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"United Against Apartheid
and the African National Congress, 1917-1963"

UNITED AGAINST APARTHEID: THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY
AND THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, 1917-1963

By

Caius Rafael Baluta

A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of History
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2014

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UNITED AGAINST BARRIBO: THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY PARTY
AND THE AFRICAN NATION IN CONGRESS 1971-1981

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A Major Research Paper
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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"United Against Apartheid: The South African Communist Party
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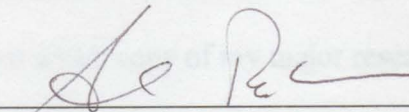
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April 24, 2014

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ABSTRACT

“United Against Apartheid: The South African Communist Party and the African National Congress, 1917-1963” explores the path taken by the South African Communist Party towards forging an alliance with the African National Congress in order to topple the Nationalist Party’s apartheid regime. It examines the ideological changes experienced by the Communist Party while adapting to the South African context, and how these changes influenced the Communist Party’s relationship with the African National Congress.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this paper to my mother, Mariana Baluta, and to my father, Doru Baluta. My mother, whose advice and support allowed me to complete this paper.

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Introduction

1910 saw the creation of the Union of South Africa as a modern twentieth century state. The British and Afrikaner white minority created a system of class and racial super exploitation of the black majority through the enactment of segregationist policies.¹ The elections of 1948 increased and entrenched racial segregation in the Republic of South Africa.² It is within this oppressive context that the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) operated in direct opposition to the state and its exploitative policies. The CPSA was one of the earliest enemies of South Africa's ruling British and Afrikaner political establishment.³ This essay will focus on the CPSA's ideological shift as it sought to establish an alliance with the African National Congress (ANC) in order to overthrow the Nationalist Party and its apartheid regime. The time frame covered will begin with the rise of communism in 1917, and it will end in 1963 when the Nationalist government weakened the ANC and CPSA's presence in South Africa.⁴ The events that took place during these years were paramount to cementing the ANC/CPSA alliance.

It is interesting that the ANC and the CPSA managed to cooperate in an efficient manner despite having somewhat of a conflicting ideology. The CPSA viewed South Africa's problems from a class perspective, while the ANC believed these problems were

¹ *Afrikaner* is the Boer name for African. As I will show later, Boers are the descendants of Dutch colonists. Throughout this paper I will use *Afrikaner* and *Boer* interchangeably when referring to these Dutch descendants. The term *Black* in South Africa encompasses different identity groups. It is comprised of African, Indian, and Coloured groups. When only referring to the native people of South Africa, I will use the term *African*.

² Thomas G. Karis, "Revolution in the Making: Black Politics in South Africa," *Foreign Affairs* 62 (Winter, 1983), www.jstor.org (accessed 22 January 2014), 381.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ A. Lerumo, "Fighting Back Against Apartheid," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 108.

caused by racial conflict. Despite their ideological differences, the two organizations managed to reach common ground and form a close alliance to overthrow the Nationalist state. Two key figures in this alliance were the ANC's Nelson Mandela and the CPSA's Joe Slovo. Both men shared command of Umkhonto we Sizwe, also known as MK, which was the military wing of the ANC/CPSA alliance.⁵ Commenting on the somewhat improbable alliance between the ANC and the Communist Party, Mandela made the following statement: "I was prepared to use whatever means to speed up the erasure of human prejudice and the end of chauvinistic and violent nationalism. I did not need to become a Communist in order to work with them."⁶ Slovo remarked: "The leading African comrades, began to devote energy as never before to the broad Congress movement. It was in the 1950s that the real foundation was laid of an alliance between the Party and the ANC that Oliver Tambo has described as constituting the two pillars of our liberation struggle."⁷ When the Communist Party became illegal in 1950, it ceased to be a relevant political movement in South Africa. By working with the ANC, which represented the majority of South Africans, the CPSA remained a relevant factor in the liberation movement. Through its alliance with the ANC, the CPSA accepted that African national liberation was centered on issues of race and not on class conflict. I argue that for the Communist Party to have forged an alliance with the ANC, serious ideological changes were made to accommodate their new ally's agenda, which positioned the CPSA in an alliance based on common interests.

⁵ Karis, "Revolution," 383.

⁶ Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994), 121.

⁷ Joe Slovo, *Slovo* (New York: Ocean Press, 1997), 104.

My analysis of the CPSA's alliance with the ANC is based mainly on two primary sources. The first is Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, which offers a wealth of information on the workings of the ANC and its campaigns against the apartheid regime. The second primary source is Joe Slovo's autobiography, *Slovo*, which provides numerous glimpses into the CPSA's battle against the British and Afrikaner political establishment. The two respective autobiographies also recount the interactions that the ANC and CPSA had while attempting to form their alliance. As such, I rely primarily on Slovo and Mandela's works, as well as evidence from primary documents released by the Communist Party and found in A. Lerumo's *Fifty Fighting Years* – a history of the CPSA. Chief Albert Luthuli's autobiography, *Let my People Go*, is also briefly examined to provide further insight on the nature of the ANC/CPSA interaction. All of these sources will be used to provide evidential information to support my hypothesis.

The historiography regarding the CPSA's interaction with the ANC during their joint struggle against the South African state has received a fair amount of academic coverage. From the 1960s onwards, various writers have explored this alliance; however, most of this literature was written under the shadow of the Cold War. Sources from the 60s, 70s, and 80s tended to be concerned with the level of communist control in the ANC. However, the end of the Cold War saw a change in the literature, and interpretations became more nuanced in their analysis of the Communist Party and the ANC.

An Overview of European Industrialism and the Creation of South Africa

Communism in South Africa cannot be fully understood without reference to the industrial revolution in Europe which ultimately led to the creation of the socialist and communist ideologies. The intensification of industrialism in Great Britain and Western Europe over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to excessive human suffering. Some classes of producers became obsolete while others were impoverished as production assumed a mass scale. As people began to live in increasingly higher concentrations within major industrial cities, working and living standards plummeted.⁸ The ascent of industrialism in Great Britain institutionalized capitalism as the predominant economic system – an arrangement based on physical and financial assets revolving around the private ownership of the means of production.⁹ The human suffering brought about by industrialism and capitalism led to the formation of socialism - an ideology focused on the need to create social justice by providing individuals with social and economic equality to limit the gap between the rich and the poor.

It is out of the socialist tradition that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels conceived communism. The two German intellectuals referred to their ideology as scientific socialism, claiming they could prove scientifically that history had advanced to the point where socialism would be the new dominant world order. Marx and Engels both argued that while capitalism was an inevitable stage in human progress, it would ultimately break down because of its inherent exploitative nature.¹⁰ To Marx and Engels, history was comprised of the class struggle between various economic and social strata present

⁸ Alfred G. Meyer, *Communism* (New York: Random House, 1967), 11.

⁹ Ernesto Screpanti, "Capitalist Forms and the Essence of Capitalism," *Review of International Political Economy* 6 (Spring, 1999), www.jstor.org (accessed 19 May 2013), 1-2.

¹⁰ Meyer, *Communism*, 11-13.

in all societies. Communism holds that capitalists (those who own the means of production) amass their wealth and power through the exploitation of the proletariat (workers who sell their labour for wages). As the proletariat's misery increases, it will eventually become aware of its own exploitation and rebel against its capitalist oppressors, thus resulting in the creation of a utopian communist society.¹¹

While Europe underwent tremendous changes during the nineteenth century with the advent of industrialism, the lands that eventually became the Republic of South Africa experienced their own transformation. In 1652, the Dutch East India Company established a trading station at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. It eventually became the Cape colony, where the Boer (Afrikaner) identity was created. As the descendants of early Dutch settlers, the Boers grew in number and expanded across South Africa. In the Cape area, they extended their territory at the cost of the Khoi-khoi people, who were driven farther inland or enslaved. The Khoi-khoi had mixed with Portuguese, Polish, Flemish, and German settlers to create the coloured identity group in the Cape, which eventually fell under Boer and later British domination.¹² In 1795, the Cape colony rebelled against the Dutch. At the time, Holland was embroiled in the French Revolutionary Wars and was therefore unable to handle this rebellion. The British feared the Cape would fall to French control and intervened. The uprising was defeated and the Cape was subjected to British administration.¹³ Living under British rule did not sit favourably with the Boers. From 1836 to 1854 they launched a massive migration to

¹¹ Andrew Gyorgy, *Communism in Perspective* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1964), 25.

