat Sandile and his army. Unity had come too late.

## Mshweshwe's kingdom

Meanwhile in the North, Mshweshwe and his people were also doing battle to protect their lands. Before the trekkers arrived, Mshweshwe's people lived on vast stretches of land in today's Orange Free State, Lesotho and parts of the Transvaal.

Initially when the Trekkers arrived Mshweshwe was not hostile and he gave them land to use. But he was quite clear that he was giving them land to use, not to buy.

From the beginning there was trouble. The Boer trekkers wanted the rich and fertile lands for themselves and Mshweshwe was forced to say:

**"...it may be that you white people do not steal cattle , but you do steal whole countries, and if you had your wish you would send us to pasture our cattle in the clouds".**

In their first war against Mshweshwe's people, the Boers were badly defeated. Frightened, they turned to the British colonial government for help and the British ruled in their favour. The land they were fighting about belonged to the Boers, they said.

Mshweshwe did not want to fight against the British yet. He had heard how their armies had helped the Boers to defeat African tribes elsewhere. Also, it was harvest time. The people must first harvest the crops and then prepare for war.

## Chasing the Boers to Bloemfontein

By 1865 , Mshweshwe was ready for war. He had sent skillful negotiating teams all the way to Britain and they had managed to persuade the British government to remain neutral. He had also





Mshweshwe

**"I have heard previously of the custom of the whites of purchasing and selling lands. I consider it a most abominable and barbaric custom to alienate the property of the tribe, which they hold so sacred. I shall not accept pego (money) from any of you. I only lend you the cow to milk. You could use her but I will not sell the cow. I allow you to remain, even if it is a year or two that you may rest on your way. We must warn you that we look upon you merely as passersby."**

managed to purchase many guns. The Boer trekkers declared war in June. The first battle was such a big victory for Mshweshwe 's army that one writer said "it looked as though Mshweshwe had organized all natives in South Africa against the Whites".

The Basotho warriors, armed with guns and having stored plenty of food for a long battle, chased the Boers an horseback to within 30 miles of todays Bloemfontein. But the Boers still thought they could win. Commandant Louw Wepner led his troops right up to Thabo Bosiu, the capital of the Basotho. He boasted that his men would capture Mshweshwe and he, Wepner, would sleep with Ma Mohatu., Mshweshwe's wife that very night. But the warriors killed Wepner and forced the trekkers to flee.

Now the British colonial government started worrying. They saw how strong Mshweshwe was and they were afraid his people's brave example would encourage Africans throughout the Cape and Natal to rise up and take back their land. They began secretly to support the Boers again. They sold guns and ammunition to the Boers in vast quantities while they made sure Mshweshewe got no more weapons.

With the advantage of more and better weapons, the Boers managed to force the Basotho off the large and fertile wheatlands in



the Orange Free State. Still Mshweshwe and his people decided to carry on fighting for their land. In July 1867 the 3rd Basotho War of Resistance started. This time the Basotho decided that they could not afford to engage in head on battles because the Boers had far better weapons than they. Instead they chose guerilla tactics. They would attack in small bands, prolong the war and wear out the Boers. For 20 long and brave years the war continued but eventually the guns of the Boers and help from the British colonial government forced Mshweshwe's people permanently off their land in the Orange Free State.

Still, Mshweshwe's people continued to control the area that today is called Lesotho. Of all the African chiefs, Mshweshwe alone remained undefeated in war.

## Pedi warriors



Pedi warriors attack the Boers

Another kingdom was the Pedi kingdom in the eastern and central Transvaal. During the 1850s the Pedi had defeated the Boers who were trying to drive them from the land. Many of the Pedi warriors went to work for short periods in the colony so that they could buy guns.

As the Pedi kingdom grew stronger, other African tribes began to reject the rule of the Boers and refused to pay taxes or provide labour for them. Sekhukhune was their chief, they said, and they would recognize no other ruler.



## Mafolofolo

One community owing allegiance to Sekhukhune was a community at Mafolofolo led by Sekhukhune's younger brother, Dinkwanyane. Although Dinkwanyane had been converted to Christianity, he and his followers had learnt to distrust the missionaries - "You are our enemies", they said, "you assist the boers and you teach us we must obey them".

In October 1875, the magistrate of Lydenberg visited Mafolofolo to tell them they must pay taxes. Forty armed men barred his way and refused to let him see Dinkwanyane. Later Dinkwanyane sent a message, explaining why his people would not pay taxes:

**"I will address you Boers, you men who know God, do you think there is a God who will punish lying, theft and deceit? I say the land belongs to us. Your cleverness has turned to theft."**



Sekhukhune

The Boers decided they must defeat the Pedi kingdom. In July 1876, a huge army marched on the Pedi kingdom. It consisted of 2000 boers, 2400 Swazi warriors and 1000 other Transvaal Africans. After many dangerous and heavy battles, the Swazi warriors captured Mafolofolo and killed Dinkwanyane.

But the Swazi were furious. The Boers had been so scared that they had just stood on a nearby hill, watching while the Swazi warriors had been killed. They refused to continue and returned home. The Boers army was terrified and when their president tried to force them to advance they gave him a petition which read:

**"We are all entirely unwilling to storm Sekhukhune's Mountain for the reason that we see no chance of safeguarding our lives or conquering the kaffer".**

President Burgers, the President of the Orange Free State, was forced to retreat. Instead he adopted a "burnt earth" policy: the Boer army burnt villages, destroyed crops and stole cattle. The Pedi area was also hit by drought and by the end of 1876 many people were facing starvation. But their spirit of resistance was still strong.

## The British join the Boers

In 1877 the British annexed the whole of the Transvaal, including the Pedi kingdom. In 1879, they demanded that Sekhukhune accept British



rule, pay a heavy fine and pay taxes. Sekhukhune was worried: the British colonial army had just defeated the mighty Zulu kingdom. But his people refused to submit:

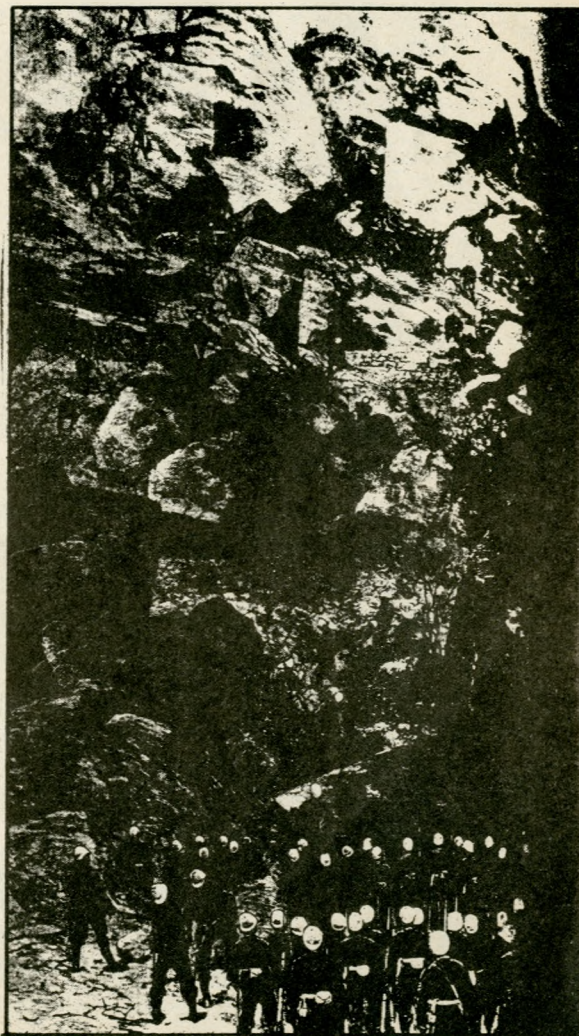
**"We will never be subject to the English who compel their subjects to work for them, the English are liars. Rather than be in the position of a subject tribe, we will fight; we won't pay taxes until we have had a good fight for it", they said.**

In November 1879, the British sent in an army to defeat the Pedi kingdom. This time the army was three times the size of the previous Boer/Swazi army. Again the Swazi and other Africans formed the backbone of the troops. After heavy fighting, the colonial army managed to chase the Pedi from their capital. Still, thousands of men, women and children refused to surrender. They hid in caves in a hill called Ntswaneng (the fighting kopje). Even explosives placed at the entrance to the caves did not break their spirit of resistance.

The next day the battle went on. There were heavy casualties on both sides: more than 1 000 Pedi warriors were killed before admitting defeat. On 2 December, Sekhukhune was tracked to a cave and taken to prison in Pretoria.



The Swazi supported the Boers and British against the Pedi



The battle of Ntswaneng



# The Zulu Kingdom

One of the biggest kingdoms in Southern Africa during the 1800s was the Zulu kingdom. During the diaqane (see page 9), Dingiswayo and later Shaka defeated many kingdoms and tribes. They then proceeded to weld together many of the defeated people into a great and mighty kingdom, which Shaka named the Zulu kingdom.

The backbone of the Zulu kingdom was its military might. Dingiswayo and Shaka developed powerful fighting methods. One of these was a fighting formation known as the "chest and horns". The "chest" was a large group of soldiers who attacked the enemy head on, while the "horns" closed around the enemy on both sides (see picture on opposite page).

Shaka also abandoned the long throwing spears and small shields used by most African warriors. Instead he made his soldiers use short stabbing spears and huge shields. Thus, by advancing closely together, the warriors could almost completely protect themselves from their enemy by creating a solid wall of shields.

Shaka also built up the power of the Zulu kingdom by completely destroying the defeated kingdoms. Everybody from the defeated tribe would be killed, except for young men and young women who would be absorbed into Zulu society. In this way the Zulu kingdom grew in size.

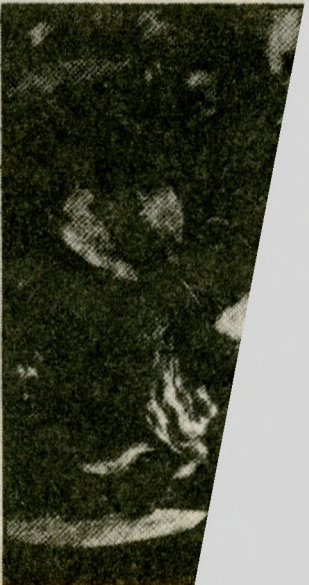
After Shaka's death in 1828, the Zulu kingdom began to get weaker, but it was still a mighty force. When the British went to war in January 1879, they suffered a humiliating defeat in the Battle of Isandhlwana. Indeed, it was the biggest military defeat in British colonial history. Massive re-inforcements were brought in and finally, by the end of the year, the British had managed to break the power of the Zulu kingdom. Cetshwayo, king of the Zulu kingdom, was captured and exiled to Cape Town.

Even today, many people remember the bravery and ferociousness of the Zulu warriors. So strong is the memory of the great kingdom that people like Gatsha Buthelezi have done all they can to co-opt the old symbols and pretend to rule in the tradition of the old kingdom.





Armed warrior

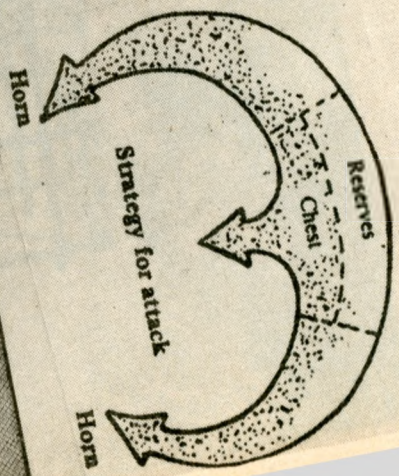
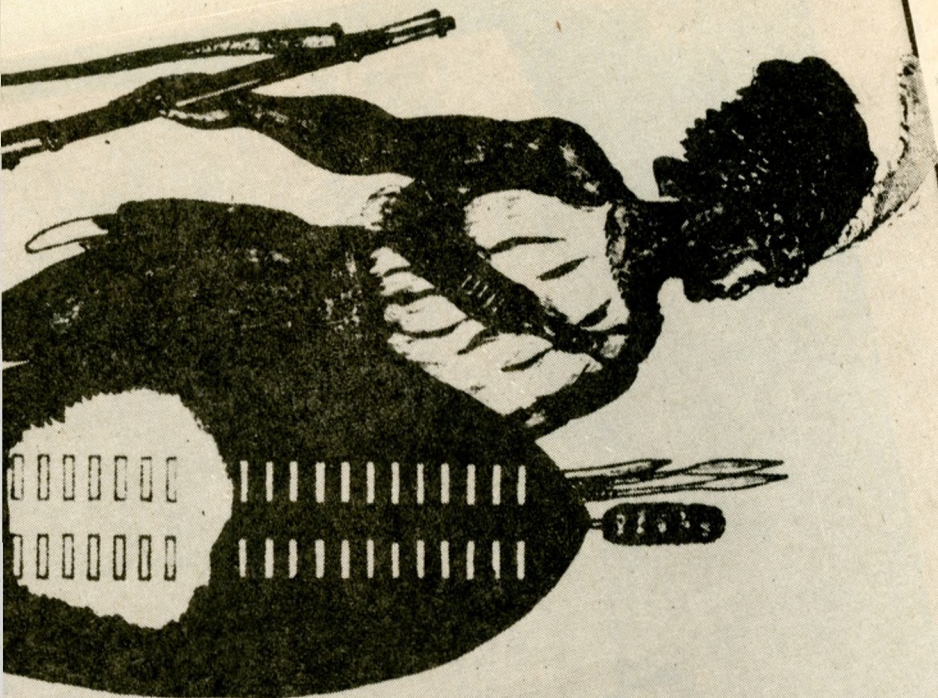


Warriors in battle

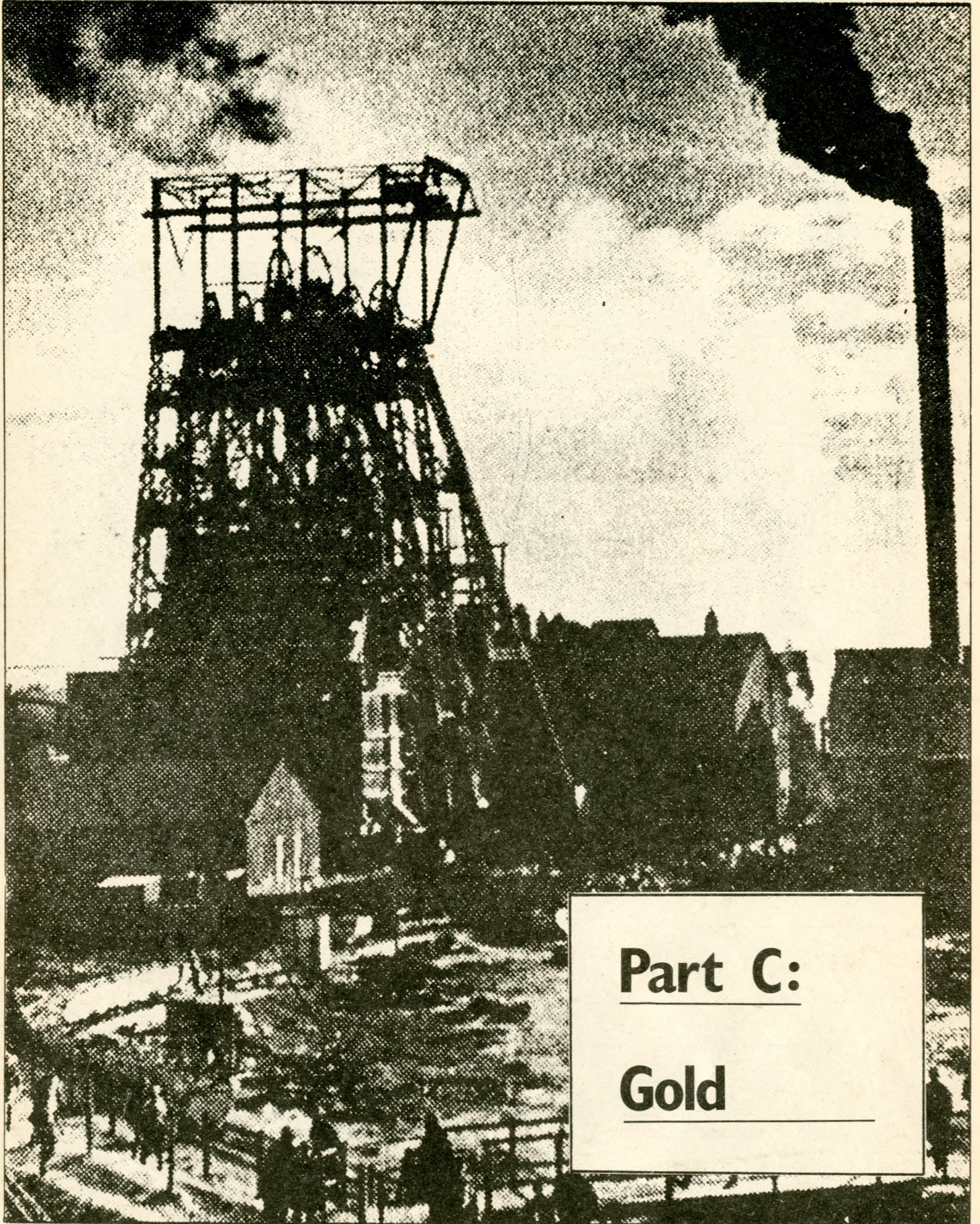


The defeated chief, Ceshwayo, is led away, 1873.









