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**CONFLICT OF IDEOLOGIES: THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE AND
COMMUNISM 1949-1955**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to expose a hidden dimension in the annals of African resistance politics. This dimension has never received adequate attention thus the repercussions of its influence has not been adequately accounted for. This dimension is centred on the causes and consequences of conflict between the ANC Africanist Youth League and the Communist Party. The Africanist Youth League was convinced that its conflict with the Communist Party was in defence of African nationalism and self-determination. The Communist Party's infiltration of the ANC and its concerted efforts to derail it and the Youth League from African Nationalism, comes under critical scrutiny in this study. Thus, the popular view of the Youth League's conflict with the ANC is proved to have been the sub-plot of the main ideological rivalry between the Communist Party and the ANC Youth League.

S. PLAATJIE

14 JUNE 1994

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DEDICATION

I thank my mother for being my inspiration and for her motivation in dire times. Had it not been for her inspiring influence this study would have not been completed. I want to thank my father posthumously for having taught me that every person is worth the same and that suffering does not mean doom, instead it is a trial and fore-runner of great things to come. My entire family shares in the outcome of this study i.e. Bra Madala, Sis Mathilda, Sis Nombuyiselo, But Xolisile, Sis Nomvula and Jabu and my son Mangaliso.

This work is dedicated to Zwaks Thomas Mknasibe who brutally met his fate in the hands of heartless killers on the night of 23-02-93 at his home in Sebokeng. Hamba kahle Mkhasibe.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	-	All African Convention
ANC	-	African National Congress
ANCYL	-	African National Congress Youth League
COD	-	Congress of Democrats
CPSA	-	Communist Party of South Africa
ICU	-	Industrial Commercial Union
NRC	-	Native Representative Council
NUEM	-	Non-European Unity Movement
PAC	-	Pan Africanist Congress
SACP	-	South African Communist Party
TASA	-	Transvaal African Student Association
TATA	-	Transvaal African Teachers Association

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

The history of African resistance in the twentieth century is a subject of great historic interest as evidenced by numerous published sources in this area of study.¹ It is in this context that the African National Congress (ANC) has received its share of attention. There were other African organisations that were formed to redress certain aspects of the oppressive policies of the government of the day. Numerous studies have been conducted on various aspects of their resistance ranging from religion, culture to labour.² Some of these organisations had a strong regional base and at times tended to be autonomous. Of all these organisations the ANC was conceived as a national organisation under whose banner various regional organisations were supposed to operate.

This study seeks to analyse the conflict between the Africanists and the Communists in the ANC Youth League from the founding of the League in 1943 until the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. The title of this study should not be misconstrued to mean that conflict only occurred between the Africanists and the Communists. The Africanists conflicted with the liberals and the Indians as well. They denounced the former for patronising Africans under the guise of trusteeship whereas they regarded the latter as opportunists.³ Conflict between the Africanists and the Communists inevitably included the ANC especially from 1952. This was as a result of greater co-operation between the ANC and the Communists

¹ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*; J. Grobler, *Decisive Clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa, 1875-1975*; G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an ideology*; M. Motlhabi, *The Theory and practice of Black resistance to apartheid; A social-ethical analysis*; M. Pheko, *Apartheid, The story of a dispossessed people*; E. Feit, *African Opposition in South Africa*.

² A. Lea, *The Native Separatist Church Movement, in South Africa*; B.G.M. Sundkler, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*.

³ Interview with P.N. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-1993. (See also: Raboroko, P.N., Congress and the Africanist : (1); The Africanists Case, *Africa South*, 4(3), April-June 1960).

which resulted from the banishment of the CPSA. This conflict will not be referred to as such but only in as far as the Communists were accused of fermenting it. (An Africanist must be understood to mean members of the ANCYL who advocated for an exclusive African orientated ideology as a solution to the South African politics. They were adherents of Anton Lembede's militant version of African nationalism called Afrcanism. In their ideological pursuit the Africanists wanted to have as little contact with the whites as possible. The Communists must be understood to mean both members of the Communist Party of South African (CPSA) and Congress of Democrats (COD).)

The purpose of this study is to analyse the ideological conflict between the ANCYL and the Communists. The ideologies that conflicted were Communism and African nationalism as espoused by the Africanists in the Youth League. (This ideological conflict was greatly manifest between 1949 which marked the adoption of the Programme of Action and 1955 when the Freedom Charter was adopted.)

This study will focus on the ideological conflict between African nationalism and Communism and its underlying causes. Africanists will be understood to mean those, mostly but not exclusively, in the Youth League who embraced orthodox African nationalism as espoused by Anton Lembede and sustained by A.P. Mda. (This nationalism also referred to as Africanism addressed itself exclusively to the African people who were seen as victims of oppression and dispossession.⁴) On the other hand Communists have been taken to mean those who subscribe to the Marxist ideology.

⁴ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; An evolution of an ideology*, pp. 67-75. See also, A.M. Lembede, "Some basic principles of African nationalism", in *Nyaniso*, February 1945, quoted in T. Karis & G.M. Carter (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge. A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, vol. 2, 1882-1964*, pp.314-316.

Conflict between the Africanists and the Communists occurred throughout South Africa. It was rife in areas where there was a large or strong presence of both parties like in the western and eastern Cape and parts of the Transvaal. In this study the focus will be on the Witwatersrand. This is due to the fact that this area housed the headquarters of both factions as well as the fact that a (large concentration of both the Africanists and Communists could be found on the Witwatersrand.) (Urbanisation accounted for the growth of the numbers of the youth in the Witwatersrand and this greatly contributed to incidents of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists.⁵) The heavy Communist presence can be attributed to the presence of a large working class in the mines and the secondary industries whom the Communists saw as vital to their political ideology and agitation which is premised on the working-class as the vanguard of the communist revolution.⁶

(This study will seek to investigate the ideological conflict between the Africanists and the Communists and how these parties sought to oust each other from the ideological leadership in the ANC and the Youth League.) Various aspects of ideological conflict will be referred to such as the issue of land, ultimate goals and strategies and who was supposed to be in the vanguard of the liberation struggle. The various strategies that were implemented by both the Africanists and the Communists to entrench their influence and undermine each other will be referred to.

(With the advent of the 1950s, a section of the Africanists in the ANCYL abandoned their erstwhile adherence to the principles of orthodox African nationalism to which they had professed allegiance and began to embrace

⁵ See C. Glaser, *Anti-social Bandits, Juvenile Delinquency And The Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960.*

⁶ A. Nzula, I.I. Poteknin and A.Z. Zusmanovitch, *Forced Labour in Colonial Africa.*

a more moderate and multi-racial ideological line. An attempt will be made to explain why this ideological change occurred and to what extent the Communists contributed to creating this division.) The implications of this event for the Africanists and on the ideological conflict will be discussed. The ANC increasingly began to co-operate with the Communists in the early 1950s and marginalised the Africanists in the process. Reasons for this co-operation between the ANC and the Communists will be investigated as well as the extent to which it heightened tension between the the Africanists and the Communists.

(In 1955 the Freedom Charter was adopted at Kliptown.) It was hailed as a crowning success for the Congress Alliance, which then included the Communists as a principal partner. (The Africanists disagreed vehemently with the ANC and the Communists over the Freedom Charter.) Reasons for their criticism and rejection of the Freedom Charter will be investigated as will the implications of the ANC's adoption of the Freedom Charter for the Africanists, the Communists and the ANCYL.

Because this study revolves around conflict it is essential to define conflict and its nature in order to create a proper paradigm. The term conflict is a very loaded term as it has numerous undertones. (The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines conflict as 'struggle, fight, opposition, be[ing] incompatible'⁷) For the purposes of this study conflict has been taken to mean opposition to and struggle between the Africanists and the Communists. (But since 'opposition' and 'conflict' can be both violent and non-violent in character the conflict under investigation in this study is of a non-violent nature.) (Conflict does not spontaneously erupt. It must be triggered by certain causes.)

⁷ (*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*; p.245)

A comprehensive study of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists has not yet been undertaken. The general tendency has been to concentrate on the conflict between the Africanists and moderate nationalists in the ANC and the YL. This tendency has resulted in the general perception that there was only conflict between the Africanists in the Youth League and the ANC's 'old guard', which is what this study challenges. The Africanists in the Youth League have not been studied in their own right but mostly as part of a background to the PAC and the political activism of leaders such as Mandela, Tambo, Sobukwe and others.⁸ (Although the founding fathers of the ANCYL were predominantly Africanists), the conflict between the Africanists and the Communists has never been fully examined.⁹

One study that comes closer to accounting for the conflict between the Communists and the Africanists is that by G. Gerhart entitled, Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an ideology. Gerhart has devoted her entire Chapter Three to the ANC Youth League. She gave considerable attention to Anton Lembede and his influence on African nationalism.¹⁰ This treatment of Lembede is justified as he was a pioneering advocate of Africanism. It was largely due to his philosophical and political commitment that the ideology of Africanism was conceived. In tracing the political activism of Lembede, Gerhart in essence accounted for the origin of African nationalism.¹¹ Her treatment of the Youth League is detailed and penetrating in its exposition of the various ideological shades that were manifest within the ANC Youth League.

⁸ B. Pogrud, *Sobukwe and Apartheid*, Chapter 3 & 4; M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, pp.24-43; N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The role of the Pan Africanist Congress and the influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian Struggle*; M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*.

⁹ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African nationalism in South Africa*, pp.349-371.

¹⁰ (G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an ideology*, Chapter 3, pp.45-82.) NB

¹¹ *Ibid.*

She went further than most historians in reflecting and accounting for conflict both within the Africanist ranks and between them and the Communists. Her book is largely concerned with the conflict of various ideologies. This concern disadvantages her work in terms of accounting in detail for the eruption of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists, which is what this study wants to investigate.¹² Her book examines the development of African nationalism and Africanism in South Africa and "... its primary emphasis being on the intellectual dimensions of black political unity, and in particular the inter-play of ideologies which have marked the post-war era...."¹³

Peter Walshe's The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, suffers from the usual shortcoming of using the Youth League to tell the ANC story. The Youth League constitutes a minute fraction of Walshe's study. Because Walshe devoted so little attention to the Youth League it is logical that he did not refer to all the aspects of its history. Reference to conflict between the Africanists and the Communists is minimal.¹⁴

Another traditional approach to the study of the Youth League is manifested in C.J.B. le Roux's magisterial thesis entitled, Die Pan Africanist Congress in Suid Afrika 1958-1964. Le Roux used the Youth League as the prelude to the study of the PAC. This approach logically relegates the activities of the Youth League into the background of the larger PAC history. Its activities were not seen in their own right and aspects such as conflict were not adequately accounted for. He refers to various areas of conflict including conflict between Nkomo's Communist camp and the

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. VII.

¹⁴ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism*, pp.349-361.

African nationalist camp of Lembede.¹⁵

Le Roux, like Walshe, identifies various ideological factions within the Youth League such as the Africanists and the Communists. However, both historians failed to explain how these various ideologies contributed to conflict and what the results of such conflicts were. It is quintessential in every political organisation to have various ideological trends which at times conflict or complement each other. The levels of these ideological conflicts reflects the organisational crises that are manifest in a particular organisation. The internal conflict in the South African black politics raises an interesting question as to whether there will be unanimity in their response to the political problems that they are faced with.

J. Grobler's 'A Decisive Clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976' has briefly attempted to expose, not only the history of the ANC but also, the internal conflicting dynamics present within the Youth League. He has gone a few steps further than Le Roux and Walshe in revealing conflict between the Africanist and the Communists. According to Grobler the main cause of conflict was the Africanists' insistence on the creed of Africanism as the sole solution to the problems of the African people.¹⁶ However Grobler's book is deficient on the magnitude of the ideological conflict between the Communists and the Africanists. To him this conflict was just part of the many conflicts in the African resistance politics. Given this approach the portrayal of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists is void of any substance.

Grobler sustains the conventional interpretation of the adoption of the

¹⁵ C.J.B. le Roux, *"Die Pan-Africanist Congress in Suid Afrika; 1958-1964"*, p.51.

¹⁶ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa - 1875-1976*, pp.88-90.

Programme of Action as representing conflict between the Africanists in the Youth League and the ANC's old guard.¹⁷ The viewpoint that the adoption of the Programme of Action marked a triumph of the Africanists against the old guard in general and Xuma in particular is contested in this study. By failing to refer to the Communist Party's opposition to the Programme of Action, Grobler misses a crucial element of a 'decisive clash' between the Africanists and the Communists.

Grobler regards the antagonism of the Communists towards the Africanists as one of the reasons for their loss of influence.¹⁸ It is not true to say that the Africanists lost influence, rather it is correct to say that their influence declined because of greater co-operation between the moderate ANCYL and the Communists. Grobler creates the impression that all the Youth League members were being unanimous on the ideology of African nationalism by not referring to left-wingers such as Nkomo.¹⁹ Grobler is silent on the Africanists' lack of unanimous support of the Defiance Campaign of 1952. He neither explored their lack of unanimity, nor referred to the reasons for those who participated in the defiance.²⁰

Tom Lodge's Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, does dwell on incidences of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists.²¹ However, Lodge largely, uses the conventional Africanist vis-a-vis ANC view of conflict. His study does not detail the real causes of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists and, in some instances, between the ANC and the Communists. Lodge states that the Transvaal

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.91.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.92.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.89.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.98.

²¹ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.29.

ANC was divided as regards support for the 1950 Communist sponsored May Day Stay-Away.²² He does not proceed to specify the reasons for their division and the reservations of the Africanists towards the Stay-Away.

Lodge concludes that by 1950 the Africanists were upstaged as there was no attempt to implement a call for a national stoppage of work envisaged by the Programme of Action.²³ Lodge's view on the Africanists' 'failure' to implement their Programme of Action is hasty as the Programme was only agreed upon in December 1949. It is difficult to evaluate the success or failure of the Africanists in implementing the Programme of Action within such a short space of time. Lodge also fails to link the Communist Party's call for the May Day action as an attempt to pre-empt the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action which, as will subsequently be shown appears to have been the case.²⁴

Lodge sees the transition from radicalism to moderacy of Youth League members such as Mandela, Tambo and Sisulu as a result of their collaboration with other national executive committees.²⁵ This view is not entirely without substance, however it must be mentioned that it was only one of the many contributory factors. Lodge creates the impression that it was the only factor that contributed to their moderacy. He does not refer to other contributory factors such as social contacts between a certain section of the Youth League and the Communists and the latter's strategy of diluting the Youth League.²⁶

²² *Ibid.*, p.33.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.33.

²⁴ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.37.

²⁶ G. Gerhart, *Black Power; The evolution of an ideology*, pp.155-158.

Lodge's reference to conflict between the Youth League branch in Orlando, under the influence of the Africanists, and the ANC is superficial as it lacks detail with regard to ideological conflict. He refers to the expulsion of Leballo without mentioning the suspension of his branch.²⁷ It is evident that Lodge's study lacks substance as far as the ideological conflict between the Africanists and the Communists over resistance politics is concerned.

Benjamin Pogrund in his Sobukwe and Apartheid only makes reference to the Youth League in as far as it affects and involves Sobukwe who is his main focus.²⁸ The fact that Sobukwe arrived on the Rand in the early fifties, indicates that he made a limited contribution to the conflict that occurred between the Africanists and the Communists. Sobukwe's occupation at Wits further restricted his involvement in politics prior to 1958. In those years Sobukwe preferred to work behind the scenes as an incognito participant.²⁹

Edward Feit's South Africa: The Dynamics of the African National Congress, does refer to conflict but lacks a coherent account on the causes and the results of conflict between the Africanists and the Communists. Whereas Feit acknowledges conflict in the African resistance movement, he views it as prevailing amongst various factions within the ANC.³⁰ He does not account for conflict between the Africanists and the Communists except to mention it in passing in connection with the alliance between the ANC and the Indians. Feit mostly refers to conflict between the Africanists and the ANC as sponsored by the Communists. He interprets the

²⁷ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.81.

²⁸ B. Pogrund, *Sobukwe and Apartheid*, p.46.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.67.

³⁰ E. Feit, *South Africa; The Dynamics of the African National Congress*, p.12.

Africanist's rejection of the Freedom Charter in this context.³¹

Chapter Two of this thesis deals with the socio-economic and political factors which contributed to the rise of militancy and ideological consciousness amongst the youth in the urban areas of the Witwatersrand. The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act and the Native Representative Council (NRC) greatly heightened African consciousness as it dashed hopes for the extension of the vote to the "northern" provinces of South Africa. As a result of this act the seeds of disenchantment were sown amongst the African people. The extent to which the loss of the vote and a minimal increase in the land available for African occupation contributed to African militancy will be discussed.

The advent of the Second World War had a great bearing on the political awareness of the African people. Africans were not, however, unanimous in their support for the war. This lack of general support served to reflect the contradictions amongst the African people as regards the war and its impact on them. This view will be further developed in this chapter. The results of the war on African political consciousness will receive attention. The stance of the Communist party will be explored as regards to their reservations about the war. The participation of P.K. Leballo in the war will receive attention in as far as it epitomises the experiences that some youths went through which later impacted on their political consciousness.

The advent of the Second World War witnessed an increase in the influx of Africans from the rural areas to the urban areas. This influx had a radicalising effect upon the urban-dwellers. The vibrant social and political life of townships such as Sophiatown and Alexandra will be explored especially in its contribution to the radicalisation of the urban dwellers.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.15-17.

Lack of housing to accommodate the new arrivals greatly contributed to conflict and confrontation between the new arrivals and the authorities and the contribution of such incidents to the radicalisation of the township residents will be explored.

The political developments in the colonies in North and West Africa had a direct impact on the development of African nationalism in South Africa. These political developments will be referred to and the extent to which they contributed to the growth of African nationalism in South Africa will be evaluated. The various mine strikes will also be referred to in terms of their role in the radicalisation of the urban dwellers.

Chapter Three focusses on the political ideology of African nationalism that underpinned the ideology of the Africanists in the Youth League. The decisive role of Lembede as the founding president and ideologue of the Youth League will be evaluated. The salient features of African nationalism, its intellectual and historical derivations will be exposed in order to afford this study a sound frame of reference. Conflict between African nationalism, Africanism and Communism will also be investigated. Aspects such as class vis-a-vis race and indigeneity vis-a-vis foreignness will be investigated in the light of their contribution to ideological conflict.

The 1949 Programme of Action, as advocated by the Africanists in the Youth League, and its contribution to conflict will be investigated. Attention will be given to the events that unfolded at the Bloemfontein Conference which resulted in the adoption of the Programme of Action. These events will be referred to in as far as they will expose the extent to which the Africanists and the Communists conflicted. The political implications of the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Africanists will be referred to.

In this chapter analysis of the post 1949 political situation and the efforts of the Communist Party to dilute the Africanists strident ideology of African nationalism will also be discussed. Reference will be made to the informal social contacts that were orchestrated by the Communists in an attempt to lure away a certain section of the Africanists in the Youth League. The results of these efforts in undermining the Africanists in the Youth league will be referred to and the response of the Africanists will also be considered.

