

## THE RISE OF AFRICAN NATIONALISM

### HISTORICAL CONCEPTS

- **Nationalism.** - a belief of unity and independence of the people of the country.
- **Apartheid.** - the policy of separate developments of different races.
- **1913 Native Land Act.** - an Act passed to allocate only about 7% of dry land to Africans and leave the more fertile land for whites.
- **1909 South African Act.** - an Act that was passed to create a unified Union of South Africa in 1910 which was going to recognise only Whites and exclude African people including Coloureds and Indians
- **Atlantic Charter.** - a document that was signed by Britain and USA after the World War Two to guarantee human rights to every people across the world.
- **African Claims.** - a document produced by ANC president A.B Xuma which included a Bill of Rights and rejection of all forms of discrimination by asserting the rights of all individuals, regardless of their colour or gender.
- **Freedom Charter.** - the document of core principles of the South African Congress Alliance, which consisted of the African National Congress and its allies: the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Democrats and the Coloured People's Congress.
- **APO.** - Africa People Organisation
- **SANNC.** - South African Natives Congress today known as ANC.
- **ICU.** - Industrial and Commercial Union.
- **PAC.** - Pan African Congress

### 1. THE FORMATION OF AFRICAN PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION (APO)

- Its first president was Dr Abdurahman.
- The APO, although it recruited its members from the relatively small group of educated and economically comfortably off Coloureds, was to become the most influential political organisation for Coloureds for almost forty years.
- The APO had as its original aims 'civilising' objectives as were prevalent at the time.
- it additionally emphasised achieving unity amongst Coloureds, promoting education, opposing "class legislation" (i.e. discriminatory colour legislation) and defending the social, political and economic rights of Coloureds.
- the APO focused its attention on the franchise question and with it, the issue of education as a means to qualifying for the vote.
- the APO garnered support very easily in the coloured population.

- Within two years of its founding it had more than 2 000 members in thirty-three branches.
- Strategies employed by the APO were non-confrontational forms of protest and appeal. They included attempting to influence liberal white parties.
- The APO experienced some political isolation in the coloured community.
- Peregrino and Tobin and their supporters distanced themselves from the APO, fearing that its stance was too radical.
- However, the APO found political allies amongst Africans.
- Hence when Dr W. Rubusana, who was the editor of Izwi Labantu, convened a South African Native Convention to formulate an African response to the draft Act.
- Abdurahman encouraged all APO branches to send delegates to the Convention.
- He also informed Rubusana through the newspaper of his cooperation and intended alliance.
- He also informed Rubusana through the newspaper of his cooperation and intended alliance.
- Consequently the APO was co-responsible for the reaction of the Convention to the draft Act.
- At the 1909 annual conference of the APO the decision was taken to send a deputation of blacks to London to lobby opposition to the draft Act.
- The delegation, comprising eight Coloureds and Africans - Abdurahman, Matts Fredericks, W. Rubusana, D Lenders, T. Mapikela, Daniel Dwanya, J.T. Jabavu and J. Gerrans and led by the white politician and lawyer William Schreiner, put up a brave fight against the draft Act.
- Although it collapsed as an organisation in the early 1940s, having to give way to more radical organisations, the APO shaped black political thought and culture for decades after its demise.

## **2. THE FORMATION OF THE SANNC**

- In 1909, a group of Black delegates from the four provinces attended the South African Native National Convention (SANNC) in Waaihoek, Bloemfontein, to propose ways of objecting to the draft South African Act, and the Union constitution.
- The SANNC meeting convened by John Dube and Dr Walter Rubusana decided to send a delegation to London to convince the British government not to accept the Union in its present form.
- The delegation led by former Prime Minister William Scheiner failed in its aims as White supremacy was entrenched under a unitary state.

- On 8 January 1912, several hundred members of South Africa's educated elite met at Bloemfontein to establish a national organization to protest against racial discrimination and to appeal for equal treatment before the law.
- The group comprised of South Africa's most prominent Black citizens: professional men, businessmen, journalist, chieftans, ministers, teachers, clerks, building contractors and labour agents.
- This meeting was the most significant in the history of Black protest politics as it was the first joint meeting of Black representatives from all four self-governing British colonies and indicated that Blacks weren't capable of united action.
- The main aim of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was to represent the concerns and anxieties of the small professional middle class which was mainly responsible for convening the Bloemfontein meeting.
- Its first President was John Dube; a Minister and school headmaster who studied in the USA and was strongly influenced by the American educator and activist Booker T Washington.
- Pixley ka Isaka Seme, a lawyer and prime mover in organizing the meeting to establish the Congress was appointed Treasurer.
- The position of Secretary General was occupied by Solomon T Plaatjie, a court translator, author and newspaper editor who had worked in Kimberly and Johannesburg.
- These men retained close ties with African aristocracy and the rural chieftaincy.
- The SANNC in its constitution wanted the following basic rights and freedoms to be recognised:
  - Unity and co-operation between the white government and the black people of South Africa.
  - Promotion of educational, social, economic and political upliftment of the Black people.
  - To seek to obtain redress for just grievances of the black people.
- The living conditions of Africans continued to be worst and the black people grew more and more reliant to the ANC.
- It became the ANC in 1923, one of the largest organizations in later years to struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa.

### **3. THE FORMATION OF INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL UNION (ICU)**

- During the 1920s, the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) - which changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923 - did not accomplish a great deal to improve the lives of black South Africans.