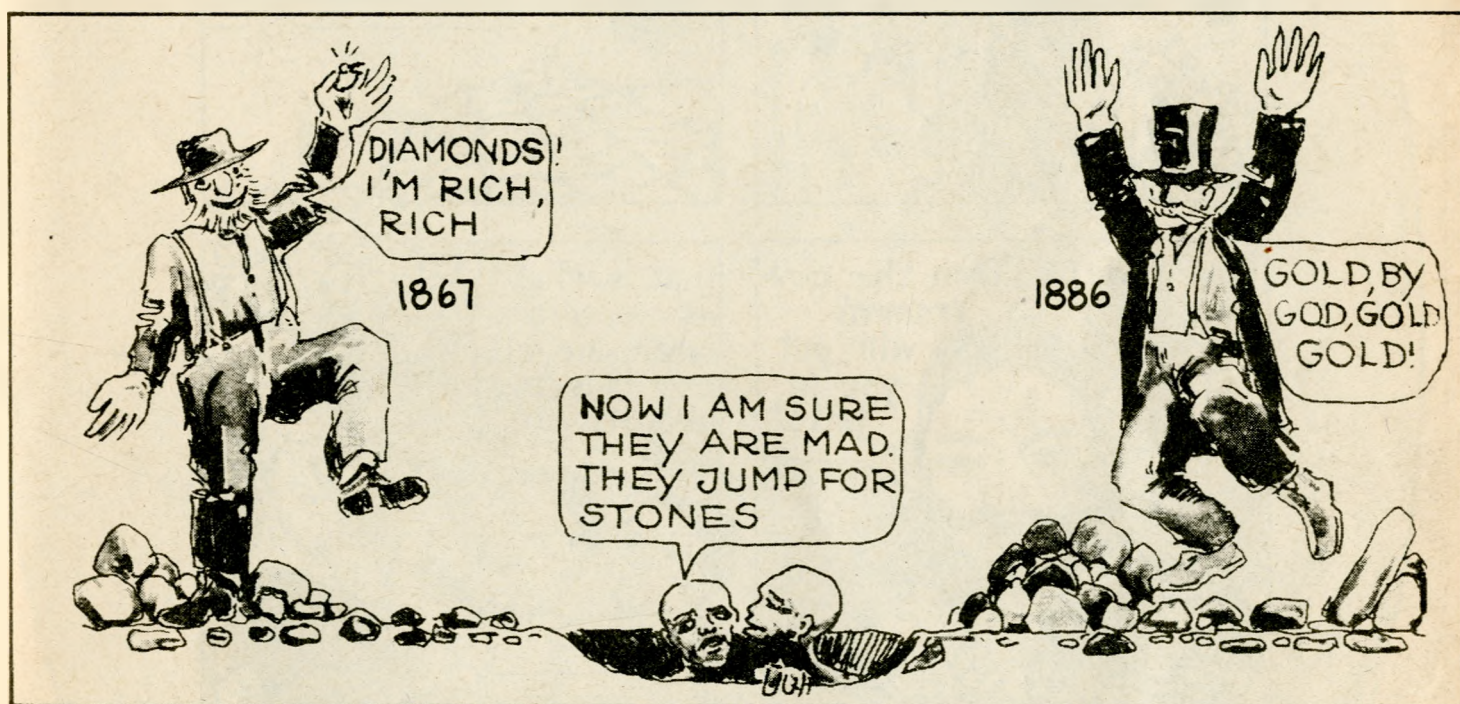
**Part C:**

**Gold**



By the 1880s, the British and the Boers had broken the power of the independent African kingdoms. But the resistance of the people was so strong that the colonial armies had failed to crush them entirely. Although the people lost much of their fertile land, they still had access to some land. This meant that they were not forced to become servants and workers. Indeed, in some areas, enough crops were produced for communities to feed themselves and to sell to neighbouring white towns. Often white farmers complained that the peasants still had too much land so that not enough were being forced to seek work on the white farms. But for the meanwhile, all they could do was complain.

Then, in 1886, on a small and insignificant farm in the Transvaal, an event happened that was to change the lives of all South Africans - the whites discovered that there was gold.



## Gold changes South Africa

People came from all over the world to seek their fortune on the Witwatersrand. Most of the gold was deep down in the bowels of the earth and thousands of miners were needed to dig it out. Most Africans were not interested in working on the mines as they had their own land. Besides, conditions were dangerous and wages for unskilled workers very low.

The minebosses and the British government started to scheme on ways to force people off the land. All kinds of taxes were introduced - hut



taxes, poll taxes, dog taxes, labour taxes. People had to pay these taxes in cash. To get this money they were often forced to go work for a wage.

People were angry and in many areas they refused to pay all these taxes. This is a conversation that took place in one area between a magistrate and some peasants:



## The Anglo-Boer War

But before they could turn their attention to the rebellious peasants, the minebosses had another problem to solve. The gold was in the Transvaal and the Transvaal was run by a Boer government, which was not always sympathetic to the minebosses. The Boers in the Transvaal were mainly peasant farmers and the Transvaal government saw to their needs. The minebosses wanted a powerful capitalist government that would focus its energies on the development of mining. They found a powerful ally, the British colonial government, who were greedy for the profits from the mines. In 1899, the British declared war against the Boer Republics in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. After three years of bitter fighting, the Boer governments were defeated.

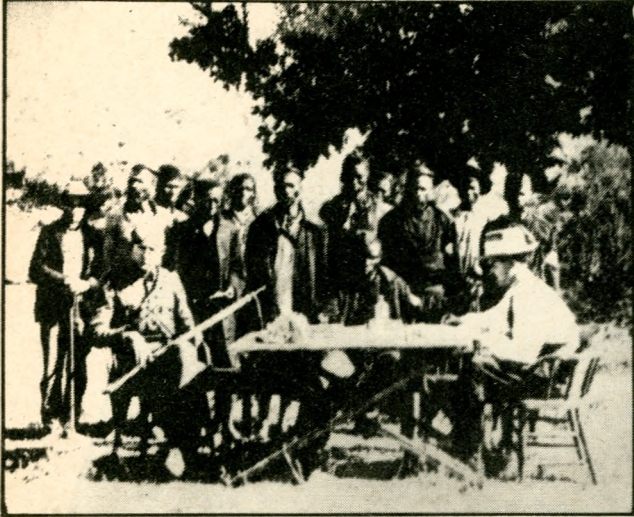




**Part D:**

**The spear falls**





Collecting taxes

Now the colonial government could turn all its attention to forcing Africans to work on the mines. Still they met with defiance. The strongest resistance came from areas in Natal. At the end of 1905, the Natal authorities decided that each male over the age of 18 had to pay £1 tax. The people were angry and all over there were rumours of a rebellion. A white farmer who tried to take his workers to pay their taxes was killed.

During the next few months, unrest simmered. In some areas, people refused point blank to pay the taxes and the rumours of the rebellion grew louder. A number of Africans were arrested for "making assegaais and uttering seditious language". Some were given the death sentence and hanged. Then there was a lull, but soon the grumbling of the rebellion grew.

## Bambata rebellion

This time it was centred on an area just north of Greyton, where the chief, Bambata, and his people lived. The government deposed Bambata and put a puppet in his place. Bambata took to the bush and began to recruit an army. In March 1906, he returned and captured the puppet chief. He then ambushed and defeated the government's troops before taking refuge in the Nkandla forests. In these forests, another chief, Sigananda and his people lived. They were iron-workers and assegaai-makers and they had already clashed with the government over the tax issue.

The colonial government ordered Sigananda to capture Bambata and hand him over. The old man replied by taking his people to join the army of Bambata. Resistance started to spread to other parts of Natal.

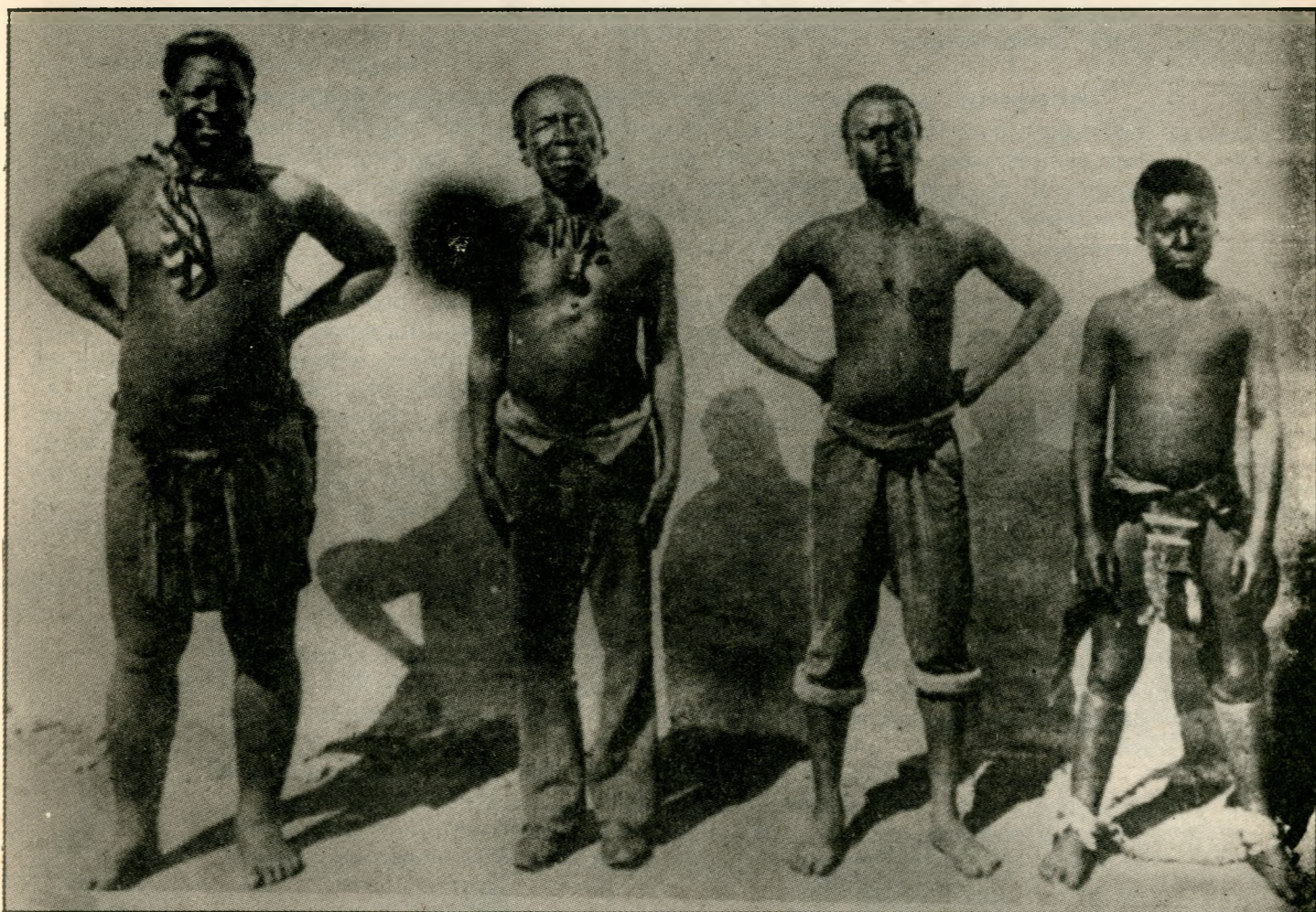
But the government's troops closed in on the Nkandla forests. One section of the troops drove the rebels up a valley, while another



Two men are executed for "sedition"



section cut off their retreat. As Bambata's army tried to retreat, the colonial army mowed them down with machine guns. Over 500 warriors were killed, including Bambata. They cut off his head and paraded through the towns to show the people that their hero was dead. Someone even made a postcard with the picture of Bambata's head which the troopies sent home to their sweethearts.



Captured rebels

The rebellion was broken. Altogether nearly 4 000 Africans had lost their lives since the beginning of the uprising. Bambata's rebellion was to be the last major armed uprising of the people against their colonial oppressors. The spear had fallen and it would be another 55 years before it would be raised high again. Until then, new and different forms of struggle would be developed to meet the changes and hardships that the pople had to carry.



# Conclusion

From 1652 until 1879, the major struggle in South Africa was over the land. As the white settlers spread out, looking for new land to farm, the conflict spread. First from Cape Town through to the Eastern Frontier, then inland and north, until people through the whole of Southern Africa were involved in the struggle to defend their land and their independence.

Perhaps the outcome would have been different if the British had not taken over from the Dutch. Britain was a strong colonial power: her armies were bigger and they were backed by a growing industrial wealth in Britain itself. While the Trekkers had defeated the Khoi and San tribes, they were battling hard to gain the upper hand against the stronger, more tightly-knit Xhosa chieftainships.

Ultimately, it was the British colonial army that broke the power of the Xhosa people and then went on to defeat the kingdoms in the North, such as the Pedi and Zulu. Still, resistance was so strong that not even the mighty British colonial army could completely dispossess the people of their land. Moreover, the spirit of resistance remained strong.