By 1950 there were certain disenchanted groupings within the Youth League. The lack of unanimity as regards the May Day Stay-Away will be referred to. Conflict ensued not only between the Communists and the Africanists, but also within the Africanists themselves as regards the 1952 Defiance Campaign. Reasons for this conflict will be explored and the extent to which it heightened conflict. The role of Dr. Moroka in fermenting conflict whether by omission or commission, will be referred to.

Chapter Four will focus on the acceleration of conflict between the Africanists and the Communist on one hand and the ANC on the other. The Africanist's vehement and passionate criticism of Sisulu and Nokwe for their attendance of the Youth Festivals in Russia will be investigated. The Africanists' criticism of Sisulu and Nokwe will be referred to. The implications of these criticisms will be analysed as they were untimely given the fact that they coincided with the government looking for excuses to ban the Communists and alleged sympathisers. The manner in which Orlando was used as a launching base for 'vitriolism' and propaganda against the Communists and the ANC will be analysed. It will be against this background that the activities of Leballo will be referred to.

The ANC and the Loyalist Youth League did not shy away from the criticism of the Africanists as it indirectly afforded the nationalist

government an alibi for the persecutions of the Communists. The rejoinder of the ANC and the Loyalists towards the Africanists will be dealt with as it oscillated from suspensions to expulsions. The Africanists, especially Leballo, rejected the reaction of the Loyalist Youth League and the reasons for this behaviour will be analysed.

1955 witnessed the adoption of the Freedom Charter which prompted diverse responses as it was interpreted differently by different groups. To the Africanists the adoption of the Freedom Charter represented the parting of ways between them and the ANC together with the Loyalist Youth League. Their reservations and objections to the Freedom Charter will be analysed. The response and criticism of the Africanists to the clauses in the Freedom Charter and their accusation of the role of the Communists in stage-managing it will be investigated. Their reservations were also based on who actually authored the Freedom Charter. The Africanist's principal criticism against the Freedom Charter was premised on the land issue. Their criticism will be referred to and why they thought the Freedom Charter negated the spirit and letter of the 1949 Programme of Action, which they would subsequently claim to be heirs to.

CHAPTER TWO - THE FORMATION OF THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE

2.1 EFFECTS OF THE HERTZOG ACTS ON AFRICAN RESISTANCE POLITICS

The African resistance politics were greatly radicalised by the 1936 Hertzog Land Act and the Natives Representation Act.¹ Prior to the introduction of the 1936 Acts the African people of the Cape enjoyed a limited franchise. Over the decades from 1910 they yearned for the extension of the franchise to the northern provinces. The formation of the ANC in 1912 was influenced by among other factors the desire to extend the vote to the northern provinces.²

The Hertzog Acts served to conscientise the African people against their common challenge. The All African Convention (AAC) was convened in order to galvanise African opposition to the Hertzog Acts. These Acts united the Africans across the political spectrum i.e. from moderates such as Jabavu to the Communists and the trade unionists represented by the Industrial Commercial Workers Union (ICU) of Kadalie.³

Apart from bridging ideological divisions the Hertzog Acts spawned the growth of a new political approach regarding protest to segregation. The AAC drew up a Programme of Action through which resistance to the government was to be spear-headed.⁴

¹ E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope; The Blackman's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa.* pp.286-301.

² See P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism.*

³ T. Karis and G.M. Carter (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa,* Vol. 2, p.6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.54-55.

Prior to the Hertzog Acts the African people entertained a certain uneasy measure of hope since those in the Cape had the franchise, albeit not a universal one. This hope led to a belief that in the not too distant future the 'Cape Vote' would be extended to the northern provinces. While this hope glimmered, it influenced the nature and extent of African political conduct which was projected through deputations, appeals, litigation and other constitutional means.⁵ The loss of the Cape vote came as a great shock to the entire African nation and in particular to the masters of moderation like D.D.T. Jabavu.

The African liberals like D.D. T. Jabavu, Selope Thema, Z.K. Matthews etc. were confronted by harsh reality of the government's determination to exclude the African people from the decision making process by whatever means possible. Selope Thema's reaction to the Hertzog Acts demonstrated the realisation of the African middle class of the troubles ahead. "... The principle of the Bill will be the beginning of endless trouble. The African people finding themselves left completely outside the national life of South Africa."⁶

With the loss of the vote came the loss of land and the creation of the reserves that later became the homelands. The radicalization of the middle class was symbolised by Jabavu's presidential address to the AAC in 1936. "We asked for bread, but got a stone. We asked for the preservation of the status quo, but got, instead, a new Bill embodying a political inferiority and segregation plus a new colour bar in the Provincial Council."⁷ Jabavu proceeded to state, by way of advocating for a solution, "let us learn how

⁵ See the ANC founding constitution in *ibid.*, and R.J. Haines, "Opposition to General J.B.M. Hertzog's Segregation bills, 1925-1937, A study of extra-parliamentary protest", p.152.

⁶ *Star*, 1 May 1936. Johannesburg City Library.

⁷ T. Karis & G.M. Cater, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, Vol. 2, p.49.

to support our own traders ... out of a patriotic spirit of African nationalism. (Nationalism ... is a necessary preliminary step for people in our stage of development to attain commercial effectiveness,)...⁸ He was very active in student politics of an organisation called TASA (Transvaal African Student Association. (He was later elected into the founding executive committee of the PAC in 1959.)) (Jabavu advocated for economic nationalism as a solution to the plight of the African people.) (However, his economic nationalism was void of any clear political orientation.) (His failure to evolve a political ideology based on African nationalism can be attributed to his moderate views and the possible fear of overtly antagonising the status quo.) Raboroko is critical in this study because he was an articulate member of the Africanists in the Youth League since its inception.

Apart from the radicalizing effects of Hertzog's Acts upon the African middle class, the greater masses and the youth were even more angered and infuriated. (According to P.N. Raboroko, who was a founding member of the Youth League, the Hertzog Acts confirmed the students' fears and apprehensions as to the government's lack of compassion for the plight of the African people.⁹) Raboroko recalls that as students at St. Peter's near Johannesburg the events and debates that centred on the Hertzog Bills were eagerly followed. The outcome was so disillusioning that it generated anti-white feelings amongst most students.¹⁰

The creation of the (Native Representation Council (NRC) in 1937) was received with mixed reactions which oscillated from lukewarm protests to radical and emotionally charged denunciations especially from the

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁹ Interview with P.N. Raboroko, Soweto 15-06-93.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Communist Party and the ICU. Some members of the executive of the AAC advocated a boycott of the NRC whilst the masters of moderation preferred to function from within. The desire to boycott the NRC marked the growth of disillusionment on the part of some of the African middle-class who previously eschewed such means of struggle. (The ANCYL was in later years to capitalise on the loss of the vote and the land as evidence of a need for a new approach to the politics of South Africa.)

2.2 THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND AFRICAN POLITICS

The Communist Party of South Africa was formed in July 1921. It was formed through the amalgamation of the International Socialist League of South Africa, Social Democratic Federation of Cape Town, the Communist Party of Cape Town, the Jewish Socialist Society of Johannesburg and the Marxist club of Durban.¹¹ D. Jones and S.P. Bunting were among the leading members of the newly formed Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA).

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922 resolved to implement a programme aimed at the orchestration of a revolution in Africa and other colonies.¹² In the light of this resolution South Africa was identified as a crucial element in the world capitalist economy, undermining it would greatly advance the cause of Communism in Africa.¹³ The Communist Party's class approach was in conflict with the South African politics that revolved around race.

¹¹ (B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania: The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, Volume 1 and 2, 1780-1966, p.53.*)

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

The Communist Party concentrated on African and white working class movements. The frequent intervention of racist inspired acts by white members of the CPSA negatively impacted on the Communist's relationship with the broad working class movement. One such example was the actions of the all-white National Union of Railway and Harbour Servants (NURAHS) which attempted to disrupt the strike by African workers in 1920.¹⁴ As a result the Communist Party found itself in an ideological catch 22 situation with regards to choosing to deal with either the white or African working class.

With the advent of the 1922 Rand Strike the Communist Party's opportunism was exposed as they took sides with the striking white workers and called for 'White workers of the world to unite'¹⁵. This action by the Communist Party had far reaching ramifications as it alienated them from the militant African working class. The ICU's Clements Kadalie became very suspicious of the sincerity of the Communist Party and its role in the South African struggle.¹⁶ However the defeat of Smuts by Hertzog and the resultant 'civilized labour' policy which greatly advantaged white workers at the expense of African workers ended the Communist's flirtation with white workers.

The embarrassing defeat that the Communist party suffered from its former allies when the Afrikaner working class benefited from Hertzog's new labour policies called for new strategies. The Communist Party realised that its ignorance of the problems of the African proletariat had contributed to its losses. A new policy was introduced whereby African organisations and trade unions were to be infiltrated through agitation, propaganda and

¹⁴ E. Roux, *Time Longer Than Rope: The Blackman's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*, p.155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.143-152.

¹⁶ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-1993.

by African agents. The new policy of the Communist Party was largely informed by the realisation that their political growth could not be achieved so long as the matters pertinent to Africans were neglected. "...The South African experience with Marxist thought became synonymous with intrigue, cynical manipulation, sycophantic adulation with Moscow, coup attempts on large non-communist organisations through infiltration of key departments and alliances with front organisations created by the CPSA, and arrogant opportunism of a highly educated white professional."¹⁷

The aforementioned view is indicative of the form and nature of co-operation between African organisations and the Communists. The central argument of the Africanists in the Youth League was inspired by their contention that one form of imperialism cannot be substituted with another, in this case Soviet Imperialism.

The ANC and the ICU became prime targets for Communist infiltration. Even the "Lekhotla La Bafo" (The Council of Commoners) a Basotho rural protest movement was infiltrated by the Communists.¹⁸ (The Communists' infiltration of the ANC and the ICU was exacerbated by internal crises and indecisive leadership within these organisations.) One such ANC leader who was used by the Communist Party was J. Gumede who became president of the ANC in 1927. He was a leading convert of Communism in the ANC. He attended a meeting of the League against Imperialism in Belgium and subsequently visited Moscow where he was well received by Soviet officials.¹⁹ His flirtation with the Communists was however frowned upon by most ANC members. He was not re-elected to a second term in office in 1930 when he lost to the conservative Pixley

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.54-55.

¹⁸ R. Edgar, *Prophets with Honour. A Documentary History of Lekhotla la Bafo*, pp.22-24.

¹⁹ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash. A Short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1975-1876*, p.61.

Isaka ka Seme. The triumph of Seme against Gumede epitomised the victory of African nationalism against Communism. The victory of Seme also reflected the preparedness of the conservative ANC leaders to purge Communistic influence from the ANC. However, the victory of Seme did not expunge the presence of Communists from the ANC. On the contrary the Communist's plot to infiltrate the ICU was uncovered and it resulted in the mass expulsions and the ban on cross-membership between the ICU and the CPSA.²⁰ As a result the Communist increasingly began to turn their attention the ANC and after 1950 also towards the Youth League.

(Many Africans were converted to Communism.) Prominent among them were A. Nzula, the first African General-Secretary of the Communist Party, M. Kotane, E. Mofutsanyana, D. Tloome and J.B. Marks. Alfred Nzula was first a member of the ANC before he became converted to Communism. He was subsequently elected General-Secretary of the CPSA and as such played an important role in the election of J.T. Gumede, a fellow Communist, to the presidency of the ANC in 1927. A similar profile applies to Moses Kotane, Dan Tloome and others. Kotane for instance joined the ANC in 1928 and the CPSA in 1929. He became General-Secretary of the Party in 1939. In 1943 he was invited by Dr. Xuma the newly elected President-General of the ANC to serve on the Atlantic Charter which drew up 'African Claims'. (There is thus clear evidence from these facts that that prominent African Communist leaders could have had a significant effect on developments in the Youth League.) They all received training in the USSR in pursuance of the 'Black Republic' resolution of the seventh conference of the CPSA in 1929. The "Native Republic" was a very short-lived policy direction. However, it should be seen in the light of identification with African nationalism. (Most of these African Communists

²⁰ B. Bunting, *Moses Kotane ...*, pp.58-59; Y.M. Dadoo, "Tribute to J.B. Marks", speech at funeral of J.B. Marks at Norodivichy Cemetery in Moscow, August 11, 1972, in *South Africa's Freedom Struggle, Statements, Speeches and Articles including Correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi*, pp.194-196.

were at the centre of conflict with the Africanists in the Youth League as they exacerbated Communistic intrusion into the ANC in the 1950s.)

2.3 THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND ITS EFFECTS ON AFRICAN POLITICS

The outbreak of World War II and its impact on the radicalizing of the African people is often emphasised if not over-emphasised by various historians and writers.²¹ Edward Roux states that it "... was the only political event that had roused the Africans for many years."²² Roux solely attributes African political mobilisation to the Second World War at the expense of other socio-economic realities that existed in South Africa, particularly on the Reef. These other factors which contributed to African political mobilisation during and after the war ranged from economic issues such as salary strikes in the mines to urbanisation and demands for a new political dispensation. However, this is not to say that the Second World War had no impact on African political radicalization.²³

The Second World War followed closely on the footsteps of the passing of the Hertzog Bills in 1936 which had dashed many an African's hope for the extension of the vote. By the time the Second World War broke out their anger had been condensed and a new realisation dawned upon them as regards their continued faith in the benevolence of the government to address their demands.²⁴

The African people were becoming more assertive and more outspoken

²¹ E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope; The Blackman's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*,

²² *Ibid.*, p.302.

²³ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-1993.

²⁴ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

regarding their misgivings about the war. They wanted to lend support to the war effort but only on certain conditions. One such condition was that the Africans receive the full franchise.²⁵ Apart from the conditional support of the ANC for the war effort, the general African populace was reluctant to serve in the war lest they again be betrayed by the government.

This fear of betrayal and their experience with the previous government's renegating on promises made to Africans largely contributed towards a guarded approach. "If we fight for you in this war shall we get back the right to buy land?"²⁶ Another sentiment of reluctance and fear of betrayal was expressed at a meeting of the ANC in Port Elizabeth. "Why ... should we fight for you? We fought for you in the Boer War and you betrayed us to the Dutch. We fought for you in the last war. We died in France and East Africa ... and when it was over did anyone care about us? What have we to fight for?"²⁷

The actual hardships that the African people encountered during the Second World War was in the theatre of war.²⁸ J. Bolnick, in his biography of (Potlako Leballo, who was one of the leading Africanist in the Youth League and the Later Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC)) has depicted Leballo's involvement and experiences in the Second World War.²⁹ The case study of Leballo serves as a paradigm of what happened to other

²⁵ "Resolutions of the ANC Annual Conference", December, 15-18, in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, Vol. 2, p.155.

²⁶ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.263.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.264.

²⁸ A. Grundlingh, *Fighting their own War; South African Blacks and the First World War*; L. Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks for participation in the Second World War", in D. Killingrey & D.R. Rathbone, (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War*, pp.

²⁹ (J. Bolnick, "Potlako Leballo: The Man Who Hurried to Meet His Destiny", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp.416-428.)

Africans who enlisted in the war as they were subjected to similar treatment. The South African army was run on segregated lines. Africans were enlisted to perform back-breaking menial tasks in the war zone as they were used to at home.³⁰ These duties involved lorry drivers, cooks, stretcher bearers, road builders etc. Leballo was a trained lorry driver at the Kaffirskraal compound. Kaffirskraal was found undesirable and unsuitable for occupation by Europeans.³¹

The exigencies of war rendered the notion of unarmed African soldiers ludicrous. Armed Africans witnessed increased confrontation with the 'enemy'. They fought heroically against the Italians.³² Leballo was captured by the Germans at Sidi Rezegh and was freed during an Allied counter-attack.³³ Leballo and his contingent survived constant air bombardment by the Luftwaffe of the Egyptian towns of Suez and Alexandria.³⁴ (This experiences radicalized the African people and greatly altered their perceptions of war and of their own abilities.)

~~NRB~~ Whereas African soldiers were treated with contempt by their white South African counterparts, they received favourable treatment from British and Australian troops. This 'equal' treatment that Africans received was in stark contrast to what they were accustomed to in South Africa.³⁵ They drank from the same canteens in Cairo with Whites. "That this relatively colour-blind atmosphere had a significant impact on most South Africans

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.419, see L. Grundlingh, "Recruitment of South African Blacks for participation in the Second World War", in D. Killingrey and D.R. Rathbone, (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War*.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.420-421.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.423.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.422.

³⁵ J. Bolnick, "Potlako Leballo: The Man who Hurried to Meet His Destiny"; In *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3 p.422.

can hardly be in doubt."³⁶

(Given the war experience and the colour-blind treatment received, African soldiers were no longer prepared to suffer in silence, let alone accept racist treatment. This new political consciousness) was eloquently demonstrated in the rum mutiny, which was the result of the African soldiers' being deprived of rum.³⁷ This mutiny shocked the authorities as those involved were armed and had experienced military confrontation.

(Many returning soldiers infused their military experiences into the South African politics.) Their transition back to a civilian life was neither supervised nor regulated through a concerted programme. This resulted in the degeneration of ex-soldiers behaviour which occasionally lapsed into violent behaviour. The Native Commissioner of Sekhukhuniland reported having been twice molested by ex-soldiers when he made his payments to wives and dependants of soldiers.³⁸ Their return to a segregated society greatly increased their level of political radicalism as those conditions were far removed from those that they were accustomed to in the war front.³⁹

2.4 URBANISATION AND THE GROWTH OF URBAN MILITANCY

With the advent of the Second World War the South African economy enlived a strong growth phase. This war-time economic boom increased the influx of Africans from the rural areas to the urban areas. This process

³⁶ A. Grundling, *Fighting Their Own War, South African Blacks and the First World War*, pp.122-123.

³⁷ J. Bolnick, "Potlako Leballo: The Man Who Hurried to Meet His Destiny", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, p.425. See A. Grundlingh, *Fighting Their Own War; South African Blacks and the First World War*, pp.110-111. There are numerous examples of the war-time experiences of Africans in the First and Second World War such as racist treatment of Africans.

³⁸ J. Bolnick, "Potlako Leballo: The Man who Hurried to Meet His Destiny"; In *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3 p.427.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.428.

of urbanisation did not commence with the outbreak of war but was accelerated by it. The growth of the secondary industry gave considerable further impetus to urban influx.⁴⁰

The government of the day did not provide for the flood of urban migration.

④ The township life was marked by over-crowding, as well as the lack of educational and recreational facilities.⁴¹ The arrival of the people from the reserves put further strains on the township's frail infrastructure. The determination of the new arrivals to stay in the urban areas ran counter to the numerous laws that sought to confine them to the reserves and to restrict their presence in the urban areas of their contracts.⁴² After the expiry of these contracts, which often ranged from six to eighteen months, the people were supposed to return to the reserves or face prosecution.

② The pass and the urban areas laws were vigorously implemented and the resulting arrests and fines bedeviled race relations between Africans and whites as the 'Native issue' became the government's main cause for concern.

③ The appointment of the Fagan Native Law Commission in 1948 was in pursuance of the government's intention to settle the 'Native issue'. The Fagan Commission challenged the basic premise of the 1921 Stallard Commission which concluded that Africans had no place of residence in the urban areas. The Fagan Commission acknowledged the inevitability of black urbanisation. It concluded that "firstly ... the townward movement of Natives is simply an economic phenomenon ... secondly that it is impossible to prevent it or to turn it back and thirdly it can be guided and

⁴⁰ F. Meli, *A History of the ANC. South African belongs to us*, p.101.

