**Chapter Six**

**Struggling with Liberalism:**

 **Barely Legal Opposition Politics 1945-1975**

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**Urban Pressures and Change**

**The Making of a Demographic Myth[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Ideological debates in South Africa begin with the country’s overwhelming social and economic pressures. South Africa’s demographics over the past century tell the tale and a shrinking white electorate is central to the story. Descriptive statistics can be confusing, but discussions of patterns are important and political participation in South Africa in this chapter begins with these impressionistic figures.

In 1975 (the year before the Soweto Uprisings), the South African government released figures on demographic changes in which the racial balance in South Africa was purportedly shifting. The source was a population study, published by the Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa. The statistics were said to have been released originally on September 21, 1975 by the IDC. Anthony Lewis, twenty years later, in an expose in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled “The Arithmatic of Apartheid,” reproduced these probably faked figures, in an article published on April 14, 1996.

These government projections (or plants to critics) purported in 1975 to suggest that the white population of the country would decrease dramatically by 2020. According to Lewis, the statistics were dead wrong and had been leaked in the 1970s to stimulate popular fear of black population growth among the white public. The South African Government suggested that there would be white population of perhaps less than six million people in the year 2020.

These projections, mostly rumors rather than openly released statistics at the time, strongly influenced government decision-making and popular white support over the next twenty years and in part explained why the National Party refused to abandon apartheid even though the political leadership knew it was unworkable. In the 1970s, the South African government used the numbers to scare legislators and the white public. By the end of the decade, the statistics were used to cover up the actual drop in the white population.

The 1976 declaration of Transkei "independence," followed by similar declarations for Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, and Venda, allowed the minority government, through the fiction of homeland citizenship, to disguise these projections for close to twenty years. Through the fiction of homeland independence, the government of South Africa could demonstrate that the black population rather than whites were in deline. These projections were wrong though not completely out of line. By 2020, there is a good chance that the white population in South Africa will dip below seven million people.

The important point to end on is that for the better part of forty years, the South African government manipulated population statistics in order to disguise the decrease in the white population with its implications on economics and trade. The African population was expected to grow to over 40 million people by the end of the century, over 50 million by the year 2016, and over 55 million people in 2025.

**The Twentieth Century Reality**

In the census of 1904, South Africa had 5.2 million people: 22 percent were white, (8.6 percent were Coloured, 2.4 percent were Indian, and the rest, 67.5 percent, were Africans (Beinart 1994, p. 5). South African demographics remained stable throughout the twentieth century. The African population remained almost constant as a percentage of the total South African population after Union (at approximately 70 percent). Whites as a percentage, however decreased throughout the century, occasionally jumping or dipping, while the percentage of Indians and Coloureds increased.

Since Union, the white population of South Africa fell from its high of 23 percent in 1911 throughout the twentieth century. As early as 1946, census figures suggested that whites, peaking briefly at 2.1 million people (22 percent), had become a declining portion of the over all population (Meredith 1998; Hailey 1957). In 1960, whites constituted about 20 percent of the total population (Keller & Picard 1989). In the mid-1970s, the South African government had calculated population projections that showed white population growth, including immigrants, at 1.54 percent, while black South African growth approached 3 percent. White demographics are reproduced in Table 6.1.

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| **Table 6.1**Decrease in the Percentage of Whites in the South African PopulationSource: Statistics provided by the South African Institute of Race Relations.  Johannesburg in the Institute’s Annual Reports. |
|  |  |
| **Year** | **Percentage of Whites** |
|  |  |
| 19041921 | 2122 |
| 1943 | 21 |
| 1950 | 19 |
| 1980 | 18 |
| 1985 | 17 |
| 20052015  2020 (estimated) | 1087 |

By 1985, the proportion of whites to the total population had decreased to 18 percent. Twenty years later, whites would consist of less than 10 percent of the total population of the country, or slightly more than the 1990 percentage of the white population of Namibia. White population growth decreased to 1.6 percent per annum while African population increases hovered just short of 3 percent.

Projections in the 1980s, from sources outside the government, confirmed the Industrial Development Corporation, (the South African government parastatal), which in the late 1980s published figures and a detailed analysis which demonstrated the way in which demographics made both the political and the institutional transition inevitable in South Africa (noted in Picard, Research Diary, June 28, 1990).

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| **Table 6. 2**South African Population 2000 actuals and 2020 projections into the 21st Century(In Millions)Data Compiled from SA Stats 2001 And SARR Annual Reports |
|  |  |
| **Population Groups** | **Year** |
|  | **2000** | **2020** |
|  |  |  |
| Whites |  4,890 |  4,520 |
| Asians |  1,215 |  1,617 |
| Coloureds |  4,890 |  7,720 |
| Africans | 39,293 | 67,798 |
| **TOTAL** | **50,288** | **81,339** |
|  |  |  |

In 1946, the African population of South Africa stood at 7.8 million. There were 285,000 Asians (3.6 percent) and just under one million Coloured South Africans (12 percent). The total population of the country in 1985 (though caculations were difficult to make given the separate statistics of the homelands) stood at close to 35 million people. By 1986 South Africa's African population had reached more than 26 million, including estimates from the "independent" homelands. There were one million Asians, three million Coloureds, and close to five million whites. A 1991 census estimated that there had been a significant undercounting of the black population prior to 1990 (Munslow & FitzGerald 1995).

In 1994, the four largest languages in the country were Zulu (9.1 million speakers), Xhosa (7.4 million people), Afrikaans (7.9 million), and North Sotho (3.7 million). Other important languages include Tswana, South Sotho, Venda, and Shangaan. There were only 3.4 million native speakers of English in South Africa and that was declining, though English was rapidly becoming the lingua franca for the country.

The population breakdown in 1995 was roughly 76 percent African, 9 percent Coloured, 3.5 percent Asian, and 13 percent white. Whites and Indians continued to declined after 1994 while Africans and Coloured citizens increased. South Africa, despite the AIDS crisis, sat on and still sits on a population time bomb. South Africa, a country one-third the size of the United States, was home to close to 40 million in 1994. The makeup of the population in 1999 was 77 percent African, 12 percent white, 8.5 percent Coloured, and 2.5 percent Indian. (Guelke 1999; *White Paper on Affirmative Action* 1957). It must be kept in mind that the figures as they changed over time were less important than the conclusions that policy makers drew from these figures. By 2020 the population of South Africa would be black Southern African country with percentage statistics not that different than Namibia, Zimbabwe or Botswana.

Population statistics continued to change during the post-apartheid period. The 1996 census counted 37.9 million people, while the Development Bank of Southern Africa claimed that there were 44.6 million people in the country. However census figures in the immediate post-apartheid period were likely too low (Guelke 1999). The overall population growth in South Africa in 1996 was about 2.1 percent.