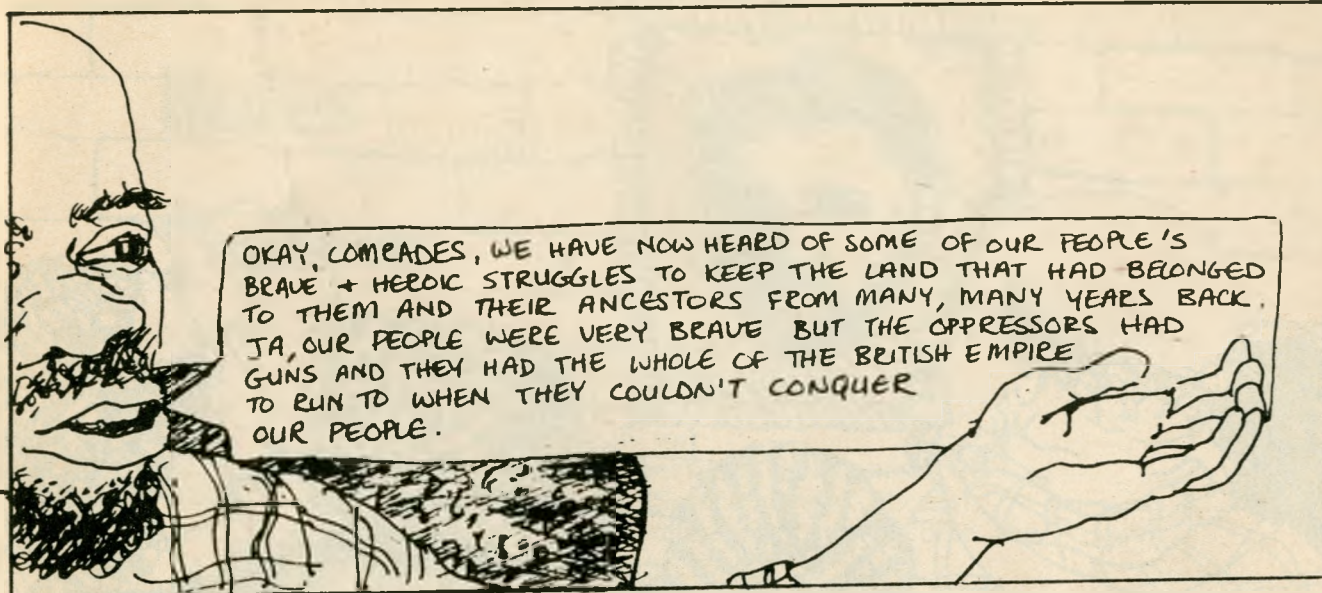
Once the whites found out about the gold and diamonds, new factors came into play. Britain was far more determined to hang onto this potential wealth and began to intervene even more directly into the affairs of her prized colony. Gold also drastically affected the fate of the African people as the colonial government began to find ways of turning them into a cheap labour force. New pressures in the form of taxes began to be exerted on the people. The struggle shifted from defending the land to resisting these pressures. It was in this context that the last armed rebellion took place - that of Bambata in 1906.

In Chapter Two, we look at the different forms of struggle that emerged in the new capitalist South Africa. But even though the struggle shifted from the land issue, the question of land even today remains an important grievance of our people. The Freedom Charter says:

## THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restriction of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger;  
The State shall help the peasants with implements, seeds, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;  
Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;  
All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;  
People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.





OKAY, COMRADES, WE HAVE NOW HEARD OF SOME OF OUR PEOPLE'S BRAVE + HEROIC STRUGGLES TO KEEP THE LAND THAT HAD BELONGED TO THEM AND THEIR ANCESTORS FROM MANY, MANY YEARS BACK. JA, OUR PEOPLE WERE VERY BRAVE BUT THE OPPRESSORS HAD GUNS AND THEY HAD THE WHOLE OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE TO RUN TO WHEN THEY COULDN'T CONQUER OUR PEOPLE.

YES, YES COM, BUT IT WAS ALSO THAT OUR PEOPLE WERE NOT UNITED. JA, OUR HISTORY IS FULL OF HEROES, BUT IT IS ALSO FILLED WITH MANY WHO ~~LOSS~~ THEIR BIRTHRIGHT BY JOINING THE OPPRESSORS. MAYBE IT WASN'T ALWAYS ON PURPOSE. SOMETIMES I SUPPOSE PEOPLE WERE JUST SCARED; SOMETIMES THERE WERE OLD JEALOUSIES; SOMETIMES JUST BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WERE QUITE SCATTERED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY.

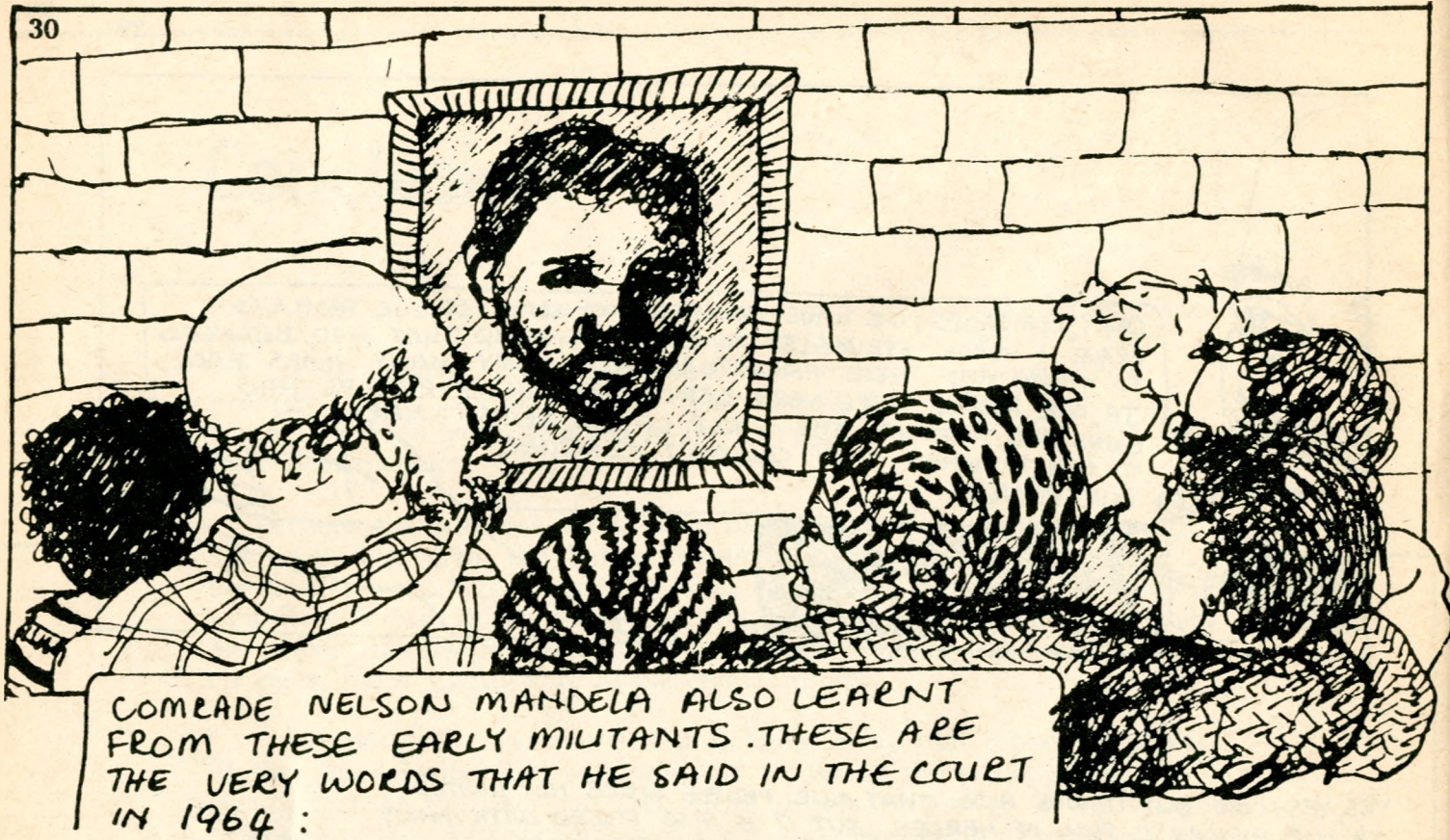
BUT IN THE END, ALL OUR PEOPLE, WHETHER XHOSA, ZULU, KHOIKHOI OR SOTHO, ALL OUR PEOPLE WERE TO END UP AS THE LOSERS.



OF COURSE, WE DID NOT FORGET THIS LESSON. ONLY 7 YRS AFTER COMRADE BAMBATA LAID DOWN HIS SPEAR - A NEW ORGANISATION WAS BORN. THIS NEW ORGANISATION WE SHALL LEARN ABOUT NEXT TIME. IT WAS AN ORGANISATION TO UNITE ALL AFRICAN PEOPLE ALL OVER SOUTH AFRICA. THIS ORGANISATION WAS THE ANC.

MAMA IS RIGHT ABOUT ALL THE DISUNITY. BUT WE MUST ALSO NEVER FORGET THE MILITANCE + COURAGE OF OUR EARLY WARRIORS. THESE MEMORIES WILL ALWAYS BE A GREAT TRADITION IN OUR STRUGGLE. EVE TODAY, YOU WILL SEE, WE OFTEN SING ABOUT THEM IN OUR FREEDOM SONGS.





COMRADE NELSON MANDELA ALSO LEARNT FROM THESE EARLY MILITANTS. THESE ARE THE VERY WORDS THAT HE SAID IN THE COURT IN 1964 :

"In my youth in the Transkei I listened to the elders of my tribe telling stories of the old days. Amongst the tales they told me were those of wars fought by our ancestors in defence of their fatherland. The names of Dingane and Bambata, Hintsa and Makana, Squngthi and Dalasile, Mshweshwe and Sekhukhune, were praised as the glory of the entire African nation. I hoped then that life might afford me the opportunity serve my people and make my own humble contribution to their freedom struggle."



# Notes

## Timeline

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 5000 BC   | People first inhabit South Africa   |
| 1652      | Arrival of Jan van Riebeeck   |
| 1659      | First Khoi/Dutch war  |
| 1673      | Second Khoi/Dutch war   |
| 1779      | First frontier war between Xhosa and Boers                                |
| 1799      | Third frontier war (Stuurman and Xhosas)                                  |
| 1806      | British take over from Dutch and become the colonial power in the Cape    |
| 1820s-30s | Difaqane/Mfecane  |
| 1830s     | Great Trek  |
| 1843      | British annex Natal   |
| 1850      | War of the Axe or War of Unity (Sandile)                                  |
| 1858      | First Sotho/Boer War  |
| 1865      | Second Sotho/Boer war (guerilla war continues for 20 years.)              |
| 1876      | Pedi/Boer war (Dinkwanyane)   |
| 1877      | Britain annexes Transvaal   |
| 1879      | Battle of Isandhlwana<br>Defeat of Zulu kingdom<br>Defeat of Pedi kingdom |
| 1886      | Whites find out about gold  |
| 1899      | Anglo-Boer war starts   |
| 1906      | Bambata Rebellion   |

## Definitions

Some definitions you will need to know:

**Colonialism:** A **colony** is a country which is settled and ruled by another country. For example, Holland and then later the British **colonised** South Africa. This means that Holland and Britain took control of the area that is now South Africa. Dutch and British people came to live in South Africa as rulers and **colonisers**. The **colonial** period is the time from **colonisation** to independence.

**National liberation:** In all countries that were colonised, people did not accept the new rulers. They fought back to regain their freedom and independence. A **national liberation** struggle is the struggle for the people as a whole to win back control of their country and their rights.

**Capitalism:** This is an economic system where a small group of people, the **bosses**, own all the factories, farms and machinery. The majority of people, the **workers**, do not own these things and to survive are forced to work for the bosses for **wages**. The **bosses** only pay the **workers** for some of the things they produce. The rest of the money they make



from selling the goods pays for the machines and materials and for their own **profits**. In a **capitalist** system, this small group of people, the **bosses**, get rich from the work that is done by the **workers**.

## Dictionary

**Abominable** = shockingly bad  
**Allegiance** = loyalty  
**Allies** = friends  
**Alliance** = pact by allies to stand together  
**Ambush** = booby trap; to lie in wait  
**Annex** = take, colonise  
**Barbaric** = savage  
**Compel** = force  
**Conscripted** = called up to army  
**Depose** = dethrone, unseat  
**Dispossess** = take away, seize  
**Gorge** = gully, ravine  
**Guerilla** = unconventional warfare  
**Indigenous** = original inhabitants  
**Lull** = a pause  
**Migration** = movement from one place to another  
**Negotiate** = bargain, propose conditions  
**Neutral** = non-aligned, not taking sides  
**Pastures** = fields where cattle graze  
**Prolong** = drag out  
**Refuge** = safe place, shelter  
**Restore** = give back, return  
**Sacred** = precious, holy  
**Seditious** = subversive  
**Spoor** = tracks  
**Subject** = citizen, subordinate  
**Taxes** = levy, payment to government/king  
**Tradition** = custom, something carried forward from generation to generation.

## Books to read

- \* The Struggle for the Land - Economic History Research Group (covers many of the same issues dealt with in this chapter, but has more detail about how people lived).
- \* Time Longer Than Rope - Eddie Roux (the people's resistance).
- \* Gold and Workers - Luli Callinicos
- \* Chaka - Thomas Mafolo
- \* Trooper Peter Halkett - Olive Schreiner (novel about Rhodes and the brutality of British imperialism).



# UWC PEOPLES HISTORY SERIES

No. 1 (Booklet 1/6) Let Us Speak of Freedom

"Let Us Speak of Freedom" is the first publication in a new UWC Peoples History Series launched by the Department of History at the University of the Western Cape. The aim of the series is to encourage the writing of popular history — and to make it accessible to students, workers and communities. People and organisations on and off the university campus are invited to co-operate with us on the peoples history project and to contribute material for publication.

"Let Us Speak of Freedom" gives one view of the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. (There are others too, history can be written in many different ways). We believe it contributes to the historical debate and to the recovery of a neglected aspect of our past.

*"The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived they put us into history. You are well aware that it is the contrary. When they arrived they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history."*

(Amilcar Cabral)



# Let us speak of freedom

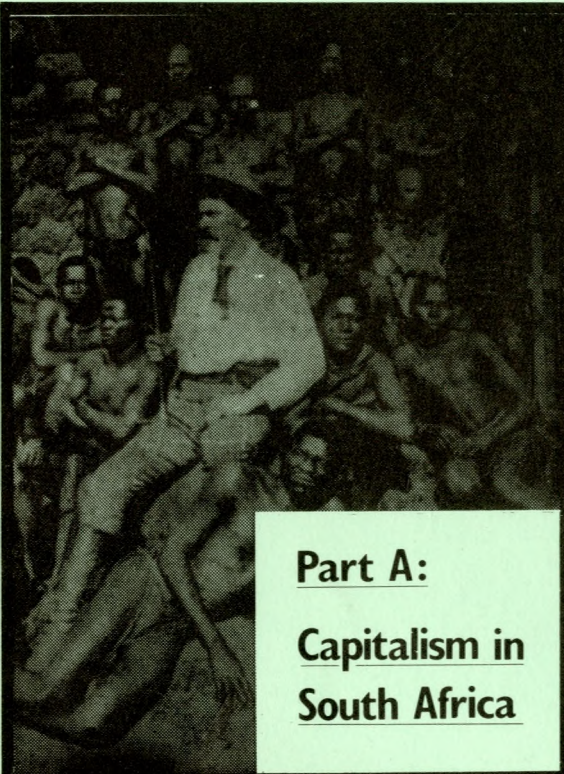
WE CALL THE MINERS OF COAL, GOLD AND DIAMONDS.