⁴¹ H. Sapire, "The Stay-Away of the Brakpan Location", in B. Bozzoli, (ed.), *Class, Community and Conflict, South African Perspectives*, p.361.

⁴² A. Stadler, "The Politics of Subsistence: Community Struggles in War-time Johannesburg", in D.C. Hudson, (ed.) *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, vol. 3, pp.54-57.

regulated."⁴³ The ultimate findings of the Fagan Commission with those of the 1920 Godley Commission stated that the rights of the African people to reside in the towns must be acknowledged and transitory accommodation be arranged for migrant labour.⁴⁴

The various government attempts at controlling and regulating African urban influx were met with vehement resistance. The Pass laws became the most despised laws.⁴⁵ The infuriation that resulted from pass raids and imprisonment generated feelings of worthlessness fused with anger. "The dawn patrol moved out of our yard with their prisoners, into the open streets; the doors of most of the rooms were wide open, deserted by the people who had fled the raid. When the police drove off ... people emerged from out of the dark yards ... they were dressed in scanty garments, bed sheets, towels, table spreads in almost anything which was handy at the time of fleeing."⁴⁶

(The inconveniences of the pass raids crystallised into a defiant mood. The law was seen as unjust and survival meant evasion of the law. Most Africans became schooled in the art of law-breaking such that it became a way of life for those who did not have passes. Still, those who had passes could not easily escape from the trepidation of not having the special permit on their passes. This permit had to be renewed every two months. Modisane recalls the fate of those without permits as they "... were arrested and fined, then went back to their homes in Sophiatown only to be arrested and fined again some days later, never forced or able to

⁴³ A. Ashforth, *Politics of official discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, Chapter 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁴⁵ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash? A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, pp.50-51.

⁴⁶ B. Modisane, *Blame me on History*, p.114.

move out." Modisane was a member of the ANCYL who shared the Africanist's sentiments. He worked as a journalist for the *Drum* magazine.⁴⁷

NB
 The urban youth was also a victim of their endless flights from the authorities. The unemployment which resulted from the non-possession of a pass forced the youth to the ranks of criminals and gangsters who were a prominent featured life in Sophiatown and other townships on the Reef. Juvenile criminality was compounded by overcrowding, unstable family life, lack of compulsory schooling and the lack of decent recreational facilities.⁴⁸ They were surrounded by ugliness, arrests, apathy, appalling living conditions and repressive legislation. Their resort to criminality and anti-social tendencies was a logical outcome of the frustration and sense of helplessness which they experienced. They found solace and a sense of belonging in the various gangs that occasionally rivalled for suzerainty.⁴⁹

These young people who were given to criminal behaviour were called 'tsotsis'. The word 'tsotsi' came from the narrow-bottom trouser that was in vogue at the time.⁵⁰ They ruled the streets with terror and violence. To them, it seemed, terror was the only means to achieve self-respect and

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.116.

⁴⁸ C. Glaser, "The making of Zorro: Sexuality and gender in the Tsotsi subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1940-1960": *Structure and Experience in the Making of Apartheid 6-10, February 1990*, (Wits History papers) p.1; Glaser, *Anti-Social Bandits, Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960*, p. 127. Benson attributes the beginning of Mandela's political consciousness after his experience of the harsh conditions in the Reef. M.B. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, p.22.

⁴⁹ C. Glaser, *Anti-Social Bandits, Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960*, p.134. See also: Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, pp.43, 223-225, 247.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.148-149.

that of their community and peers.⁵¹ The tsotsis were not initially involved in politics but with time they became politicised and took active part in the ANC campaigns.⁵² The police were most despised by the tsotsi who constantly battled with them as they violently engaged the police who attempted to raid for beer. The tsotsis also attacked bulldozers and their crews during the removal of Sophiatown. (Tsotsis were increasingly drawn to the PAC due to the latter's not so middle class orientation. The PAC utilised the tsotsis to distribute their leaflets and material for producing the *Africanist*.⁵³)

It would be a misleading to make the sweeping generalisation that all urban youths resorted to criminality and thieving. A considerable number if not the majority of them attended school and avoided involvement with the tsotsis. Schools such as the St Peter's in Johannesburg and the Wilberforce teacher-training school in Evaton in the Vaal Triangle became the seedbeds of student political consciousness. St. Peter's was established in 1922. It played a significant role in the growth and development of African political thought. Many leaders of the Youth League and the ANC had their schooling at St. Peter's where people such as Oliver Tambo taught.⁵⁴ These schools were under the aegis of missionaries and their liberal tradition which prevailed in these schools. This scenario of liberalism in African schools also prevailed elsewhere in South Africa at (Lovedale, Healdtown and Adams College. It was at these institutions that future leaders of the ANC, the Youth League and the PAC)

⁵¹ D. Mattera, *Memory is the Weapon*, pp.98-108.

⁵² C. Glaser, *Anti-Social Bandits, Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Youth Gang Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960*, p.137, see G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.224-225.

⁵³ *Ibid.*,

⁵⁴ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93; N.C. Manganyi, *Exiles and Home Comings; A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*, pp.54-55; J. Grobler, *A Decisive Class, A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa, 1875-1976*, p. 89.

were schooled.⁵⁵ (The liberal institutions of higher learning greatly influenced the advent of student militancy. Lovedale, Healdtown, Adams College, St Peters and Fort Hare were some of the institutions that were at the fore-front of student militancy in South Africa.⁵⁶ These institutions provided the foundation upon which the ANCYL was to base its manpower in order to advance its political cause.)

2.5 FORMATION OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS YOUTH LEAGUE (ANCYL)

The formation of the ANCYL ushered in a new era of racialism in the South African liberation history. (The mood of Pan-Africanism that prevailed in Africa after World War II contributed greatly to the upsurge of militancy in South Africa.⁵⁷) The radical propaganda of Pan-Africanism as espoused by Kwame Nkrumah and Nnandi Azikiwe found a receptive audience amongst young African professionals and intellectuals.⁵⁸ Referring to the ANCYL branch at Fort Hare, P.G.M. Pitje states that R.M. Sobukwe and J. Matthews were both elected as Foreign Affairs secretaries. "They brought us newspapers from West Africa, notably those of Dr. Nnandi Azikiwe's group. Fundamental questions were asked and answered, e.g. who built the Zimbabwe ruins? Who taught the whole world the value of irrigation?"⁵⁹ (This symbolised the contact and influence that West Africa had on the evolution of the Africanist ideology in the Youth League.) Africa's past achievements were cited as examples of her ability to

⁵⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an ideology*, pp.51-53; N.C. Manganye, *Exiles and Home-comings, A Biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*, pp.63-64.

⁵⁶ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

⁵⁷ L. Callinicos, *A People's History of South Africa*, vol. 3, pp.32-36.

⁵⁸ G.M. Pitje, *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe*, a document presented at the Centre for Enrichment in African Political Affairs, (CEAPA), 16th December 1987, p.4-5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

distinguish herself amidst other nations of the world.

(The young African intellectuals that constituted the ANCYL were widely read on the various ideologies of Pan-Africanism. They began to realise that the unity of all oppressed African people was paramount.) The militancy displayed by the proponents of Pan-Africanism was also evident in the early South African Black Ethiopian Church.⁶⁰ The formation of the break-away African churches was as a result, mainly, of the "...growing feeling of national consciousness and revolt against whites, not only in religious terms, but in everything".⁶¹

The white liberals had arrogated to themselves the right to be spokesperson for the African people.⁶² This trusteeship thrived in part because the "...continued financial weakness and factional disputes in African politics ensured that there was no serious threat to the essentially paternalistic role the liberals continued to play..."⁶³ The young African intellectuals and professionals were not prepared to accept the patronage and trusteeship of white liberals. These young intellectuals desired to promote self-reliance, self-determination and national pride.⁶⁴ J.K. Ngubane, the avowed critic of the Communists, asserts that he realised that the ferment of African National consciousness in him was shared by most other young professionals. J.K. Ngubane was closely associated with the Africanist cause but was in fact a member of the Liberal Party. He was strongly opposed to Communism and he regularly attacked the Communists for what he perceived to be their dominant role in black (African) politics in

⁶⁰ E. Roux, *Time Longer than Rope: The Blackman's Struggle for freedom in South Africa*, pp.77-80.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.78.

⁶² Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

⁶³ P.B. Rich, *White Power and the liberal Conscience. Racial Segregation in South African Liberalism*, p.77.

⁶⁴ C.J.B. le Roux, "Pan Africanism in South Africa"; *Journal of African Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1979, p.35.

general and the Congress Alliance in particular. He has authored a much quoted book namely An African Explains Apartheid.⁶⁵

(The ANC's peaceful and moderate political approach was eschewed by the militant young African intellectuals. Referring to Joe Matthews his mother stated that "...Joe and his group were impatient, angry, impetuous, demanding, and as all older men throughout history Z.K. (Matthews) and his group were patient, calm, cautious and understanding".⁶⁶ Joe Matthews was a son of Z.K. Matthews and a founding member of the Youth League. He later joined the SACP and Inkatha. The formation of the ANCYL thus provided an outlet for the release of the anger and the radicalism of the youth.)

Prior the formation of the ANCYL there were a number of student organisations that operated in certain provinces. One such organisation was the Transvaal African Student Association (TASA) which occasionally held its meetings at the Bantu Men's Social Centre in Johannesburg where students took part in various political discussions.⁶⁷ Peter Raboroko, then a young teacher, was the president of TASA. The Bantu Men's Social Centre which was controlled by liberals was also used as an African school while the Jan Hofmeyer School of Social Work was also attached to it. It thus served as a school for Africans as well as a social and cultural centre for them.⁶⁸ Apart from the TASA there was the Social Studies Society (SSS) which organised political discussions at Fort Hare from the mid-

⁶⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.30.

⁶⁶ G.M. Pitje, *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe*, paper presented to at the Centre for Enrichment - African Political Affairs, 16 Dec. 1987, p.7. See No Sizwe, *One Azania One Nation*; The National Question in South Africa, p.57; G. Mbeki, *The Struggle for liberation in South Africa; A Short History*, p.53.

⁶⁷ T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.). *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.99.

⁶⁸ Interview with C. Peterson, Sebokeng, 06-12-93, see P.B. Rich, *White Power and the Liberal Conscience; Racial Segregation in South Africa*, p.79.

thirties. The SSS was largely composed of students at Fort Hare. Dr. William Nkomo, was one of the founding members of the ANCYL, participated in those discussions while he was a student at Fort Hare.⁶⁹

In 1939 M.T. Moerane and J.K. Ngubane organised the National Union of African Youth (NUAY) in Natal. This organisation consisted largely of teachers and issued a newsletter to propagate its views. In a manifesto issued by Moerane it was asserted that the aim of the organisation was to awaken the political consciousness of the youth.⁷⁰ The teaching profession strictly discouraged its members from involvement in political organisations, hence Moerane was forced to withdraw the manifesto. As a result the anticipated NUAY failed to get off the ground. Ngubane later left for Johannesburg where he occupied the post of assistant editor to R.V. Selope Thema's Bantu World.

In 1940 the formation of the Transvaal African Teachers Association (TATA) in Johannesburg contributed its share to the rise of teachers and student political consciousness. Prominent members of the ANC were leading members of TATA. These included Z. Mothopeng, E. Mphahlele and Pitje were at some stage presidents of TATA. The activities of TATA offered politicised teachers the opportunity to express themselves and also to politicise those amongst them who had not yet been exposed to politics. The political radicalism of teachers was evidenced by the 1944 march by 5 000 teachers in protest against low salaries.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Editorial comments, T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.). *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.99.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.* See N.C. Manganyi, *Exiles and Home Comings; A biography of Es'kia Mphahlele*, pp.154-157; H. Sapire, "African Political Organisations in Brakpan in the 1950s", in P. Bonner, P. Delius and D. Posel, (eds.), *Apartheid's Genesis: 1935-1962*, p.258; *Azania News*, official organ of the PAC of Azania, vol. 21, no. 3, 1986, p.11.

The final move for the formation of the ANCYL was however contained in the ANC's Annual Conference in Bloemfontein in 1942.⁷² This resolution incorporated the students at Fort Hare. According to Sisulu the suggestion for the formation of the ANCYL came from L. Gama, a leading member of the ANC. Gama felt that the various strikes at schools and the subsequent suspension of teachers indicated the need to give the youth political education and guidance under the banner of the ANC.⁷³ Resolution 24/42 at the same ANC Annual Conference in Bloemfontein in 1942 urged the Transvaal Education Department to reinstate suspended teachers at Bethany and Ramakgopa schools.⁷⁴

(The initial practical step towards the formation of the ANCYL was taken by Raboroko in 1943. He was president of the Transvaal African Student Association at the time.⁷⁵ His presidency of TASA stood him in good stead when convening and presiding over the first meeting that led to the formation of the ANCYL. The latter was finally constituted at the Bantu Men Social Centre in 1944. William Nkomo became the chairman of the provincial executive committee prior to the election of Anton Lembede as national president.⁷⁶)

2.6 AIMS OF THE ANCYL

The ANC Youth League's provincial committee issued the Congress Youth

⁷² T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), "Resolutions of the ANC Annual Conference, December 20-22, 1942, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.203.

⁷³ Interview with W. Sisulu, Johannesburg, 12-08-93.

⁷⁴ T.Karis and G.M. Carter (eds.), "Resolutions of the ANC Annual Conference, December 20-22, 1942, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.202.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁷⁶ Interview with W. Sisulu, Johannesburg, 12-08-93; interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

League manifesto in March 1944. This manifesto entailed the aims and objectives of the ANCYL. In its manifesto the ANCYL criticised trusteeship and dubbed it "the consolidation by the whiteman of his position at the expense of the African people so that by the time national awakening opens the eyes of the African people to the bluff they live under, white domination should be secure and unassailable."⁷⁷ The ANCYL Manifesto proceeded to state the broad objectives of the Youth League. "The formation of the league is an attempt on the part of the youth to impart to Congress a truly national character. It is also a protest against the lack of discipline and the absence of a clearly defined goal in the movement as a whole."⁷⁸ (The ANCYL also saw itself as the brain-trust and generator of African nationalism.⁷⁹)

(Apart from viewing itself as the intellectual wing of the ANC) the ANCYL perceived its role of that of a watchdog. The ANCYL "...will keep a vigilant eye on all un-national tendencies on the national unity front and in congress policies".⁸⁰

The ANCYL did not proceed to explain the un-national tendencies it wanted to police. One might suspect that this reference was directed at the Communist Party, however, this is not substantiated by the ANCYL Manifesto. (The ANCYL's attitude towards the Communist Party was indirectly reflected in this founding manifesto. "We believe that the national liberation of African will be achieved by Africans themselves. We reject foreign leadership of Africa.) We may borrow useful ideologies from

⁷⁷ "Congress Youth League Manifesto". Issued by the provisional Committee of the Congress Youth League, March 1944, in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.302.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.306.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.307.

foreign ideologies, but we reject the whole-sale inportation of foreign ideologies into Africa."⁸¹

The Provincial Committee was asked to write the constitution for the ANCYL which was accomplished in 1944. The ANCYL's constitution outlined the aims of the Youth League as:

- "(a) To arouse and encourage national consciousness and unity among African youth.
- (b) To assist, support and re-enforce the African National Congress ...
- (c) To study political, economic and social problems of Africa and the world.
- (d) To strive and work for educational, moral and cultural advancement of African youth."⁸²

^{NR}
 (In all the ANCYL's aims African nationalism as defined by the term Africanism became the major rallying point from which their political programme and much of its actions emanated.)

(The ANCYL emerged as a new and distinguished forum of young African intellectuals in South African resistance politics. The ANCYL's leading members included A. Lembede, A.P. Mda, O. Tambo, V. Mbobo (vice president), D. Bopape, L. Majombozi, W. Conco, W. Sisulu and W.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.308.

⁸² "Constitution of the ANC Youth League, 1944", in T.Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, vol.2, p.310.

Nkomo.⁸³ Most of these ANCYL members were teachers or aspiring lawyers while others were medical students.⁸⁴ A. Lembede distinguished himself as a leading spokesperson and theorician of the ANCYL.

Lembede was born in Georgedale area of Natal in 1914. His parents were poor and worked as share-croppers on a white owned farm. After having spent two years at school he left to work as a 'kitchen-boy' for an Indian family in order to earn money for school fees.⁸⁵ He was described by Ngubane as a living symbol of African misery.⁸⁶ He matriculated in 1937 at Adams Teacher Training College. Lembede commenced his B.A. studies while he taught at Parys in the Orange Free State and completed it when he was at Heilbron Secondary School. Lembede subsequently completed an LLB. and an MA degree through correspondence at the University of South Africa (UNISA). It is undeniable that Lembede was a consummate and erudite scholar as was evidenced by his Masters cum laude awarded by Unisa. The title of his thesis was The Conception of God as Expounded by, or as it Emerges, From Great Greek Philosophers from Descartes to the present.⁸⁷

Lembede's intellectual ability was immense and was widely acknowledged by most of his peers. Mda who succeeded Lembede as President of the ANCYL in 1947, confessed the extent to which he was impressed by

⁸³ T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa*, vol. 2, p.101; Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania: The origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, 1780-1966*, p.59. See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; An Evolution of an Ideology*, p.51, A.P. Mda, *Lembede's life Career recounted Tribute to Lembede*, August, 1947, p.1 and F. Meli, *A History of the ANC; South Africa belongs to us*, p.109.

⁸⁶ A.P. Mda, *Lembede's life Career recounted; Tribute to Lembede*, August, 1947, p.2 (Document).

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

Lembede's scholarship. "I read through his thesis before he submitted it. I must confess that I was taken aback by the breadth of learning and profundity of so young a man as Anton. He found no difficulty in compassing the immeasurable regions of thought traversed by such intellectual giants as St. Augustus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Hegel, Joad, Kant and others." After receiving his M.A. cum laude, Lembede left teaching to become a lawyer in partnership with the former ANC president Pixley Isaka ka Seme. The latter represented the ANC's liberal leadership that thrived on trusteeship and on its predilection for moderate means.

Prior to his arrival in Johannesburg, Lembede had made contact with Mda in 1938 at Adam's College and with Ngubane.⁸⁸ This contact and friendship was strengthened with Lembede's arrival in Johannesburg. He made an impressive debut as a public speaker at the meeting called at the Mooki Memorial School in Orlando in 1944.⁸⁹ Lembede's intellectual prowess led to his inclusion in the team that comprised Ngubane and Mda whose main duty was to draw up the ANCYL Manifesto.⁹⁰ Lembede soon had easy access to most public platforms and he wisely used this opportunity to popularise his views on African nationalism.⁹¹ Mda reflects that "...in April 1944 at the Bantu Men Social Centre, where after an erudite exposition he showed Africa's middle position in relation to the materialistic West and spiritual Orient."⁹² This was evidence of Lembede's quick grasp of politics and his ability to articulate the African

⁸⁸ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.351; see G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.50.