By 2010, if these statistical patterns continued, the black share of the electorate was close to 80 percent, white and coloured voters were less than 10 percent each, and the Indian vote less than 2 percent. Speculation was that that black share of the population might be close to ninety percent by 2025. By 2007, the actualities for white population showed a drop to 9 percent and by 2015 to just over 7 percent. The changes of the white population over time are shown in Table 6.1. In contrast, by the year 2025, the African population could top 60 million. See Table 6.2 for a discussion of population projections into the 21st century.

**The Fear of Urbanization**

In the early 1980s, the South African cities that were supposed to turn white under apartheid were turning black. By 1980, Johannesburg was an African city. On a typical Saturday morning shopping day, it looked more African than Nairobi or Abidjan. The country was becoming rapidly Africanized. As Sparks (1990, p. 373) points out, "instead of withering away, they [blacks were] colonizing the suburbs, the black tide [was] flowing more strongly every day...." Local government issues in South Africa became part of the ideological debate as observers of the urban scene concluded that the black population in the cities was permanent and growing (Mabin 1991). The African National Congress (ANC) itself was largely an urban party and would not immediately, after 1994, see rural empowerment and development as a high priority.

By 1983, urban signs were ominous for the National Party leadership. The South African Institute of Race Relations predicted that, four million Africans out of a working population of ten million were unemployed. There were on-going fears that the government’s urban policy would lead to revolt (Legum 1972). The horror stories of influx control were well documented in the newspapers of the early 1980s (“When the Tortoise” 1980). The situation would get worse before they got better.

The architects of apartheid grappled with ways of curtailing the growth of the urban African population throughout the post-war period. Members of the Association of Administrators of Non-European Affairs, who administered black urban areas, came to have a significant influence over township policies since the Department of Bantu Administration and Development had little experience in the urban black townships. It was the task of the Non-European Affairs Administraters to manage the control system developed by the National Party to control urban migration (Posel 1991).

Urbanization had both social and political consequences. The immediate cause of the shift in National Party thinking was the ungovernability of the urban townships after 1984 and the extent to which the United Democratic Front (UDF) could mobilize mass opposition. However, over the long run, "[t]he human, demographic and economic forces of population growth, urbanization, mass education, and industrial development had far more impact than deliberate government action" or political activism (Waldemeir 1997, p. 25). The key to understanding the movement toward negotiations lies in a process of industrialization and urbanization that rendered the apartheid system unworkable and ultimately forced the Nationalist government to the negotiating table (Sparks 1990).

An attempt to accommodate urban black demands rather than resisting them began in the late 1960s at a time when the policy makers discovered the end of a surplus of white workers. A dependence on black urban labor, including labor from the neighboring states, continued long after the creation of a non-racial government. Changing socio-economic patterns occurred as a result of the unyielding behavior patterns of hundreds of thousands of black South Africans, as they resisted pass laws, influx control, and job reservation. The nation-building ideas of Aggrey Klaaste of the *Sowetan* in the 1980s were based on this incremental principle.

Urbanization was the great equalizer in terms of both blacks and whites and made the negotiations process inevitable. However, the retreat from an ideology of apartheid pre-dated the outbreak of political violence in the 1980s by close to twenty years. The 1983 constitution, and its local government components, had been vetoed by reputable black leaders from the beginning, and government backed down on the P.W. Botha’s racially based Tricameral legislative structure within a few years. By the end of the 1980s, population changes and urbanization meant that black South Africans had effective veto powers over constitutional change.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Apartheid created what Richard Tomlinson (1990, p. 5) calls, a "bastardized city structure" in South Africa. That is, there was an apartheid-created artificial separation of people in contradiction to basic economic principles. The apartheid system created rich and poor areas of the city with the poorer parts being denied industrial and commercial development and a financial base upon which services could depend.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Over 80 percent of the black population would be urban and the Pretoria, Witwatersrand and Vereeniging (PWV) area would become a megalopolis of 14 million people, half of whom would live in some kind of informal housing (Tomlinson 1990). This knowledge would have a significant impact upon future political developments.

**Demographic and Economic Trends**

Political negotiations in South Africa, for John Kane-Berman (1990b), were the end of a social transformation process rather than the beginning. The new, non-racial South Africa was already there by 1980. By 1990, he argued, the economy was already fully integrated. The transfer to a non-racial government would follow from what had already occurred through changes in behavior patterns among South Africa's people, black and white. What Kane-Berman called the "silent revolution"[[4]](#footnote-4) effectively destroyed government efforts to control migration into the urban areas.

Economic trends also reflected the partly middle class nature of that revolt. Because of this, urban political violence was the weapon of choice used against the constitutional structures between 1984 -1987. Instead, Kane-Berman (1990b) argued, the socio-economic changes in the 1970s and 1980s were based on the need for skilled black labor when the surplus of skilled whites ended in 1969. Negotiations followed from this need.

One of the reasons that the government turned to substantive negotiations with the ANC was that their "own affairs, general affairs" dichotomy had nowhere to go beyond the local level in a rapidly urbanizing South Africa and the changing set of economic conditions. It was South Africa's demographic trends in the end that made the apartheid system unworkable. The year 1969 marked a turning point in South Africa's economic history. Prior 1969, white South Africans were able to supply almost all of the skilled and semi-skilled human resources needed by both the private and the public sector.

Whites, after 1970, were no longer able to meet the needs for skilled labor and increasingly employers turned to training black South Africans to meet their labor needs. At that point, the National Party government could either allow the economy to stagnate, or permit black South Africans to be trained for skilled and semi-skilled employment to meet the labor demands.

In 1960, only twenty-eight Africans obtained the matriculation exemption necessary for admission to university. The decade of the 1980s provided the backdrop to a demographic and managerial revolution in South Africa. As such, it has been characterized by a number of both mutually reinforcing and contradictory pressures as South Africa moved towards a negotiated, non-racial government.

Blacks, by 1984, had come to make up the majority of the matriculants (they would constitute 80 percent of matriculants by the year 2000) and, in 1990, they made up two thirds of the college students in teacher training college and one third of all university graduates. During the decade of the 1990s, black South Africans were the fastest growing segment of the country's professional, managerial, and business class. At the same time, the country faced monumental educational, housing, and health challenges. Affirmative Action had not even begun by then. By the turn of the century, black professionals would come to dominate the South African economy. The shift has been and will continue to be dramatic. The demographic shifts and economic trends were an essential component of the movement of both sides towards a negotiated settlement (See Picard, 2005 for a discussion of skills deficiencies).

The demographic shifts, described above, that had occurred in South Africa during the last decades, had increased size and influence of the urban black community, providing a constituency for the developing ANC/UDF alliance. Urbanization and resistance in the 1980s came to threaten the stability of the apartheid political system. In 1991, 43 percent of the black population was unemployed. By the turn of the century, underemployed and unemployed blacks remained around 40 percent of the population. Structural unemployment would be particularly hard on the post-Soweto generation, those aged 20-35. Because of the collapse of the educational system, most will never work and will constitute an increasingly angry sub-class of the urban population. (Picard 2006).