Let us speak of the dark shafts, and the cold compounds far from our families.

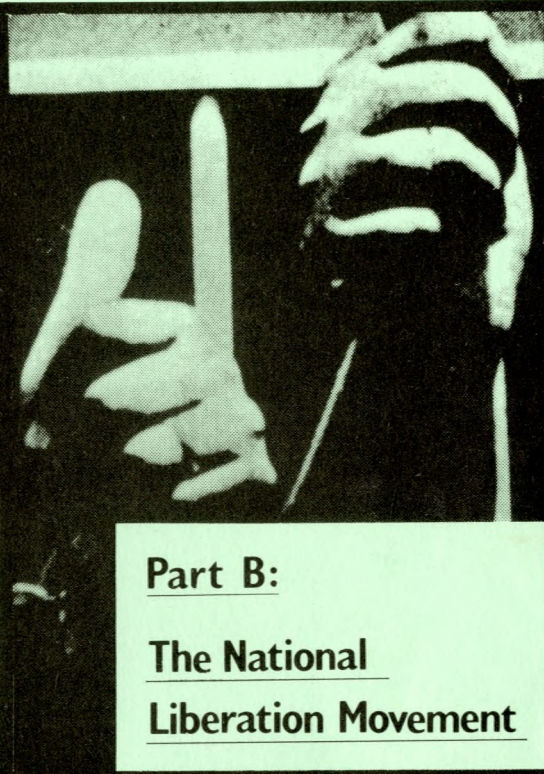
Let us speak of heavy labour and long hours, and of men sent home to die.

Let us speak of rich masters and poor wages.  
LET US SPEAK OF FREEDOM.

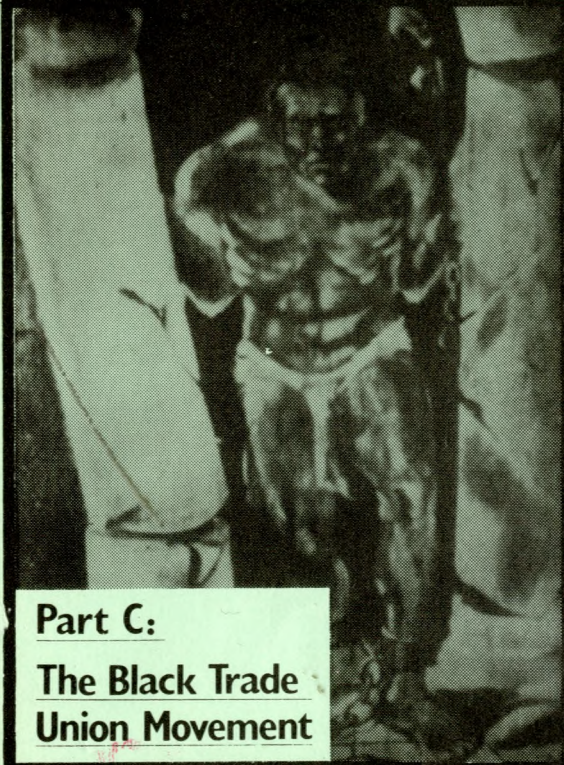
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THE CAPE TOWN  
TRADE UNION  
LIBRARY



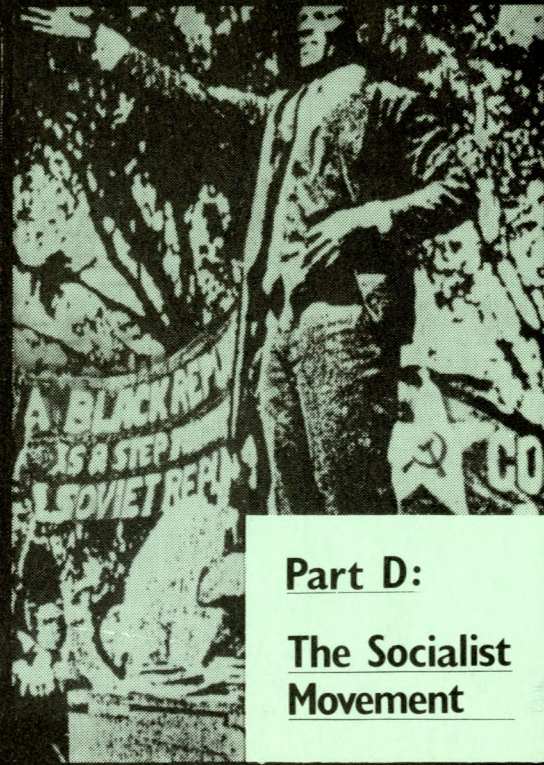
Part A:  
Capitalism in  
South Africa



Part B:  
The National  
Liberation Movement



Part C:  
The Black Trade  
Union Movement



Part D:  
The Socialist  
Movement





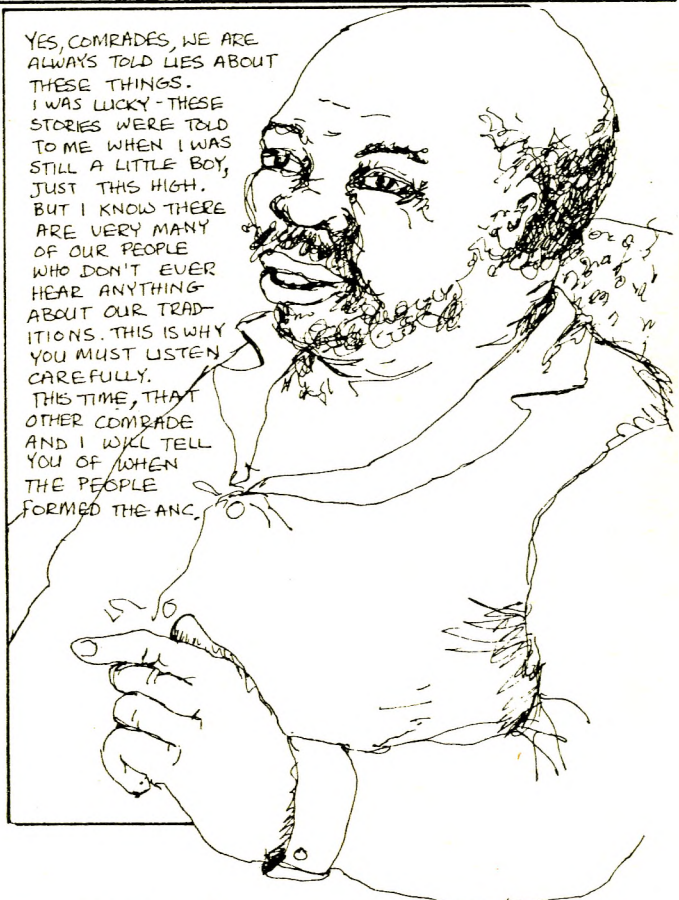
JA, COMRADES, HERE WE ARE AGAIN. IS EVERYONE HERE. OKAY, MAYBE WE CAN START AGAIN. ME, I AM AN OLD WOMAN. COM THOZAMO, I THINK YOU MUST SHAKE MY MIND - WHERE DID WE END OFF LAST TIME?

MMM. IF I REMEMBER YOU HAD JUST TAUGHT US OF UBAMBATA AND THAT REBELLION. YA, MAMA, I WAS VERY EXCITED ABOUT LAST WEEK'S LESSON. WE ALWAYS THINK IT WAS JUST THE BOERS WHO MADE ALL THIS OPPRESSION, BUT IT WAS THESE BRITISH WHO REALLY DEFEATED OUR PEOPLE, ALSO WE AFRICAN PEOPLE OFTEN THINK THAT AMACOLOURED PEOPLE JUST ACCEPTED THE BOERS BUT NOW I KNOW THAT THAT WAS DIFFERENT.



2.

YES, COMRADES, WE ARE ALWAYS TOLD LIES ABOUT THESE THINGS. I WAS LUCKY - THESE STORIES WERE TOLD TO ME WHEN I WAS STILL A LITTLE BOY, JUST THIS HIGH. BUT I KNOW THERE ARE VERY MANY OF OUR PEOPLE WHO DON'T EVER HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT OUR TRADITIONS. THIS IS WHY YOU MUST LISTEN CAREFULLY. THIS TIME, THAT OTHER COMRADE AND I WILL TELL YOU OF WHEN THE PEOPLE FORMED THE ANC.



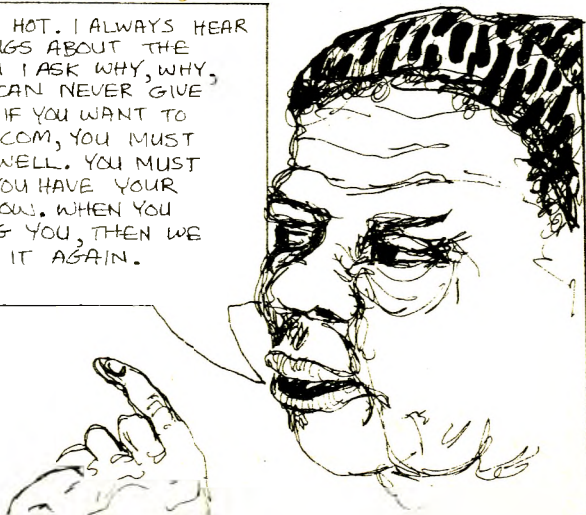
3.

COM, I WAS ALSO PLEASED WITH OUR TALKS LAST WEEK, BUT CAN'T WE SKIP A BIT TODAY. WHAT I MEAN TO SAY, COM, IS THAT WE ALL KNOW HOW REACTIONARY THE ANC WAS AT FIRST, SO CAN'T WE.....



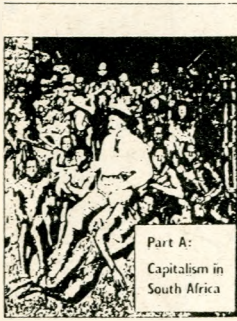
4.

YO, YO, YO, COM, YOU ARE MAKING ME VERY HOT. I ALWAYS HEAR YOU YOUNG PEOPLE SAYING THESE THINGS ABOUT THE PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION. BUT WHEN I ASK WHY, WHY, WHY, DO YOU SAY SUCH THINGS, YOU CAN NEVER GIVE ME AN ANSWER. ME, I DON'T MIND IF YOU WANT TO BELIEVE THESE THINGS, BUT THEN COM, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION VERY WELL. YOU MUST NOT JUST SHOUT SLOGANS. MAYBE YOU HAVE YOUR REASONS, BUT LET US LEAVE THIS NOW. WHEN YOU HAVE HEARD WHAT WE ARE TELLING YOU, THEN WE CAN COME BACK AND TALK ABOUT IT AGAIN. OKAY. WE SHALL BEGIN

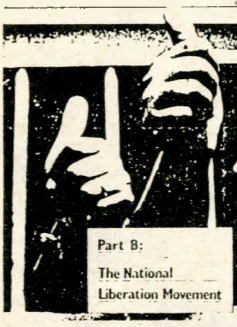




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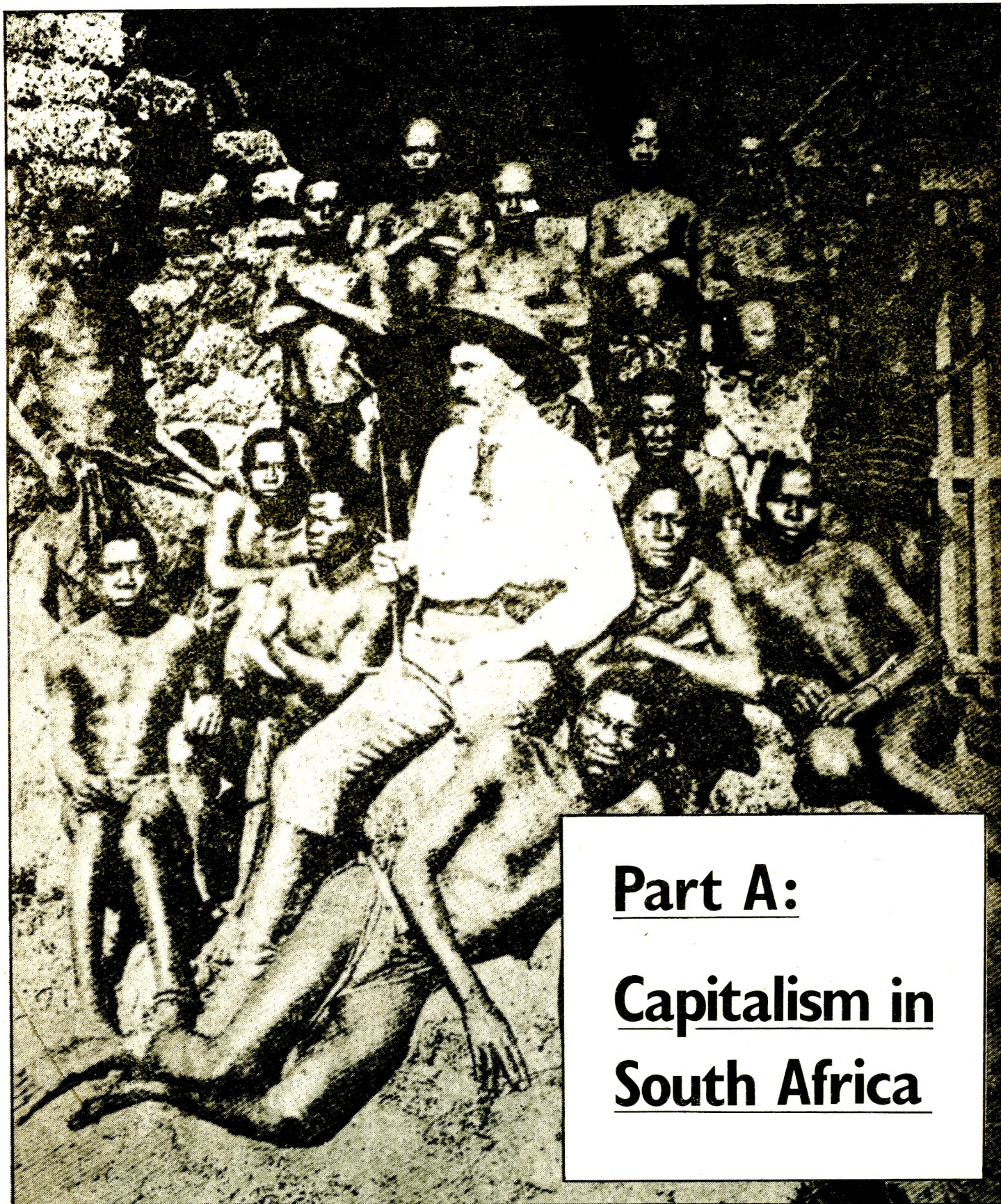


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**Part A:**

**Capitalism in**  
**South Africa**



In chapter one, we looked mainly at the struggle for the land. After the whites found out about the gold, capitalism developed very quickly in South Africa. The new cities and towns with their factories and mines became the heart of this new capitalist world. Land was still important to the people and struggles continued to happen in the countryside. Capitalism, however, had become the most powerful force in South Africa; what happened in the factories and mines affected the people wherever they lived.