¹² Edward S. Ellis, J.H. Aiken, John A. Cooper, John Clark Ridpath, *The Story of South Africa* (Guelph: World Publishing Company, 1902), 51-52.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 57.

the outlying territories in what became known as the Great Trek. The Boers sought to escape British governance and to forcefully expand into new territories. The Boer treks led to the creation of the republics of Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal – also known as the South African Republic. By 1843, the British gained control of Natal from the Boers, which doubled their colonial holdings in the area.¹⁴

British and Boer expansion across these territories did not proceed unopposed as the diverse African inhabitants resisted European encroachment. On the Eastern Cape, the Xhosa fought the Boers and the British for many decades. They were eventually defeated in 1818 by British forces, which resulted in the occupation of their lands.¹⁵ In Natal, the Zulu experienced prolonged fighting with Boer and British forces. They were defeated in 1887 by the British and their lands were incorporated into Natal. However, Zulu military resistance continued until it was ultimately defeated in 1906.¹⁶ In the North, in the lands that became the Orange Free State, the Sotho people were weakened and lost a great deal of their territory and cattle to Boer wars of aggression from 1865 to 1868. Nonetheless, the Sotho maintained a degree of independence by agreeing to British protection; however, these negotiations forced them to cede even more land to the Europeans.¹⁷

Africans immersed themselves in the colonial world in various ways – one was by working in the rapidly expanding mines. In 1867, diamond deposits discovered at

¹⁴ A. Lerumo, "Conquest and Dispossession," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 10-13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 13-15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

Kimberley attracted enormous amounts of labour along with British and American capital investment. Within twenty years of this discovery, roughly three million British pounds worth of diamonds were exported. Diamond mining comprised approximately half of all Cape exports. By 1888, the De Beers Company established a monopoly over diamond mining, which destroyed competition and ensured diamond prices remained inflated by controlling the stone's distribution. This centralised power allowed De Beers to create a racially divided labour force to increase profits through the exploitation of African workers. The establishment of a poorly paid labour pool set a precedent for gold mining and other industries to follow in the subsequent years. In the 1880s, gold was discovered in Witwatersrand, close to Johannesburg city, in the Transvaal. Gold mining was dominated by six companies, all of whom possessed the capital required to control the intensive mining operations. By 1899, Johannesburg employed 100,000 workers and produced 27 percent of the world's gold.¹⁸ The mining sector consolidated its interests with the founding of the Transvaal Chamber of Mines, which became the greatest accumulation of capitalist strength in South Africa.¹⁹

Mining interests such as the De Beers Company cooperated with Afrikaner Cape farmers in the late 1800s to control the supply of African labour. They sought to increase the availability of cheap African labour through the implementation of new legislation. In 1887 and 1892, legislation was introduced that limited the African franchise in the Cape by disqualifying land held in common from meeting the property standards needed for voting. Working and living areas in cities became more racially segregated, while the

¹⁸ William Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 27-28.

¹⁹ A. Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism and the Birth of the Liberation and Labour Movements," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 26.

aborted Glen Grey Act of 1894 attempted to increase the availability of cheap African labour and to intensify political segregation. The twentieth century saw the expansion of segregationist and oppressive legislation in South Africa.²⁰

With the discovery of the massive gold deposits in Witwatersrand, it became imperative for the British Empire to assume political and economic control of the Afrikaner Republics in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. War between the British and Boers broke out in October 1899, while hostilities ended when the British emerged victorious with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902. The main diplomats present were Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner for South Africa and Jan Christiaan Smuts, a Boer general who assaulted the Cape towards the end of the war.²¹ Smuts went on to become heavily involved in South African politics in the following decades.

Despite the rift that existed between Boers and British during the war, both groups found ample reasons for cooperation once hostilities ended. The Treaty of Vereeniging was based on the common understanding of the need to increase the exploitation of African labour through the elimination of African lands. After the war, this exploitative system was initially enforced under Milner's military government. British and Afrikaner interests were further interlinked with the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. The white legislatures of the Transvaal, Cape, Natal and Orange Free State Colonies voted to unite, while the British agreed to create an "all-white Parliament for the new self-governing Dominion" of South Africa. Only whites were permitted to vote in the provinces of this independent Dominion. The only exception was

²⁰ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 29.

²¹ Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism," 26.

in the Cape, where a very small portion of coloured and Africans qualified to vote based on the control of property; however, they could only vote for European representatives. Due to the economic dominance of the Transvaal, Afrikaner generals Louis Botha and Jan Christiaan Smuts were elected to lead the first Union government. Together, Botha and Smuts promoted large mining and farming interests through the increased flow of African labour paid at the "lowest possible rates."²²

The Union government was favoured by both British and Afrikaners; however, the advent of World War One in 1914 weakened this political unity. Botha and Smuts brought South Africa into the conflict as a British ally. General J. B. M. Hertzog, the main proponent of Afrikaner rights, did not favour an alliance with Britain against Germany. He broke away from the Union government and created the Nationalist Party, which became a proponent of neutrality and equality of rights between British and Boers. Botha died during the war, and Smuts thus became Prime Minister. He was defeated in the 1924 elections by Hertzog and his Nationalist Party, which maintained power for the next decade. The Great Depression of the 1930s forced Smuts and Hertzog to reconcile their differences and unite their opposing parties. The year 1934 saw the creation of the United Party, which maintained power late into the 1940s. The only Boer/Afrikaner dissent came in the form of D. F. Malan, who feared that Smuts's pro-British views would eventually undermine Afrikaner interests. As a result, he formed the Purified Nationalist Party, which became the opposition to the ruling United Party.²³ During the

²² Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism," 27-28.

²³ Edward A. Tiryakian, "Apartheid and Politics in South Africa," *The Journal of Politics* 22 (Nov., 1960), www.jstor.org (accessed 22 January 2014), 683-684.

1948 elections, Malan's Purified Nationalist Party defeated the United Party and assumed control of the government.²⁴

Modern political and social ideas in the Republic of South Africa evolved in a setting marred by racial segregation and economic exploitation. The Union government under Smuts and Botha passed acts and laws to increase the destitution of the black population. In 1913, the Native Land Act was passed, which reduced the land available for Africans to less than 13 percent of South Africa's territory. The Act also outlawed sharecropping, and other forms of tenancy that did not provide labour to white farmers, thus reducing private African landownership, which meant that successful African peasants could not become "capitalist farmers."²⁵ The Act impoverished rural Africans, much as the mechanization of agriculture had done in the United Kingdom. A poor and displaced pool of labour was thus created to be exploited by the mining companies and white owned farms. In the 1920s and '30s, Hertzog's Nationalist Party introduced what became known as the Hertzog Bills – legislation to reinforce the political and economic exploitation of Africans by removing their few remaining voting rights. Segregation was based on many of the legislative acts introduced by Hertzog. This type of exploitative legislation was expanded and further entrenched by Malan's Purified Nationalist Party. After his electoral victory in 1948, Malan implemented apartheid, which was designed to increase racial separation. Africans were expected to live and develop in their own

²⁴ Tiryakian, "Apartheid and Politics," 685.

²⁵ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 56-57.

separate racial "Homelands," which amounted to only 13 percent of the land area carved out in the 1913 Land Act.²⁶

South Africa experienced great economic changes, and the Europeans working in South Africa's industrial mining centers found labour conditions even more exploitative and brutal than those in Europe. Most white workers were Boers who had a history of discrimination against Africans. As a result, the country's urban working class was racially divided, which made it difficult for trade unions and socialists to appeal to both Europeans and Africans.²⁷ Nevertheless, socialism took a minor foothold in the country due to the work of British socialists and labour activists such as David Ivon Jones, Bill Andrews, and Sidney Bunting. The irony is that most socialists tended to be either Africans or Eastern Europeans whose ideology did not appeal to the conservative Boer proletariat, which was represented by the right wing Labour Party.²⁸ These vanguards of South African socialism helped to create the International Socialist League (ISL) in 1915 by breaking away from the Labour Party - the ISL was the main predecessor of the CPSA.²⁹

The year 1921 saw the creation of the CPSA, which was the country's first communist party. It continued to function under this name until Malan's Purified Nationalist Party declared it illegal in 1950. The Communist Party was reconstituted as an underground organization in 1953, and its name was changed to the South African

²⁶ Thomas K. Ranuga, *The New South Africa and the Socialist Vision* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), 8-9.

²⁷ Stephen Ellis and Tsepo Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 12.

²⁸ Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism," 42.

²⁹ Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades*, 12.

Communist Party (SACP). The CPSA started out as a European socialist organization (the main leaders were British men such as Jones, Andrews, and Bunting), which sought the removal of the capitalist system in South Africa. However, by 1928 the CPSA was transformed from its European roots into a party whose membership was primarily African. Initially, the Communist Party had trouble reconciling Marxist class struggle with the existence of African nationalism.³⁰

The African National Congress (ANC) was originally formed in 1912 in response to the increasingly segregationist policies of the Union government under Botha and Smuts. The Native Land Bill passed in 1912 was the first major attack on the remaining African land rights. An accumulation of oppressive policies highlighted the need for a national organization to represent all Africans, irrespective of tribal ancestry or language.³¹ State oppression in the twentieth century also led to the creation of the African Indian Congress (AIC), and the creation of the coloured identity group's African People's Organization (APO).³² The ANC itself was a small organization that drew its support from traditional chiefs and the African bourgeoisie. Its early goals were to work within the constitutional system to advance the interests of Africans; however, this moderate stance changed in the 1940s, during the course of the Second World War. Under the direction of Dr. A. P. Xumá, and later that of Dr. Albert Luthuli, the ANC was transformed into a mass national liberation movement.³³

³⁰ Rob Davies, Dan O'Meara, and Sipho Dlamini, *The Struggle For South Africa* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1984), 292.