**The Slideaway Liberals[[5]](#footnote-5)**

**Early Liberalism and South Africa**

Even many advocates of liberal ideals have admitted that liberalism had weak roots in South Africa (Shain 2006). Different advocates over time had differing views of the concept and the extent to which it targeted the creation of a single social and political culture or protected different cultures from internal challenges and international influences. In understanding the evolution of liberal values we need to examine the empirical realites as liberalism played itself out over South Africa’s some 350 year history.

South African liberalism from the beginning “was paternalistic, segregationist, and somewhat ambiguous towards expanding rights to Africans” (Schneider 2003, p. 25). Historically, the goal of liberal reformers in South Africa (represented politically both by the liberal wing of the United Party under Smuts and the Liberal and Progressive Parties after 1948) was to eliminate the normative bias for maintaining apartheid and weaken the moral and ideological arguments in favor of it (Cloete 1991). This did not mean that some liberals were opposed to some forms of segregation. There were, as we have seen, two branches of liberalism prior to 1948, assimilation and segregation.

Within the colonial services of the Department of Native Affairs, there was a streak of liberalism and idealism. Before 1948, liberals ran for "native" seats in Parliament with the support of the ANC. Margaret Ballinger, a well-known liberal Native Representative, was said to have "close ties with, and the full support and trust of, the ANC" (Mouton 1997, p. 174). Prior to 1948, a few white liberals strongly influenced the ANC leadership (O’Meara 1996).

In the post war period, some liberals self-defined themselves as all those who opposed apartheid but were not communists (Welshe 2006). This definition was too broad. We would argue that liberals were those who, from a development perspective, were committed to a market economy and political pluralism, but recognized the need for a modicum of social service and human resource capacity building. Many liberals in South Africa did not, and do not, fall under that definition. The South African Liberal Party (1953-1968) radicalized after 1959 and included some who espoused violence and a more collectivist view of social development.

Paternalism often was linked to the “upliftment” of blacks, a phrase most often heard in South Africa as liberals approached political transformation. White liberals believed that "they [were] in the business of uplifting the blacks, and that it [was] entirely natural and proper that the uplifters should be in [a] better state than the upliftees" (Beckett 1985, p. 68). For liberals, except for a fringe in the Liberal Party, revolution was impossible. Only an incremental negotiated solution to apartheid, with some form of non-racial but limited franchise, could prevent society from either driving the National Party further to the right or degenerating into a totalitarian revolution.

There had long been a call by liberals in South Africa for forced moderation. Black South Africans, the message went, had to go slowly in order to avoid a conservative backlash. Compromise and patience were the code words for this image. As early as 1948, Roux (1964, p. 74) noted, paternalism "was the old story of liberalism in South Africa…The Natives must not put forward extreme demands: this would simply play into the hands of the reactionaries." What Benjamin Pogrund (1990, p. 38) would later call the “professional liberal” always historically called for moderation.

For reformers, the demand for modernization was defined by a spectrum that stretched from, on the one side, total white power to, on the other side, total black power, with infinite staging posts in between. Although each diminution of white power involved an equal increase in the power of blacks (Bekker & Humphries 1985). It was that middle, slightly conservative sector on the continuum that was targeted by South African liberals.

It has been argued that settler society in South Africa represented a liberal slice of the much broader conservative-socialist spectrum that was reflective of Europe. Forced moderation formed the basis of colonial style white paternalism in South Africa. "White South Africans are born paternal," a colleague told one of the authors in 1988 (Picard, Research Diary, October 10, 1990).[[6]](#footnote-6) Rian Malan (1990, p. 34), in his autobiography, defines this paternalism from his childhood. Speaking of the family servants of his childhood, he says:

I loved them all, indiscriminately: Lena, Johannes, Piet, James, Betty, Miriam, Miriam's children and teeming grandchildren, the other Piet, who worked next door, the waiters in the hotel down the road, John's boys - all of them.

A number of former officials, including Patrick Duncan, supported the creation of a non-racial Liberal Party in the 1950s that, while it never garnered any parliamentary seats, was the most radical of the “white” political movements in the post-war period. The Liberal Party, led throughout much of its short period of existence (1953-1968) by Duncan and the author Alan Paton, though it attracted some black followers, remained white dominated, "a mark of the acute ethnic imbalance of the...party" (Vigne 1977, p. 21).

From the early 1950s, the ANC and its allies were hostile to the Liberal Party calling it a white party and an "apologia for racism" (Stadler 1998, p. 354). This was so despite its increasing radicalism after 1960, its decision to disband in 1968, rather than become an all-white party as required by apartheid legislation, and the decision of a number of liberals to go underground and resort to violence against the apartheid state. As late as 1960, among rank and file white liberals, few knew much about the ANC (Vigne 1977). To many white liberals, the potential for a multi-racial South Africa was lost with the dissolution of the Liberal Party in 1968. Over the years, the term non-racial eclipsed multi-racial as the normal term for the external opposition in South Africa (Horowitz 1992).

**Voting for Progs and Thanking God for the Nats**

A group of United Party MPs, unhappy with the conservatism of the United Party, broke off in 1959 to form the Progressive Federal Party. Many of the stalwarts of the party, Helen Suzman, Colin Eglin, Zach de Beer, and Harry Oppenheimer, remained supporters of the party down to 1994. Helen Suzman, for many years was the sole representative in parliament of the Progressives (or “Progs” as they were nicknamed) until 1974 when six fellow liberals were elected Progressive Federal MPs.

After 1970, fewer and fewer white voters, either British or Afrikaans, voted for either the United Party or its eventual successor, the Democratic Party/Alliance. Those who did vote for a liberal white party, were said by South African pundits “to in their hearts be thankful for the apartheid policies of the National Party” (Picard, Research Diary, June 1, 1991). One stream of liberalism within the old United Party advocated political federalism, a position that was later to be taken up by the Progressive Federal Party and later, in the 1980s, by the Democratic Party and after 1990 by the National Party. Federalism would allow for "redrawing the internal boundaries and altering the political structure of the RSA itself, and then federating with other independent regions" (Marquard 1971, p. 66). To its critics, however, partition and federation were two halves of the same coin:

The only way to meet such opposition [to federalism] is in the first place to show why apartheid is not the economic and cultural protection that its adherents believe it to be, and, in the second place, to examine how federation could in fact promote the security and prosperity now vainly sought behind the walls of racial separation (Marquard 1971, p. 104).

The white liberal opposition in parliament was always a part of the political establishment and opposition; liberal white politics always had a clubhouse feel about it. Historically, there was also considerable business involvement in the white opposition parties. Mining magnate Harry Oppenheimer began his career as a United Party Member of Parliament. The leader of the Democratic Party in 1990, Zach de Beer, spent many years as an Anglo-American executive.