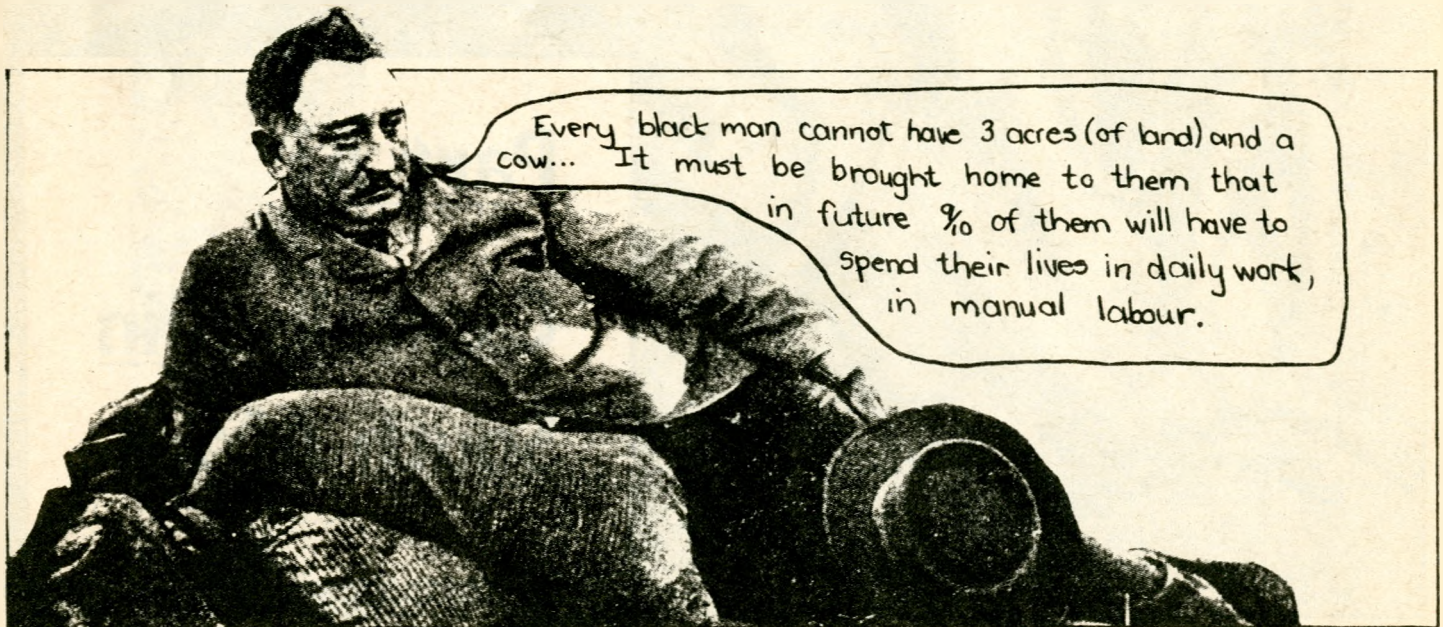
In these cities and towns, the people began to learn new ways of struggling and organizing. Not long after Bambata had dropped his spear, the people began to build organisations - both national political organisation of black trade unions. At least two major organizations, the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) have their roots in this period.

## The mines need workers

By 1906, the people had been militarily defeated, but they were too strong to have been completely pushed off the land. Most black people still had access to enough land to survive on.

This made the government and the mine bosses very angry. The mines needed thousands of workers to bring the gold out from the depths of the earth. Even though they forced the people to pay all kinds of taxes, most young men refused to go work on the mines. Wages were low and many workers were killed in mine accidents.

The government and the mine bosses decided to change this situation. Not by raising wages or improving the safety of the mines, but by forcing even more people off the land. Cecil John Rhodes, former prime minister of the Cape and a big mine boss, said:



Cecil John Rhodes



---

## Union and 1913 Land Act

In 1910, the British colonial government decided to unite the Cape, Natal, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into one country under one government. This new government was a white government and it was mainly sympathetic to the mine bosses. One of the first things it did was to pass the 1913 Land Act.

In terms of this Act, the country was divided up into "white" areas and "black" areas. The "White" areas consisted of 93 percent of the country, the "black" areas only 7 percent (Later this was increased to a measly 13%). Africans who lived in the "white" areas had to give up their land and become workers or else go live in the miserable black reserves.

By the stroke of a pen, thousands of families were left homeless. Some became landless workers on white farms. Others refused to accept the insulting low wages, and trekked off with their families and cattle to try find other land. In most cases they were chased away from wherever they went. The "reserve" areas, already overcrowded, began to burst at the seams. Slowly the trickle of young men to the mines flowed faster. There was no choice - watch your family starve and the cattle die or sell your strength to greedy mine bosses for a few months at a time.

## City life

In the cities life was hard and bitter. Most of mineworkers had to live in compounds - huge hostels that packed men in like sardines. The compounds helped the bosses to sleep easier at night. The compounds were built like jails, often with only one entrance which was barred with a strong steel gate. Armed guards checked on who was coming and going and anyone who caused trouble was locked up. The compounds were also divided ethnically - Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, etc - to make unity more difficult.

Pass laws and curfews made the workers' burden even heavier. Often a man would need to carry a whole bunch of papers in his pocket to show that he had paid his taxes, that he had paid his rent, that he was in the area legally, that he had permission to be out at night, and so on. If any of these papers were not in order, he was thrown into jail

While every African person had to carry passes, not everyone lived in compounds. Initially most of the compounds were for the mine workers. Those who came to work in the new factories in Johannesburg and other big cities, lived wherever they could find place to stay. There were no group areas then, so workers lived next door to each other, no matter what their colour. Factory workers were also often better paid than the miners. Many settled permanently in the cities with their families.

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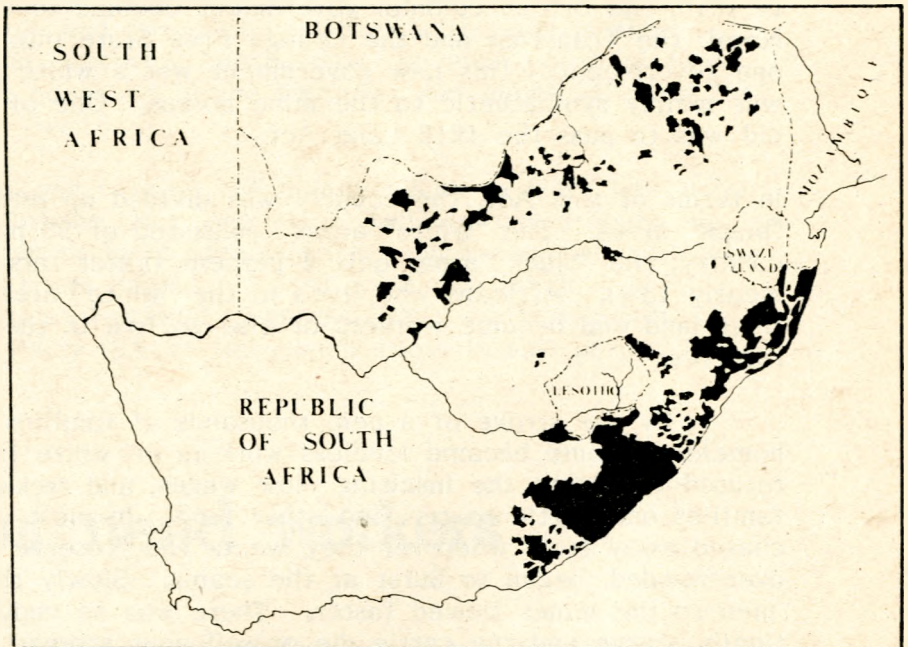
# 1913 Land Act

This story was told by one of the ANC leaders, Sol Plaatjie, who travelled around the farms in the Transvaal and OFS on bicycle to find out the effects of the Land Act.

A squatter called Kgobadi got a message from his father-in-law in the Transvaal. His father-in-law asked Kgobadi to try to find a place for him to rent in the Orange 'Free' State.

Kgobadi had also been forced off the land by the Land Act.

The 'Baas' said Kgobadi, his wife and his oxen had to work for R36 a year. Before the Land Act, Kgobadi had been making R200 a year selling crops.



He told the 'Baas' he did not want to work for such low wages. The 'Baas' told Kgobadi to go.

So both Kgobadi and his father-in-law had nowhere to go. They were wandering around on the roads in the cold winter with everything they owned. Kgobadi's goats gave birth. One by one they died in the cold and were left by the roadside for the jackals and vultures to eat.

Mrs Kgobadi's child was sick. She had to put her child in the ox-wagon which bumped along the road. Two days later, the child died. Where could they bury the child? They had no rights to bury it on any land. Late that night, the poor young mother and father had to dig a grave when no-one could see them. They had to bury their child in a stolen grave.



Migrants on their way to town



# Passes

The pass was a document of labour control.. Any white person or policeman could stop an African and ask to see his pass. When he looked at the pass, he would find:

- \* the name and address of the bearer, as well as his father's name and his chiefdom, so that the bearer could easily be traced if he ran away;
- \* the name of the district where the pass owner was allowed to look for work; the date on which the pass was issued - the pass bearer had only six days to find a job; otherwise he had to try for another district. This method made sure that labour was directed to the areas where it was needed;
- \* the names and addresses of all the employers of the pass bearer, past and present; how long he had worked for each of them; what kind of work he had done; what the employer thought of him. In addition, the pass bearer's wages for each job were recorded. What the bosses said about him decided whether he would get a job in the future. The wage he had been

paid decided how much he would be paid in the future.

All of this information was recorded in the files of the pass office, making it easy to keep track of all workers. If a worker broke his contract, it would be reported to the pass office. Workers' lives, then, were completely controlled by the pass. An IWA member explained:

"These passes are chains, enchaining us from all our rights. These passes are the chains chaining us in our employers' yards, so that we cannot go about and see what we can do for ourselves. .. It is the very same with a dog. If you take your dog and chain it to a tree, I am sure the dog will only move as far as the chain allows it. And if you want to starve that dog, can it go and look for food? Never, it will die at the same place where it is chained. Comrades, I want to tell you it is the same with us here in South Africa.

IDENTIFICATION PASSPORT

REGISTERED

No. 23293 A. DISTRICT JOHANNESBURG.

EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: P. B. Midlay 25 Kirk St

PERIOD OF VALIDITY: From 9<sup>th</sup> July 54 To 15<sup>th</sup> July 54

EMPLOYEE'S NAME: CHARLES NYELASI

EMPLOYEE'S SURNAME: CHARLIE

EMPLOYEE'S FATHER'S NAME: NYQUANKE

EMPLOYEE'S TRADING NAME: BACA MUKOWLA

EMPLOYEE'S ADDRESS: NYIASI LANGA M'LELEBE J.R.

ISSUED AT: JOHANNESBURG

DATE: 9. 2. 53

ISSUED BY: [Signature]

TRANSFERRED TO: [Signature]

TRANSFER STAMP: NATIVO PASS OFFICE JOHANNESBURG 2 JULY 1954

TRANSFER STAMP: NATIVO PASS OFFICE JOHANNESBURG



## White workers

There were also white workers in the cities. In the early days of gold mining, many skilled miners from other parts of the world came to work on the mines. After the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1901), poor Afrikaner families were also forced to find work in the cities. During the war, the British had burnt their farms and crops and thrown many women and children into concentration camps to break the Boer resistance.



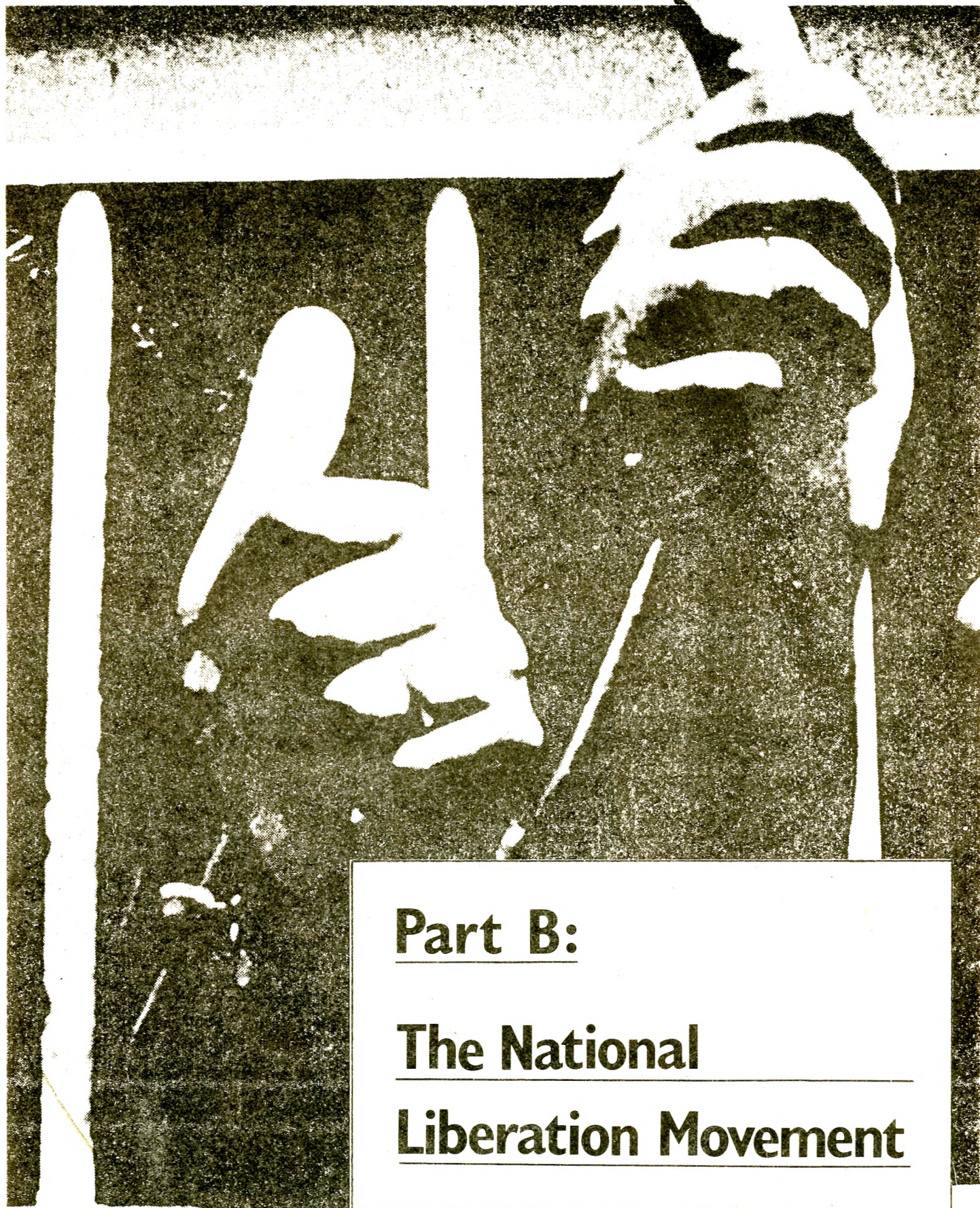
A rural white family treks to town

## Changes

Life then had changed dramatically for millions of ordinary South Africans. But still South Africa was very different from what it is today. Although lots of people had been forced to the cities to work, the working class was still very small. Most of the workers were mineworkers. Factories were small. Also, most African workers did not spend all of their time in the cities. Many still saw themselves as peasants and hoped to return to the land and cattle back home. The bosses, of course, used this as an excuse to pay even lower wages. They argued that they only had to pay enough money to support the worker, not his family. His family, they said, could live off the land.