³¹ Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism," 29.

³² *Ibid.*, 31-32.

³³ Davies, O'Meara, and Dlamini, *The Struggle*, 285.

An alliance between the CPSA and the ANC should have been a practical impossibility. The Communist Party focused on class conflict while the ANC emphasized the racial problems in South Africa. During the 1930s, the ANC rejected Marxist principles and cut ties with the CPSA. However, in the 1950s the two organizations merged into a close alliance to achieve African national liberation through the defeat of the Nationalist government and its apartheid regime. This collaboration survived the banning of the CPSA in 1950 and that of the ANC in 1960. To date, the ANC and the Communist Party remain allies in South Africa's political scene.³⁴

Historiography

The historiographical tradition which covers the CPSA is comprised of three distinct ideological strands: liberal, nationalist, and radical. Each of these schools views the South African conflict from a different point of view. The liberal historiographical interpretation is closely related to the British-influenced liberal movement in South Africa. Liberalism had problems reconciling its defence of white liberty with the political and social demands of black opposition movements. Liberals did not win a great deal of support with conservative Afrikaner nationalists or among the more radical black opposition.³⁵ Furthermore, they tended to see the Communist Party as a radical political movement and not necessarily a Soviet puppet.

³⁴ South African History Online, "South African Communist Party (SACP)," <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/south-african-communist-party-sacp> (accessed 17 May 2013).

³⁵ Benjamin Kline, "The National Union of South African Students: A Case-Study of the Plight of Liberalism, 1924-77," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 23 (March, 1985), www.jstor.org (accessed: 22 January, 2014), 139.

Thomas G. Karis' article "South African Liberation: The Communist Factor," explores the perceived communist influence within the ANC from a liberal perspective. According to Karis, the United States was concerned that the ANC/CPSA alliance would allow communists loyal to Moscow to capture the ANC's leadership. Washington feared that a communist influenced ANC would easily win the vote if the Nationalist government was defeated.³⁶ Karis argues that to focus on communist control of the ANC would not be conducive to a proper understanding of the political scene in South Africa. The ANC was similar to a national liberation movement as opposed to a full-fledged political party. Furthermore, the article holds that the CPSA did not control the ANC; instead, Congress leaders had simply chosen to work with communists because of their common opposition to the Nationalist Party and its apartheid regime.³⁷

Tsepo Sechaba and Stephen Ellis' *Comrades Against Apartheid* offers another liberal overview of the Communist Party and its interaction with the ANC. The authors claim that the two organizations were close allies and at times both groups operated as a single entity. A perfect example of this convergence was the joint creation of MK, the military branch of the ANC/CPSA alliance. One of the book's arguments is that the Communist Party used the ANC as a pool from which to recruit highly capable individuals into its own ranks, which was the primary reason many ANC members were also communists.³⁸ Both Sechaba and Ellis saw the Communist Party as a radical opposition movement. Part of communism's appeal was its portrayal by the media as the

³⁶ Thomas G. Karis, "South African Liberation: The Communist Factor," *Foreign Affairs* 65 (Winter, 1986), www.jstor.org (accessed: 12 March, 2013), 267.

³⁷ Karis, "South African," 267-268.

³⁸ Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades*, 6-7.

greatest danger to the Nationalist Party's survival. However, unlike Karis, the two authors argue that communists had the ability to dominate the ANC leadership due to their ability to obtain various high-ranking leadership positions in the organization.³⁹

Raymond Suttner's *The ANC Underground in South Africa* is a liberal examination of the ANC. However, the book reserves an entire chapter to explore the Communist Party's interaction with the ANC. Suttner argues that communists did not dominate the ANC leadership; instead, the relationship between the two organizations was multi-dimensional. The CPSA made important contributions to the ANC but this did not mean that communists were in control of the leadership process.⁴⁰ Suttner claims that the CPSA was a diverse organization with ideological differences based on regional and provincial affiliations. Communists in Cape Town adhered to a more classic form of Marxism, while those in the Northern Transvaal tended to mix African spiritual practices with Marxism. A prime example of this fusion was Flag Boshielo, who was a Central Committee member of the CPSA while also being a spiritual healer.⁴¹

Nationalist interpretations fall in line with the views of the Purified Nationalist Party and are ideologically conservative in outlook.⁴² Nationalist perceptions, such as Nathaniel Weyl's *Traitor's End*, view the Communist Party as an alarming organization. Weyl argues that South Africa triumphed and defeated a powerful and dangerous communist presence within the country, while maintaining a functioning parliament, the rule of law, and an independent judiciary system. He suggests that during the 1950s and

³⁹ Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades*, 10.

⁴⁰ Raymond Suttner, *The ANC Underground in South Africa* (Sunnyside: Jacana Media Ltd., 2008), 39.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Kline, "The National Union," 142.

'60s, the Communist Party influenced the activities of the ANC. Communists were given assistance by the Soviet Union, which placed the South African state in a precarious position.⁴³

Lloyd Eby's article, "Communism, Totalitarianism, and the African National Congress," is a scathing indictment of the ANC/CPSA alliance. His views are in line with Weyl's arguments on the danger of communism in South Africa. Eby claims that the communist-influenced ANC was a supporter of terrorism and murder. A victorious ANC would result in the creation of a communist regime under the control of the Soviet Union. The article argues that the CPSA had a strong influence over Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military arm of the ANC/CPSA alliance.⁴⁴ Eby warns against the danger of achieving national liberation while overlooking the threat posed by the CPSA. An alliance with communism would usher in greater oppression in the form of a Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴⁵

Like the previous two articles, Morgan Norval's *Inside the ANC* is another Nationalist interpretation that portrays the ANC as a dangerous political movement. Norval argues that peace in South Africa could be achieved if all competing factions peacefully negotiated and reached a compromise. However, the communist dominated ANC/CPSA alliance was committing acts of terrorism and murder to bully its way to a position of power in any future political negotiations. Norval argues that revolutionary

⁴³ Nathaniel Weyl, *Traitor's End* (New York: Arlington House, 1970), 9.

⁴⁴ Lloyd Eby, "Communism, Totalitarianism, and the African National Congress," *International Journal on World Peace* 4 (Apr-Jun 1987), www.jstor.org (accessed: 13 March, 2013), 175.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

change in South African must not be allowed to occur, since the communist-influenced ANC would use its popularity with the African people to establish a pro-Soviet state.⁴⁶

Radical interpretations fall in line with the views held by the Multiracial Congress Alliance. The ANC leads this partnership which also includes the African Indian Congress (AIC), the African People's Organization (APO), as well as the CPSA. The predominant ideology is strongly anti-conservative, as illustrated by the ANC's demonstrations against D. F. Malan's Purified Nationalist Party after its 1948 electoral victory.⁴⁷ As a member of the CPSA, Harold Wolpe's "Strategic Issues in the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa" is a radical perspective on the conflict between the ANC/CPSA alliance and the Nationalist government. Wolpe argues that to conceptualise the struggle against apartheid in primarily racial terms fails to properly examine the problems of class interests, as well as the subsequent alliances made between various social classes in the black population. With the electoral victory of the Purified Nationalist Party, South Africa experienced a political shift through the subordination of the black population to white interests. This shift followed the implementation of apartheid, a political system in which only whites could participate in a "bourgeois democratic form of parliamentary government." The 1950s in South Africa were marked by the increased coercive power of the state, which forced the ANC and the CPSA to escalate their resistance through the implementation of political action and mass mobilization campaigns against the state's oppressive legislation.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Morgan Norval, *Inside the ANC* (Washington: Selous Foundation Press, 1990), 27.

⁴⁷ Karis, "Revolution," 381.

⁴⁸ Harold Wolpe, "Strategic Issues in the Struggle for National Liberation in South Africa," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 8 (Fall, 1984), www.jstor.org (accessed: 18 January, 2013), 234-237.

Martin Legassick's article, "South Africa in Crisis: What Route to Democracy?" examines the country's political and social conflict from a South African communist perspective. Legassick explains that South Africa's problems are neither racial nor cultural; instead, they are issues of class conflict between capitalists and workers.⁴⁹ At the heart of the matter is the idea that apartheid is not only a means of racial and cultural division but also a system designed to maintain the privileged position of the capitalist class.⁵⁰ Legassick claims that two-thirds of the black population supported the armed struggle against apartheid undertaken by the ANC/CPSA alliance in the 1960s. Both organizations would have a difficult time abandoning their military operations for fear of losing the African people's support.⁵¹ Wolpe and Legassick emphasize the primacy of class conflict in the struggle against apartheid. Both authors view the escalation of resistance by the ANC and the Communist Party as a necessary response in the face of increasing government oppression.