White opposition politics was long seen as part of the responsibility of Anglo-American Corporation[[7]](#footnote-7) senior executives, both because Anglo-American financed liberal organizations and because it saw the National Party as anti-business. A minority of whites had continued to support liberalism after the collapse of the United Party and the dissolution of the Liberal Party in 1961. Later, some remained loyal to the Democratic Party, successor to the Progressive Party, so long represented by Helen Suzman (Beinart 1994).

Despite liberal influences within the movement, liberals and the ANC had an uneasy relationship after the latter organization was banned in 1960. Though individual liberals, such as Helen Suzman and Frederick van zyl Slabbert, were respected for their principled stand against apartheid, for many within the ANC, liberal political movements were little more than watered down versions of the National Party. The National Party was simply more honest in its political views. For many in the ANC, there was a "sense in which liberalism is an alien tradition, which may be blamed for future problems, encouraging a retreat into nationalism and Africa-centrism" (Cartwright 1997, p. 85).

The views of the white Parliamentary opposition, whether the United Party in the early 1950s, the Progressive Party in the 1960s and 1970s, or the Democratic Party in the 1980s and beyond, have often been read as the view from white business. Liberals viewed the state as having a responsibility to “ensure pluralism and the maintenance of a stable environment for competing groups,” but should stay out of redistributive politics (Lester 1998, p. 246).

It was the conservatism of liberals in the 1960s and 1970s that caused many within the liberation movements to despise liberalism as an ideology. This was a continuing concern of many within the ANC throughout the period in exile. It remains a part of the mantra in the second decade of the 21st century, where many who have given up on the corruption of the Zuma administration still cannot bring themselves to vote for the Democratic Alliance. The dominance of the political resistance landscape by the ANC and its allies left little room for liberal activists in the negotiations process (Vigne 1997).

**The Absent Center**

Some long time liberals claimed that, particularly in the 1980s, there was a political intolerance of liberalism in South Africa. In part this was caused by the intimidation and violence of the period. To the ANC leadership, it was a particular failure of liberals, during the run up to negotiations, not to realize "how steadily apartheid was crumbling" as a result of ANC actions, though it is not clear what difference it would have made had the inevitability of change been recognized by liberals earlier (Wentzel 1995, p. 17).

After 1980, even moderate "anti-apartheid organizations hardly ever publicly challenged claims that those who organized boycotts and stayaways did so democratically" (Wentzel 1995, pp. 32-33). To its critics, some liberals came to tolerate the violence imposed on the townships by the UDF and even criminal behavior in the townships. Some liberals themselves appeared to tolerate and accept the illiberalism of the liberation movement that included "activists still molded in the Stalinist conception of press freedom" (Wentzel 1995, p. 17). Liberals, some conservative critics suggested, had come to slide away from their democratic roots.

Intolerance was linked to the struggle environment (so labeled by the UDF) of the 1980s. Out of the struggle came the “comrade culture” and the principles of the “National Democratic Revolution” (Gumede 1998b, p. 9). The ANC strategy in the 1980s had been made up of four elements, the armed struggle, sanctions and international isolation, underground internal action, and internal mass mobilization (Van zyl Slabbert 2000). Given this strategy, according to one newspaper account, "the greatest threat to South Africa's liberal democracy could come from inside the ANC" (Gumede 1998b, p. 9).

To its critics, the abandonment of liberalism by some liberals in South Africa, "was not just a matter of turning a blind eye to liberatory excesses; it was also a matter of excoriating those who did not do so, and even severely reprimanding those who merely queried the accuracy of some of the assertions that were made during the last decade" (Wentzel 1995, p. 262). The loss of liberal values, according to Wentzel, would do great harm to post-apartheid South Africa. One of the problems faced by South African liberals, both during the apartheid period and during the negotiations, was their tendency to split both because of ideology and personality. Liberals also sometimes alienated their constituents with a Burkian view[[8]](#footnote-8) of their responsibility (Mouton 1997).

Liberals in South Africa have long been incrementalists. As advocates of limited government, its leadership stressed the importance of incrementalism. To some, incrementalism had become an ideology of its own in South Africa. Incrementalists did not envision a comprehensive replacement of the status quo but rather a gradual transition, reflected in voluntary changes in behavior and continued space for business development and international commerce.

Liberals distinguished between positive and negative elements of the existing South African social and economic situation. It was change oriented, in that it advocated replacement on a piece-by-piece basis of those elements of society that were negative, but without losing the international linkages that are now called globalism. Incrementalism was seen as a process that would lead over time to a "new South Africa" without violent revolution or comprehensive policy change (Bernstein & Godsell 1998). In the end that largely happened.

A number of liberal NGOs supported limited government and decentralized authority. The role of the largely business supported non-governmental sector was important in the reform process and articulating debate on regionalism and pluralism. In order to achieve its goals, for example, the business backed Urban Foundation focused “mainly on effecting changes in state policy and eroding the political bureaucratic impediments which prevent the implementation of 'structural reform'" (Hendler 1985, pp. 35-37). In the negotiations, one liberal leader, Colin Eglin played an important back-stage mediating role between the National Party and the ANC and in crafting a liberal interim and final constitution (Van zyl Slabbert 2006b). For the most part, however, many liberals had just slipped away and had little influence over the negotiations process.

The liberal movement in South Africa had several goals according to Zac de Beer in a 1991 interview.[[9]](#footnote-9) These were: 1) The preservation of the free enterprise system in South Africa through reform; 2) The development of joint labor-management institutions that would facilitate development, create a common purpose without the divisive loss of productivity because of strikes; 3) The creation of a stable, non-racial political democracy in South Africa with moderate political parties of the center, right, and left; and 4) The creation of a large, vibrant multi-racial middle class. Overall, the party's primary concern was to find a pragmatic synthesis between competing capitalist and socialist ideologies in a post-apartheid South Africa (Interviews with De Beer, 1988, 1990 and 1991).

Critics of the ANC, particularly within the liberal community, had long questioned the democratic credentials of the ANC and, in general, "the growing intolerance on the left" (Kane-Burman 1990b, p. 6). At the local level, critics accused ANC local cells of "blatant...indoctrination, fervent anti-religious and racist propaganda and the advocating of violence" (Smith 1990, p. 3). By 1993, the term liberalism, as Desmond Tutu points out, had become almost a “swear word” in the New South Africa (Tutu 1999, p. 79). This despite the fact that the Democratic Party, through its representative to the negotiations, Colin Eglin, had a “real and lasting impact upon the negotiations” and helped lay the foundations for a “liberal democratic state” (Barber 1999, p. 300).