⁸⁹ A.P. Mda, *Lembede's life Career recounted: Tribute to Lembede*, August, 1947, p.4 (document).

⁹⁰ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.352.

⁹¹ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash; A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p.89.

⁹² A.P. Mda, *Lembede's life Career recounted; Tribute to Lembede*, August, 1947, p.4 (document).

case in the global context.

^{N12}
 (The founder members' of the ANCYL were not ideologically uniform, though they professed to share a common aim of radicalizing the ANC from within. Three main ideological trends became manifest within the ANCYL. They were the Communists or left wing, the African nationalists and the Africanists.⁹³ The Communists comprised Nkomo, Bopape, and Majombozi. The Communists were a small group who were largely distrusted by the other groups. The African nationalists were moderate in their ideological outlook. The Africanists were more radical and outright than the African nationalists. Unlike the African nationalists who emphasise the political struggle in South Africa, the Africanists saw their struggle in a broad African continental basis.)

(The African nationalist group comprised Ngubane, Mda, Tambo, V. Ncekeni, M. Yenwa and others. This group was "...constantly aware of the dangers of an extremist and inward-looking racialism".⁹⁴ The African nationalists were moderate in their political outlook. It is argued that the moderacy of the African nationalist was partly due to the close contact they maintained with the white liberals, generally in the urban areas.⁹⁵)

^{N13}
 (The Africanist or militant African nationalists were represented by, amongst others, Lembede, Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and Raboroko.⁹⁶ They were

⁹³ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.355, See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an Ideology*, p.71; L de Beer, *A Political Analysis of the African National Congress and Extra-parliamentary Movement*, p.34 and C.J.B. le Roux, "Pan Africanism in South Africa", in *South African Journal of African Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1979, p.35.

⁹⁴ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.355.

⁹⁵ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania; The origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress 1780-1966*, vol. 1 and 2, p.66.

⁹⁶ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African nationalism in South Africa*, p.356.

outrightly radical and blunt in the advocacy of their ideology and were less circumspect in propagating anti-white attitudes. The radicalism of the Africanist group was to manifest itself at Fort Hare University College in 1947. Azikiwe Mhandi's quote was frequently used to justify their militancy. "Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell a man a moderately to rescue his wife from the arms of a ravisher ... but do not ask me to use moderation in the cause lie the present."⁹⁷

(The Africanists were mostly from poor backgrounds. Lembede was described as a living symbol of poverty.⁹⁸ Zeph Lekoane Mothopeng, a teacher by profession and a leading member of the Africanists in the Youth League later became a member of the newly formed PAC, National Executive Committee, was described as a "... big and bony and wore large mine boots"... He looked grotesque".⁹⁹ (The Africanists, dominated the ANCYL during the presidency of Lembede which contributed greatly to their recruitment of like-minded members.) Among these new Africanist converts were Leballo, R.M. Sobukwe, Ntsu Mokhehle, J.N. Pokela and Z.B. Molete.¹⁰⁰ This group, after the death of Lembede, played a crucial watch-dog role in pioneering the Africanist ideology.)

(Communism was greatly despised by the youth who had strong and emotional attachments to African nationalism even prior to the formation of the ANCYL.)^(N2) (In 1941 ideological conflict ensued between the African nationalist group represented by Mokhehle and Sobukwe and the Communists led by Kasinambra, an Indian student who was a member of

⁹⁷ G.M. Pitje, *Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe*, document presented at the Centre for Enrichment in African Political Affairs (CEAPA), 16th December, 1987, p.6.

⁹⁸ G. Gerhart, *Black Power; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.51.

⁹⁹ N.C. Manganyi, *Exiles and Home-comings; A Biography of Es'Kia Mphahlele*, p.55.

¹⁰⁰ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.356.

the Communist Party.¹⁰¹ As can be seen in the following: "In 1942, a parcel of Communist Manifestos arrived at the University (Fort Hare) for distribution. Mokhehle's group charged Kasinambra for wishing to replace Boer colonialism with subservience to Moscow".¹⁰²

Fort Hare became the seedbed that nourished and brought to power the Youth Leaguer's militant creed of African nationalism or Africanism. The Youth League's radical creed of African nationalism encouraged already militant student politics at Fort Hare. At Fort Hare Z.K. Matthews's role as a teacher further impacted strongly on the growth of student militancy.¹⁰³ "Students were drawn to hear a man who was able to dissect the many social problems that they faced. Many were despairing of him but all respected his wide abilities. He was perceived as being too moderate and conciliatory at a time when the effects of oppression were menacing."¹⁰⁴

In 1943, Fort Hare was the main institution of African higher learning in South Africa and thus offered a wide scope for training of future African leaders. Fort Hare, situated in the Eastern Cape, had a long-standing history of liberalism and resistance to oppression.¹⁰⁵ Students at Fort Hare came from as far afield as Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Students at Fort Hare were influenced by the ideology of African nationalism which they in turn spread to their various communities upon completion of their studies. Fort Hare was thus ideally situated to act

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania; The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, 1780-1966*, vol. 1 and 2, p.65.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.60.

¹⁰⁴ T.R.H. White, *Z.K. Matthews and the Politics of Education in South Africa*, p.70.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.66.

as sounding board and launching pad for African nationalism and Africanism.¹⁰⁶

Mda became aware of the immense possibilities that Fort Hare had to offer the ANC Youth League in particular and resistance politics in general as a pool from which future leaders could be drawn. "Fort Hare is just the place to start a Youth League. The young people there are the intellectual leaders to be and a growing consciousness of their role in the national liberation struggle will add new vigour and force to the struggle for national freedom."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

¹⁰⁷ "Letter to the Youth League, from A.P. Mda to G.M. Pitje, August 24, 1948, quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol.2, p.319.

CHAPTER THREE - THE MAKING OF CONFLICT

3.1 THE IDEOLOGY OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM OR AFRICANISM

(Unlike the ANC's middle class founding fathers, the Youth League's pioneers were a radicalised and militant middle class whose militancy can be greatly attributed to the socio-economic and political conditions obtaining in the 1940s. Unlike the ANC founders, neither of the Youth League founders received their education abroad nor were there any theologians amongst them. There was thus little that moderated some of their anger and militancy.) Even though some of the Youth League founders were new arrivals in the urban areas, there was virtually no difference in as far as the harsh urban and rural socio-economic deprivation and political juxtapositions were concerned. The evolution of an ideology by the Youth League was meant to be the panacea to these political and economic ills to which the African people were subjected.

^{nB} (With the formation of the ANC Youth League an ideology of radical African nationalism or Africanism was unveiled and conceived by Anton Lembede.¹ This ideology of radical African nationalism revolutionised the African resistance politics and set Africanists in the Youth League and the ANC on a collision course.) (Africanism became the mortal foe of Communism and invariably heightened conflict between the Africanist in the Youth League and the Communists.) The Africanists were not only content to agree to disagree with the Communists but they were determined to expell the Communists as false prophets and lackeys of the East.²

What could have contributed to Lembede's conception of African

¹ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa, The Evolution of an ideology*, chapter 3, pp.54-55.

² *Ibid.*, p.65.

nationalism? (The conception of African nationalism was the main central rejoinder to the numerous challenges that confronted the African people.)

These challenges ranged from political, social and personal challenges. Lembede attempted to respond, through African nationalism, to conflicting national considerations amongst the Youth Leaguers as to the role of whites and their future in South Africa.³ There is no doubt that Lembede's philosophical background and generally acquired knowledge on African political struggles had an impact on his conception of African nationalism although there is no evidence to substantiate this view. It is possible that Lembede could have ardently and closely followed the epoch making political events in Africa in general and Ghana or the Gold Coast in particular. His views on Africanism bear certain resemblances with Kwame Nkrumah's views on Pan-Africanism.⁴ (Lembede's postulation of Africanism was given further impetus by a circle of like-minded young radicals who were in search of a liberatory ideology.⁵ Pronounced amongst these latter radicals was Mda, who succeeded Lembede as President of the Youth League in 1947.)

According to Sisulu, Mda was well read and pragmatic in his approach to politics and as a result he blunted much of Lembede's philosophical approach.⁶ This was further evident by the fact that "...Mda found Lembede rather uncritically fascinated with the spirit of determination embodied in fascist ideology, to a point where he saw nothing wrong with quoting certain ideas of Hitler and Mussolini with approval. Mda set himself the task of disabusing Lembede of some of his more dangerous fancies and turning his intellectual powers towards a deeper consideration

³ *Ibid.*, p.69.

⁴ K. Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path*, pp.102-104.

⁵ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.74.

⁶ Interview with W. Sisulu, Johannesburg, 12-08-1993.

South Africa's problem".⁷

NB

(Lembede was disenchanted with the lifestyle of the African people in the urban areas on the Reef. Their idolisation of American symbols and values like clothes, and movies was a great cause of concern to him.⁸ With Africanism he attempted to emancipate the African people from such value systems. Africanism was meant to forge and foster self-reliance and pride in one's own culture and being.) Africanism according to Lembede, represented the culmination of a laborious intellectual journey to the self, to the purpose in life of an African person and his ultimate destiny.⁹

NB & #

(Africanism, like most concepts, does not easily lend itself to a clear cut definition. There are basically two main discerned trends of Africanism. One is more exclusive and Afro-centric whilst the other is more inclusive and liberal.¹⁰ The former appeals solely to the African people whilst the latter encompasses even non-Africans or whites. Members of the ANC Youth League who embraced the exclusive form African nationalism were referred to as Africanists whilst those who adhered to the inclusive brand of African nationalism were later referred to as the Charterists.¹¹)

(African nationalism in its broader context can be defined as "...a group attitudinal stand against other group attitudes, a national, institutional and cultural answer to pressure by institutions and cultural representatives of

⁷ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.53-54.

⁸ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93; G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.55-58.

⁹ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

(national and interests other than African in Africa."¹² Another dimension of African nationalism according to Black Savage, is an ideology, a "...gospel of self-love, respect for the esteem and cherishing of things material and spiritual which we inherit from our sires and not one of hatred for another."¹³ Nelson Mandela defined African nationalism and its purpose as "... giving the African people the self-confidence and subjective liberation without which a people can never hope to challenge effectively any national oppression."¹⁴ Mandela emphasises the indispensability of African nationalism and its typical self-reliant element.)

(Lembede's Africanism was a militant and radical ideology that was exclusive rather than inclusive.) It did not hesitate or fear to out-rightly offend white people.¹⁵ According to Lembede the definition of what is wrong or right was dictated to the African people by whites.¹⁶ Lembede was quite aware of the implications of his militant denunciation of whites as oppressors. He did not fear to being called anti-white or a racist. Lembede preferred being called "anti-white" rather than to amend his belief in the ideology of Africanism.¹⁷)

(Lembede's Africanism placed strong emphasis on the unity of Africa and its people. This unity of Africa meant the physical, cultural and political unity of Africa and her people. South Africa was an indivisible part of the

¹² Black Savage, "African Nationalism in Multi-Racial Africa", in (*The Africanist*, vol. 11, no. 1, Jan-Feb, 1955, p.7 (Wits Papers).)

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ N. Mandela, "Presidential Address: From Annual Conference of the African National Congress Youth League", December 1951, in S. Johnson and R.H. Davis, Jr (eds.), *Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress. The Struggle Against Apartheid 1948-1990 A Documentary Survey*, p.38.

¹⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.74; P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.356.

¹⁶ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.74.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

whole of Africa "Africans were one people and out of their social and ethnic groups must emerge one united African nation; the leadership of Africa must come out of their own loins as no foreigner can be a true agent of social change in Africa."¹⁸)

Lembede's propagation and belief in the unity of Africa made him a true Pan-Africanist in outlook. His love for Africa was deep and immense and was exemplified by his nostalgic utterances. "My soul yearns for the glory of Africa that is gone. But I shall labour for the birth of a new Africa, free and great among the nations of the world".¹⁹ (The freedom and unity of Africa constituted the ultimate goal of the Africanists in the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) which inherited the Lembedist outlook of Africanism when it was formed in April 1958.²⁰)

(Lembede believed that the struggle was for the liberation of Africans and this could be achieved without the patronising behaviour of progressive (liberal) whites, Indians and Coloureds.²¹ Co-operation between Africans and other groups was based on certain conditions. Among these conditions was that the African people should firstly attain internal cohesion and self-confidence.²² The dominating influence of whites was viewed with great scepticism and hence Africans had to be empowered prior to any co-operation with another group.)

Lembede insisted that every nation was endowed with its own unique and

¹⁸ (*Pan-African Youth Voice*, vol. 1, no. 1, p.2; A.M. Lembede, "Policy of the Congress Youth League" in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May, 1946, quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.) *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary*, vol. 2, p.317.

¹⁹ *Pan-African Youth Voice*, vol. 1, no. 1, p.2.

²⁰ Interview with C. Pieterse, Sebokeng, 06-12-1993.

²¹ G. Gerhart, *Black Power; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.75.

²² *Ibid.*, F. Meli, *A History of the ANC; South Africa belongs to us*, p.110.

divine destiny. The divine destiny of the African people was national freedom.²³ (The African people could only invigorate and kindle their divine potential upon being liberated.) The national freedom of the African would earn them the respect of other nations and only then would they be able to occupy their rightful place amongst other nations.²⁴

(The desire to be respected by other nations of the world meant that the African people were to attain excellence and a balanced progress in all spheres of life. Mda's insistence on excellence was in response to the competitiveness of the other countries in various fields of human knowledge.²⁵ The envisaged progress was to be properly co-ordinated so that no field of human life lagged behind i.e. education, culture, morals, economics, and politics.²⁶)

(Lembede, like most Youth League members, shared the same antipathy towards the Communists.) They contrasted "... their nationalism with the class analysis of a dogmatic foreign ideology which they judged to be antipathetic to a nationalist struggle and the later exercise of African power".²⁷ Lembede insisted that the African people suffered racial and not class oppression. Mda later wrote that the "... Africans were suppressed because of their colour as a race, as a group and as a nation. They experience national oppression, and the only way to escape would be

²³ A.M. Lembede, "Policy of the Congress Youth League" in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May 1946; quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, 1883-1964*, vol.2, p.318.

²⁴ Interview with C. Pieterse, Sebokeng, 06-12-93.

²⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.66-67.

²⁶ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

²⁷ P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.355; G. Gerhart, *Black Power: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.76.

to undertake national struggle".²⁸ (Lembede dismissed Communism as another form of white paternalism and also for reasons of its anti-religious attitudes.²⁹) It should be remembered that he was an ardent Catholic.

Lembede tried to interest his fellow youth leaguers in the usefulness of religion as a means of attaining freedom. His Catholic background was greatly instrumental in shaping his beliefs as regards the value of Christianity for the attainment of freedom. He was impressed by the Afrikaner's unification and the value of the church, state and the people.³⁰ Lembede did not develop a systematic liberatory theology that could be used to politically inspire the African people.³¹ Earlier militant African churches and sects proved to be too volatile and divided to challenge the status quo. The Israelites of Enoch Mgijima are a classical example of the vulnerability of the African churches.³²

Lembede systematically jettisoned various conceptions of man and attempted to expose their limitations.³³ Included amongst such conceptions was Nazism and Communism. Lembede saw man in Darwinistic terms as a peculiar being distinct from others. He used the Darwinistic thesis, which meant that man evolved from a man-like specie,

²⁸ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash, A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p.89.

²⁹ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania. The Africanist Political Movements in Lesotho and Azania: The origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, 1780-1966*, vol. 1 & 2, p.60.

³⁰ Interview with C. Pieterse, Sebokeng, 06-12-1993.

³¹ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania: The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, 1780-1966*, vol. 1 & 2, p.61.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ A.M. Lembede, "Some Basic Principles of African Nationalism, in *Nyaniso*, February 1945, quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, 1883-1964*, vol. 2 p.315.

to propagate Africa's unique destiny.³⁴ Lembede insisted that the Africans had a divine destiny.³⁵ This thesis of divine destiny of a nation or a people is arguable since it presupposes that every nation or people's destiny follows a certain prearranged pattern that will inexorably culminate in a certain destiny. This thesis rules out the efforts and the means of a certain people or nation at improving their lot since their destiny is foreordained. The divine destiny thesis of Lembede is, ironically also propagated by those with whom his views are in conflict with.³⁶ For instance the Nazi perception of their superiority is in direct keeping with their interpretation of divine destiny. They were convinced that they were superior and thus destined to lead and rule.

(The Africanists insisted that Africanism was more than just a figment of the mind as it was a concrete substance founded on the self. This meant that Africanism was the expression of African individuality which epitomised the African sense of self-worth.) ("It is a fact of our birth and very growth as of the self, to the consciousness of oneself among other Selves..."³⁷ This sense of an African Self was later to be referred to by the PAC, (Pan Africanist Congress) as the African Personality.³⁸)

"Africa Personality" was also a reflection of Negritude as articulated by Leopold Senghor. However, the CPSA/SACP commitment to liberation was highly variable and to a large extent determined by decisions taken at Comintern and then by conditions in South Africa. The promotion of the African's sense of self-worth was directed at remedying self-denial and self-shame which resulted from political and economic dispossession.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ L. Thompson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid*, T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*.

³⁷ N. Ka Linda, "Africa for the Africans", in *The Africanist*, vol.I no. III, May 1955, p.12 (Wits Papers).

³⁸ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-1993.

(The Africanists in trying to justify the Africans claim to Africa, argued that God created various nations and placed them on certain continents to inhabit and own.³⁹ In keeping with this view the Africanists contended that it would be blasphemous to refer and regard Africa as Europe.⁴⁰) The Africanists fused their ideology with religion and this tendency only served to obscure and contradict the meaning of African nationalism. The Africanists wanted to incorporate both scholarly analysis and religion in their ideology. These irreconcilable aspects resulted in an ideological contradiction. "Supposing we were to say an African is a European and that Europe is Africa ... it would mean or require God to make a complete overhaul of the entire system of natural existence."⁴¹

(The Africanists came from a Christian background and this was easily merged into their ideology. Their religiosity also permeated their slogan which epitomised their political ideology of Africa for the Africans and Africans for humanity and humanity for God'.⁴² This slogan symbolised the Africanist's addendum to the Pan-Africanist slogans 'Africa for the Africans'.) The extension of this slogan is a further confirmation of the emphasis that the Africanists placed on religion as the rationale for their claim to Africa.⁴³ The extension of this slogan could also have been intended to appeal to the more religious members of society and also to undermine the Communistic atheist stand.⁴⁴

(The Africanists defined an African not in terms of race but in terms of his

³⁹ N. Ka Linda, "Africa for the Africans", in *The Africanist*, vol. I no. III, May 1955, p.12 (Wits Papers).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² G. Gerhart, *Black Power: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.68.

⁴³ Interview with Mfengu - Sharpeville - 20-07-93.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

(or her indigenuity to Africa. "We intend to struggle for the return of sovereignty to the rightful owners of the country...".⁴⁵ The emphasis of the Africanist claim to Africa was at the heart of conflict between them and the Charterists who stated that 'the land belonged to all irrespective of race or creed'.⁴⁶ The Africanists ultimate goal was the repossession of their 'stolen land' and not the amelioration of the status quo. Their claim to aboriginality of Africa entitled them to the return of Africa to the sons and daughters of Africa.)