In Thomas K. Ranuga's *The New South Africa and the Socialist Vision*, we have a radical examination of the history of the ANC/CPSA alliance. Ranuga, unlike Wolpe and Legassick, focuses on the issue of communist influence in the ANC. One of his main arguments is that communists never controlled the ANC. The only ANC leader closely associated with Marxism was J. T. Gumede who served as president general of the ANC from 1927 to 1930. However, the ANC ousted him from power during the 1930s because of his involvement with the Communist Party. Gumede was replaced by the conservative

⁴⁹ Martin Legassick, "South Africa in Crisis: What Route to Democracy?" *African Affairs* 84 (Oct., 1985), www.jstor.org (accessed: 18 January, 2013), 588-589.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 589.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 598.

leader Pixley ka Isaka Seme, who ensured that the ANC would not tolerate Marxist influence.⁵² The creation of the Congress Youth League in 1944 also brought about a more militant form of nationalism in the ANC. The majority of the Youth League's members were strongly anti-communist. They did not trust communist class analysis since it was seen as a foreign ideology which the CPSA could use to subvert the ANC's interests.⁵³

While various ideological interpretations have already been made regarding the history of the CPSA and its relations with the ANC, a certain gap remains within the literature. An analysis of the changes the Communist Party underwent in order to ally itself with the ANC is still somewhat incomplete. Furthermore, most of these examinations were written before the publications of Joe Slovo and Nelson Mandela's respective autobiographies. These two primary sources provide a wealth of new information regarding the ANC and CPSA's interactions. Unlike the liberal and nationalist historiographical interpretations I previously highlighted, my focus is not on the degree of communist control in the ANC. Instead, I examine the ideological conflict the CPSA underwent in order to adapt to the South African setting and how this, in turn, impacted the power dynamic in the ANC/CPSA alliance. This historical examination is more closely related to Harold Wolpe and Martin Legassick's class/race discussion.

The Development of Early CPSA Ideology and the Issue of National Liberation

The success of communism in the Russian Revolution in 1917 ensured that South African socialists became heavily influenced by Russian communist ideology. After 1917

⁵² Ranuga, *The New South Africa*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

the International Socialist League began publishing material from the Russian communist newspaper "Pravda."⁵⁴ South Africa's social problems were viewed through a classic Marxist lens and primary focus was given to the class struggle between workers and capitalists.⁵⁵ The racial oppression of Africans was not emphasised. Subsequently, the ISL believed it could unite both African and white workers into a single labour organization to oppose capitalist exploitation.⁵⁶ The common argument was that the racial and economic differences between Africans and whites would not inhibit a union of the South African proletariat. Socialists claimed they could apply the same organizational methods used by Russian communists in order to combat Smuts's Union government.

In 1921 the ISL merged with various socialist organizations to create the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). Like its socialist predecessor the CPSA once again invited all workers, irrespective of race, to unite with the World Communist International. The difference between the Communist Party and the ISL was in the greater focus the CPSA placed on the recruitment and indoctrination of workers. Communists accused the Labour Party of being reformist in nature and of catering to the white middle class while workers' needs were ignored. The CPSA decided that an aggressive indoctrination campaign aimed at workers was insufficient as a strategy. The Communist Party concluded it would need the flexibility to use any social unrest in the

⁵⁴ Lerumo, "Modern Imperialism," 39.

⁵⁵ International Socialist League, "The Bolsheviks Are Coming," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 115.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

country to further the cause of the proletariat.⁵⁷ Such discontent soon came in the form of the 1922 Strike, which was organized by white workers when the Chamber of Mines diminished their pay. Even though the CPSA had not organized the strike, it nonetheless offered its support to the striking workers, since the Communist Party saw the strike as a means to oppose capitalism. The argument was that supporting the white workers would bring the CPSA closer to defeating the South African state.⁵⁸ The 1922 Strike highlighted the difficulties the CPSA experienced in attempting to create a racially united labour front. In its support for white labour, the Communist Party failed to include African workers in the demands for higher pay and skilled employment. The Strike itself was racially exclusive, since whites refused to include African workers in the labour dispute. Thus, the CPSA was placed in the difficult position of choosing sides. To make matters worse, the strike was unsuccessful and the majority of white workers abandoned the Communist Party in favour of the Labour and Nationalist parties.⁵⁹

Even as early as 1915, socialists exerted a great deal of effort to include the urban African workforce in the class struggle. The International Socialist League encouraged Africans to support white unions in an attempt to create a unified labour front. From its inception in 1921, the CPSA employed the same policy in the immediate years.⁶⁰ However, as early as 1928, communists began to seriously question if a united front

⁵⁷ Communist Party of South Africa, "Manifesto of the Communist Party of South Africa," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 117-119.

⁵⁸ Communist Party of South Africa, "The Fight to a Finish," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 121.

⁵⁹ A. Lerumo, "The Turn to the Masses," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 51-52.

⁶⁰ S.P. Bunting, "Ten Crowded Years of Glorious Life," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 123.

between African and white workers remained a possibility to be pursued. In 1928, the Communist International's Executive Committee argued that South Africa's inherent social, economic, and political problems made it practically impossible for communists to appeal to both African and white workers. The Executive Committee made certain key observations, such as the fact that the overall African population at the time had increased to roughly 5,500,000, while whites numbered 1,500,000. Despite the fact that Africans were the overwhelming demographic majority, they were only legally entitled to 13 percent of the country's territory, while whites claimed the rest. Furthermore, there was no African bourgeoisie to speak of, while the vast majority of the country's working class was African. In the industrial and transportation sectors, Africans numbered 420,000, while whites only comprised a tally of 145,000. In the agricultural sector, there were 435,000 African labourers as opposed to only 50,000 whites. The Executive Committee understood that the proportion of African workers within the country grew faster than that of whites. Furthermore, African employees earned much less than their white counterparts due to racially discriminatory labour practices.⁶¹

The Communist International's Executive Committee realized it was imperative to accelerate the recruitment of Africans into the CPSA. Even as early as the mid-1920s, communists were active in the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa (ICU). The ICU was created in 1919 and operated as a general union for African workers and peasants. By the late 1920s the ICU had 100,000 members and was deeply involved in trade unionism and matters of African nationalism.⁶² While Africans

⁶¹ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 126-127.

⁶² Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 104.

comprised the overwhelming majority of the country's labour force, they faced serious discrimination in the workplace. Communists were well aware of these issues and sought to use them to further the goals of the CPSA. In turn, this action brought the Communist Party closer to acknowledging South Africa's racial problems.

The widening split between white and African workers was further increased by the policies of the Labour Party of South Africa. In 1915 this organization split away from the International Socialist League and began to favour racial policies that benefitted white labour at the expense of African workers. By 1922 the majority of miners working in the Transvaal were poor Afrikaners displaced from their farms due to an economic depression in the 1920s. The Labour Party and Hertzog's Nationalist Party both drew their support from this impoverished demographic. In 1923, both political parties entered into a close alliance which formed the main opposition to Smuts's Union government.⁶³ The Communist International's Executive Committee understood that this alliance sought to benefit white labour at the expense of African workers. The CPSA accused the Labour Party of indoctrinating white workers with a racist ideology.⁶⁴

In 1926 communists were expelled from the fast-growing Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa (ICU). Its leadership was at odds with communist ideology and feared that the CPSA would attempt to gain control of the ICU.⁶⁵ The Executive Committee interpreted this expulsion as the work of black reformist leaders corrupted by the Labour and Nationalist parties. Communists feared

⁶³ Lerumo, "The Turn to the Masses," 55-56.

⁶⁴ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question," 126-127.

⁶⁵ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 105.

their fallout with the ICU could lead to the political marginalization of the CPSA.⁶⁶ The interests of white and African workers were in discord due to legislation introduced by the state to control African unions. The 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act did not legally recognize unions that included Africans in their membership, and racially inclusive labour unions were not allowed to operate in the work place.⁶⁷ However, Africans still had the right to strike to address political grievances due to a loophole in the legal system. Agreements between trade unions and employers that took Africans into consideration were not legally enforceable in the country. The Executive Committee highlighted the difficulties this created in maintaining a united labour front. White workers chose to side with the state to maintain their privileged position to the detriment of African workers.⁶⁸ The Afrikaner Broederbond, created in 1919, was a secret organization that championed Boer interests. One of its main objectives was to make sure Afrikaner trade unions were not influenced by outside sources such as communism. During the 1930s and '40s, the Broederbond became a major supporter of Malan's Purified Nationalist Party, which helped to diminish the Communist Party's appeal among the white labour movement.⁶⁹

The Communist International's Executive Committee initially examined the South African problem through Marxist principles of class conflict and capitalist exploitation. It saw Smuts's Union government and Hertzog's Nationalist Party as an alliance between British capitalism and Boer bourgeoisie, which increased the black

⁶⁶ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question," 128.

⁶⁷ Davies, O'Meara, and Dlamini, *The Struggle*, 322.

⁶⁸ Slovo, *Slovo*, 40-41.

⁶⁹ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 120-121.

population's economic exploitation.⁷⁰ However, Marxist interpretations had to eventually consider the South African context. By 1928, the Communist Party of South Africa had grown in size, numbering 1,750 members, of which 1,600 were coloured or African. Communists were thus compelled to consider the racial problems faced by African workers, who were hit especially hard by Hertzog's Nationalist Party during the 1920s.⁷¹ The Creswell Wage Act of 1925 and the Mines and Works Amendment Act of 1926 caused thousands of Africans to lose their jobs in skilled positions as they were replaced by white workers who received higher rates of pay.⁷² The state successfully courted white workers by placing their interests at odds with those of African workers, which forced the Communist International's Executive Committee to acknowledge that class analysis was insufficient when tackling South Africa's problems. The racial factor that drove the Union government and the Nationalist Party to enact their segregationist policies had to be taken into account. Furthermore, an organization comprised of 1,750 supporters was by no means a mass movement, thus some communists claimed that a change of strategy was needed to increase the CPSA's appeal in South Africa.