Many white liberal South Africans claim that the National Party after February 2 adopted almost all of the Democratic Party’s policies and that they were not given credit for their contribution to the negotiated settlement. There is some justification to this since the white opposition was always a part of the political establishment. The view of the white Parliamentary opposition, whether the United Party in the early 1950s, the Progressive Party in the 1960s or 1970s, the Democratic Party in the 1980s, or the Democratic Alliance in the years after 1994, was often read as the view from Anglo-American. Anglo's view of the future was “of a South Africa brought into the twentieth century world of modern industrial society, free of the constraints of apartheid, with a free labour market and greater flexibility for business” (Pallister, Stewart & Lepper 1988, p. 84).

**Charterists and the Africanist Challenge**

**An Organizational Mozaic**

Prior to World War II, the ANC was a moderate liberal organization favoring a gradual extension of the suffrage to "civilized" Africans with its membership "fearful both of the [red] blanket African from the reserves and the working class African in the towns, its methods [were] limited to peaceful petitions and deputations" (Fine & Davis 1990, p. 4). Historians usually portray the ANC as a conservative middle class organization until well after World War II, when "the old conservative middle class African National Congress was buried" by the radicalism and revolutionary views of the 1950s and 1960s (Seme 1991, p. 23).

A more accurate view of the ANC as an organization is that earlier views were layered into an organizational mosaic within the Congress movement, with later views and values woven into the structure, but not replacing the earlier values. There was a strong middle class constituency within the ANC throughout the apartheid period, down through the end of the negotiations process. The ANC had long reflected a "wide variety of thinkers and activists...[a] polyphonic voice of the liberation" (Pillay 1993, p. i).

The ANC Youth League, despite its increased militancy, also represented a largely middle class nationalism in the late 1940s. After 1949, the ANC as an organization expanded from a middle class interest group to a mass-based national organization and developed an urban, working class support base while retaining significant black middle class support. Much of the exile and post-1990 senior leadership of the organization came out of the ANC Youth League in the early 1940s and it was this leadership that defined ANC resistance strategies throughout the period in exile (1960 - 1990) (Benson 1966).

Attempts to repress the movement quickened after the National Party came to power in 1948. To the leadership of the apartheid state, the ANC monopoly over African opinion had to be broken. Repression occurred as part of the apartheid state's urban control policies. The period after the Second World War also saw increased racial tensions with the minority Indian population. There were very serious Anti-Indian riots in 1948.

Throughout the 1950s, the apartheid government attempted to expel Africans, Indians, and Coloureds from the central cities and from areas where they had long lived, such as Sophiatown and District Six. ANC mass resistance largely was directed at these increasingly restrictive policies despite growing differences between the three South African classified racial groups.

In the 1950s, liberalism as a value system still dominated within the ANC leadership and, in addition, tens of thousands of blacks joined the multi-racial Liberal Party (Johnson 2004). Beginning with the defiance campaign in 1952, South African social movements fundamentally shaped the nature of the urban transition (Swilling & Shubane 1991).With campaigns planned and led by former members of the ANC Youth League, the ANC began to use mass demonstrations to challenge the apartheid system. Demonstrations in the 1950s were not violence free. Gangs often "beat up" those who violated boycotts (Bernard & Twala 1994, p. 9).To the ANC Youth League, "the national liberation of Africans [would] be achieved by African (sic) themselves" (Meli 1988, p. 111).

The state's legal attack against the ANC began in 1952 when the government "named" 500 people under the Suppression of Communism Act and banned the Communist Party of South Africa. The first large-scale attempt to use the judicial process against the ANC occurred in 1956 with the so-called Treason Trial. The Treason Trial, which involved 156 ANC leaders, opened on December 19th, 1956 and, though the defendants were eventually acquitted, tied up the ANC leadership in a legal defense for over four years.

The Treason Trial was a watershed in terms of the development of an ANC organizational culture. Among other things, it cemented the relationship between the ANC and the Communist Party.[[10]](#footnote-10) It is also noteworthy that the term Africanism began to be used in the 1950s during the Treason Trial. This was the idea that the African majority had to predominate. Robert Sobukwe, it might be said, was the leading Africanist leader during this period (Benson 1966).

**The Freedom Charter and Urban Resistance**

On the 25th and 26th of June 1955, a “Congress of the People” took place in Kliptown, near Johannesburg, and approved a document submitted to the conference by the ANC declaring their advocacy for a non-racial government with full human and political rights. Adherents to the Freedom Charter, including the ANC and the UDF, are often referred to as Charterists. In contrast to the Africanist groups, the ANC committed itself to non-racialism, but also first clearly defined its policy toward what would later be called affirmative action in its 1956 Freedom Charter.[[11]](#footnote-11) The Freedom Charter called for non-racial parliamentary institutions, social democracy, and a mixed economy. According to Tom Lodge (2006b), the Freedom Charter, while vague and not overtly socialist, would only provide economic space for small enterprises competing in a limited market.

The Freedom Charter defined the ANC as an organization during the long years in exile and became the basis of its re-entry into open politics after 1990. The document raised two concerns among whites about the public sector: first, the ANC was committed to opening the state administration, police, and army to all people, and secondly, access to the bureaucracy by the majority would contribute to an identity between the state and the people (Fine & Davis 1990). After 1994, ANC policy was to seek access to the civil service through affirmative action schemes, rather than to carry out a more fundamental reform or capacity development of the institutional state.

ANC support remained largely urban during the period it was legal. The majority of the ANC membership came from the urban working class that had an important influence on the leadership of the organization (Mbeki 1992). For the ANC, there was a special urban role in the struggle against apartheid (Johns & Davis 1992). Some ANC leaders recognized the urban bias in the organization. By the time it was banned in 1960, the ANC had become the organization that best defined urban working class aspirations. These organizational efforts that were made in the 1950s would pay off after 1990 when the organization was un-banned.

During the period of its active political engagement in the 1950s, the ANC became dependent upon Indian and white contributions. By the 1960s, the ANC had developed a message of “mythological attributes, charismatic moral authority and messianic self-sacrificial leadership” (Lodge 2006b, pp. 84-85) and the ANC articulated a vision of “redemptive heroism [which] supplied inspiration and hope, ingredients in a moral authority that would endure for decades to come” (Lodge 2006b, p. 92).

Prior to 1960, however, appeal to rural Africans remained limited and the ANC/SACP (South African Communist Party) alliance made little headway in confronting the special problems of rural, largely homeland blacks, both because of the structural separation of the homelands and because the ANC ignored the rural areas of the country. Both before and after it’s banning, the ANC as an organization established little presence or influence in the rural areas with the partial exception of the Transkei and the Eastern Cape. The movement had provided little political support for the rural revolts of the 1950s (McKinley 1997a).As Govan Mbeki (1992, p. 56) noted, despite the outbreak of peasant revolts, neither the ANC nor the Communist Party paid any "attention to the organization of the peasants" prior to their banning.