(The role of whites was perceived against the background of the Africanist's claim to being indigenous to Africa. Whites were seen as foreigners, who had not reconciled themselves to the interests of the African people. "No foreigner can ever be a true and genuine leader of the African people because no foreigner can ever truly and sincerely interpret the African spirit which is unique and peculiar to Africa."⁴⁷ Whites were viewed with great suspicion and collaboration between them and the Africans was conditional upon Africans acting as a single unit and non-Africans as separate units.⁴⁸ This meant that Africans were to be consolidated into one power block whereas whites were not to act as a single power block. Thus, to the Africanist, there was little difference between liberal whites and conservative whites. The Africanists were well aware of the existence of well-meaning whites but insisted that they be excluded from their organisation in order to afford the African a measure of self-reliance. Later Sobukwe was to state that there were whites who were intellectually)

⁴⁵ J.G. Matthews, "The Significance of the African Nationalist Programme", *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 5 November 1949, quoted in G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.69.

⁴⁶ *Freedom Charter*, p.19.

⁴⁷ A.M. Lembede, "Policy of the Congress Youth League, in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May, 1946, quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter (eds), *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, Vol. 2, p.317.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.318.

sympathetic to the plight of the Africans but due to their material situation from which they benefitted they could not side with the Africans.⁴⁹

3.2 IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT - AFRICAN NATIONALISM VIS-A-VIS COMMUNISM

The Africanists vehemently and unreservedly criticised the Communist Party and its Marxist materialistic ideology. Their main criticism stemmed from their African nationalism. To the Africanists, African nationalism and Communism were incompatible and irreconcilable foes. The Africanists did not waste a moment to criticise the Communist Party and discard its ideological foundation in favour of Africanism.⁵⁰ (Lembede's view of the evolution of African nationalism was partly in an attempt to confront the Communist Party's Marxist ideology head-on.⁵¹)

(Whereas the Communist Party based its fundamental ideological premise on class struggle, the Africanists asserted that the African people did not suffer class oppression but were oppressed as a people, i.e. ethnic oppression.⁵²) The Africanists were of the opinion that they suffered national oppression as an African people. This view could not be reconciled with the Communist class struggle. The rejection of a class struggle should be seen as a defiant assertion by the African nationalists promoting African nationalism at the expense of Communism.⁵³

⁴⁹ N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The Role of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian Struggle*, p.52.

⁵⁰ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power; The evolution of an ideology*, p.76.

⁵¹ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁵² Black Savage, pseudonym. "African Nationalism and the 1949 Programme of Action" in *The Africanist*, Vol. II, No. 1, Jan-Feb, 1955, p.4, (Wits Papers).

⁵³ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power; The evolution of an ideology*, p.76.

The Africanists in the Youth League's arguments against Communism were partly contradictory given the fact that the ancient African traditional societies demonstrate a certain level of 'classlessness'. These African traditional societies were often invoked by the Africanists in the Youth League in an attempt to demonstrate the evils that were brought about by the arrival of whites in South Africa.⁵⁴ This contradiction was later manifested in the amenability of certain Youth Leaguers towards the influence of Communism even if they still purported to adhere to the philosophy of African nationalism. "Today I am attracted to the idea of a classless society ... in part from my admiration of the structure and organisation of early African societies in this country. The land, then the main means of production belonged to the tribe. There were no rich or poor, and there was no exploitation."⁵⁵

Most of the Youth League members fell victim to the glorification of African traditional societies whereas the other members were Communists. These societies were often depicted as peaceful, democratic and void of oppression. To further say that the traditional African families were classless is also untrue and unrealistic. There were certain socio-political features that closely resembled a classless society but that did not make them classless. This was evident in the social stratification wherein the chiefs and indunas occupied the higher echelons of society. These individuals were vested with certain powers and privileges that were concomitant with their station in society. The commoners and peasants were relegated to the lower class in traditional African society. For the Youth League to be blind to such historical factors was unfortunate and regrettable.

⁵⁴ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁵⁵ N. Mandela, "I am prepared to die" excerpted from the courtroom statements, Pretoria Trail, April 20, 1964 in S. Johns and R.H. Davis Jr. in *Mandela, Tambo and the ANC: The Struggle against Apartheid 1948-1990. A documentary survey*, p.128.

3.2.1 CONFLICT OF STRATEGIES AND INTENTIONS

The Africanists denounced the Trotskyites as counter-revolutionary and elitist.⁵⁶ They were accused of lacking grassroots support and involvement. They were said to be intellectualising rather than organising people in the factories and market places.⁵⁷ The Trotskyites were condemned for their ostentatious revolutionary theory and colourful language that failed to draw any grassroots support. Owing to their high sounding political terminology and phraseology, (the Trotskyites were accused of waging a struggle that was not related to the African masses in South Africa.) The Africanists saw the cause of the Trotskyites as self-delusion and political masturbation intended upon achieving nothing "...as young men of a patriotic mould would fritter away their time, chasing Trotskyite shadows instead ofbuilding a new Africa on the basis of African nationalism.⁵⁸

Most of the Africanist criticism against the Trotskyites was aimed at the African members of the Trotsky movement. The Africanist alleged that the Trotskyites were against the revolution in South Africa as they were conniving with the bourgeoisie.⁵⁹ To them the solution was the vigorous promotion of African nationalism as a liberatory creed. Some of the Africanist allegations against the Trotskyites were founded more on deliberate political propaganda than on concrete facts.

The other terrain upon which the Africanist in the Youth League conflicted

⁵⁶ 'Comments on Thing and Things, The Trotskyite's Pretensions', *African Lodestar*, vol. no. 3 undated, p.7 (Wits Papers).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ A Leontier, 'Political Economy-Beginners Course', in *African Lodestar*, vol. no. 3 undated, p.7.

with the Communists was on the issue of strategies. However, this conflict of strategies was greatly influenced by and occurred within the parameters of ideological conflict. The Africanists in the Youth League felt that the strategy and political ideology of the Communists was wanting and worthy of suspicious. (The Africanists vehemently questioned the intentions of the Communist Party as a major cause for concern. To them the Communist Party was bent upon stifling and diluting African nationalism which they perceived as an obstacle to Communism). According to the Africanists, the Communist Party wanted to steer the ANC along a constitutional and non-violent path.⁶⁰ The Africanists did not have adequate grounds for their criticism as the ANC was still using constitutional methods, albeit with an element of defiance. The Africanists' criticism of the Communist Party for advocating constitutional methods was far-fetched. The Communist Party had long advocated militant opposition to the policies of the South African governments. However the CPSA/SACP commitment to revolutionary strategies was highly variable and to a large extent determined by decisions taken at Comintern and then by conditions in South Africa.

The Communist Party was vocal in its insistence on the boycott of the Native Representative Councils on which certain ANC members served. At times the Africanists criticised the Communist Party just for the sake of criticism.

The Africanists believed the Communist Party intended to "... put a brake on the struggle."⁶¹ According to Peter Raboroko their intention was to capture the leadership of the ANC in order to perpetuate white

⁶⁰ Nzana, pseudonym, 'Democracy in Congress' *The Africanist*, vol. 1, no. III May 1955, p.4 (Wits Papers).

⁶¹ Nzana, pseudonym, 'Democracy in Congress' *The Africanist* vol. i no. III. May 1955, p.4 (Wits Papers).

domination.⁶² The experience of the betrayal of the African mine workers by the Communist Party in the 1922 Rand Revolt loomed large in the minds of most Africanists. To them this was a quintessential reminder of the insincerity and inconsistency of the Communist Party in the struggle of the African people.⁶³ In the Rand Revolt the Communist Party sided with White mine-workers, at the expense of African mine workers, and called for the unity of white workers of the world.

The experience of the 1922 Rand Revolt became one of the justifying factors for the Africanist's antipathy towards the Communists. Their conduct was seen as being inconsistent with their self-professed ideology which did not emphasise colour but class. This ideological inconsistency was seen as an opportunistic venture hence Sobukwe later referred to the Communists as quacks.⁶⁴ Against this background the Communists could not become trusted allies of the Africanists. The latter could, as well, have been aware of conflict that ensued between the Communists and Clements Kadalie of the ICU in the 1920s and 1930s.

3.2.2 CONFLICT OF INDIGENITY VIS-A-VIS FOREIGNNESS

The Africanists were also in conflict with the Communists because of their foreign ideology which they viewed with growing suspicion. They feared that they would become subordinate to the Communist Party's internationalism.⁶⁵ The Youth League's reconciliation with the Communists ideology would thus mean, in essence, the overthrow of the

⁶² Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-1993.

⁶⁵ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; the evolution of an Ideology*, p. 76.

Africanist's cardinal claim to Africa as the home of the Africans.⁶⁶ Though the Africanists were critical of the Communist Party's ideology, which they saw as incompatible with the political conflict in South Africa, much attention was nonetheless paid to the Communists' exoticism. Potlako Leballo, one of the main protagonists of the anti-Communist line in the Youth League criticised the Communist Party for pretending to be foreign experts in African affairs.⁶⁷ The Africanists particularly disliked the political prescriptiveness of the Communist Party. To them the Communists tutelage of the African people was no different from the liberal trusteeship which was diametrically opposed to the spirit of self-reliance and self-determination that the Africanist were engendering among African masses.⁶⁸

(Lembede urged the African people to "...attain political consciousness and that of their destiny - national independence. This must be achieved by the Africans for the Africans. The battle must be fought by the Africans and victory must be for the Africans."⁶⁹ This view represented a further amplification of the slogan 'Africa for the Africans' and the eschewal of foreign intrusion and guidance.)

In his criticism of the Communist Party's foreignness, Leballo resorted to the most vicious vocabulary and blunt denunciation. "We must reject inexorably and outright the petty intruders ... who infiltrate into our ranks

⁶⁶ 'Basic Policy of Congress Youth League' Manifesto issued by the national Executive Committee of the ANC Youth League 1948, in T. Karis and G. Carter *From Protest to Challenge....*, vol. 2, p.330.

⁶⁷ P. Leballo, 'We need Political faith in the Programme of African Nationalism', *The Africanist*, vol. 1 no. V undated, p.4. Later Potlaka Leballo proved to be a controversial figure and was ousted as the PAC chairman. He died in 1986 in exile. See H. Isaacs, untitled manuscript, chapter 6, 7 & 8.

⁶⁸ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

to whisper friendliness."⁷⁰ It is evident that the Africanists perceived the Communist Party as agents of white domination who needed to be obliterated by the African masses. How did Leballo wish to destroy 'foreign traffickers'? It seems that the ideology of African nationalism was the primary means through which white domination was supposed to be vanquished.)

3.3 THE FORMATION OF THE FORT HARE BRANCH OF THE YOUTH LEAGUE AND THE ORIGIN OF THE 1949 PROGRAMME OF ACTION

In 1948 a branch of the ANCYL was formed at the University College of Fort Hare. Godfrey Pitje was elected its first chairperson and Joe Matthews its secretary. The formation of the Fort Hare branch of the ANCYL was a sequel to Mda's letter to Pitje urging him to form a branch in 1948.⁷¹ This development came less than a year after the death of Lembede who until then had been the guiding force in the Youth League. The leadership mantle was inherited by Mda who did not entirely endorse Lembede's radical creed of African nationalism.⁷² By this time however members of the National ANCYL had crystallised into disciples of Lembede's vision's of African nationalism.⁷³

(The Fort Hare ANCYL (Victoria East branch) became the most important and powerful of all the ANCYL branches) The radical stance of Africanism appealed to the young intellectuals at Fort Hare, most of whom had been

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ "Letter to the Youth League from A.P. Mda to G.M. Pitje, August 24, 1948", in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, pp.319-321.

⁷² P. Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, p.356.

⁷³ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

in conflict with the authorities on campus.⁷⁴ Lembede's Africanism offered the Fort Hare students a greater stimulus towards political consciousness.⁷⁵ (In 1949 a new and radical ANCYL leadership emerged at Fort Hare. Its leader was the charismatic Robert Sobukwe and his deputy was Ntsu Mokhehle.⁷⁶ It was this young innovative leadership of the ANCYL at Fort Hare that contributed immensely to the continuation and development of the Lembede's Africanism.⁷⁷)

(The preliminary draft of the Programme of Action was drawn by Mda in 1948.⁷⁸ Sobukwe and Pitje authored their own version of the Programme of Action which was based on the 1948 Programme written by Mda.⁷⁹ Sobukwe and Pitje's Programme of Action was later endorsed by the Cape ANCYL provincial conference and some of its main aspects were later reflected at the 1949 Bloemfontein conference.⁸⁰ The radical and uncompromising spirit of the 1949 Programme of Action which came to prevailed at Fort Hare could be found in Sobukwe's speech to the final year students in October 1949.⁸¹)

(Sobukwe thus played a pivotal role in the development of the Africanist movement.) He was soon perceived as a rising star and leader of great

⁷⁴ See J. Bonick, "Potlako Leballo, The Man Who Hurried to Meet his Destiny", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, pp.429-431.

⁷⁵ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93. Joe Mathews left the ANC and the Communist Party to join Inkatha Freedom Party.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ G. Gerhart, *Black Power: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.185.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ See M.R. Sobukwe, "Address on Behalf of the Graduating Class at Fort Hare College, delivered at the 'Compilers Social' October 21, 1949, quoted in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, pp.331-336.

stature.⁸² He was born in 1924 at Graaff Reinet in the Cape Province.⁸³ He passed his B.A. at Fort Hare in 1949 and taught at Wits as a junior lecturer in the department of African Languages.⁸⁴ He galvanised the Africanists into a coherent and militant faction in the early 1950s. He was widely admired for his eloquence, charisma and intellectual prowess.⁸⁵

(The adoption of the Africanist inspired Programme of Action by the ANC in 1949 represented the triumph of the Africanist faction within the YL and the ANC.⁸⁶ Prior to the adoption of the Programme of Action, the Africanists and the Communists were consolidating and entrenching their influences within the YL and the ANC. The Africanist in the Youth League wanted to re-direct the ANC towards a more radical and confrontationalist form of African nationalism.)

Gerhart in her authoritative study on the Africanist movement in South Africa interprets the adoption of the Programme of Action as a clear coup by the Africanist in the Youth League over the ANC's old guard leadership.⁸⁷ This view is plausible but does not comprise the only and main reason for the adoption of the Programme of Action. (The main aim

⁸² See G.M. Pitje's remarks about Sobukwe in G. Gerhart, *Black Power: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.184.

⁸³ *Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania: Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe*, PAC manuscript, p.21.

⁸⁴ G. Gerhart, *Black Power: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.182.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.191, for more biographical information on R.M. Sobukwe see also Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania: *Mangaliso Robert Sobukwe*, PAC, manuscript pp.21-22; B. Bogrund, *Sobukwe and Apartheid*, M. Motlahabi, *The Theory and Practise of Black Resistance to Apartheid: A Social-Ethical Analysis*, N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism: The Role of the Pan Africanist Congress and the influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian struggle*; T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, vol. 4, pp.147-149; C.J.B. le Roux, *Die Pan Africanist Congress in Suid-Afrika, 1958-1964*.

⁸⁶ M. Motlahabi, *Theory and Practise A social-ethical analysis of Black Resistance to Apartheid*; p.44. See also J. Grobler *A Decisive Clash, A short history of Black protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p. 91; T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p. 26.

⁸⁷ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa ...* p. 83. See also J. Grobler, *Decisive Clash; ...* p.91, M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, p.37; E. Feit, *South Africa, Dynamics of the ANC* pp.2-3.

for the adoption of the Programme of Action, was to extirpate the influence of the Communist Party through the implementation of a principled programme. It was also intended to provide the ANC with a mechanism for confronting the government rather than merely reacting to its actions.⁸⁸)

✶ (It is, however, true that the Youth League was prepared to sacrifice the old guard on the altar of African nationalism.) (This action was largely prompted by the Africanist intention to confront the Communist Party head-on.) Numerous historical sources are silent on the conflict that ensued between the Communist Party and the Africanists in the Youth League on the day the Programme of Action was adopted. (The adoption of the Programme of Action marked the replacement of the old guard by the Africanist Youth League and a coup against the Communist influence and penetration, albeit temporarily.⁸⁹ NB)

(Prior to the commencement of the December 1949 ANC conference in Bloemfontein, there were rumours of the Communist Party nominating its own candidate for election to the position of President General.⁹⁰ These rumours had an element of truth given the Communist Party's intention to capture the leadership of the ANC. The Africanists in the Youth League planned to frustrate the Communists intentions. Conflict between the Africanists and the Communists became clearly apparent during the election. Nearly every position for which the Africanists in the Youth League nominated a candidate was countered by a Communist candidate.⁹¹ Prior to the election of Walter Sisulu as General-Secretary, the Africanists had had L.K. Ntlabathi, who was a member of the ANCYL

⁸⁸ Dr. P.L. Tsele, "The Future of the ANC", *The Africanist*, vol. 1, no. VI, 1955, p.3 (Wits Papers).

⁸⁹ Interview with C. Pieterse, Sebokeng, 06-12-1993.

⁹⁰ N. Ka Linda, 'Congress and other Organisations' *The Africanist*, vol. 6 no IV, Jan-August, 1955, p.5.

⁹¹ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

and a teacher, elected. Before Ntlabathi was declared General Secretary, as he had defeated the Communist Party's candidate, the Communist Party hastily sought an undertaking from him that, as a school teacher, he was going to effectively and efficiently discharge his duties.⁹² When Ntlabathi was unable to give this assurance the Communist Party's candidate was about to be declared Secretary-General. The Africanists in the Youth League, realising that they had been out-manoeuvred, hastily requested time to substitute their candidate. This led to the election of Sisulu as Secretary-General of the Youth League.⁹³ Sisulu was the candidate of the Africanists.)

At the 1949 Conference the Youth League called for the adoption of the thumbs up slogan. The first four fingers were to denote Unity, Determination, Solidarity and Militancy and the raised thumb was to signify that Africa should come back to the Africans.⁹⁴ The thumbs up slogan and symbol was in direct keeping with the Africanists demand for the return of Africa to the Africans. The Communist Party strongly objected to this symbol and slogan as it revived and sustained the exclusive African nationalism with which the Africanists aligned. In response the Communist Party belittled and poked fun at the thumbsup symbol as they projected it as signifying flight.⁹⁵

(The 1949 ANC Bloemfontein Conference represented the victory of the Africanists over the Communist Party in particular and the ANC old guard in general. The Africanists occupied strategic positions in the ANC National

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ "Minutes of the Annual Conference of the ANC, December, 15-19, 1949" in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, ...*, vol. 2, p.291.