The bosses also used every opportunity to keep workers divided - white worker against black, Xhosa against Sotho, factory workers against mine workers. But this did not stop the people from struggling for a better life. It is to this struggle that we now turn.





**Part B:**

**The National**

**Liberation Movement**



In 1909, just before the Union of South Africa was formed, a Congress was held in Bloemfontein, attended by many local African organisations. These organisations could see that as far as the whites were concerned, there was to be no place in the government for black people in South Africa. Although the people protested strongly, the Union was formed. With the exception of the Cape and a few hundred people in Natal, black people were given no political rights in the Union. In the Cape only people with enough education and property could vote.

The time was ripe for black people to unite. At the end of 1911, a young lawyer, Pixley Seme, wrote a letter to the African newspaper, "Imvo Zabantsundu" saying:

"the demon of racialism, the aberrations of the Xhosa Fingo feud, the animosity that exists between the Zulus and the Tongas, between Basotho and every other native must be buried and forgotten. We are one people".

He called on the people to form a national African political movement.

## Birth of the ANC

On the 8 January, 1912, the South African Native National Congress, later to be called the African National Congress (ANC), was formed. The ANC united African people from all parts of South Africa into one national political movement. As Seme had said, there were no longer tribes; the people were now one. The ANC also brought together people from different walks of life - intellectuals, priests, chiefs, working people and peasants.



Early leaders of the ANC



## Delegations

Immediately after the inaugural conference, Congress sent a delegation to Britain to tell them of the people's anger at having being excluded from the Union government. Although South Africa had its own government, it was still a colony. Because of this, many people thought that if they put pressure on the British government, it would intervene and force the Union government to give black people their political rights. But the British government turned a deaf ear to the delegation.

Again, when the 1913 Land Act was passed, another Congress delegation set out for London to try persuade the British government to put an end to this injustice. Before the delegation left, Congress leaders travelled from farm to village all through South Africa to hear the grievances of the people. Meetings were held and all over people scraped together the pennies and shillings needed to pay for the delegation's fare.

But the British government supported the minebosses who controlled the Union government. Once again the British government refused to listen to the voice of black people in South Africa. The delegation also spoke to many other people in Britain and public meetings were held. For the first time, ordinary people in Britain heard of the struggles and the pain of the South African people.



ANC delegation to London

## Other issues

Congress also took up many other issues, both big and small, that were deeply felt by the people throughout South Africa - dog and poll taxes, land, bad conditions on the mines, wages, housing, voting rights, the pass laws.

Congress tackled these issues through public protest meetings, resolutions, letters to the press and by sending delegations both to the Union and British governments.

In some areas, though, the mood of the people was far angrier and there more militant struggles took place.



## OFS: women stand firm

In 1913, the authorities in the Free State tried to force African women to carry passes. The women saw how passes trapped their men. They were determined to resist every effort to make them victims of the pass laws. Congress supported and helped to organise the women's defiance.

In Bloemfontein, hundreds of women marched on the magistrate's office. This pamphlet tells what happened:

**"Friday morning, the 6th June, should and will not be forgotten in South Africa. On that day the native women declared their womanhood. 600 daughters of South Africa taught the arrogant whites a lesson that will not be forgotten. Headed by the bravest of them, they marched to the magistrate, hustled the police out of their way and kept shouting and cheering until his worship emerged from his office and addressed them. They proceeded to the Town Hall. The women had now assumed a threatening attitude. The police tried to keep them off the steps... Sticks could be seen flourishing overhead and some came down with no gentle thwacks across the heads of the police. 'We have done with pleading. We now demand', said the women".**



The protest swept through the small dorps. Many women were sent to prison. In Winburg the prison was so full of resisters, that the police had to stop arresting the women. The struggle continued on and off during the next seven years. In 1920, the Congress newspaper, "Abantu -Batho " reported that

**"The women were again fighting the battle of freedom. In the district of Senekal, 62 women were sentenced to pay a fine of L2 each or go to jail with hard labour for one month .. The women refused to pay the fine and preferred to go to jail, so they had to march 24 miles to Senekal, where there is a prison."**

The women's resistance was so strong that the Boers were forced to admit defeat. It was not until the 1950's that anybody dared raise the question of passes for women again.



## Transvaal: strikes and passes



Workers in the cleansing department on strike

In 1918, workers in the cleansing department in the Johannesburg municipality decided that they had had enough. They had the worst jobs. They had to collect the toilet buckets from all the houses everyday and their wages were amongst the lowest of all workers. They saw how white workers won wage increases by going on strike, so they also went on strike. Within days, Johannesburg began to stink as the shit piled up.

The workers were all arrested. When newly employed workers refused to work as scabs, they too were arrested. The magistrate, McFie, dealt with the strikers harshly. He sentenced them to work for two months without pay and ordered armed guards to shoot anyone who refused to work. Black people in Johannesburg were furious. Congress organised meetings all around the Rand. Activists who were members of the ANC called on their organisation to support the workers' struggle.

At the first meeting on the 10th June, the atmosphere was hot. Speaker after speaker denounced McFie and called for solidarity action. Some of the more conservative Congress leaders tried to damp the spirit down. Bud Mbelle called on the audience to "extinguish the fire when we see it burning outside....the ANC Congress at Bloemfontein decided that its feeling was against any form of strike... if we do not stop the strike the whole of Johannesburg will be in flames." But the audience roared, "Let it burn!"

Over 1 000 people attended the second meeting on the 19 June. Some recalled the heroes and fighting spirit of the early days:

**"The White people teach you about heaven and tell you that after**



after death you will go to a beautiful land in heaven. They don't teach you about this earth on which we live... If we cannot get land on this earth neither shall we get it in heaven..The god of our chief Chaka, Mshweshwe, Sandile, Lentsoe, etc gave us this part of the land we possess."

The meeting decided that on 1 July all workers would demand a minimum wage of 1 shilling a day. If the bosses wouldn't give in to their demand, they would strike.

**"The White workers do not write to the Governor General when they want more pay. They strike and get what they should",** declared one speaker.

All over the Rand the atmosphere got hotter. Congress organizers went to Benoni, Springs, Randfontein and Roodepoort to mobilize the workers there. Everywhere, workers were angry and militant. The government began to get nervous. The Prime Minister, Louis Botha met with a Congress delegation and the bucket strikers were all released!

Talk of the strike continued amongst the militant workers in the town. However, not all the people in Congress supported the strike. Some felt that striking was a foreign method. The people should rather stick to tactics like delegations. One ANC leader, complained about the militant Congress leadership in the Transvaal. "They spoke almost in unison, in short sentences, nearly all of which began and ended with the word 'Strike'..."

Others supported the idea of the strike but felt that the people were not yet ready for action: more mobilizing and organizing work was needed. The communists supported this position. In the end the strike was officially called off, although many workers demanded the 1 shilling wage and some did go on strike.

## Anti-pass campaign

After this, things looked quiet for a while. But underneath the quiet, anger was still bubbling. There was one issue that the workers were particularly angry about - the hated pass laws. Again the Transvaal Congress was at the forefront of these struggles, as the people demanded that their organisation give them guidance and leadership.

On the 31 March 1919, several thousands of workers marched to the pass office in Johannesburg, demanding to discuss their grievances with the officials. A deputation of ten was allowed into the offices but left after getting no satisfaction from the officials. They then led the crowd to an open space behind the pass office, where they proceeded to hold a mass meeting.





Men collect the passes in large sacks

"Our voice," said one speaker, "is not heard and will never be heard so long as the present conditions exist. We count for nothing in parliament, although we are the majority of the population of the country. We are increasing every day, and we have a right to be heard, and we will be heard."

The meeting decided that everyone should refuse to carry passes. Everyone handed in their passes. All through the day, organisers marched through town, collecting passes and throwing them onto huge bonfires.

Leaders were arrested but the pass burning continued all over the Rand in places like Springs, Benoni, Boksburg and even some rural areas. Within a few weeks, over seven hundred people were in jail and eventually the resistance died down.

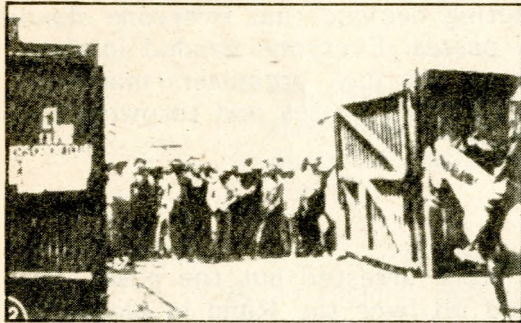


Anti-pass meeting, 1919

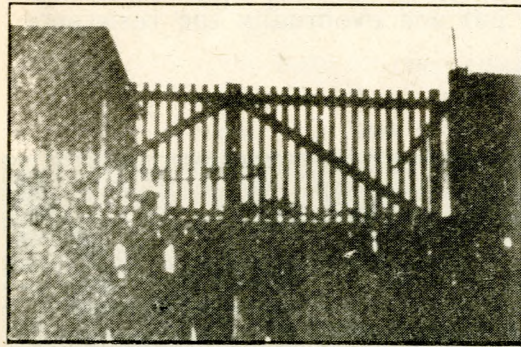




Mounted police outside the compound



Workers march towards the compound gate



Workers are locked into the compound



Workers gather inside the compound



The army surrounds the compound

## Mineworkers' strike

Scarcely a year later, resistance spread to the mines. In February 1920, two miners, Mobu and Vilikati were arrested. The two had just returned from a Congress meeting and were going from room to room, urging workers to unite and strike for higher pay. The following day, almost all the workers in the compound went on strike. They demanded the release of Mobu and Vilikati, higher wages and some other concessions.

From there, the strike spread rapidly along the East Rand, then to Johannesburg West, Johannesburg Central, Roodepoort, Germiston East and all through the West of the Reef. All in all, more than 71 000 workers were involved in the strike, bringing many mines to a standstill.

Congress in the Transvaal organised many meetings in support of the mineworkers. They also wrote a letter to the bosses, on behalf of the workers, listing their demands.

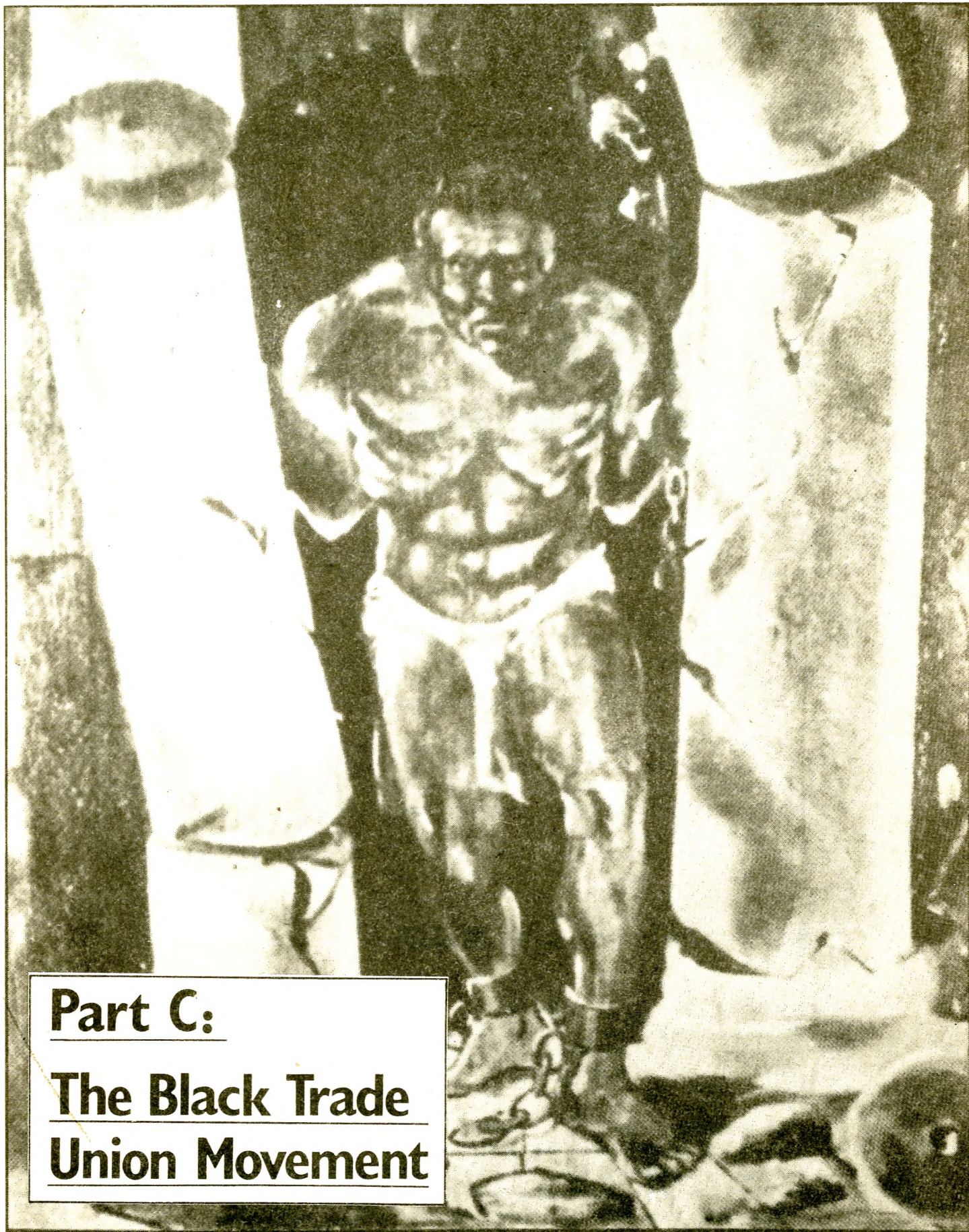
But eventually the strike was broken brutally. Police herded the workers into the compounds and those who refused to go to work were driven underground at gunpoint.

## Controls and reforms

The results of this period of struggle in the Transvaal were many. Workers gained much experience in organisation. All the oppressed were mobilised against low wages, passes and the shocking conditions in the towns.

Yet the ANC leadership was divided about how to respond to the direct action of the people. Some continued to oppose mass, militant action, believing that it would scare the white government and jeopardise the chances of winning reforms. The government could see that the leadership was divided and they responded in two ways. First they tightened controls on people in the towns. Then they gave some reforms in an attempt to co-opt the middle classes. In this way, they hoped to divide the ANC further.





**Part C:**

**The Black Trade  
Union Movement**



## White workers

From the early days of capitalism in South Africa, a strong dividing line was drawn between black workers and White workers. Initially, the white immigrant miners were the only ones allowed to do the skilled jobs. Because skilled workers were scarce, they were paid far more than the black workers.

As blackminers became more experienced on the mines, the greedy bosses started to undercut the power of the skilled white miners by threatening to replace them with cheaper black labour. White miners felt threatened and they also believed that they were more "civilized" and superior to their fellow black workers. So, instead of joining hands with black workers against a common enemy, the mine bosses, white workers began to see black workers as their enemy as well.

## Trade unions

The immigrant workers also brought with them a tradition of trade union experience from their home countries. They formed powerful trade unions and fought many militant battles with the mine bosses, the biggest of which was the 1922 mineworkers' strike. During this strike, the government sent in the army and even bombed white miners from the air. After the 1922 strike and revolt, the bosses and government decided to guarantee white workers a more privileged position. Their trade unions were co-opted and tamed. From then on it was up to black workers to fight for the rights of working people in this country.