By 1958, the state had rooted out and banished the few ANC sympathizers in the rural areas and replaced traditional leaders sympathetic to the ANC with pro-government and pro-homeland chiefs. Despite the pockets of urban support, "evidence could be marshaled to show that African political consciousness was not in fact particularly high [in the] countrywide, and that the limits of African tolerance had been far from reached" during the apartheid period (Gerhart 1978, p. 233). Rural revolt would not be spontaneous. Down to its un-banning in 1990, the ANC presence in the rural areas remained limited.

**Early Urban Resistance and Africanist Pressures**

The Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), formed in 1959, advocated an Afro-centric or black consciousness worldview, later taken up by Steve Biko and the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s. N. C. Manganyi, a clinical psychologist defined black consciousness. He said, "Black consciousness should be understood to mean that there is mutuality of knowledge with respect to the 'totality' of impressions, thoughts and feelings of all black people" (Kotze 1975, p. 80). Kotze (1975, p. 80) elaborates by saying that, "Blacks are conscious of ‘mutual suffering’, of their ‘cultural heritage’, and Black consciousness is expressive of a new creative responsibility and self‑improvement in numerous fields ‑ not only the political." According to Kotze (1975 pp. 39-40), speaking of both the PAC and later black consciousness groups:

The first political organizations in South African history [tried] consistently to employ voluntary associations to build a following and achieve their objectives…Their overriding objectives of Black unity and self‑realisation in various fields led them to realise that they would only succeed if their activities permeated to all levels of Black society.

Pan Africanists and black consciousness leaders did not like the liberal non-racialism of the ANC. In May of 1959, Robert Sobukwe “delivered a biting attack on liberals, thereby venting the deep-seated anger in some black circles about the historical role of whites…in the black struggle” (Pogrund 1990, p. 103). However, despite Sobukwe’s attack, relationships were generally good between PAC and the Liberal Party led by the novelist Alan Paton. There was “a working relationship of mutual respect”(Pogrund 1990, p. 145). Before the PAC was banned, there was some potential for an eventual amalgamation of the PAC and the Liberal Party. It was the non-racial ANC, rather than the Africanist PAC, which later developed a confrontational attitude toward liberals.

The Black Consciousness movement that developed later in South Africa under the leadership of various Africanist organizations, thus

arose from a need for a national political movement which would concentrate on self‑help development efforts, rather than power‑oriented action. In BPC [Black Peoples Convention][[12]](#footnote-12) terminology the Blacks are referred to as a "community" and never a "society": thus emphasis is on the subjugation of the interests of the individual to those of his fellow‑Blacks, and on mutual assistance and obligations (Pogrund 1990, p. 61).

Prior to the Soweto uprising in 1976, there was virtually no violent resistance in South Africa's urban townships targeting apartheid, though there were expressions of anger in the townships going back to the Sharpeville massacre. Throughout most of the decade of the 1970s,

...the government could adopt neither a strategy of thoroughgoing reform nor a policy of unmitigated repression. This strategic indecisiveness on the part of the state has been one of the most significant factors which have distinguished the development of black resistance movements in the 1970s from those in the two preceding decades (Lodge 1983, p. 326).

The social and political tension of this time is described by Ronald Bethlehem (1988, p. 21) in the following terms: “It was as if the country was moving towards a climax of disaster, and so in a sense it was, for this pessimistic view was vindicated in the events surrounding Sharpeville and in South Africa's eventual expulsion/withdrawal from the Commonwealth.”

The construction of an internal political underground, according to Govan Mbeki (1996), began in the early 1970s. At the grassroots level in the townships, the ANC began to prepare for clandestine urban resistance as early as the late 1950s. What came to be called the "M-Plan," developed by Nelson Mandela, established a cell system designed to protect the organization under conditions of illegality. This grassroots system came to life in the 1980s urban revolt and formed the basis of the civics movement that in large part brought the ANC to political power. Despite the weakness of the ANC in the rural areas, the origins of the shift to violence date back to the rural conflicts in the late 1950s, where increasingly activists concluded that peaceful and legal methods of protest were impotent while “crude violence” often resulted in success (Hooper 1960, p. 312).

By 1975, even prior to the Soweto uprising, the ANC had "re-established its presence inside the country," working through its allies in the illegal trade unions, the religious organizations, and legal opposition movements (Mbeki 1996, p. 38). The Soweto riots of 1976 began a period of urban discontent and revolt that escalated after 1983 to a full-blown revolt against apartheid. During the Soweto crisis, ANC leaflets appeared in the township encouraging resistance to the government. There was also some evidence of an ANC underground presence during the Soweto revolt (Massie 1997).

The ANC began to reassert itself internationally in the 1970s and, after the 1976 Soweto Uprising and the death of Steve Biko, it became the preeminent South African exile movement (Serfontein 1975). After the Soweto uprising, 4,000 people left South Africa and became available to the liberation movements (Johns & Davis 1991). Most of these eventually joined the ANC (Barber 1999). This infusion of new blood resulted in an increase in the ANC’s activity, both diplomatically and militarily, and in the size of its bureaucracy in exile.

In terms of recruitment and membership, an important difference between the homeland‑based parties, and political organizations like the ANC, PAC, and later the South African Students Organization (SASO) and BPC, was that "the latter, [essentially the underground organizations] through their intention to penetrate voluntary Black organizations and establish new ones, are able to draw on a variety of interest groups for recruitment purposes" (Kotze 1975, p. 111). In terms of ideology, "The existential nature [of] Black consciousness is a dominant feature, and what cohesion the movement has can be attributed to the common experience of its adherents in White‑ruled South Africa, and not to a common agreement on the nature and function of ‘Black culture’, on the compatibility or not of communalism and economic development, and on social norms and values ‑ to mention some prominent issues" (Kotze 197a, p. 80).

 There was a wide gulf strategically between the ANC, the PAC, and later the BPC and the homeland parties that also all had a strong appeal to educated middle class black South Africans. Ideologically, the difference between homeland parties and outlawed groups after 1960 was less than it appeared to some. According to Kotze (1975, pp. 41-42):

This is clear from the homeland parties' willingness to work within the framework of separate development (although with certain misgivings), their emphasis on African unity, the latent africanism in their ranks, and the relative esteem in which they hold banned ANC and PAC leaders. Whereas they differ in respect of each of these matters with BPC and SASO their greatly similar social and economic objectives makes future rapprochement a possibility.

**The South African Communist Party and the**

**Nature of the Mass Democratic Movement**

**The Nature of the Front**

From its beginning in 1912, the ANC saw itself as "an African 'Parliament' inclusive of all political persuasions united in common opposition to discrimination and apartheid" (Johns and Davis 1991, p. 310). This led to a sense of pride and satisfaction within the organization. As one insider noted in a public event in the 1950s, "Listening [to the speeches] I realized again the grandeur and prestige of the African National Congress" (Joseph 1986, p. 95). The ANC retained this view of itself as a national front down to the 1994 non-racial elections.