By 1928 the Communist International's Executive Committee regarded the CPSA's decision to create a united labour front between Africans and whites as a failed strategy. The CPSA had not placed sufficient attention on the issue of African national liberation, thus the Communist Party was urged to change its strategy away from class struggle and focus on national liberation. South Africa would become an independent republic free of white minority rule, thus the Communist Party was expected to place its

⁷⁰ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question," 126.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁷² Lerumo, "The Turn to the Masses," 59.

ideology of class struggle on hold. The CPSA was to give primacy to racial issues such as segregation and African liberation.⁷³ Initially the CPSA resisted the Executive Committee's new strategy. A delegation led by S. P. Bunting argued that the Executive Committee had incorrectly assumed that issues of national liberation took precedence over the class struggle. However, due to the CPSA's loyalty to the Communist International, the new strategy was adopted in 1929, although not without a great deal of internal opposition.⁷⁴ Recalling the CPSA's change of strategy, Joe Slovo remarked that "... in contrast to the position in 1922, the Party's membership was overwhelmingly black and its ideology had moved a long way towards an understanding that the main immediate content of the South African revolutionary endeavor is the national liberation of the African people."⁷⁵

The new focus on race and national liberation meant the CPSA would have to cooperate with the ANC - the most significant African organization in the country. The goal was to transform the ANC from a moderate liberal organization into a revolutionary force capable of challenging the South African government for control of the country. Communists planned to weaken the influence traditional chiefs had within the ANC. The CPSA believed the chiefs were collaborating with Hertzog's Nationalist Party. Some within the CPSA argued that the radicalization of the ANC should be the Communist Party's primary mission in order to achieve the Communist International's goal of

⁷³ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question, 129.

⁷⁴ Lerumo, "The Turn to the Masses," 64-65.

⁷⁵ Slovo, *Slovo*, 52.

creating an independent republic.⁷⁶ The CPSA's internal ideological debate between race-related issues such as African liberation versus the proletariat's class struggle against capitalism, ultimately served to create serious problems for the Communist Party in the following years.

Communist Infighting and the Rise of the ANC's Youth League

As a member of the CPSA and a Communist International representative, D. G. Wolton was convinced the CPSA was on the wrong path. He accused S. P. Bunting, the general secretary of the Communist Party, of leading a right wing movement within the organization. Wolton and Lazar Bach, a young communist of Latvian descent, instigated a leftist purge within the Communist Party, thus beginning a deep sectarianism, which led to the eventual removal of Bunting and important trade union leaders. With Bunting gone, Wolton became the new general secretary, a role Bach would later inherit. Together, Wolton and Bach claimed the Executive Committee's proposal for the CPSA to focus on race problems, such as African national liberation, meant for the Communist Party to organize a socialist revolution in South Africa. Their opponents, led by Moses Kotane who later became general secretary, countered that the Executive Committee had intended for the CPSA to organize a national democratic revolution and not a socialist one. Kotane's faction challenged Wolton and Bach's leadership, claiming the CPSA should work to understand and cater to the "masses" and their demands.⁷⁷ Wolton and Bach were accused of focusing on pointless doctrinal factors, such as the dispute between

⁷⁶ Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South African Question," 131.

⁷⁷ A. Lerumo, "From 'Fusion' to Fascism," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 72-73.

Stalin and Trotsky, while ignoring the fact they lived in a country whose population had never experienced the history of labour mobilisation seen by Europe.⁷⁸ The CPSA lost a great deal of its membership during the 1930s, with communists who favoured democratic revolution over the more traditional focus on socialist revolt being expelled from its ranks.⁷⁹

The Communist Party's infighting is significant because it anticipated the eventual alliance between the ANC and the CPSA in two significant ways. Membership attrition weakened the CPSA, which meant it was in no position to significantly influence the ANC by the time the two organizations began working together in the 1940s. By the time of its banning in 1950, the Communist Party was small and needed to work through other political movements to remain relevant in the country's political scene. Slovo admitted that much: "It was becoming clearer than ever that the catalyst for real change in South Africa could only come from a challenge by the racially dominated. And this challenge was growing, more especially from the black workers."⁸⁰ By 1935 the majority of the CPSA supported Kotane's focus on democratic revolution and Bach was expelled.⁸¹ The CPSA became involved in race issues that affected the black population, such as segregation and racism. The Communist Party understood that the apartheid regime had to be removed before it could implement its doctrine of class conflict in order to create a dictatorship of the proletariat. The CPSA realized that its goal of creating an

⁷⁸ M. M. Kotane, "Letter to the Central Committee," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 133.

⁷⁹ Slovo, *Slovo*, 32.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸¹ Lerumo, "From 'Fusion' to Fascism," 73-74.

independent republic could only be achieved through cooperation with a mass national liberation movement such as the ANC.

While the CPSA recovered from its years of infighting, developments within the ANC further weakened the communist position in the eventual alliance. The ANC's Youth League (YL) was created in 1944 at the Bantu Men's Social Center. The meeting was comprised of an elite group of young Africans, such as Oliver Tambo, Walter Sisulu, and Nelson Mandela, who were all educated at Fort Hare University. They were convinced that only African nationalism could solve racial oppression in South Africa.⁸² As Chief Albert Luthuli recalled: "The founding of the Congress Youth League had met a long-standing need, giving to young men a sphere of action, and assurance that the days of polite, unheeded complaint were over."⁸³ The shared feeling was that the ANC's leadership was too focused on protecting the rights of the African elite and as such was not concerned with the common African. Dr. A. P. Xuma was voted out of the ANC's presidency, while the YL began preparations for a Program of Action designed to turn the ANC into a mass movement through the implementation of "confrontational protests, boycotts, and passive resistance."⁸⁴ The YL represented a more radical movement in the ANC, calling for the creation of a new South Africa based on racial equality. The country would become a democratic society in which all adult individuals could vote.

⁸² Mandela, *Long Walk*, 97-99.

⁸³ Albert Luthuli, *Let my people go* (London: Collins, 1962), 108.

⁸⁴ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 154.

Furthermore, the YL vehemently rejected the notion that British and Afrikaner political parties cared for the well-being of the African people.⁸⁵

While the YL sought to fuel African Nationalism and thus turn the ANC into a more radical organization that could actively fight for the rights of Africans, it was also deeply mistrustful of communist ideology. YL members saw Marxist principles as concepts that were foreign to South Africa and therefore could not be used to solve the country's troubled situation. Mandela expressed this sentiment, "We were," he noted, "extremely wary of communism... Lembede felt that the Communist Party was dominated by whites, which undermined African self-confidence and initiative." Most within the YL argued that accepting communist help would lead to the weakening of African nationalism. The YL opposed the inclusion of whites into the ANC's nationalist movement on the grounds that Africans needed to stop being "enamored of white culture."⁸⁶

Some within the Youth League, including Mandela himself, became friends with communist activists; however, the YL still harboured a deep mistrust of communism. Mandela explains that he was opposed to the ANC working with communists because he feared the CPSA would dominate the ANC's leadership due to the Communist Party's experience and training. Mandela "believed that it was an undiluted African nationalism, not Marxism or multiculturalism, that would liberate us... I even went so far as breaking up CP meetings by storming the stage..."⁸⁷ The YL sought to build a powerful African

⁸⁵ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 99.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

national movement to overthrow the Nationalist Party's apartheid regime which oppressed the black population through the implementation of racist legislation. The strategy was opposed to the CPSA's view that Africans were discriminated against as an economic class; instead, the YL argued that Africans were facing persecution primarily because of their race.⁸⁸

While the ANC continued to allow communists to work within its ranks, it is apparent that the younger leadership, represented by Mandela and the Youth League (YL), was quite suspicious and antagonistic towards the CPSA. This atmosphere of mistrust and doubt made the new generation of ANC leaders wary of communist influences. Thus, if the CPSA wished to work with the ANC, it could not afford to engage in attempts to gain control of an already deeply suspicious ANC leadership. The CPSA's acceptance of the independent republic strategy served to placate the ANC, since it signified that the Communist Party accepted the need to focus on racial issues, such as African national liberation, before considering the class struggle. The fact that the YL had radicalized the ANC meant that the Communist Party no longer needed to weaken the authority of traditional chiefs in the ANC. Furthermore, the CPSA's infighting during the 1930s had weakened the party by diminishing its membership. As such, if communists wanted to work with the ANC, they would have to abide by its rules.