⁹⁵ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

Executive Committee. Their nominees included the President-General i.e. Moroka, Walter Sisulu, G.M. Pitje to mention but a few.⁹⁶ The Communists suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Africanists. They realised that the Africanists had tipped the balance of power scale in their favour and had thus assumed an increasingly important role in the ANC. The Africanist Youth League had become a factor to be reckoned with. They demonstrated their power by ousting Dr. Xuma who, ironically had sponsored the formation of the ANC Youth League, in favour of Dr Moroka.⁹⁷)

The Communist Party thus was forced into retreat by the Africanists in the Youth League or seeking positions of command in the ANC executive committee. They were forced to revise their strategy and tactics in dealing with the Africanists in the Youth League. Their strategy was to penetrate and divide the Africanists.⁹⁸ As a result the Communists began to target certain prominent individuals within the Africanist movement/faction in order to cause a division in their ranks. Some Youth League leaders were openly invited to dine with the Communists and on these occasions the conversation invariably ended up as a political meeting where these individuals were won over to the Communists cause.⁹⁹

Frequent parties and festivity characterised the social contact between the Communists and the neutralised Africanists. White girls and liquor became available and morals were wanting at these parties.¹⁰⁰ Ruth First, the first

⁹⁶ T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge, A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.

⁹⁷ J. Grobler, *A Decisive Clash; A short history of Black Protest politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p.91.

⁹⁸ Interview with P.N. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.* See G. Gerhart, *Black Politics in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.155-157.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with S. Kekana, Evaton, 28-03-93.

wife of the Communist Party leader Joe Slovo, is alleged to have been instrumental in the organisation of such parties and social gatherings.¹⁰¹ This view is substantiated by the fact that Ruth First invited the Youth League to affiliate with the Progressive Youth Council which was the youth wing of the Communist Party.¹⁰² Against this background it is evident that the social gatherings were a continuation of the tactic of infiltrating the Youth League with Communists and countering the influence of the anti-Communist Africanists in the organisation.

Nelson Mandela's stay at Wits was also seen as a watering down of his affiliation to radical African nationalism (Africanism) and of and becoming more amenable to the influence of the Communists.¹⁰³ Mandela's stay at Wits could, however, have only had a limited influence upon him, if any at all. Raboroko later insists that although Sobukwe maintained contact with both Liberals and Communists he did not associate with them to an extent that they could influence his thinking because he rejected their communist philosophy.¹⁰⁴ Raboroko describes Sobukwe as "sea green" incorruptible.¹⁰⁵ His remarks about Sobukwe have an element of subjectivity, however, as he was a fellow Africanist who held Sobukwe in high regard.¹⁰⁶

The social contact between elements of the Africanists and the

¹⁰¹ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

¹⁰² See "Letter from the ANC Youth League (Transvaal) to the secretary [Ruth First] of the Progressive Youth Council, March 16-1945 in T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, p.316.

¹⁰³ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ P. Raboroko authored a book on Sobukwe entitled *The Defier of the undeniable* whilst in exile. He was elected secretary for education in the PAC executive committee in 1959 and admired the leadership of Robert Sobukwe. See *The Daily Nation*, Wednesday, May 19, 1993 (Kenya's daily paper).

Communists did not result in any meaningful conversion to the Communist Party. Although very few were indeed converted many nevertheless had their radical African nationalist foundation shaken and modified. "These Youth Leaguers without abandoning African nationalism, (Africanism) began to talk a different language which we could not accept".¹⁰⁷ This changed political language of certain Africanists in the Youth League shows the extent to which the Communist Party had managed to infiltrate the Youth League after 1950.¹⁰⁸

(The election of several moderate Youth Leaguers onto the ANC's National Executive Committee in 1949 contributed to this development. Their growing contact with the Communists further alienated these individuals, who included Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo from radical African nationalism. Although they still maintained a certain level of allegiance to African nationalism by 1950 they had clearly become more sympathetic to the Communist cause. The majority of the Africanists in the Youth League however remained loyal to the radical African nationalism of Lembede and eschewed the company of the Communists. These latter individuals included among them Mda, Pitje, Leballo, and Raboroko.¹⁰⁹ This manifest split within the ranks of the Africanists in the Youth League greatly contributed to its political indecision and greatly threatened the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action. It seems that there was no concerted effort to realign the anti-Africanist group under the guidance of Mandela, Sisulu and others with radical African nationalism after 1950.)

The Communists were, at the advent of the 1950s, assured of the support of leading persons in the ANCYL executive council. The Communist Party,

¹⁰⁷ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

¹⁰⁸ T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.39.

¹⁰⁹ G. Mbeki, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa, A short history*, p.72.

it seems, used the opportunity to launch an assault on the Africanists. The amenability towards the Communist was shown by the Transvaal ANC Youth League chair person, Dilizintaba Mji, in 1951. He stated that the ordinary whiteman was not an oppressor and needed to be forgiven.¹¹⁰ This view was in direct conflict with the mainstream radical Africanist views on white people in South African politics.

3.4 THE MAY-DAY STRIKE ACTION AND THE SUPPRESSION OF THE COMMUNISM ACT

The Programme of Action was exploited by the Communists in an attempt to advertently embarrass the Africanists by recommending action in keeping with the stated aims of the Programme of Action. By this time the leading members of the Communist Party such as J.B. Marks, Moses Kotane and Yusuf Dadoo were under threat of banning orders. The Communist Party declared May 1st as stay-away in honour of Worker's Day and in protest against the banning of their leading members. It is ironic that the meeting that called for the declaration of May Day was presided over by Dr. Moroka who had been elected President of the ANC on the ticket of the Africanists in the Youth League whose views were irreconcilable with those of the Communists.¹¹¹

The Africanists criticised the May Day stay-away call by the Communists. Their criticism varied as can be seen in the different grounds given for their criticism. There was no unanimous reason for criticising the stay-away as most reservations and objections tended to reflect personal views and not those of the Africanists in the Youth League. Mandela and Tambo felt that the 'People's Holiday' was meant and conceived of in order to derail the

¹¹⁰ *Bantu World*, 21 October 1950; T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, p.37.

¹¹¹ M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, p.38.

1949 Programme of Action.¹¹² Other members of the Africanist Youth League objected to the stay-away call as it epitomised political adventurism.¹¹³

Mary Benson, in her biography on Nelson Mandela, argues that the Africanist Youth League's criticism of the Communist stay-away call was due to their perception of the Communist Party's intention, to hijack their programme of launching a national stoppage for May Day.¹¹⁴ The differences were so minor and trivial that they could have not caused such conflict over this issue. Moreover there is, it seems, no material evidence to support Benson's allegation. It is known that May Day 'belongs' to the Communists. For the Africanists in the Youth League to organise a programme on this day would have been a contradiction of their anti-Communist stand.

J.K. Ngubane the well-known Zulu journalist writing in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, in 1950, lambasted the Communist Party's May Day demonstration. "The Communist Party apparently are satisfied that they have, by stampeding our people into the May Day demonstration, at least gained a major propagande victory for Communism. After year of obstructing the struggle of the African people, now that they are about to be banned they want to go down having at least summoned a little courage to convince Moscow that they are not always lackeys to the oppressors.... The May Day demonstrations were intended to be part of a world campaign engineered by the Communists to help advance the cause of Communism and not of

¹¹² *Bantu World*, 8 April 1950 p. .

¹¹³ B. Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, p.141.

¹¹⁴ M. Benson, *Nelson Mandela*, p.38.

the oppressed African".¹¹⁵

The main argument of the Africanists against the May Day stay-away was that such a day belonged to the Communists and was thus irrelevant to African people and therefore it had to be opposed.¹¹⁶ Pitje recalls an event wherein he was sent to Alexandra township to address a rally on the eve of the May Day stay-away. He criticised the stay-away as being irrelevant to the African people. "When I finished ... I was hurriedly taken-away from the meeting by people who were sympathetic towards what I have said as they felt that I was in danger of being assaulted by the Communists,"¹¹⁷ If this allegation is true then it is a clear representation of the level of conflict between the Communists and the Africanists in the Youth League. The May Day event further exposed the Communist's preparedness to 'enforce' their call for a national stay-away and to deal with those who were intent upon its failure.

The results of the stay-away were bloody. Eighteen people were killed and more than thirty were injured.¹¹⁸ Most Africanists were angered by the bloody outcome of the stay-away. The Communists were accused of using the African people for their own political gain.¹¹⁹ Moroka was not spared from the vitriol. He was accused of being a willing tool of the Communists.¹²⁰ His leadership was found wanting and of no use to the

¹¹⁵ J.K. Ngubane, "Post-mortem on a Tragedy". Editorial on the events of May 1, in *Inkundla ya Bantu*, May, 20, 1950, T. Karis and G.M. Carter, (eds.), *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa, 1882-1964*, vol. 2, p.441.

¹¹⁶ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ For a detailed account of the consequences of the May Day stay-away and its impact on the African people 'see B. Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, pp.141-147.

¹¹⁹ T. Karis and G.M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge; A Documentary of African Politics in South Africa*, vol.2, p.441.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

African people. "The very first act of his leadership he took ... was a major blunder, it landed the Africans in a disaster, it left him isolated with the majority of his followers not with him. If he has the consolation that he is very popular with the Communists he should also be very worried that he has shaken African confidence in him."¹²¹

(The Nationalist government prepared the Unlawful Organisation Bill aimed at suppressing the Communist Party. In an apparent tactical move to forestall the passing of the proposed bill, which later became the Suppression of Communism Act, the Communist Party dissolved itself and went underground. Deprived of an operational base the now underground Party turned to the ANC for refuge.¹²²) The Communist Party's determination to implement the May-Day stay-away could have been influenced by the lack of a political base from which to conduct its politics. The ANC thus a haven from which the Communist Party could further its aims without exposing itself to direct government action.

{ Alarmed by these developments the Africanists heightened their surveillance of the influx of Communists into the ANC fold. They criticised the dissolution of the Communist Party as epitomising a lack of courage and resolve. The Party and its leaders were accused of having committed political suicide which emanated from political cowardice.¹²³ The Africanists stopped at nothing short of the denunciation of the Communists. The membership of the Communists in the ANC, after the dissolution, was greatly questioned by the Africanists in the Youth League.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.442.

¹²² E. Feit, *South Africa: The Dynamics of the African National Congress*, p.13. See also N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The Role of the Pan Africanist Congress and the influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian Struggle*, pp.7-8.

¹²³ The Editor Speaks, "Right" and "Left" in Congress, *The Africanist*, vol. i, no.IV, Sept-Nov 1955, p.1 (Wits Papers).

"We venture to ask just how they can now be sincere to the Nation Building Programme of the ANC when to them membership of the ANC was purely tactical expediency."¹²⁴

(The penetration of the Communists into the ANC can to an extent also be attributed to the indecisive leadership of Dr. Moroka. His election as President-General of the ANC was entirely for reasons of political expediency and not based on his political views and ideological orientation.¹²⁵ He was expendable and showed to be helpless in the face of competing and conflicting ideologies within the ANC. Mda too, the spiritual heir of Lembede, was disadvantaged by ill-health. There was thus no leader of substance within the Youth League to withstand and check the Communist influx into the ANC. This scenario culminated in a period of drift and realignment in the ANC and the Youth League wherein the competing ideological camps threatened to impose their different views on the ANC and control its political direction.¹²⁶)

(The Africanists targeted the African members of the Communist Party in particular. Their motive for this move could have been that they regarded the African Communists as more vulnerable than their white counterparts. It could also have been due to the Africanists' intention of engendering a sense of guilt in those African Communists by repeatedly denouncing them as sell-outs of their people by hob-nobbing with 'foreigners'.¹²⁷)

These African Communists were further denounced as "pot bellied political

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ G.M. Gerhart, *Black Politics in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.91.

¹²⁷ Africanus, 'Away with Foreign Domination', *The Africanist*, vol.II, no. 1, Jan-Feb, 1955, p.9. Africanus was the pseudonym for A.P. Mda.

misleaders, corned-beef political clowns, and political flunkies."¹²⁸ They were dubbed "...lily livered pseudo leftists who sow dissension in our ranks as they cannot throw away white leadership."¹²⁹ It seems that Marks and Dan Tloome were the main targets of these Africanist attacks. They were accused of being puppets under the spell of foreign political tutors.¹³⁰ (The Africanists in the Youth League refused to come to terms with the Communists. They were prepared to do everything in their power to alienate them from the liberation struggle of the African people in South Africa.)

(After the adoption of the Programme of Action in 1949 Mda rallied together a "Hard Core" Africanists in Orlando East.¹³¹ Members of the Hard Core included inter alia Dr. W.Z. Conco, Mokhehle, Ngubange, Pitje, Sobukwe, Leballo, Mda, V. Sifora, M. Yengwa, J.N. Pokela, J. Fazzie and A.Z. Gwenje.¹³² This latter group, held meetings in Orlando, Johannesburg and at Bochabelo Location in Bloemfontein. The Hard Core came to represent a pressure group that was intent on popularising the goals of the Africanists in the Youth League.¹³³)

(In addition to the Hard Core the Africanists also organised an Inner Circle in 1949. The Inner Circle like the Hard Core was constituted mainly by Africanists from Orlando and the Eastern Cape. They included Mda, Leballo, S. Ngeadane, Molotsi, Z. Mothopeng, Sobukwe, Pokela, and

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ The Editor speaks, "Right" and "left" in Congress, *The Africanist*, vol. 1, no. V, Sept-Nov, 1955, p.1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania. The Africanist movement in Lesotho and Azania: The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress*, p.60.

¹³² *Ibid.*; G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, pp.134-135.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Moleté.¹³⁴ The Inner Circle's purpose was to consolidate African experience and build an ideology of liberation as well as to inspire the Africans to take pride in their past and traditions. The Hard Core and the Inner Cycle were used interchangeably to refer to one group of Africanists in the Youth League.)

(Both the Inner Circle and the Hard Core were meant to act as watchdogs to ensure the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action.¹³⁵ By the early 1950's, the Africanists were becoming increasingly aware of the ideological deviations from the 1949 Programme of Action. The Defiance Campaign of 1950 fostered a new co-operation between the ANC and the Communist Party. This co-operation was a source of great concern to the Africanists in the Youth League.)

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

(With the advent of the 1950s ideological conflict within the ranks of the Africanists became more pronounced as the moderate African nationalist faction increased its influence by its members becoming leading figures in the ANC.) (These latter individuals included among them Sisulu, Mandela and Tambo. The 1952 Defiance Campaign, instead of healing the breach in African nationalism, exacerbated the tension and heightened conflict.¹ It seemed that by 1952 the Communists had succeeded in neutralising the influence of the Africanists who had posed a daunting challenge to them) By 1952 the moderate Africanist faction showed signs of becoming increasingly sympathetic to the intrusion of the Communists into the ANC and the Youth League.

(NB
As a result this period saw conflict increased between the moderate African nationalist group and the radical Africanists. At the same time the level of co-operation between the moderates and the Communist continued to increase which helped to further fuel the conflict and the moderate African nationalists. As the feeling of being marginalised increased among the Africanists after 1952 so did their criticism and denunciations of the moderate group and the Communist Party who were seen to be one.²)

(The year 1952 witnessed a showdown between the Africanists and the moderate African nationalists who were supported by the ANC. In December 1950 Mandela was elected, as President of the ANC Youth League. His presidency of the ANC Youth League made him an ex-officio member of the ANC's National Executive Council. This meant that after 1950 he had the opportunity for a closer relations with the Communists in

¹ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

² Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

the ANC, especially in the Transvaal. This proximity with the Communists such as Marks and Kotane, blunted his erstwhile reservations about the role of the Communists in the South African political struggle. Mandela testified that he initially supported the resolution which called for the expulsion of the Communists from the ANC but, after having worked with them, he changed his views.³)

(The co-operation of the ANC with organisations such as the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), Communist Party (CP), African People's Organisation (APO) and the Transvaal Council of the Non-European Trade Unions (TCNETU) in the June 26 Day-of-Protest prompted the formation of the Congress Alliance.) The positions of Sisulu and Mandela were entrenched and consolidated in the ANC and ANCYL leadership. Sisulu and Cachalia, who was a secretary of the SAIC, closely worked together as joint secretaries for a Joint Council that was tasked to implement the June 26 Day-of-Protest. These latter developments further widened the ideological rift between the Africanists and the moderate nationalists.)

4.1 THE DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN

The ascent of the Nationalist Party government with apartheid as a new political policy aimed at tightening the oppressive laws against the African people, created a new political realism amongst the oppressed people in South Africa. The victory of the National Party in 1948 "...was a boon to black politics because it provided a focus for the rhetoric of opposition. By giving its racial policy a label, that of apartheid, the NP offered an ideal target for those who were trying, to coordinate black opposition to South

³ 'Courtroom Testimony, Excerpted from *Treason Trial 1960*, S. Johns, and R.H. Davies Jr. (eds.), *Mandela, Tambo and the ANC. The struggle Against Apartheid, 1948-1990: A Documentary Survey*, p.71. See also J. Frederikse, *Unbreakable Thread, Non Racialism in South Africa*, p. 73. Mandela's view was shared by most other members of the Youth League.

Africa's racial dispensation."⁴ The intransigence of the NP and its aversion to negotiations meant that the moderate and pro-negotiation ANC old-guard suffered a great political defeat as their predilection for talks was stifled and frustrated.

The electoral victory of the Nationalist Party meant that the white people were a consolidated political power bloc. Its overt racial policy explicitly isolated and targeted the African people for political punishment. The African people and the anti-government organisations used apartheid as a rallying force against the Nationalists. Whatever ideological and strategic contradictions that were manifest amongst the African people were submerged and held in abeyance as opposition to the government assumed priority. Nevertheless the Africanist in the Youth League continued to stoke the fires as they kept criticism of the Communist Party and its perceived role in the ANC alive.

^{NB}
 (The Africanists denounced and criticised the Defiance Campaign as been Communist inspired.⁵) Amongst those who felt that the Defiance Campaign was a creation of the Communist Party was Pitje. He felt that the Communist Party used the Campaign in order to embarrass the Youth League and to contradict the Programme of Action.⁶ Some Africanists saw the Defiance Campaign as a means to revive the Communist Party which had been suppressed in 1950. "The Defiance Campaign can be regarded as the effective ... cause of the establishment of the Congress of Democrats" according to Raboroko.⁷ In other words the COD was a front

⁴ W. Gebhard, *Shades of Reality: Black perceptions of South African History*, p.133.

⁵ C.J.B. le Roux, "Pan Africanism in South Africa" *South African Journal of African Affairs*, vol. 9 no. 1, p.36. See also B. Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, p.149 and T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* p.37. Interview with G.M. Pitje - Johannesburg 14-06-93.

⁶ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

⁷ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

organisation of the SACP.

This latter view is categorically rejected by Sisulu. He insists that the 1949 Programme of Action, tabled by the Youth League, called for action against unjust laws. The Defiance Campaign was thus a logical outcome of the unfolding 1949 Programme of Action. He dismisses the contrary view as ludicrous.⁸ Sisulu's point of view is plausible given the insistence of the Youth League for action as opposed to the post politics of petition and deputation which, in their view, had little success. It should be remembered that Sisulu is unlikely to be entirely objective on this issue given his connections to the SACP. Raboroko, who was a leading member of the Africanists, defied and was taken to the Boksburg Blue-Sky prison.⁹ This evidently shows that the case of the Africanists against the Defiance Campaign was unsubstantiated and based on debatable premise.

The lack of unanimous support for the Defiance Campaign in black politics in general could be attributed to a lack of resolve and strategic uncertainty. The lack of resolute leadership was the main contributory factor. (It should be remembered that Mda was not actively involved in politics in the 1950s due to ill-health and that Nelson Mandela had succeeded him as President of the Youth League in 1950. The Africanists thus lacked a leader of Mda's stature who could galvanize the Africanists ideologically in the post 1949 era, which led to uncertainty in the wake of new challenges.)