Even in its early years as a legal organization, press reports sometimes portrayed the ANC as anti-liberal and "highly secretive, authoritarian, and deeply influenced by the SACP[[13]](#footnote-13) [South African Communist Party]" (Rantete 1998, p. 31). Despite the ANC’s reputation for non-violence, it is worth noting that demonstrations in the 1950s were not violence free. By the time it was proscribed in 1961, the ANC had become a secret society, with a centralized and autocratic leadership.

Historically, both Christian and socialist movements in South Africa supported black South African aspirations. Nowhere has support for black aspirations been stronger than in the SACP. The relationship between defined class interests and racial solidarity has never been easy in South Africa (Roux 1964). The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) started off by supporting white workers in the early 1920s and in effect had to choose between white workers and black workers. This was a problem for socialists more generally during the inter-war period.

Shortly after the Rand strike of 1922, the CPSA cast its lot with the black majority while the more conservative Labour Party maintained its support for white workers. In 1924, the SACP opened its membership to all races (Barber 1999). However, in spite of a position from the 1930s that working class interests were one, the CPSA was never able to make that bridge between workers of different racial or ethnic groups.

It is important to understand the historical role that the CPSA played in South Africa and its relationship with the ANC movement. There were always important differences between the ANC and the Communist Party. Working class solidarity within the CPSA contrasted with that of the ANC which "failed to recognise the political opportunity of establishing a trade union under Congress protection" (Lodge 1983, p. 10). The more conservative ANC continued to encourage African entrepreneurship as a means to African advancement (Kotze 1975).

Communists in the inter-war period tried to apply a Leninist model to South Africa. The South African economy was an example of "an imperialist economic system, with the exploiter class located partly in South African business, partly in overseas bodies which financed South African economic development, and partly in the white workers whose privileged position in the economy gave them a parasitic relationship to the business interests" (Davenport 1977, p. 373).

In large part, the contemporary influence of the SACP within the ANC and its popularity among some blacks had its origins in the CPSA’s political and educational work in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly in its support for the Night School Movement to promote popular education. White socialists in the Communist Party became strongly associated with the night school system, an involvement that remained strong until the late 1940s, when the party leadership, at the orders of the Comintern, shifted to a vanguard party apparatus.

In the 1930s, Moscow dictated that the CPSA support the creation of a "native republic" in at least part of South Africa and the CPSA sought support for this idea from the white electorate. Partly for this reason, until after World War II, white elections were still important both to the ANC and the CPSA (Slovo 1996). Whites in the CPSA, influenced by white Labour Party activists in the 1930s, sought state involvement in economic and social planning and were influenced by ideas of social engineering (Venter 1997).

By the early 1940s, the CPSA had become deeply involved in grassroots community activities.It saw itself during this period within the mainstream of white politics albeit on the left. During World War II, the CPSA supported the allies in World War II after Hitler’s invasion of Russia. By 1945, the CPSA was promoting closer ties with the ANC and the CPSA urged its members to help build the ANC into the primary organization of the African people (Callinicos 1990, pp. 101-107).The Communist Party of South Africa participated in segregated local government bodies throughout the 1940s (Bernstein 1999).

Intellectually, the South African paradigm of social conflict, as it evolved among Communists in the inter-war period, had to "be complemented by an Hegelian-Marxian view of change as an internally generated process of conflict and contradiction between opposites. Much change is abrupt, qualitative and revolutionary"(Van den Berghe 1977, p. 278). Prior to World War II, Communists fought what they saw to be fascist tendencies amongst white workers. During this period, an all-white People's Front was created and, at various times, tacit support was offered to the Labour Party and other working class elements.

**Ruth First and contractions within the South African Communist Movement**

Ruth First served as representative of white middle class members of the CPSA and later the SACP. In the late 1950s, she worked as a radical journalist documenting conditions of black poverty and repression, particularly in rural South Africa. Her perspective was both that of a Communist Party activist and of "an educated white woman who was both an observer of the life around her and a social participant in that which she observed” (Pinnock 1997, p. 28).

The daughter of two life-long Communists, she "hated dogma and empty displays of revolutionary fervour"(Slovo 1997, p. 23). She hated "apparatchiks"[[14]](#footnote-14) and publicly opposed the SACP on a variety of issues. According to her daughter, its was First's "sharp tongue...[which] had so often gotten her into trouble in the movement to which she had dedicated her life" (Slovo 1997, p. 23). According to her husband, SACP leader Joe Slovo, "Ruth's kind of 'deviationism' was an important obstacle to the resurgence of blind cult worship...in the socialist movement." (Slovo 1996, p.39).

Ruth First's biography was similar to many of those who held membership in the SACP in the 1950s. She came out of a secular Jewish background. Both of her parents (and her husband, Joe Slovo) had migrated from the Baltic States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1950s, she was a mother, a privileged South African white, and a high profile activist in the Communist Party.  Her membership in the movement, to quote from a film about her life, kept her in "a world apart" (Slovo 1996, p. 39).[[15]](#footnote-15)

Rather than abstract theories, First documented social forces and the institutional forms that those social forces took. First wanted to know "how institutions worked, who they were composed of, where the power lay, who benefited from them and how they impacted upon individuals." (Slovo, G 1997, p. 39. Her independence and non-conformity separated Ruth First from many of her contemporaries, including her husband Joe Slovo, during the 1950s and 1960s. Though there was a resistance to new ideas within the underground movement, Ruth First was known for her openness. During this period, there were many in the movement who found her constant search for new ideas very threatening. (Van den Berghe, 1977).

The mental terror of a South African prison was graphically portrayed in Ruth First’s book, *117 Days*. In prison, First said, "I could now see unraveled the campaign of attack against me. Solitary confinement for an indeterminate period was the basic requirement" (First 2009,pp. 135-136). As did many, shortly after her release from prison, she went into exile, she became an academic and author, writing several books on South Africa, Namibia, Libya, and on African politics and international relations.

For First, exile was a "disillusioning experience. She found that for many of those who had left South Africa the dynamics of an exile life had taken over--the posturing, the politicking, even a kind of lethargy and lack of urgency" (Clingman 1998, p. 382). In 1970, she moved to Mozambique as Director of Research in the Institute of African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. As was the case with so many activists during this period, she was assassinated, by a parcel bomb on August 17, 1982.

**Vanguardism and the Soviet Union**

Observers have long been puzzled about the relationship between the ANC and the SACP. The alliance between the ANC and the SACP was important since it was "a handful of white communists who befriended Africans over the years that [accounts] to a large extent [for] the refusal of so many African Leaders to turn racialist" (Benson 1966, p. 11). This is a loyalty that continued after 1994, when whites in the South Africa government (many of them members of the SACP) were represented in the new Government far outside of the white electoral support for the ANC.