The CPSA and the ANC Forge Closer Ties

Closer ties between the Communist Party and the ANC only really developed from the mid-1940s onwards. The common challenges faced by both organizations forced their members to cooperate, thus increasing their interaction and familiarity with

⁸⁸ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 112.

one another. In 1946, after the end of the Second World War, a major event occurred in the Witwatersrand mining complex that changed the political setting in South Africa. The African Mine Workers' Union (AMWU), led by the CPSA's J. B. Marks, organized a strike against the Chamber of Mines. The AMWU demanded better living conditions and higher pay, as well as the removal of War Measure 1425, which banned union meetings in the mining complex. The Chamber of Mines refused to negotiate with the AMWU. Therefore, from August 12-19, the AMWU launched a massive strike in which 100,000 African workers participated, thus bringing a significant portion of the mining industry to a halt. Smuts's United Party crushed the strike through violence and repression. AMWU's leaders, as well as the CPSA's general secretary, Moses Kotane, were accused of conspiracy to initiate the labour dispute.⁸⁹ The Communist Party's entire Johannesburg wing supported the AMWU's mass strike. Slovo recalled that: "... at night we maneuvered our way in a borrowed car around the mining areas between Springs and Braamfontein, looking for opportunities to put up posters and throw leaflets over the guarded work-prisons of the black miners."⁹⁰

The African Mine Workers' Union itself had been created jointly by members from both the ANC and the CPSA. Some of these activists, including J. B. Marks, belonged to both organizations. Like the Communist Party, the ANC dedicated considerable resources towards helping the AMWU. During the strike, Mandela worked in close cooperation with Marks in the mining complex to formulate the AMWU's strategy. When recalling these events, Mandela noted that: "The strike was the beginning of my close relationship with Marks... we discussed my opposition to communism at

⁸⁹ Lerumo, "From 'Fusion' to Fascism," 84-86.

⁹⁰ Slovo, *Slovo*, 52-53.

great length... I had these same discussions with Moses Kotane and Yusuf Dadoo, both of whom believed, like Marks, that communism had to be adapted to the African situation."⁹¹ During the weeklong strike, many ANC and CPSA activists forged closer ties, which were made possible by the CPSA's acceptance of the independent republic strategy, which championed racial issues over those of class.⁹² The Communist Party's involvement on the side of African workers was a perfect example of the CPSA dealing with racial issues, such as workplace discrimination. The strike helped the CPSA reach a common understanding with the ANC on the urgent need to end the apartheid regime. Furthermore, by 1946 the majority of the Communist Party's membership was African, which must have helped convince the Youth League to soften its anti-communist stance.⁹³ The AMWU's strike was the first serious campaign to bring ANC and CPSA activists together against a common enemy represented by Smuts's United Party.

The 1946 strike brought to the fore the power that African workers could wield against the state due to their ability for mass mobilisation. The white population was likely scared into voting more extreme elements into power during the 1948 elections. It was during this year that Malan's Purified Nationalist Party ran on its racist apartheid election platform and ultimately defeated Smuts's United Party. After their victory, the Nationalists moved to consolidate their power by terminating the right to vote still available to a minority of coloured people. White political representatives who spoke for Africans were also removed from the political system. In 1950, the Purified Nationalist Party banned the CPSA under the Suppression of Communism Act. Ten years later, the

⁹¹ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 102.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Slovo, *Slovo*, 52.

ANC was also declared an illegal organization. Furthermore, the Nationalist government gave itself the legislative power to declare any organization illegal. The state also assumed the power to censor individuals and to confine them to house arrest without trial in the judicial system.⁹⁴

Malan's Nationalist government was quick to implement its apartheid system, which was modelled on the segregationist policies present in South Africa prior to the 1948 elections. Apartheid's core concepts were based on racial separation, preservation of political institutions for whites only, segregation of urban and rural areas, control of African movement to cities, greater racial separation of the labour market, and segregation of public facilities. The Nationalists "Afrikanerized" the state apparatus to ensure they maintained power. Thus, Afrikaners were placed in key areas in the state, such as the army and the intelligence departments. The new Nationalist regime under Malan quickly created new legislation to reflect its apartheid ideology. The year 1950 saw the creation of the Immorality Act, which banned marriage and sexual relations "across racial boundaries."⁹⁵ The Group Areas Act in 1950 and the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act in 1951, allowed the Nationalist government to racially divide urban land and move people across the new racial boundaries. During 1953, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act was passed, which allowed the government to create racially divided and unequal public facilities.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Neville Curtis, "South Africa: The Politics of Fragmentation," *Foreign Affairs* 50 (Jan., 1972), www.jstor.org (accessed: 22 January, 2014), 283-284.

⁹⁵ Beinart, *Twentieth-Century*, 147-148.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

As a direct response to these racist policies passed against the black population, the ANC implemented the Youth League's Program of Action in order to transform the ANC into a national mass movement. Recalling the implementation of the ANC's new strategy, Mandela wrote that: "the Youth League had seen the failure of legal and constitutional means to strike at racial oppression; now the entire organization was set to enter a more activist stage." The ANC was to use new strategies, such as strikes, boycotts, passive resistance, and stay-at-homes, to defy the Nationalists and their apartheid regime.⁹⁷

The CPSA itself was unprepared for its ban under the Nationalist Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. Its Central Committee, headed by Moses Kotane, announced that the Communist Party would be disbanded. Slovo recalled, "most of us were stunned by the Central Committee announcement that in the face of the ban the Party had no option but to dissolve itself."⁹⁸ After the initial shock wore off, ex-party members such as Slovo, convened and indicated their desire to reconstitute the CPSA as an underground organization. The old Central Committee was informed that unless it took steps to reconstitute the Communist Party, veteran members would move to create a separate organization. However, many communists were not prepared to re-join the CPSA in an illegal manner, and membership suffered. To show the organization's new status as an underground movement, its name was changed from the CPSA to that of the SACP.⁹⁹ Due to the Communist Party's illegality, communists who sought to (officially) continue

⁹⁷ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 113.

⁹⁸ Slovo, *Slovo*, 66-67.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

their political activism in the country had to operate through other legal organizations. Thus they became more involved with the ANC, which was the largest African-based organization in the country. From 1950 to 1960, SACP members devoted considerable effort and time to the ANC's goal of overthrowing the Nationalist Party and its apartheid regime. It was during the 1950s that the ANC/SACP alliance was finalized, prompting one of the ANC's main leaders, Oliver Tambo, to claim that the SACP and ANC were the "two pillars" of the "liberation movement".¹⁰⁰ Simply put, communists who wanted to remain relevant as political activists had no other choice but to operate through legal organizations such as the ANC. It was not only the safest alternative available, but it also went hand in hand with the principles of the independent republic strategy, where issues of race such as African liberation and the destruction of apartheid, were given primacy over class ideology. Furthermore, the newly reformed and renamed SACP had been weakened from the party's infighting during the 1930s. Its membership was small, and it had lost even more influence in the country due to its banning. Working with the ANC became the only real viable alternative in order to remain relevant in South Africa.

During a meeting of the ANC and African Indian Congress (AIC) it was proposed that the various South African liberation movements could no longer afford to remain divided. The Communist Party's ban in 1950 and apartheid's oppressive policies constituted a danger which could not be ignored. Dr. Yusuf Dadoo, a prominent member of the AIC and the SACP, agreed with Nelson Mandela, who represented the ANC's Youth League, that the Communist Party's ban constituted a serious danger to all other liberation movements. South African activists would have to create a united front in order to oppose the Nationalist government. It was at this meeting that Oliver Tambo

¹⁰⁰ Slovo, *Slovo*, 103-104.

stated that: "Today it is the Communist Party. Tomorrow it will be our trade unions, our Indian Congress, our APO, our African National Congress." In response to the Suppression of Communism Act, as well as the murder of eighteen Africans by the police on May 1, the ANC, the AIC, the APO, and the SACP united to stage a National Day of Protest on June 26, 1950.¹⁰¹ The SACP's hopes of creating an alliance with the ANC were finally realized once the Nationalists began to threaten all liberation movements with the possibility of illegality. The Communist Party's banning influenced the ANC into joining ranks with the SACP, a goal many communists harbored since 1928, when the independent republic strategy had been introduced by the Communist International's Executive Committee. The creation of the ANC/SACP alliance had nothing to do with communist persuasion; instead, the Nationalist government had become far too great a threat for the ANC to be able to afford the luxury of operating without allies.

The 1950s saw numerous campaigns launched by the ANC and its communist allies against the apartheid regime. The campaigns included the 1950 Defend Free Speech Convention, which had made May 1st a "People's Holiday," all the way to the massive 1952 Defiance Campaign where a total of 8000 individuals voluntarily chose to be arrested for their opposition to the Nationalist government's racist legislation.¹⁰² Over the course of its five-month duration, the Defiance Campaign received a great deal of support and publicity, which ultimately resulted in the registered membership of the ANC rising from 20,000 to 100,000 members. In response, the Nationalist regime felt threatened by the campaign's racial unity, which was a direct challenge to its policy of

¹⁰¹ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 117.