The moderate Youth Leaguers unlike the Africanists saw the Defiance Campaign as a tactical move geared towards the consolidation of those forces opposed to apartheid. The Alliance organisations, namely the ANC, COD and SAIC emerged united after the Defiance Campaign. This unity

⁸ Interview with W. Sisulu, Johannesburg, 12-08-93.

⁹ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

was largely forged by the Nationalist Party's actions against the Communist Party in 1950. These organisations realised that they had a common 'enemy' which led to their discovering of each other and building their relationship on what they had in common. According to Sisulu the banning of the Communist Party was in the final analysis the banning of the ANC.¹⁰ Sisulu implies that after the banning of the Communist Party the ANC could have been suppressed anytime. The criticism of the Africanist's was seen as inconsequential when viewed against the merits that a joint alliance would yield.

(As a result the Congress Alliance became a focal point of the Africanists criticism and ridicule. It was seen as a continuation of white domination which was anti-ethical to African nationalism with its cardinal elements of self-reliance and self-determination.¹¹) To the Africanist's the Alliance meant certain sacrifices from the African people. "But if one has Allies, how is one going to avoid the granting of Concessions when the spoils are being divided."¹²

Individual members of the Congress Alliance came under attack. Apart from the Communist Party, the SA Indian Congress in particular was singled out for criticism. The Indian Congress was accused of not being honest with the Alliance since their membership was largely due to the Group Areas Act.¹³ The Indians were accused of being opportunists who sided with the Africans when they were threatened by encroachment on the privileges that they benefited from under white hegemony.¹⁴ Both the

¹⁰ Interview with W. Sisulu, Johannesburg, 12-08-93.

¹¹ Nzana, "Democracy in Congress", *The Africanist*, vol. I, no. III, May, 1955, p.4.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, see B. Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, p.149.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Indian Congress and the Communists were seen as aligning with the ANC for political expediency. This was especially the views of B. Modisane. "The South African Indian Congress, which had been a kind of social club financed by the Indian merchant class began on a policy of alignment."¹⁵ The conflict between the Indians and the Africans in Natal in the late 1940s was still fresh in the memory of most Africanists.¹⁶

The Africanists' rhetoric was quintessential of Lembede's antipathy towards non-Africans. They felt that any conceivable alliance was to be mainly founded on principles. "From our inception we have put necessary emphasis on principles as opposed to foolish practices."¹⁷ It seems that the Africanists concentrated on criticising the ANC and the Alliance without any practical actions aimed at remedying the situation. To Africanists such as A.B. Ngcono of Natal the Alliance meant guidance and not assistance.¹⁸ In other words Africanists such as Ngcono viewed the Alliance as emanating from the Communist's perception of the African people's inability to challenge the status quo on their own, hence they had to be under the constant guidance of the Communist Party.

The Africanists' criticism of the Communists continued unabated and largely unchecked. They blamed them for creating the Alliance. (As far as the Africanists were concerned the ANC was remote-controlled by the Communists for ends contrary to those of the African people.) (According to A.B. Ngcobo, a Natal Youth League leader and later Treasurer-General

¹⁵ B. Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, p.132.

¹⁶ The conflict in Natal had far-reaching implications on the Indian and African relations. This event disappointed most African Nationalists who held the view that Indians were their fellow oppressed brothers. See Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, pp.134-135.

¹⁷ The Editor Speaks, "We shall Live", *The Africanist*, vol. I, no. VI, December, 1955, p.1.

¹⁸ A.B. Ngcobo, "a Natal Youth League member who was part of the Africanist breakaway from the ANC", J. Fredrikse, *The Unbreakable Thread; Non-Racialism in South Africa*, p.71.

of the PAC)"they came in ... and they pressurised to have that Alliance. Of course the Alliance came in because they had the money and we didn't have - we have the numbers".¹⁹ The extent to which the Communist Party's financial clout contributed to their 'manipulation' of the ANC has not yet been established. However, it is possible that the Communists did use finance to penetrate the ANC as alleged by Ngcobo.

It should be noted that the Africanists were not unanimous with regard to support for the Defiance Campaign. The results of the Africanists criticism of the Defiance Campaign exposed a lack of unanimity amongst the Africanists with regard to support for the campaign. Although most (Africanists were totally opposed to the Defiance Campaign as being SACP led) and did not want to become involved in it many nevertheless kept a close watch over its development because they feared a possible Communist take-over. The Africanists, aware of the danger of Communist infiltration of the ANC, especially after the Suppression of the Communism Act, gravitated to the (Inner Cycle of the Africanist movement. This Inner Cycle spearheaded the formation of the Bureau of African nationalism throughout South Africa.²⁰ The Bureau was a clandestine movement comprising notable Africanists who were the brains-trust of the Africanist Movement. They operated mainly from the Eastern Cape.)

(The Bureau of African nationalism sought to project and promote orthodox African Nationalism.) The Bureau issued articles, pamphlets and statements which occasionally engaged the Communist Party and which mostly sought to advance a proper ideological line within the ANC. Its corps of writers

¹⁹ *Ibid.* See also A.M. Grundlingh, "Segregation, black politics and trade unionism", in B.J. Liebenberg and S.B. Spies, (eds.), *South Africa in the 20th Century*, pp.308-309.

²⁰ B. Leeman, *Lesotho and the Struggle for Azania. Africanist Political Movement in Lesotho and Azania: The Origins and History of the Basutoland Congress Party and the Pan Africanist Congress, 1780-1966.* Volumes 1 & 2, p.76.

included Sobukwe, Mda, Letlaka, C.J. Fezzie, Pokela.²¹ They constantly urged the resisters not to allow the Defiance Campaign to be hijacked by minority interests but to bear in mind the 1949 Programme of Action resolution.²² (It can thus be said that the main result of the Defiance Campaign was the creation of power blocs which battled to entrench their views. These main contending blocs were the Africanists on the one hand and the Communist - ANC alliance on the other hand.)

4.2 THE AFRICANISTS CONFLICT WITH THE ANC

The ANC's political esteem was greatly enhanced by the Congress Alliance and the criticism of the Africanists became negligible. The Africanists were seen as a minute group of spoilers. The election of Albert Luthuli as the ANC president in 1952 ushered in an era not dissimilar to that of Xuma in 1940. (Luthuli was a moderate by nature and eschewed all forms of violence from whatever quarter.)²³ His moderacy was also exemplified by his membership to the Native Representative Council (NRC). Luthuli was voted into the ANC presidency by the moderate Youth League in Natal in the face of opposition from Champion, the ICU leader and Natal ANC leader. Although Luthuli was avowedly opposed to confrontation he supported it selectively so as not to antagonise the Youth League in Natal.

The ANC, through the Defiance Campaign, had put itself at the centre of the political gravity in South Africa. The Communist Party had gained considerably publicity since the May Day Stay-Away and the Defiance Campaign. They were increasingly prepared to sustain their hold over the ANC thus preparing the ground for conflict with the Africanists in the

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See A. Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, M. Benson Nelson Mandela, p.51.

Youth League.²⁴

4.2.1 THE STRATEGY OF THE AFRICANISTS

The Africanists ideology of radical African nationalism or Africanism was dismissed by the moderates in the ANCYL as irrelevant and racist and in conflict with the broader aims and objectives of the Congress Alliance of the Congress Alliance. To regroup and strengthen their position, the Africanists consolidated themselves in the Orlando branch. This branch was to serve as a base from which Lembede's Africanism was to be promoted and protected.²⁵ It must, however, be noted that whilst most Africanists were concentrated in Orlando they were also found in other areas of the PWV such as Evaton, Pretoria and Alexandra.²⁶

To the Africanists in the Youth League, Orlando was destined to play a pivotal role in the unfolding of their ideology. According to J.K. Ngubane, the Orlando branch mainly concerned itself with the evolution of the theory of African nationalism in order to use it to neutralise the influence of the Communists within the ANC.²⁷ Similar sentiments were expressed by other leaders of the Africanists. "Orlando, it was pointed out, must carry the war into the enemy camp to rout Communism ... from the ANC and African Affairs for African nationalism."²⁸ This view was further

²⁴ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

²⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.140; C. Glaser, "When Are We Going To Fight? Tsotsis, Youth Politics and the PAC on the Witwatersrand during the 1950s and early 1960s", *Structure and Experience in The Making of Apartheid, 6-10 February 1990* (Wits History Workshop papers), pp.13-14.

²⁶ Interview with C. Pieterse, Sebokeng, 06-12-93; N.C. Manganyi, *Exiles and Home Comings: A Biography of Es Kia'Mphahlele*, pp.54-55.

²⁷ J.K. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid*, p.101; see C. Glaser, *Anti-social Bandits, Juvenile Delinquency and the Tsotsi Subculture on the Witwatersrand, 1935-1960*, pp.211-212.

²⁸ Black Savage, "African Nationalism and the 1949 Programme of Action", *The Africanist*, vol. II, no. 1, Jan.-Feb., 1955, p.6.

emphasised by P. Molotsi who saw the Orlando branch as the base from which to fight 'anti-African forces' and to uphold the flaming torch of Africanism.²⁹ (The other aim of the Orlando branch was to implement the 1949 Programme of Action.³⁰)

(The strategy of the Africanists was to dilute the power of the moderate nationalists and to replace them with the Africanists.) This strategy was conceived to enable the Africanists to let the ANC revert to its erstwhile 1949 position (wherein membership was only opened to blacks) and thus allow the implementation of the Programme of Action.³¹ Emphasis was placed on working from within the ANC hence the break-away of the Nationalist Minded Bloc led by Selope Thema was criticised for demonstrating its discontent through withdrawing from the ANC. The National Minded Bloc was formed in 1950 in protest against the "... growing influence of Communists and Indians in Congress-decision-making".³² Selope Thema was the editor of *The Bantu World*. The Nationalist Minded Bloc was called on to disband by the Africanists and to apply its energies and resources appropriately in support of the national cause.³³

(As part of their strategy the Africanists founded its own mouthpiece *The Africanist*.) This pamphlet was essentially conceived of as a platform to advocate the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action and as a

²⁹ P.H. Molotsi, "Orlando Youth and the National struggle, *The Africanists*, vol. 6, no. IV, July-August, 1955, p.7.

³⁰ Black Savage, "African Nationalism and the 1949 Programme of Action", *The Africanist*, vol. II, no. I, Jan.-Feb., 1955, p.7. See M. Resha, *Mangoana o Tsoara Tripa ka Bohaleng; My life in the struggle*, pp.88-89.

³¹ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

³² G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.87.

³³ P.L. Tsele, "The Future of the African National Congress", *The Africanist*, vol.I, no. VI, December, 1955, p.4.

propaganda instrument against the ANC's collaboration with the Congress Movement. The Africanists warned that their criticism of the ANC and the Communists was not supposed to be unbridled and purposeless.³⁴ Their criticism was supposed to be informed, rigorous and uncompromising. Criticism was not to be used as an end in itself but in order to convey a particular message.³⁵

(Ironically the Africanists criticism of the ANC exposed their lack of political cunning and strategy. They became preoccupied with criticism whilst they did not appear to be doing anything. They were mainly reacting to the political activities of the ANC without any attempt to implement the Programme of Action on their own. They did little to either organise the youth, or organise rallies and workshops in pursuance of their stated aim of the implementation of the 1949 Programme of Action.) They became ivory tower politicians bent on crucifying the ANC and the Alliance Movement.

4.2 REASONS FOR CONFLICT

In 1953 Walter Sisulu and Duma Nokwe attended the World Youth Festival in Bucharest, Rumania, Moscow and Peking.³⁶ The Bucharest Youth Festival was held under the aegis of the Communist Party of Russia and China as a forum to enhance and consolidated world youth organisations under the banner of Communism. *The Africanist*-pamphlet cited this visit as evidence of the extent to which the Communist Party was using certain members of the ANC. Sisulu and Nokwe were criticised as lackeys and

³⁴ Black Savage, "African Nationalism and the 1949 Programme of Action, *Africanist*, vol.11, no. 1, Jan-Feb, 1955, p.6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ J.K. Ngubane, *An African Explain Apartheid*, p.99; G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.135.

functionaries of the East.

According to Ngubane, Sisulu and Nokwe's attendance of the World Youth Festival was without the slightest knowledge or approval of Albert Luthuli.³⁷ Luthuli, as the ANC president, was supposed to be informed about Sisulu and Nokwe's visit. If he was not informed it meant that his permission or approval was not sought. The reason for this seems to be that the Communists, who were manipulating the moderate Africanists, knew that Luthuli would appose them and thus spoil their intended take-over of the ANC.

Since Sisulu was Luthuli's senior lieutenant he should have taken it upon himself to inform the president of his sojourn in Bucharest. His failure to do so greatly enforced the accusation that he was a willing tool of the Communist Party.³⁸ As a result the Africanists were vindicated in their view of a Communist conspiracy to seize the ANC leadership and to install their own functionaries. The results of these visits, Ngubane later claimed, were far-reaching as they shook most members into disbelief and subsequently resulted in resignations from senior posts by those who followed Luthuli.³⁹

N. Muendane in his book on the role of the PAC and Africanism in the Azanian struggle interprets the visit by Sisulu and Nokwe as intended to indoctrinate them in Communism. "They came back well steeped in Soviet mythology."⁴⁰ One of the main alleged Communist converts was Tambo

³⁷ J.K. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid*, p.99.

³⁸ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93. Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

³⁹ J.K. Ngubane, *Conflict of the Mind; Changing Power Dispositions in South Africa*, p.208.

⁴⁰ N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The role of the Pan African Congress and the influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian struggle*, p.12.

who, it was claimed, took an active part in the resurrection of the Communist Party under the mantle of the Congress of Democrats.⁴¹ It is rather an exaggerated claim to state that Tambo was a Communist convert. It could be true that he was sympathetic to the Communist cause without embracing Communism per se.

The Africanists also took the ANC and the moderates in the Youth League to task on the issue of Sisulu and Nokwe's visits to Moscow and Peking in 1953. This latter incident presented a perfect opportunity to exploit in order to advance their views and to undermine the ANC from within. These visits were described as farcical and only intended to undermine African national independence and self-determination.⁴² The extent to which the Africanists were eager to make political capital of the visits was exemplified in claims of financial misappropriation during these visits.⁴³ This was an unsubstantiated claim as the Africanist themselves failed to prove their case. The failure of the Africanists to submit proof of their allegations shows that they were only bent on maximum political propaganda.

4.2.3 THE RESPONSE OF THE MODERATES IN THE YOUTH LEAGUE AND THE ANC

The moderate Youth Leaguers vehemently denounced the Africanists and rejected their criticism and allegations. They were greatly perturbed by the Africanists vitriol which was overtly blunt and pointed and clearly of a propagandistic nature. According to the moderates the criticism of the

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² P.H. Molotsi, "Orlando Youth and the National struggle", *The Africanist*, vol. 6 no. IV, July-August, 1955, p.7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Africanists was unparalleled and became a source of great concern as it had serious political implications as can be noted from the following comment: "It is to be noted that even the African baiter Swart has not yet made such allegations against Congress man and woman." S.C. Swart was regarded as an avowed foe of Africans who could have made such accusations and not the Africanists.⁴⁴

This reaction was triggered by the Africanists' repeated accusations of Sisulu and Nokwe being eastern functionaries. The moderates spat venom at the Africanists whom they denounced as chameleons intent upon sowing seeds of disunity in the ranks of Congress.⁴⁵ (The anti-Africanists in the Youth League was in the forefront of the battle against the Africanists whilst the ANC largely kept silent. The Africanists were further denounced as enemies of liberation who had to be purged root and stem.⁴⁶ They were seen as more lethal " ... than the oppressor because they stab us in the back."⁴⁷) They were accused of being "...used by the oppressor as political functionaries and mercenary levers for halting the forward march of the people"⁴⁸, They were denounced as a "bunch of malcontents".⁴⁹ Their opponents in the Youth League took them to task for their criticism and vilification. "We warn those who are now engaged in delaying tactics, opportunism, government inspired witch hunting ... that when the time comes we shall not hesitate to expose and label them as the abortive

⁴⁴ The editor, "We have long memories", *African Lodestar*, vol. 6 no. 5, May, 1954, p.1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁴⁶ Secretary's Report. "Youth League's Annual Conference", from 5th July-9th December, 1954, p.V.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ M. Resha, *'Mangoana o Tsoara Thipa ka Bohaleng: My life in the struggle*, p.88. M. Resha is the wife of Robert Resha, who was president of the Youth League in the late 1950s.

frauds that they are and will have been".⁵⁰ The moderate Youth Leaguers not only countered the accusations of the Africanists but also launched increasing attacks against them. They used the same blunt and scathing language that was used by the Africanists.

But what could have led to such anger and infuriation from the ranks of the moderates in the ANC against the criticism of the Africanists as it was not a new phenomenon? Could it be that the criticism of the Africanists towards Nokwe and Sisulu was more personal than professional. Erstwhile criticism of the Africanist was largely based on ideological and strategic differences without any personal attacks. The moderates vowed that "... we, the youth shall be called upon to perform the rites of reaping curses upon their iscariotheous heads."⁵¹

There is however a contrary view which states that the level of anger of the moderates towards the Africanists was largely prompted by the unfortunate coincidence between their criticism and the government's measures against the ANC and the Alliance movement.⁵² The Nationalist government took strong measures to uproot the spread of Communism and the ANC became a victim of these measures. (Most ANC officials including Sisulu and Luthuli were banned in 1952.) The ban was reimposed in subsequent years. (The accusations of the Africanists, especially against Sisulu, provided the government with a much needed excuse to implicate him as a Communist.⁵³) According to the moderates this was the moment when they were supposed to rally around their leaders. "Loyalty demanded

⁵⁰ The editor, "We have long memories", *African Lodestar*, vol. 6 no. 5 May, 1954, p.2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* See "the statement by Provincial Executive of the ANCYL", Transvaal, Johannesburg, 11 May, 1954 in *Ibid.*, p.6.

⁵² G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an ideology*, p.140.

⁵³ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

the principles of Freedom For All.⁵⁷ The anxieties of the Africanists were reinforced as the African nationalism of the ANC ran counter to their go-it-alone version of nationalism.

4.3 THE FREEDOM CHARTER: CLIMAX OF THE CONFLICT

(The adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955 unleashed wave-upon-wave of anger from the Africanists. They were viciously determined to express their anger against the Freedom Charter which they perceived to be a negation of the 1949 Programme of Action. The adoption of the Freedom Charter by the ANC and the rest of the Congress Alliance symbolised the reversal of fortune for the Africanists. Their victory against the Communist Party in 1949 was, ironically, reversed through the collusion of their former associates and comrades.⁵⁸ The Freedom Charter was a crowning achievement for the Congress Alliance in which the Communist Party was an instrumental partner. The Africanists were elbowed out of the ideological lead and their 1949 Programme of Action was sidelined.⁵⁹)

The Africanists were not the only people who objected to the Freedom Charter. It was also opposed by African liberals such as Ngubane and some ANC members especially those in Natal.⁶⁰ (The Africanists questioned in particular the origin of the Freedom Charter. According to them the Freedom Charter was an SACP document smuggled into the ANC in its final form by the Communists.) According to P.K. Leballo the Freedom

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ J. Grobler, *Decisive Clash, A Short History of Black Protest Politics in South Africa 1875-1976*, p. 118.