There had been strikes and struggles by black workers before 1920. Black workers, however, were not organised into trade unions. Only one union, the Industrial Workers of Africa, was formed in 1918 by the communists. We will deal with the Industrial Workers of Africa later in this chapter.

## I see you, white man!

In 1919, a new union, the Industrial and Commercial Union, the ICU, was formed in Cape Town after a dockworkers strike. In 1920, the ICU had its first national conference. They decided to organize all workers, including women and farm workers to fight for:

- \* A minimum wage of £5 a month
  - \* Work for 5 days per week and a half-day on Saturday
  - \* An 8 hour working day
  - \* An end to laws which oppressed black people, especially the pass laws and the 1913 Land Act.
-





ICU leaders

"Although the initials stood for a fancy title, to us it meant: when you ill-treat the African people, I See You; if you kick them off the pavements and say they must go together with the cars and ox-carts, I See You; I See You when you do not protect the people, I See You when you kick my brother, I See You."

Clements Kadalie was elected as the national president.

The ICU swept through the country like a veld fire reaching into the cities and the rural areas, and even as far as today's Zimbabwe and Malawi. A farm labourer from Standerton said: "Man, we thought we were getting our country back through Kadalie."

The ICU was still very young when it had to mourn its first martyrs. At an open air rally in Korsten, Port Elizabeth, one of the ICU leaders, Masabalala, urged workers to join the ICU and to fight for a living wage of 10 shillings per day. After the meeting the police arrested Masabalala. Word soon got out and many workers marched to the police station where Masabalala was being held. The police and some whites panicked and started shooting. 23 Workers were killed and many more injured. But the anger of the people forced the police to release Masabalala and the bosses agreed to a small increase.

In 1925, the ICU held many meetings in the township at Bloemfontein. Wages were very low and the women were fed up with the continual beer raids. Many women made a living from brewing and selling beer. Everytime the police found the women's beer, they threw it into the streets. Kadalie and other ICU speakers told the people of the victories that others had won through unity. He called on them to "Agitate until Parliament trembles".

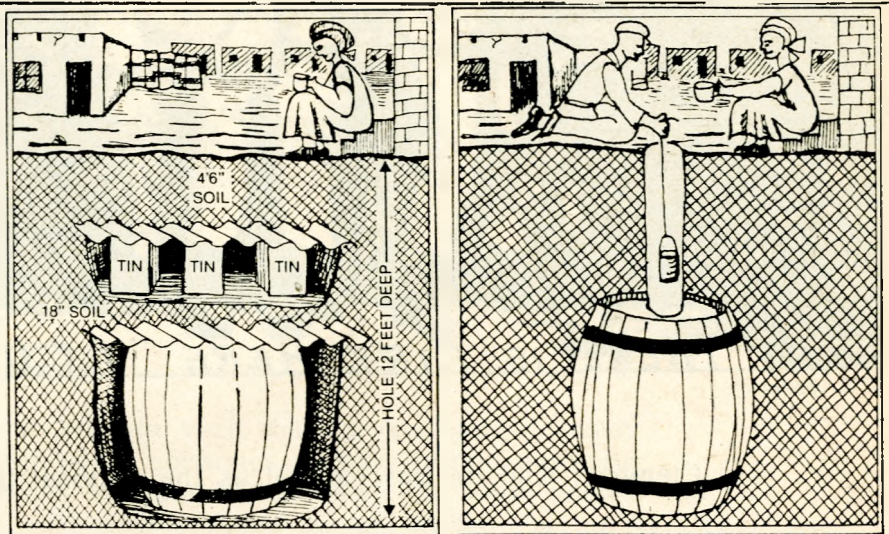
One Sunday the women held a demonstration in the township to protest about the beer raids. Over 3000 people attended. The police and some whites came into the township and shot one man dead. The people threw stones and chased the police away. That night meetings



were held all over the township and the people decided to stay away from work. 22 000 responded to the call.

Again the police and local whites came into the township. This time they killed four more people and injured 23. But the attacks did not break the spirit of the people. Many more workers joined the ICU. The struggle for higher wages continued but it was only three years later that the workers eventually won their increase.

These sketches show the cunning manner in which the liquor is buried - a method that confused the police for a long time. A hole is dug 12 feet deep. Into this is placed a big barrel of liquor. A sheet of iron is put on top of the barrel and covered with 18 inches of soil. Then come paraffin tins full of liquor which are also covered with soil. In many raids only the paraffin tins were found. After the police took the tins away, the barrel was tapped as is shown in the second sketch.



## ICU grows

Despite the fact that the police had shown that they would deal with the ICU ruthlessly, this did not frighten the people. All through the country a fighting spirit was reborn.

Many farm workers also joined the ICU. They used to travel many miles to attend ICU meetings on Sundays. In Nelspruit the police tried to break up one such meeting, by arresting some people. An ICU newspaper describe what happened:

**"The chiefs with their regiments came forward and 9 000 people sang Nkosi Sikelela i-Afrika and they demanded they should all be arrested. The police spoke among themselves wanting to know where they are going to put all these people, and it was said they should all go.. there were three cheers and they left for the Location and the people's son spoke."**

In Middelburg, Thomas Mbeki, a member of the National ICU executive and Communist Party member told the people to be proud. This land belonged to them too and they "must walk on the pavements side by side with the whites". An old lady remembers: "the people



began to be free to move on the pavements, away from the streets and the cars. They were made to walk on the pavements, walking side by side with the whites and rubbing shoulders with them. Mbeki .. brought us to this position for we used not to mix."

A young African teaching in Vryheid described an ICU recruiting meeting. A huge crowd made its way to the meeting place. There were veterans from the Zulu war, young and old men from the farms, middle aged men from the mines, workers from the town "all marching, column upon column towards the venue of assembly". Speeches were made and the young teacher wrote membership cards "till my arm ached ... And those people flocked to the ICU as to the ark which would convey them to safety".

## Decline of the ICU

But the ICU grew so quickly that often its leaders couldn't keep pace. It was difficult to consolidate organization and win workers' demands when workers all over the country were clamouring to form new branches. Factories, too, were small in those days so it was difficult to form industrial unions like we have today. Thus, although, the ICU at its height had 100 000 members, often it was not strong on the factory floor. The ICU also had hardly any members on the mines where most African workers were employed. The compounds made it very difficult to organize mine workers.



ICU meeting



Other problems began to arise too. From 1925 onwards, Kadalie and some of his supporters wanted to win recognition from the government for the ICU. They began to oppose militant action and refused to support strikes. One group in the leadership stood in their way - the communists. Many members of the Communist Party were active and important organizers in the ICU. They saw the problems in the ICU and worked hard to overcome the difficulties. They were concerned that while the ICU made lots of fine speeches, very few victories had been won. They were also very concerned about the way that money from membership fees was abused and disappeared.

In 1926, Kadalie and his supporters managed to expel the communists. A rule was made that no member could be a member of the ICU and the Communist Party at the same time. The Communist Party replied:



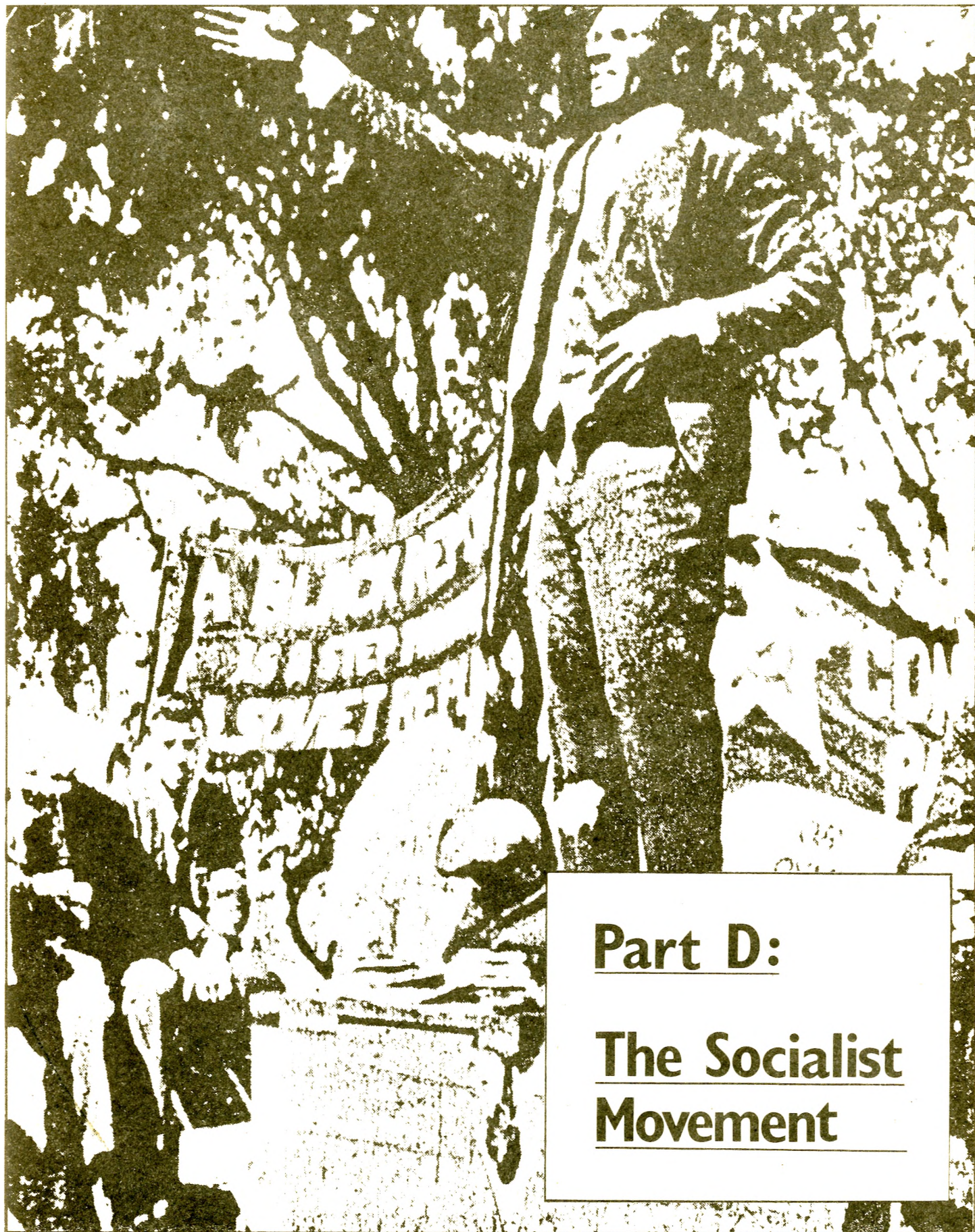
ICU executive. Thomas Mbeki, Jimmy La Guma and Johnny Gomas (all standing) were members of the Communist Party

**"The Communist Party is not in opposition to the ICU. It appeals to all Native workers to join up and help build a still stronger ICU. The Communist Party is a political party, whereas the ICU is a trade union. You are told you cannot serve two masters. Your expelled officials have never served two masters, but only one - the downtrodden workers of Africa."**

In a number of areas, where the communists were known and respected, members held meetings to protest against the expulsions. But Kadalie refused to budge.

For a while, the ICU continued to grow enormously. Then from 1928, members grew more and more disillusioned. Eventually the ICU split up. By the end of the 20's there was little left of the ICU. The ICU was dead, but the fighting spirit lived on. The vision of one union for all black workers would inspire workers for years to come.





## Part D:

# The Socialist Movement



## Early socialists

We have already seen how the immigrant miners brought with them a tradition of trade union struggle. Many had also belonged to socialist organizations.

In 1915, the International Socialist League (ISL) was formed. In the early days, most of the work of the Socialists was done amongst the white working class. Right until after the 1922 mineworkers strike, most of these early communists believed that white workers would be in the forefront of the struggle for socialism.

Still, in 1917 a small group of communists began to organize black workers into a union, the Industrial Workers of Africa (IWA). The Industrial Workers of Africa used to meet in Mr Neppe's shop on the corner of Fox and McLaren Streets in Johannesburg. Phooko, a member of the IWA, explained the goals of the organization to a meeting:

**"This organization was to organize, and get rid of the Pass Laws which are the main oppression to us Natives, and also fight against the little wages we are paid, and also fight for our rights. We are the workers of the world, we do everything, we produce everything, and still we get nothing, out of what we produce all is taken and owned by a group of men called the Capitalists, the rich men, men who do nothing. We are organizing to try and abolish this lazy group of men.**

The Industrial Workers of Africa never had more than a few hundred members but its power was felt all through the Rand. Members of the IWA helped organise the boycott of mine stores, they were active in the upsurge that followed the bucket strike, in the anti-pass campaign and the 1920 black mineworkers strike. Together with the Transvaal Congress, IWA militants travelled from compound to compound, right across the Reef, urging workers to unite and fight for their freedom.

## Communist Party is formed

In 1921, the ISL joined together with other socialist organizations to form the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). After the 1922 white mineworkers strike, many in the CPSA began to see that it was black workers and not white who would fight the battle against capitalist exploitation in South Africa. Although some continued to organize in the white unions, others began to organise black workers.

Many communists were, as we have already seen, active in the ICU until they were expelled in 1926. Even then, many members



# LISTEN! WORKERS! LISTEN!

Native workers! Why do you live in slavery? Why can't you be free as other men? Why are you kicked about and spat on by your white employers? Why is it that you cannot go where you like without passes? Why is it that you are imprisoned when you are found without a pass? Why do you labour so hard for low wages, and why is it that you are sent to jail when you refuse to go to work? Why are you encamped in the compounds like cattle? Hy! Why is it so?

Listen then! It's because you are the workers of the world. It's because your employers want to be rich through you. It's because they buy and pay the Government and the Police to keep you as slaves. If they did not make money through you, you would not be oppressed. But listen, this world is existing through your strength. You do all the work; without you they cannot live. You are their life. Take note of that. You are the cows they live on and you are oppressed and milked. Then you are robbed of all that belongs to you.

There is only one way of freedom, native workers! Unite! Workers! Unite! Forget the things that divide you. You must not say this is a Zulu, and this is a Sotho and this is a Shangaan. You are all workers. Bind yourself together in a strong chain.

Wake up! Workers! Wake up!

It is now dawn. Ho! You have long been sleeping and the white men robbing you of your strength for nothing. Come all to our meeting of the workers and hear the good news of freedom, and how to fight for our rights so that you can free yourself from the chain of the bosses. Unity is strength!

Comrades and let us fight against these many passes that cause the trouble and also fight against the low wages we are paid.

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT YOUR CHAINS! YOU HAVE A WORLD TO WIN!

## WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!

ISSUED BY INTERNATIONAL WORKERS OF AFRICA





Inaugural conference of the Communist Party

resigned from the CPSA so that they could continue working among the ICU's members. The CPSA also started to recruit many blacks members into its ranks. Soon black people began wearing the five pointed red star with the hammer and sickle. By 1928, out of total membership of 1 750, 1 600 were Africans.

## Communist Party grows

Meetings were held all over the country. In Vereeniging, 2 000 township residents attended a CPSA meeting. During a meeting in Potchefstroom, a Communist Party official, Thibedi was arrested and charged with incitement. Hundreds of people lined the streets when he appeared in court. After he was acquitted a jubilant crowd met on the market square and were addressed by Douglas Wolton, another CP official.

Local whites were so angry to see a white man addressing the crowd that they attacked and assaulted Wolton. Fighting broke out and finally the communists led the crowd back to the township. As a result of this incident nearly the whole township signed up.