¹⁰² Slovo, *Slovo*, 107.

racial separation. The Nationalists claimed that the protests were led by communist agitators, and passed new legislation in 1953 that successfully stopped the Defiance Campaign. The subsequent passing of the Public Safety Act allowed the government to arrest people and incarcerate them without trial while also declaring martial law. The Laws Amendment Act was later introduced to allow the Nationalist regime to use "corporal punishment" against protesters.¹⁰³

Due to cooperation between SACP and ANC members in the various national liberation campaigns of the 1950s, some of the ANC's apprehension regarding communism began to break down. Fellow activists from both organizations started to see each other as comrades in arms against a common enemy. Mandela wrote that: "Because of my friendship with Kotane," among others, "and my observation of their own sacrifices, I was finding it more and more difficult to justify my prejudice against the party."¹⁰⁴ Mandela saw these SACP members primarily as activists who had made serious sacrifices and risked being persecuted by the Nationalist government in order to contribute to the cause of African national liberation. Communists started to be judged based on their contributions towards the ANC's goals and not on their ideology.

Mandela immersed himself in Marxist philosophy to gain more insight regarding his communist allies. To his surprise, he was able to relate his experiences as a freedom fighter to Marxist calls for revolution against the status quo. The fact that communists, and in particular, the Soviet Union, were willing to support national liberation movements in third-world countries softened Mandela's views regarding the inclusion of communists in the ANC's ranks. Mandela claimed he saw no contradiction between the

¹⁰³ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 132-133.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

ideology of “African nationalism” and communism. He was primarily an “African nationalist” engaged in the liberation of South Africa from the rule of a white elite representing a minority of the population. Mandela wrote that as a freedom fighter, he was prepared to use any ideology and any means necessary to defeat apartheid and to remove “human prejudice” from South Africa. He explained that as revolutionaries, communists and African nationalists had much more in common as opposed to what divided them. Mandela concluded that he did not need to become a Marxist in order to cooperate with communists against the apartheid regime. While some have questioned the degree of communist control over the ANC, Mandela cautioned that the ANC itself may very well have been the one who used the SACP to accomplish its own goals of national liberation.¹⁰⁵

From Mandela’s recounting of his dealings with the SACP while engaged in the liberation of the country, it is apparent that he started to tolerate communism. He saw that prominent SACP members such as Moses Kotane, J. B. Marks, and Joe Slovo were all extremely committed to the ANC’s cause of national liberation. They were devoted liberation fighters and Mandela chose to overlook their Marxist ideology and instead focus on their contributions to African national liberation.¹⁰⁶ The ANC’s president, Chief Albert Luthuli, made the following remark regarding communist involvement in the ANC:

There are Communists in the South African resistance, and... our primary concern is liberation, and we are not going to be sidetracked by ideological

¹⁰⁵ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 120-121.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

clashes and witch hunts. Nobody in Congress may use the organisation to further any aims but those of Congress.

Luthuli further clarified why the SACP was allowed to work with the ANC: "When I co-operate with Communists in Congress affairs I am not co-operating with Communism. We leave our differing political theories on one side until the day of liberation, and in the meantime we are co-operating in a defined area, in the cause of liberation."¹⁰⁷ The ANC leadership was not interested in Marxist ideology; however, it was also not prepared to refuse a useful ally such as the CPSA.

As I stated previously, the SACP never achieved a mass following. In fact, its membership had decreased during the infighting of the 1930s; with the banning of the CPSA numerous communists declined to join the SACP as underground activists. The banning of the Communist Party also meant that its members were only able to work effectively within the ANC's ranks. Therefore, the SACP operated from a position of weakness in its dealings with the ANC, which was a mass movement that still enjoyed legal recognition until 1960. As such, communists could not afford to risk losing their only avenue to political relevancy in South Africa through an attempt at converting the ANC into a communist puppet. There was no need for the SACP to take such a course of action. Marxists had already adopted the independent republic strategy, which called for the SACP to aid the ANC in achieving national liberation of South Africa. As such, the immediate and practical goals for the two organizations were the same and they both regarded the urban African workforce as their main support base. Thus, the ANC and the SACP had to deal with a common set of demands from their constituents, such as

¹⁰⁷ Luthuli, *Let my people go*, 154.

responding to the deterioration of African social and economic standards due to the implementation of the Purified Nationalist Party's apartheid regime.

Communists saw themselves as the guardians of the liberation struggle, and it was during the mass movements of the 1950s that the SACP was put to the test. The Communist Party's Central Committee operated on an almost constant basis in order to examine all the major issues facing the ANC/SACP alliance in its numerous campaigns against the apartheid regime. Joe Slovo remarked that the SACP had achieved its respected position in the ANC's ranks through the means of "persuasion and example" and not with "caucus and manipulation." As Slovo himself acknowledged, due to the SACP's tight knit and structured nature, it had a "powerful organizational position"; however, the SACP's leader, Moses Kotane, discouraged the Communist Party from attempting to dominate the ANC's decision making process, fearing this would lead to sectarianism. Slovo recognized that Kotane's manner of dealing with the ANC was the main contributing factor which influenced the ANC to accept an alliance with the SACP. He was well respected by all liberation fighters, and the ANC's leader, Chief Albert Luthuli, considered Kotane to be one of his closest advisors.¹⁰⁸ Kotane's strong and aggressive leadership style helped significantly with the ANC's acceptance of the SACP. Kotane's abrasive leadership style convinced the ANC that he was not a weak leader influenced by white communists. Slovo recalled that Kotane had no problem exercising his authority over white Marxists whom he perceived to challenge him. "Kotane's confidence in himself and his assertive, often bullying style (which knew no color bar) made an enormous contribution to the acceptance of the Party as a truly indigenous

¹⁰⁸ Slovo, *Slovo*, 128.

force.”¹⁰⁹ As an African communist, Kotane no doubt found it much easier to relate to the national liberation struggle. He most likely influenced the SACP to deal with the immediate problem facing South Africa, such as the elimination of the coercive apartheid regime. As an African, it is likely that Kotane considered the elimination of racial oppression as an obstacle which had to be removed before the class struggle could begin in earnest. Therefore, at least for the time being, both the ANC and the SACP had similar goals.

Even after its reconstitution as an underground organization in 1953, the SACP continued to adhere to a democratic decision making process. All Communist Party members were given the opportunity to discuss new policies before the Central Committee reached a decision. Furthermore, the SACP's leaders were re-elected on a two-year rotation at meetings staffed by representatives from the different communist branches in South Africa. All representatives were allowed to freely vote for whomever they thought would best serve the SACP as leader on the Central Committee.¹¹⁰ Therefore, even though the SACP was highly organised and structured, it nonetheless operated on a democratic basis and was not a monolithic block united on all issues. As such, it would have been difficult for the SACP to influence the ANC's leadership, since its own leaders were regularly re-elected, which ensured that the Communist Party would be somewhat preoccupied with its own democratic debates.

The Armed Struggle

¹⁰⁹ Slovo, *Slovo*, 129.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

In 1959 the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) split from the ANC in protest against the inclusion of "non-Africans," which was similar to the race-class wrangling that the Communist Party had to contend with. However, unlike the ANC, the PAC did not believe in multiracialism; it denounced the ANC for being under the control of whites, for not being radical enough, and for being dominated by communists.¹¹¹ On March 21, 1959, the PAC held a demonstration in the Sharpeville township; police fired upon the unarmed demonstrators, killing 69 people that day.¹¹² Many of those who died were women and children shot from behind while attempting to flee. South Africa came under heavy criticism from the international community, including the United Nations Security Council. The Nationalist government insisted that the violence at Sharpeville was a scheme designed by communists seeking to destabilize the country.¹¹³ The ANC and its communist allies decided that a strike had to be organized to protest the killings, while sympathy generated by the brutal attack would also be used to launch a campaign against South Africa's despised pass laws. To organize the upcoming campaigns, a decision making group was created, which included Mandela and Slovo, among others.¹¹⁴ On March 28, hundreds of thousands of Africans responded to the ANC's call and remained in their homes, while fifty thousand people protested the shootings in the township of Langa. In response, the state declared martial law and cancelled the right to habeas corpus.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 227.

¹¹² Slovo, *Slovo*, 136.

¹¹³ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 238.

¹¹⁴ Slovo, *Slovo*, 136.

¹¹⁵ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 239.

As a result of the mass protests, the Nationalist government banned the ANC in 1960. It was during the era of 1960 to 1963 that the SACP made its greatest contribution to the ANC and its cause of national liberation. Once the ANC had become an illegal entity, it faced a whole other set of problems for which it was not initially prepared. The ANC, unlike the Communist Party, was a mass movement, which made it much harder for it to operate in a clandestine and illegal manner. Like the Communist Party, the ANC contained leadership elements that were unprepared for operating in an underground organization.¹¹⁶

By the beginning of the 1960s, the ANC's campaigns were losing support from the people. The latest stay-at-home drive was a failure due to lack of participation. Mandela had become disillusioned with the ANC's strategy, claiming that because the Nationalist Party was destroying nonviolent protests through the use of its armed forces, the ANC needed to respond by changing its tactics. The SACP had just formally announced its reconstitution and was planning to create its own military branch. Mandela believed the time had come for the ANC to turn to armed struggle, and he proposed this idea to the ANC's Working Committee. Mandela's proposal was defeated by the SACP's General Secretary, Moses Kotane, who was also one of the more powerful members of the ANC's Executive Committee. Kotane countered that the old ways of nonviolent protest were still viable; if the ANC turned to armed struggle then a great deal of individuals could be hurt.¹¹⁷ At a separate meeting, Mandela explained that the ANC could no longer continue to operate by the standards of nonviolence when the state used

¹¹⁶ Slovo, *Slovo*, 170.