⁵⁹ I. Vadi, *The Campaign for the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter 1953-1955. A focus on the Transvaal*, p.332.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.307.

that the banned leaders should not be deserted by the movement they had served and for which they were suffering."⁵⁴

What was the ANC's response to the vilifications of the Africanists? The ANC, did not want to challenge the Africanists at their level of emotive and radically charged criticism. They interpreted any reaction to the vilification of the Africanists as stooping to the level of their critics. The ANC, instead, used its supporters in the Youth League to confront and engage the Africanists whilst it itself maintained its political maturity and professionalism. However, the ANC could not have been totally unaffected nor embarrassed by the criticism of the Africanists. These criticisms were after all given wide publicity by Selope Thema's *Bantu World*.⁵⁵ Thema stood to gain from the altercation as he himself broke away from the ANC on the basis of ideological differences.

The weight of the allegations that the Africanists levelled was therefore too great to be ignored by the ANC. This was evident in Luthuli's presidential address in 1955. In his address he explained the ANC's stand with regards to dispute over African nationalism. Luthuli cautioned against the dissipation of the ANC in the face of the 'enemy' by engaging in a dispute over "isms".⁵⁶ In an attempt to explain the official ANC stand on the ideological dispute and to lay the debate to rest, Luthuli emphasised the ideology which the ANC professed that of inclusive African nationalism. It is also fair to infer that the ANC, having accepted the multi-national nature of the country, envisaged an inclusive nationalism which rested on

⁵⁴ E. Feit, *South Africa; The dynamics of the African National Congress*, p.9.

⁵⁵ G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology*, p.134.

⁵⁶ A. Luthuli, "Presidential address ANC Annual Conference, Bloemfontein, 1955", T. Karis and G.M. Carter, micro film roll no. 13, p.3.

Charter was originally drawn-up in Russia.⁶¹ Leballo's tendency to exaggerate inevitably arouses suspicion of his view on the Russian origin of the Freedom Charter. This view has however never been substantiated. Raboroko asserts that the Freedom Charter was drawn up by Rusty Bernstein who was a leading member of the Communist Party.⁶² It is not certain as to who authored the final form of the Freedom Charter. Luthuli stated that "...there were principles in the Charter which had not previously been part of Congress."⁶³ Luthuli did not proceed to elaborate which principles were not previously agreed to. Therefore, by his own admission, the drafting of the Freedom Charter did not reflect the wishes of the ordinary members. At best the Freedom Charter was a reflection of the ideas of local, regional and national executive members.

(The preamble of the Freedom Charter stated that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people".⁶⁴ The main argument of the Africanists was premised on the land question. This was in direct keeping of the Africanist belief of Africa for the Africans. They bluntly criticised the Freedom Charter's stance on 'the land belonging to all who live in it.' To them this was ludicrous and anti-ethical to African nationalism as espoused by Lembede. "To whom does Africa belong?...Do stolen goods belong to a thief and not to its owner?"⁶⁵ Sobukwe was to state in later years that the Freedom Charter auctioned the African land away.⁶⁶)

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.308.

⁶² Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁶³ See A. Luthuli, *Let my People Go*, Luthuli's interview in the Drum Magazine "How Red is Congress", E. Feit, *South African, The Dynamics of the African National Congress*, pp.15-17, T. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, pp.72-73.

⁶⁴ *Freedom Charter*, p.19.

⁶⁵ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

The Africanists ostensibly maintained the supreme importance of land as being a God-given commodity which encompasses and reflects a people's pride, sense of self-esteem and nationhood. To them there was a mystical connection between the land and the soul of a people which could not be easily severed.⁶⁷ Raboroko sees the Freedom Charter as the further usurpation of the land of the Africans which commenced in 1913 and continued in 1936.⁶⁸ He rejected the envisaged "division of the land amongst those who work on it." You cannot divide or subdivide anything before you decide to whom it belongs."⁶⁹ They further stated that in accordance with the Freedom Charter, "...the country belongs to the foreign invader and the indigenous invaded, the dispossessor and the dispossessed, the alien robber and the robbed."⁷⁰ To them the differences between Africans and whites were irreconcilable and would remain so as long as oppression prevailed. The Africanists perceived the clause on the land belonging to all as meant to "...confuse issues to a point where the oppressed do not even know against whom they are fighting, the oppressor was to be left alone, only the oppressive laws were the target..."⁷¹

The avowed aim of the Africanists was to emphasise the Africans non-negotiable and inalienable right to Africa. It was thus inconceivable to them to speak of equality of land ownership while the political contradictions between Africans and whites existed.

(The land issue was certainly the crux of the Africanists rejection of the

⁶⁷ See G. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa; The evolution of an ideology.*

⁶⁸ Interview with P. Raboroko, Soweto, 15-06-93.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Africanist; News and views*, December, no. 2 1972.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

Freedom Charter.) To them the Freedom Charter's clause on the 'land belonging to all who live in it' obscured the real issue in the politics of South Africa. This clause removes the object of dispute that had consistently guided the ANC from its formation.⁷² The Africanists contested this clause and saw it as ludicrous since the political contradictions pointed to the opposite.⁷³ (Without resolving the land issue, the Africanists were convinced that a solution to the problems of South Africa would be remote.) The Freedom Charter's stance on the land issue was used by the Africanists to disgrace the ANC in the eyes of land-hungry Africans who arrived in towns because of the dispossession of their land.

The Africanists asked "when there is no longer any dispute about the ownership of the land, what is left to fight for except civil rights."⁷⁴ The Freedom Charter was seen as not demanding the return of the land to the Africans but, rather as an attempt to ameliorate the system. This sentiment was echoed by Sobukwe in 1959. "To the ANC leadership, the present National government is a properly elected government of South Africa, whose policies however it does not approve of."⁷⁵ Sobukwe's perception of the ANC stand is a little exaggerated as it fails to take into account the ANC founding objectives which were more ameliorative than revolutionary.

The Africanists rejected the retention of race categories as postulated in the Freedom Charter and they interpreted this as evident of the inconsistency

⁷² N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The role of the Pan Africanist Congress and the influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian struggle*, p.9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *The Africanists*, Jan. 1959 in *Ibid.*, p.51.

of the Communist Party. This was in response to declaration in the Freedom Charter which stated that 'The country belongs to all *who live in it*, Black and White; All people shall have equal rights to use their *own languages*, and to develop their folk *culture* and *customs*; All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and *national pride*.'⁷⁶

The Africanists expressed their misgivings at the seemingly perpetuation of distinct racial groups which had to be kept exclusive from each other. (To them the perpetuation of racial categories such as 'Black and White' represented multi-racialism to which they were opposed. They saw this as a continuation of racial separation which were the very policies that they were fighting against.⁷⁷) The Communists were accused of contradicting Communist objectives by attempting to preserve racial categories.⁷⁸ They insisted that the Communists were bent upon the perpetuation of White domination by preserving racial and cultural categories.

In later years the Africanists were to state that "The C.P. ... refer to the position of the Whites as a special group in a democratic Azania, because they are seeking a built-in bill of rights for the White minority as a form of protection against the dangers of Black majority rule."⁷⁹ The vilification by the Africanists of the Communists' retention of racial categories presupposed that the Freedom Charter was authored by the Communist Party.

⁷⁶ *Freedom Charter*, p.19; N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism: The Role of the Pan-Africanist Congress and the Influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian Struggle*, pp.8-9.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Africanist*, News and Views, April-May, 1973.

⁷⁹ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-93.

The conflict between the Africanists and the ANC over the role of the Communist party in the drafting of the Freedom Charter greatly heightened the tension between the two factions in the Youth League and the ANC resulted in fresh conflicts. Animosities became entrenched and any prospects of reconciliation grew increasingly elusive. (Those who supported the adoption of the Freedom Charter were henceforth referred to as the Charterists. This use of the new name reflected the redefinition of ideological battle lines. The Africanists were now faced with the ANC and the Communist Party and other members of the Alliance, i.e. Indians and Coloureds. The political fortunes of the Africanists of 1949 were jettisoned and they suffered a humiliating defeat with the adoption of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown in 1955.⁸⁰)

The Africanists were faced with the challenge of replacing the Freedom Charter by reactivating the Programme of Action. The Africanists felt that the latter was compromised and contradicted by the former. They argued that this was what the Communists intended. The Africanists were also put on the defensive due to their relatively small numbers in comparison to their opposition in the Youth League and by ANC-propaganda. According to Muendane: "The spirit of African nationalism as a liberatory creed ceased to have any mention at the conference which was stage-managed and christened the "Congress of the People."⁸¹ The Freedom Charter was seen as a huge departure from the liberatory path of the Youth League and the ANC since 1949.

The Africanists saw the Freedom Charter as the completion of the redefinition of political struggle in South Africa. (To them the struggle was

⁸⁰ N. Muendane, *Confrontation with Apartheid Colonialism; The Role of the Pan-Africanist Congress and the Influence of Sobukwe and Africanism in the Azanian struggle*, p.8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

no longer "... for self-determination and peasants, but as a struggle for equality between what they call blacks and whites to be equals."⁸² The Africanists contradicted the Freedom Charter's perpetuation of the struggle based on class analysis.⁸³) This argument was prompted by the declaration in the Freedom Charter wherein the 'land was to be re-divided amongst those who work it'.⁸⁴ The essence of this declaration meant that the land would be shared by both white and black peasants which was anathema to the Africanists.

The Freedom Charter indicated a greater degree of co-operation between the ANC and other political organisations. Pronounced amongst these organisations was the Communist Party which was predominantly white-controlled. The Africanist viewed "whites as shareholders in the SA Oppressor Company Ltd. (There are whites, of course, who are intellectually converted to our cause, but because of their position materially, they cannot fully identify themselves with the struggle of the African people.) They want safeguards and check-points all along the way, with the result that the struggle of the people is blunted, stultified and crushed."⁸⁵ Seeing that the Communists were perceived as beneficiaries of the status quo by the Africanists co-operation between them and the ANC was deemed to be unjustified and untenable. "We believe that co-operation is possible between equals. This is collaboration, not co-operation."⁸⁶

(The Freedom Charter, it can be said, marked the final parting of the ways

⁸² Pan-Africanism (An outline), PAC Pamphlet, undated, p.2.

⁸³ *Future of the Africanist Movement*, PAC document, undated, p.1.

⁸⁴ *Freedom Charter*, p.19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

between the Africanists and the moderates or Charterists. According to Muendane it "...became the final stage in the internal struggle between the Africanists and what were now to be known as the Charterists."⁸⁷ He proceeds to state that the Freedom Charter also signalled the defeat of the Africanists in the internal ideological struggle.⁸⁸ This struggle that the Africanists lost in 1955 was fought on an ideological and leadership basis.) The Africanists realised that they were outwitted and were forced to change their strategies in order to salvage African nationalism. It was only with the resuscitation of the 1949 Programme of Action by the Africanists that a pro-active stand emerged. "Seeing that the Freedom Charter contradicted the 1949 Programme of Action we adopted it and became its custodians and sought to jealously safe-guard it."⁸⁹

4.4 RESULTS OF THE CONFLICT

While the ANC and Africanists were preoccupied with their ideological differences the state continued to act against their leaders. They could neither issue statements nor take part in ANC activities for a stipulated period of time. During this time (the mid 1950s) the criticism of the Africanists was mounting propaganda attacks, thanks to the support and publicity of the *Bantu-World*.⁹⁰ The Africanist's criticism was of great concern to the ANC because it was unable to provide an response due to the ban and government threats. (The ANCYL under the leadership of the moderates, took the initiative in punitive measures against the Africanists. They wanted to purge the ANC off its critics and to solve the ideological

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8.

⁸⁹ Interview with J. Ganya, Soweto, 21-06-93. Ganya was accused number two after Zeph Mothopeng in the 1977 Bethal trial, He was sentence to 10 years on Robben Island.

⁹⁰ Molotsi was a leading member of the Africanists who was on the staff of the *Bantu World*.

conflict through other means.

The Africanists of Orlando, which acted as a springboard for attacks on the ANC and the Alliance Movement, were identified as the main rival. Leballo and his branch were suspended pending further investigation.) This suspension was brought about by Leballo's criticism of Nokwe and Sisulu, whom he labelled as "flunkies" and "Eastern functionary allies".⁹¹ Leballo was urged to appear before a tribunal of the Provincial Committee where he was to present his case.

Leballo remained defiant and refused to appear before the committee. His actions were probably a result of his defiant and cantankerous character. His participation and activities in the Second World War had a radicalizing influence upon him.⁹² He developed a tendency of flaunting authority. Leballo's pioneering influence in the Fort Hare student strike in the early 1940s was an explicit reflection of Leballo's perception of authority and control.⁹³ His character flaws and un-cooperativeness was in later years to cost the PAC its political fortune and give rise to conflicts, dissensions and killings.⁹⁴ It is also possible that Leballo perceived the committee before which he was supposed to appear as illegitimate and thus unqualified to try him.

(Leballo's intransigence and refusal to appear before the Provincial Committee resulted in his expulsion from the Youth League in 1956.)
"There being not other way to remedy ... than the expulsion of Mr. Leballo,

⁹¹ G. Gerhart, *Black Power; The evolution of an ideology*, p.140.

⁹² See J. Bolnick, "Leballo; The man who hurried to meet his destiny", *Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol. 29, no. 3, pp.418-428.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.428-441.

⁹⁴ Interview with G.M. Pitje, Johannesburg, 14-06-1993.

the Provincial Executive did expel him convinced that this action was taken in the interest of the liberatory movement."⁹⁶ Leballo's defiant actions provided the Youth League with a long awaited opportunity of dealing with him and the rest of the Africanist faction and obliterating his influence within the Youth League which was perceived as inimical and militating against the programme of the ANC. In this regard the Youth League could not be held responsible or blamed for Leballo's expulsion as he rejected a chance for official recourse that he was afforded. Leballo's refusal to appear before the Provincial Committee exposed his infantile and myopic political strategy. Due to the fact that the Africanists wanted to work from within meant that they could not suddenly work from without in order to resolve conflicts and contradictions.

(The Orlando Branch of the ANC Youth League with its entire executive, which included Peter Molotsi, Lekaje and Nhlapo was suspended.) The suspension of the Orlando branch was thus the result of their lack of cooperation with the investigating Provincial Committee. The refusal of the Orlando branch to co-operate with the provincial investigating committee could also have been prompted by their perception of the loyalist Youth League's compromising stance with regard to the issue of radical African nationalism.

The defiant stance of the Orlando Africanists was demonstrated in their refusal to leave the Youth League despite their suspension in 1956. They were led by Leballo who had been expelled. In an attempt to reinforce their decision the Youth League rejected Leballo and his group's credentials and refused them entry. Their credentials were rejected on the basis that they were elected by an unconstitutional branch comprising suspended members

⁹⁶ *Executive Report to the 12th Provincial Conference of the ANCYL, Transvaal, undated, p.5.*

which included the delegation.⁹⁶ The Youth League was taking a hardline stance against the Africanists whom they felt were a great danger.

⁹⁶ "Annual Report to the National Conference", *The African Lodestar*, vol. 6 no.1, July 1954, p.2.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from this study that the ANC Youth League provided an important forum in the battle between the Africanist and the Communists. The Youth League's founding members, i.e. Lembede and Mda were well read and conversant with various ideologies and their merits and demerits. They were well schooled mostly in the social sciences, as well as philosophy and the practical politics of South Africa and elsewhere. The era in which they lived witnessed epoch making events internationally and on the continent of Africa. (The radical Africanist philosophy of Marcus Garvey and George Padmore influenced their ideological and political development.)

(With these new-found views and ideology they set out to direct the ANC from within towards a more militant political path.) (Meanwhile Communist infiltration of the ANC gained momentum from global and domestic political developments) The domestic political factors were those like the departure of Xuma from the ANC leadership and the ascent of the Nationalist Party in government in 1948. (The Africanist in the Youth League, realising the haphazard politics of the ANC and the menace of the Communists, conceived the 1949 Programme of Action. By compelling the ANC to advance to a principled political programme the intrusion of the Communists would be checked and repelled by the Programme of Action.

The Communist Party realising the imminence of its political defeat committed itself to overpowering the Africanists influence within the ANC. The 1950 Suppression of Communism Act spurred on the intentions of the Communist Party to infiltrate the ANC. They perceived the Africanists as a dangerous foe whose ideology they regarded as black racism and chauvinism. The period between 1949 and 1955 thus became a time of intense conflict between the contending ideologies Africanism and

Communism.

The two contending ideologies bitterly criticised and denounced each others goals and intensions. The ANC lacked a clearly defined ideological programme in which its political conduct could be based. The ANC's lack of an assertive ideology meant that it played a minimal role, if any at all, in the ensuing ideological conflict between Africanism and Communism. The adoption of the 1949 Programme of Action marked the triumph of the Africanist Youth League over the Communist Party. This victory of the Africanists was however short lived as the Communists won the second and subsequent rounds until 1955.

The central argument of this study is that the major conflict which ensued between the Africanists and the Communist Party was ideological and also shaped by strategic differences. This argument overthrows the popular perception of conflict ensuing between the ANC and the Youth League. The Africanist in the Youth League wanted to transform the ANC into a more bellicose organisation whilst on the other hand they wanted to eliminate the Communist Party's influence in the ANC in particular and on African resistance politics in general.)

The ideological conflict between the Africanists and the Communists however should not only be seen in the context of the South African political scenario. It should also be viewed in the broader ideological and political struggle that characterised the cold-war era. The then Soviet Republic was determined to undercut Western influence by spreading the ideas of Communism in South Africa. This could best be achieved by co-operating with and infiltrating the African resistance movements. The ANC appeared to be an obvious target.

The Nationalist Party's clampdown on the Communist Party triggered a

sympathetic reaction from the ANC towards the Communist Party which laid the basis for solidarity against the common foe. The Africanists found themselves in an invidious position where their criticism of the Communists was integrated as reinforcing that of the Nationalist Party.

(The increased co-operation between the ANC and the Communist Party, which was a direct response to the Nationalist Party's Apartheid legislation, ironically coincided with the vigorous criticism of the Africanists. The climax of the conflict between the Africanists and the Communist Party - ANC Alliance was reached in the adoption of the Freedom Charter in 1955. After 1955 the Africanist became increasingly aware that they could no longer reverse the ANC's new policy of multiracialism.)

(Shortly after this the Africanists left the ANC to form the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) in April 1959. The PAC adopted the 1949 Programme of Action and became its custodians. Leading Africanists such as P. Raboroko, Z. Mothopeng, Z.B. Molote, N. Mahomo, S. Ngedane and N. Pokela became national executive members of the newly formed PAC, while R.M. Sobukwe was elected president. The formation of the PAC marked the culmination of the ANC and the Congress Alliance. Though Mda was a leading exponent of Africanism, he turned down the PAC's offer for president as he was opposed to a break-away.

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