- it was overshadowed by the more dynamic Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), founded in Cape Town in 1919.
- Established by Clements Kadalie, who was originally from Nyasaland (now Malawi), the ICU started out as a trade union for the Black and Coloured dockworkers of Cape Town.
- However, the ICU soon developed into a more general organisation, including in its membership skilled as well as unskilled workers from industry and the agricultural sector.
- Unlike the SANNCU, the ICU did not officially petition the authorities, but adopted a more active approach with a view to obtaining better working conditions and higher wages for its members.
- As a result, its membership increased rapidly - mainly because the ICU held out hope for immediate change within the existing socio-economic system.
- The trade union movement spread to other urban areas, such as Natal, where it found an effective provincial secretary in George Champion.
- Soon ICU branches were opened throughout South Africa, and in 1925 the union moved its headquarters to Johannesburg.
- the ICU shifted its focus from trade unionism to a more militant nationalism.
- At its peak from 1927-1928 the ICU claimed more than 150 000 members.
- The majority of members were Black, but there were a few thousand Coloured members and some White members.
- But, the ICU as an organisation largely failed to provide effective activist leadership.
- The ICU leaders could not mobilize their members for large-scale action.
- The ICU failed to promote strike action where it was clearly warranted.
- In due course two factions developed within the ICU.
- There were those who supported more militant action, and those who advocated moderation.
- This, together with financial problems, was largely responsible for the gradual decline of the ICU.
- Nonetheless, even though the ICU disintegrated, it occupies an important place in the history of Black labour.
- Not only was it the first black trade union movement, but it also helped to make blacks more aware of their exploitation.

#### **4. THE ATLANTIC CHARTER AND A.B XUMA'S AFRICAN CLAIMS**

- Alfred Bitini Xuma, who became President of the ANC in 1940, inherited an organization in disarray and set out to rebuild the ANC against great opposition.

- Under his leadership, the ANC constitution was revised and the organization became more efficient and centralized, thus attracting a wider following.
- Xuma was central to the adoption of the Africans' Claims document at a time when the ANC was increasingly becoming politicized and there were increasing calls for a departure from petitions and conciliatory methods.
- Africans' Claims in South Africa is the title of a document drawn up by a committee of 28 members and sympathizers of the African National Congress (ANC) and on 16 December 1943 unanimously accepted at the ANC's annual Conference.
- It was created in response to the Atlantic Charter passed two years earlier, in which former President of the United States Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill set out the objectives of the Allies during the Second World War and their ideas of the world order after its end formulated.
- The central points of Africans' claims were the demands for universal suffrage and for an end to racial segregation in South Africa.
- This document charted the path to racial equality in South Africa that they hoped would follow the conclusion of the Second World War.

## **5. AFRICANISM OF THE ANC YOUTH LEAGUE**

- The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) was established on 2 April 1944, by Anton Lambede (who became the League's first President), Nelson Mandela, Ashby Mda, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo.
- The aim of the Youth League was to galvanise the youth to step up the fight against segregation within the country.
- At the time the ANCYL was established, political circumstances in South Africa were tenuous as the ruling United Party was divided about South Africa's participation in World War II.
- The Youth League's manifesto was launched at the Bantu Social Centre in Johannesburg in March 1944 ahead of its inaugural meeting.
- It stated, amongst others, that Africanism should be promoted (i.e., Africans should struggle for development, progress and national liberation so as to occupy their rightful and honourable place among nations of the world); and that the African youth should be united, consolidated, trained and disciplined, because from their ranks, future leaders would be recruited.
- Their motto was: "Africa's cause must triumph".
- The Youth League followed a moderate stream of African nationalism known as Africanism.
- They rejected the slogan 'Africa for Africans' because of the multi-racial character of South Africa.

- To strength its fight for liberation, the Youth League developed a Programme of Action which involved different methods like boycotts, strikes and other defiance tactics.
- In 1949, the ANC adopted this programme, which represented a radical departure from the ineffective strategies of the past, and a transformation of the organisation into a revolutionary mass movement.

## **6. THE FREEDOM CHARTER**

- In 1953 the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, Coloured People's Congress and other organisations met.
- Togethet they proposed the national meeting that was going to be call d Congress of the People.
- The purpose of this meeting would be to gather the views of ordinary South Africans for their demands to be included in a document called Freedom Charter.
- Thousands of people participated in the campaign and sent in their demands for the kind of South Africa they wished to live in.
- These demands found final expression in the Freedom Charter.
- Nothing in the history of the liberation movement in South Africa quite caught the popular imagination as the Congress of the People campaign.
- The Congress of the People was held in Kliptown, near Johannesburg on 26 June 1955.
- Almost 3000 people attended to discuss and adopt Freedom Charter.
- The final document called for:
  - A non-racial South Africa.
  - Political rights for all, regardless of race, colour and gender.
  - Equality of all national groups.
  - Equal distribution of wealth.
  - Social security and education for all.
- The Charter became the basis of ANC thinking after 1950s.

## **7. THE FORMATION OF THE PAN AFRICAN CONGRESS (PAC)**

- The PAC was formed by the group of ANC Youth League members who rejected the clause in Freedom Charter wich says " South Africa belongs to everyone who live in it, black and white."
- They argued that the ANC Youth League was moving away from Africanism in favour of multi-racialism.
- These Africanist withing the ANC believed in slogan "Africa for Africans."
- The PAC was formed in 1959 and Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe became its president.

- The PAC wanted black African interests to come first and no power sharing with other groups.
- African nationalism had held a steadfast vision of South African identity.
- Socio-economic changes and National Party's introduction of apartheid in 1948 contributed to the rise of African nationalism.