¹¹⁷ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 270-271.

armed oppression against Africans. He argued that Kotane still saw the ANC as a legal organization even though it had been banned by the state. If the ANC did not act, it risked losing its hold on the populace, which had begun resorting to instances of armed struggle against the Nationalist government. Upon hearing these arguments, Kotane relented in his opposition, and Mandela was able to get the next Working Committee to accept the armed struggle proposal.¹¹⁸

Kotane was obviously well respected throughout the ANC to successfully oppose Mandela's proposal. However, as a communist within the ANC, Kotane worked from a position of weakness. The SACP had to constantly operate within the parameters of national liberation so as not to estrange the ANC. While Kotane might have been persuaded by Mandela's arguments, it is also likely he did not wish to create divisions between the SACP and ANC. Mandela was a member of the Youth League who had originally opposed the inclusion of communists in the ANC. Even though he eventually accepted the SACP as a valuable ally despite the organization's Marxist ideology, Kotane was fully aware of Mandela's past opposition. Communists were accepted in the ANC because they were hard-working liberation fighters who muted their communist ideology in favour of supporting African national liberation. It is highly likely that Kotane discontinued his opposition to Mandela's proposal so as not to gain an enemy who could create a rift between the ANC and SACP. This would indicate that the Communist Party had to be careful not to step out of line within the ANC.

In 1961 the ANC's National Executive accepted the Working Committee's decision to commence the armed struggle. Chief Luthuli advised the rest of the ANC leadership to keep this decision a secret in order to protect the organization's allies, such

¹¹⁸ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 271-272.

as the African Indian Congress and the African People's Organization. The Nationalist government had not yet banned these liberation movements. The ANC and SACP's plan was to keep this military organization subordinate to their orders, while it would give the appearance of operating as a separate entity with no affiliation to the ANC/SACP alliance. Mandela was authorized to oversee the ANC's military wing while working with whomever he deemed fit in order to lead the armed struggle.¹¹⁹ The new military institution, named Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), publicly presented itself as a distinct entity seeking to support the national liberation movement.¹²⁰ Mk was run in an egalitarian manner by the ANC and SACP, while its High Command was comprised of Mandela and Slovo who represented their respective organizations. Together, the two revolutionaries decided on which individuals would complete MK's High Command structure. However, Mandela and Slovo's decisions had to be approved by the ANC/SACP alliance.¹²¹

Even though communists played an important role in the creation of MK, they were unable to gain an advantage in its leadership. The close working association between the ANC and the SACP meant that MK was run in a fair and friendly manner between communists and non-communists alike. After the leaderships of both the ANC and the SACP had been neutralized in South Africa by the Nationalist government, MK fell primarily under the influence and control of the ANC's foreign operation in Tanzania. After 1963, it took time for the SACP to rebuild an effective and centralized

¹¹⁹ Mandela, *Long Walk*, 272-274.

¹²⁰ Slovo, *Slovo*, 173.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 173.

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leadership outside South Africa. The ANC was operating primarily out of Tanzania, whose government favoured the PAC over the ANC. It perceived the PAC as being more militant and more revolutionary because it did not have white communists in its ranks. Therefore, the ANC's alliance with the Communist Party became somewhat problematic, and the SACP had to tread very lightly so as not to create suspicion among the Tanzanian government.¹²²

By the time that the armed struggle had begun, the SACP was distributing propaganda material after its reconstitution in 1960. In the 1962 document, "The Road to South African Freedom," the SACP issued an appeal for the righteousness of its cause as a part of the national liberation movement. The Communist Party sought to reach Africans by writing of the injustice of the political and social situation in South Africa, where three million whites held political and economic privilege over the majority of the African population, which numbered eleven million.¹²³ The document used Marxist philosophy to explain that the racial oppression within the country existed because of the exploitative nature of capitalism. However, communists made sure to state that the SACP's most urgent and immediate goal was that of African national liberation. The Communist Party's main objective was to unite all classes of the racially abused majority with the aims of creating a "national democratic revolution" to bring down the Nationalist government and its apartheid regime. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the national revolution would create African liberation and stop racial oppression. Furthermore, the Communist Party explained that the interests of the working class were

¹²² Slovo, *Slovo*, 177-178.

¹²³ South African Communist Party, "The Road to South African Freedom," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 157.

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the same as those of the SACP itself, and with the overthrow of apartheid, the SACP would seek to create a democratic government that would guarantee "freedom and equality of rights."¹²⁴ Throughout this document, it is apparent that the SACP chose to largely ignore communist ideology in favour of supporting the ANC's goal of achieving national liberation. In many ways, the SACP was acting as a surrogate that supported the goals of the national liberation movement at the expense of its own Marxist ideology, which would normally call for a class war against the capitalist class.

In 1963, the SACP's Central Committee released a document titled "The Revolutionary Way Out," which was written to win support for the ANC, SACP, and MK. In this document, the Communist Party explained that the Nationalist government had gone too far with its oppressive policies. Africans were ready to support banned organizations such as the ANC and the SACP, as well as an armed struggle against the Nationalist state.¹²⁵ The Communist Party declared the ANC to be the ideal African national liberation movement, while its struggle to overthrow apartheid could always depend on the full support of the SACP.¹²⁶ The document argues that SACP and ANC leaders should listen to the general populace's calls for a more forceful resistance against Nationalist oppression. Any action undertaken by the oppressed should be "principled" and represent the goals and tactics of the "national leadership," or risk descending into "adventurism" and mere revenge without a carefully planned course of action.¹²⁷ In

¹²⁴ South African Communist Party, "The Road to South African Freedom," 158-159.

¹²⁵ South African Communist Party, "The Revolutionary Way Out," in *Fifty Fighting Years*, ed. A. Lerumo (London: Inkululeko Publications, 1971), 160.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹²⁷ South African Communist Party, "The Revolutionary Way Out," 166.

defence of the ANC and the SACP alike, the document states that the Nationalist government was misinformed in its claim that the ANC had been overrun by communists. The ANC would never allow an outside force to control its leadership after having fought for so long to maintain its existence against the attacks of the Nationalist government. The document argues that the reason why the ANC and the SACP were able to work together was that both organizations shared the same goal of African national liberation.¹²⁸

Throughout this document, we see that the SACP was once again attempting to promote the goals of the ANC/SACP alliance. It is evident that the Communist Party sought to defend MK and the turn to violence by justifying the need for an armed struggle against the Nationalist government, while also explaining that the ANC had not been taken over by communists. A great deal of concern was placed on the issue of African national liberation and supporting the ANC's goals. The communist ideology of class struggle was almost entirely absent. It is evident that the SACP muted its own ideological beliefs in order to work within the ANC's ranks. As such, the Communist Party reinforced the ANC's race-centred national liberation approach, while its own ideology of class struggle remained muted.

Conclusion

The ANC/SACP alliance was built out of the necessity to work together against a common enemy. The rise of Malan's Purified Nationalist Party during the 1948 elections instituted a much harsher form of segregation in the form of apartheid. Racist legislation made life increasingly more difficult for South Africa's black population. The Nationalist

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, 170-171.

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government was also prepared to ban any organization it saw as a threat to its rule. The banning of the Communist Party in 1950 warned the ANC that the Nationalists would not hold back from muting all dissenting voices, not just those of the SACP. This made conditions more favourable for an ANC/SACP alliance.

By 1928 The Communist Party began to entertain notions of working with the ANC in order to bring about the fall of capitalism. It was during this year that the Communist International's Executive Committee suggested to the CPSA that a united front between white and African workers was not a realistic possibility. The Executive Committee proposed that the CPSA had to accept that South Africa's race problems took precedence over Marxist ideology of class conflict. This suggestion created internal debates within the Communist Party that lasted until the mid-1930s. However, by the end of these conflicts, the CPSA had accepted the Executive Committee's proposal that the Communist Party should focus on creating an independent republic in South Africa through a democratic revolution.

The Nationalist electoral victory in 1948 cemented the ANC/CPSA alliance; however, by this time there was no need for a communist takeover of the ANC, nor was such a thing a realistic possibility. By the 1950s, the ANC was led in large part by the Youth League, which was an educated group of African national liberation fighters who were strongly opposed to Marxism. Furthermore, the Communist Party was severely weakened due to its internal class-race conflicts. A great deal of the CPSA's membership had been reduced as a result of this infighting. By 1950, the CPSA was banned by the Nationalist government. Therefore, for communists to remain politically relevant in South Africa, they had to operate through the ANC. The Communist Party would not risk

losing its only lifeline to political relevancy by attempting to control the ANC. Thus the CPSA was willing to place its Marxist ideology on hold and become the ANC's junior partner until African national liberation could be achieved.

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