Many people also attended CP night schools after work. Often there were not enough desks for everyone. In one school, comrades had to blacken the walls because there were no blackboards. In the night



schools, workers learnt for the first time how to read and write and how to struggle for a better life. Books, like Buhkarin's "ABC of Communism", circulated widely.

## Black Republic

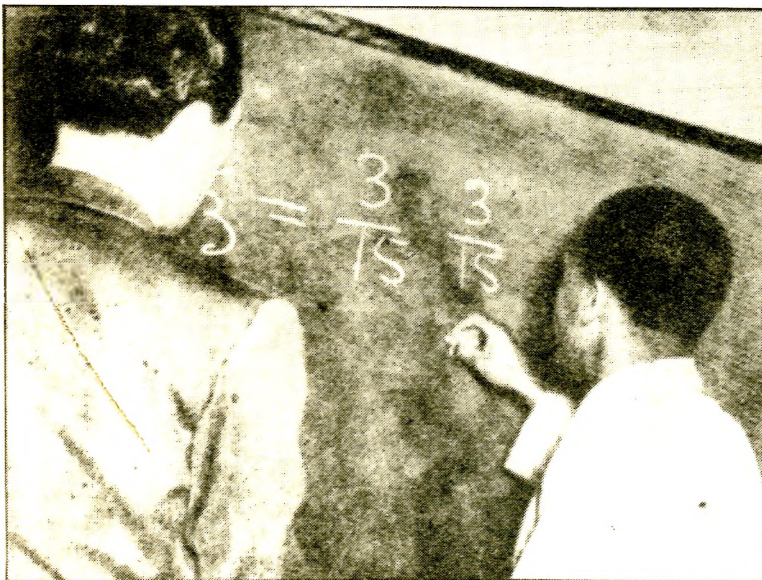
In 1928, the CP adopted a new revolutionary programme - the Black Republic programme. The Black Republic programme said that the struggle for socialism could not be separated from the struggle for full political rights for all black people.

Racial oppression, said the Black Republic programme, helped the bosses to make bigger profits. It did this in many ways:

- \* racism kept workers divided;
- \* pass laws, curfews and compounds made it more difficult for workers to organise;
- \* migrant labour kept wages low for black workers;
- \* Lack of political rights meant workers could not vote for laws which could help them.

So, although capitalism and the bosses were the main enemy, the whole machinery of white government kept black workers in their place. On the other hand, whites as a whole benefitted from the colonial oppression and exploitation of black people. Job reservation guaranteed them jobs; wages were much higher; indeed, whites got a better deal than blacks in every aspect of their lives -housing, education, etc. The fact that they had the vote, gave them a weapon which black people didn't have.

The Black Republic programme went on to say that majority rule in a non-racial and democratic South Africa was an immediate aim.



CP night school

It was only in such a society that class exploitation could be ended and socialism built. To achieve this, black workers would have to join with other oppressed groups - peasants, teachers and other middle class groups. In short, the Black Republic programme said that national liberation and the struggle for socialism were part of one single struggle.

The Party's immediate task then was to mobilize against racist laws; restore land seized by the conquerers; and establish an



independent, majority ruled Republic, free from colonial Britain.

Not everyone in the CP agreed with this programme. Many still believed that the white workers formed the vanguard in the struggle for socialism. Even those who realised that the black workers would play a leading role, believed that the struggle in South Africa was simply between two classes: the bosses on the one hand, and the workers on the other. While they recognized the special burdens that black workers had to carry (like passes, for example), they believed that the struggle would develop in the same way as it did in the advanced capitalist countries in Europe.

Some members even resigned after the Programme was adopted. But by the 1929 CP congress, membership had almost doubled, clearly showing that people supported this new approach.

## League of African Rights

In 1929, the Nationalist Party came to power for the second time and declared its determination to suppress all opposition, in particular that of the communists. They passed new repressive laws and ordered massive pass raids. In the face of these attacks, the Party called for a United front and the League of African Rights was formed, uniting militants in the CPSA, the ANC and the ICU.

JT Gumede (ANC President) was elected President, D Modiakgotla (an ICU official) Vice-President and SP Bunting (CP official) Chairman.

The League launched a One Million Signature Campaign to petition for human rights and began to organise anti-pass demonstrations for 16 December. NB Tantsi of the Transvaal ANC specially composed a battle song, "Mayibuy' iAfrika".

The League captured the imagination of thousands of South Africans and within weeks signature forms began pouring in. After some months, however, the CP received a telegram from the International Communist Movement (Comintern), telling them to stop the broad front policy and to disband the League. While many communists were unhappy with this position, they were bound by discipline to the Comintern and so the League was disbanded. This period and the period ahead was a difficult one both for communists in South Africa and internationally. The next few years were to see the CP torn by divisions and a spirit of sectarianism.

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# Conclusion

The 1920s drew to a close. By this stage, the ICU was virtually non-existent, having split up into different factions and having lost its mass support. The ANC was far weaker and more inactive than it had been earlier in this period; the CP too was increasingly disorganised by internal divisions and sectarianism. It would take almost a decade to rebuild the black trade union movement and roughly the same time before the ANC and CP were on a firm footing again.

Yet despite these problems, great strides had been made. We saw in Chapter 1 how the early tribes and kingdoms had been militarily defeated. More than this, the new conditions that the people faced in a capitalist South Africa required a new response. The old military strategies, based on the tribal system, could not be used to fight the new conditions that the people faced in the cities and mines.

The people responded to these new challenges. Barely six years after the last armed rebellion in 1906, people united under the banner of the ANC. They recognised how the disunity between tribes had helped the colonial government. The ANC was the first national, political organisation that began to overcome this problem by building unity between all African people. People stopped seeing themselves simply as a member of one or other tribe and began to forge a common national identity.

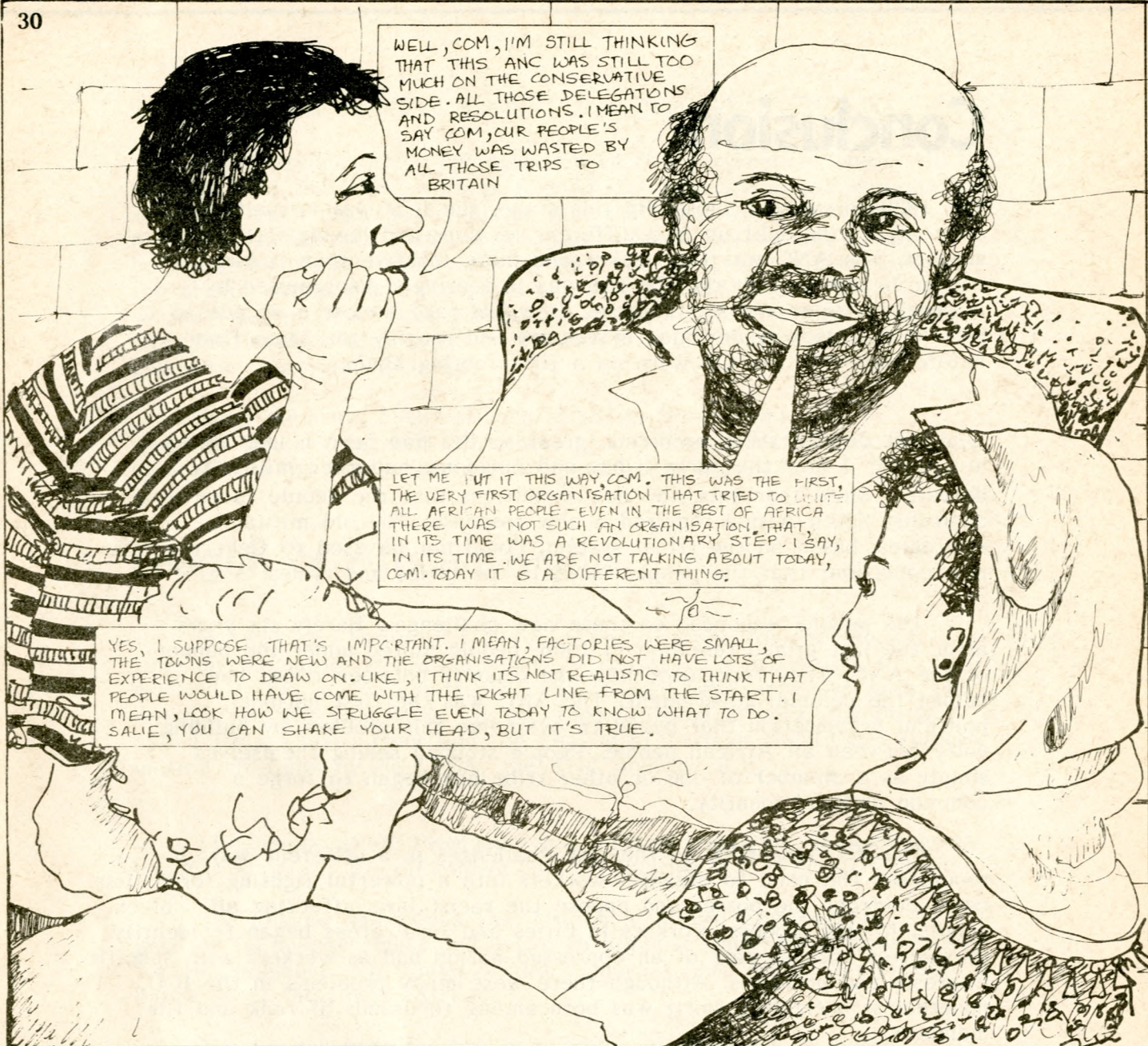
The ICU responded to the new challenges in a different way. It recognised the need to organise workers into a powerful fighting force that could confront the bosses and oppose the racist laws affecting **all** black people. In this process, workers in cities and rural areas began to identify themselves both as part of an oppressed nation and as workers with specific interests and problems. Although there were many problems in the ICU, nonetheless a fighting spirit was born among thousands of rank and file members.

The CP contributed to the struggle in its own way. As part of a world-wide communist movement, it gave people an awareness of struggles in other countries. Within South Africa, it put forward a vision of a new society, free from exploitation and misery. Even if people did not agree with the CP's vision, their propaganda helped people to see that it was possible to build an alternative society. Their Black Republic Programme made a unique contribution in showing the link between the oppression people faced as black people and the exploitation they suffered as workers.

Despite, then, the problems faced by all three movements at the end of the 20s many gains had been made. A firm basis had been laid for the struggle of the people to advance.

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WELL, COM, I'M STILL THINKING THAT THIS ANC WAS STILL TOO MUCH ON THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE. ALL THOSE DELEGATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS. I MEAN TO SAY COM, OUR PEOPLE'S MONEY WAS WASTED BY ALL THOSE TRIPS TO BRITAIN

LET ME PUT IT THIS WAY, COM. THIS WAS THE FIRST, THE VERY FIRST ORGANISATION THAT TRIED TO UNITE ALL AFRICAN PEOPLE - EVEN IN THE REST OF AFRICA THERE WAS NOT SUCH AN ORGANISATION. THAT, IN ITS TIME WAS A REVOLUTIONARY STEP. I SAY, IN ITS TIME. WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT TODAY, COM. TODAY IT IS A DIFFERENT THING.

YES, I SUPPOSE THAT'S IMPORTANT. I MEAN, FACTORIES WERE SMALL, THE TOWNS WERE NEW AND THE ORGANISATIONS DID NOT HAVE LOTS OF EXPERIENCE TO DRAW ON. LIKE, I THINK IT'S NOT REALISTIC TO THINK THAT PEOPLE WOULD HAVE COME WITH THE RIGHT LINE FROM THE START. I MEAN, LOOK HOW WE STRUGGLE EVEN TODAY TO KNOW WHAT TO DO. SALIE, YOU CAN SHAKE YOUR HEAD, BUT IT'S TRUE.



COMRADES, I DON'T THINK WE ARE ALL GOING TO AGREE ON THESE THINGS. MAYBE WE MUST LEAVE IT NOW, I AM GETTING VERY TIRED. THE COMRADES CAN THINK MORE ABOUT THESE ISSUES AT HOME AND IN YOUR OWN DISCUSSION GROUPS. LET US GO HOME NOW.



# Notes

## Timeline

- 1906 The Bambata Rebellion
- 1910 The Union of South Africa is formed. With the exception of some people in the Cape and Natal, black people are given no political rights.
- 1912 The ANC is formed
- 1913 The 1913 Land Act is passed
- 1913-20 The women in the OFS fight the pass laws
- 1915 The International Socialist League is formed
- 1917 The first black trade union, the IWA, is formed
- 1918 The bucket strike
- 1919 Transvaal anti-pass campaigns
- 1919 ICU is formed
- 1920 Black mineworkers strike
- 1921 The CPSA is formed
- 1922 White mineworkers' strike and Rand Revolt
- 1925 ICU kicks out communists
- 1928 CPSA adopts Black Republic programme
- 1929 League of African Rights formed

## Definitions

**Socialism** is a system which tries to introduce common **ownership** of the means of production (factories, banks, farms, machinery), instead of **private ownership**. The government also tries to **plan** what the factories should produce according to what is **needed** and not how much profit can be made - in other words, the **economy is planned**. Basic human needs like housing, health and education are guaranteed to all citizens. In a **capitalist** society, the government rules mainly in favour of the **capitalist class**. In a **socialist** society, the government rules mainly in favour of the **working** class who have suffered the most oppression and exploitation.

Many people see **socialism** as a **stage** on the road to **communism**. They believe that under **communism**, society will no longer be divided into classes (workers, middle classes, ruling classes) but everyone will be completely equal.

## Dictionary

- abolish** = do away with
- abuse** = ill-treat, insult, harm



**clamouring** = shouting for, calling for  
**conservative** = reactionary, opposed to change  
**curfew** = fixed time after which people may not be out of doors

**denounced** = exposed, condemned  
**disillusioned** = disappointed, beliefs broken

**ethnically** = dividing into different groups eg Afrikaans, English, Jewish, Sotho, Xhosa, Tswana, etc  
**exploitation** = taking away, using for own ends  
**extinguish** = put out

**flourishing** = waving about

**hustled** = pushed roughly

**inaugural** = first, founding  
**incite** = stir up, provoke  
**intervene** = intercede, interfere

**monopoly** = exclusive control

**regiments** = unit in the army

**unison** = as one, all together

**veteran** = old-timer, served in previous war

## Books to read

- \* **Gold and Workers** - Luli Callinicos
  - \* **Working Life: 1886-1940** - Luli Callinicos
  - \* **The ICU** - Labour History Group
  - \* **The 1922 White Mineworkers Strike** - Labour History Group
  - \* **Time Longer Than Rope** - Eddie Roux
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# UWC PEOPLES HISTORY SERIES

No. 2 (Booklet 1/6) Let Us Speak of Freedom

"Let Us Speak of Freedom" is the first publication in a new UWC Peoples History Series launched by the Department of History at the University of the Western Cape. The aim of the series is to encourage the writing of popular history — and to make it accessible to students, workers and communities. People and organisations on and off the university campus are invited to co-operate with us on the peoples history project and to contribute material for publication.

"Let Us Speak of Freedom" gives one view of the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa. (There are others too, history can be written in many different ways). We believe it contributes to the historical debate and to the recovery of a neglected aspect of our past.

*"The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived they put us into history. You are well aware that it is the contrary. When they arrived they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history."*

(Amilcar Cabral)