Even when there was the closest cooperation between the ANC and the SACP, “invocations of the vocabulary of Bolshevik bureaucracy by the ANC’s senior officials, should be understood as an idealized rather than actual description of the ANC’s inner life” (Lodge 2003 p. 56). Increasingly, after 1960, many Africans saw the SACP as moving to control the ANC. As the ANC moved into exile, the rift between Africans and the other parts of the ANC alliance, and especially the SACP, began to reopen. Similarly, there was a great deal of distrust and rivalry between white liberals and Communists.

During the vanguard period (1948-1960), membership in the CPSA was by invitation only. Because of government attempts to suppress the movement after 1950, "[t]hey learned conspiracy in those early years" (Frankel 1999, p. 38). All gatherings were in secret, no meeting was ever pre-advertised, or held in the same place twice running (Pinnock 1997). To conservative critics, when the CPSA was banned in 1950, Communists in the Congress of Democrats (successor to the Communist Party) "allegedly conspired to highjack the African liberation struggle" (Fredrickson 1995, p. 283).

In 1949, the CPSA had about 2,000 members. Though the majority were African, the leadership was overwhelmingly made up of whites, Indians, and Coloureds (Barber 1999). The CPSA, when it was banned in June of 1950, was by far the most inter-racial of all of South Africa's political organizations (Venter 1997). Throughout the 1950s, white communists and former communists continued to draw many Africans in the movement (the ANC) and towards "a commitment to a multi-racial society" (Frankel 1999, p. 314). The ideology that developed within the ANC "arose from the fact that the brain trust of the movement was its Communist segment--the most talented ANC members were usually members of the SACP or those who associated themselves with it" (Venter 1997, p. 93).

In the 1950s and 1960s, a section of the ANC, influenced in part by the CPSA/Congress of Democrats (a white movement within Congress that became a surrogate for the communist party), got locked into the mindset of the ideology of the then Soviet Union. This mindset prevented many from the ability to innovate (Gevisser 2009a). At the core of the ideology of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was the idea of “world socialism” (globalism) or the “spark” of vanguardism which defined “democratic socialism,” the need for tight central control of the process of policymaking. Within a few years, however, some members of the SACP leadership in exile were able to separate the international politics of the Soviet Union from the domestic realities of politics within South Africa and within the Southern Africa region.

March 21, 1960, the day of the “Sharpeville massacre,” is remembered both as a tragic day and as a turning point for South Africa. The police opened fire on the crowd in Sharpville during a demonstration against Pass laws organized by the PAC. The government declared a state of emergency a few days later and the ANC and PAC, the two largest black opposition groups, would be banned. On April 8, 1960, the South African government declared the ANC and the PAC unlawful organizations. The banning of ANC and the PAC (which had broken away from the ANC in 1959) forced them underground (Benson 1966). Shortly thereafter, the Nationalist movements turned to violent resistance.

Since 1990, the CPSA/SACP has been somewhat elusive about its past and has said very little about the “whys” of involvement in and influence over the ANC (Slovo 1997). The SACP, in the early 1960s, developed an elaborate policy document, *The Road to South African Freedom* (South African Communist Party 1963), approved by its sixth conference. The key element of the document was the analysis of South Africa in terms of "internal colonialism", or "colonialism of a special type" (Clingman 1998, p. 284). These concepts and the two-stage theory of revolution led to a marriage of nationalism with socialism that remained the basis of SACP support for the ANC throughout the years in exile and into the post-apartheid period (Fine & Davis 1990).We will examine the ANC in exile in chapter nine.

**Communists and Race**

The formation of the South African Communist Party in the 1920s resulted in a “communist ideology sometimes [that] merely cloaked white paternalism” (Lodge 2006b, p. 36). Whites supporting the ANC were always conscious that they were "better off" with their "pink skin" (Joseph 1986, p. 84).Whites, even white Communists, also often were isolated from the reality of racial division. White South Africans who joined the Communist Party had been exposed to "every available motif in the repertoire of racial stereotype" some of which influenced their ideology and personal feelings (Clingman 1998, p. 45). White Communists also continued to enjoy a privileged life style despite their opposition to the regime.

In 1948, Edward Roux, a prominent white supporter, argued that non-Europeans were discriminated against because they were backward and this backwardness accounted for the conservatism of many African organizations such as the ANC. As long time South African Communist leader Joe Slovo pointed out, when he was growing up, "We knew nothing at all about the black ghettos; they seemed to be in another world whose function was to belch servants" (Slovo 1995, p. 14).

Many left-wing whites accepted Roux’s premise that Africans were "backward" and hoped that, as Africans "developed" and urbanized, they would form organizations that would resist discrimination and authoritarianism” (Roux 1964, p. 324).As one white Communist, Betty du Toit, put it, "I was...very racist...oh yes, very...that was my biggest problem; and I knew that I had to fight it, even when I was a member of the Communist Party" (as quoted in Bernstein 1994, p. 57). Joe Slovo (1995, p. 22) has written, "I well remember the discomfort I felt when I found myself seated between black youths."

There was paternalism among many on the left that came out of the "strange mix of intimacy and inequity that characterized the nature of South African domestic labour [in] a pattern familiar to many left and liberal [white] homes"(Clingham 2000, p. 171). Ruth First's parents, both of whom were Communists, always hired a white nursemaid from London to look after baby Ruth. According to her mother, their children "always had a white nurse...we didn't have coloured people in the house...whites were better educated" (Pinnock 1997, p.6).

Some South African socialists and communists "combined a passionate devotion to the Soviet Union" with an attitude of "'a kaffir remains a kaffir'…and [had] a vicious racism towards the majority of the South African population" (Slovo 1995, p. 22). Critics of the SACP have noted anti-black feelings among some members throught its history. For some left of center whites, sympathetic to the Mass Democratic Movement and the ANC, elements of this paternalistic stereotype still survive. Reaction by white ex-communists and others on the left to the vagaries of the Zuma administration have revived some to this attitude into the second decade of the twenty first century.

Prior to 1960, members of the SACP were able to "sustain surprisingly bourgeois manifestations" and an upper middle class life style, along with their radicalism (Clingman 1998, p. 118). The lawyer, Bram Fischer, combined his activism with a lucrative law practice, often representing the large Southern African mining interests. Lavish parties on the weekends brought white socialists together with black activists, discussing politics and revolution while drinking wine around the Fischer swimming pool.

White South Africans in the SACP had little day-to-day contact with Africans other than a limited spectrum within the leadership of the ANC. Ruth First noted, speaking of her mother, "I wonder what it was that fueled her stern contempt of them [blacks]" (Pinnock 1997, p. 78). A more objective view suggests that Communists in the ANC operated from a variety of motives and came to take divergent positions on issues ranging from racial perceptions, to the use of violence and to the shift to negotiations. By 1990, for many activists, the SACP label came to have little meaning in an ideological sense.

**The Continuity and Limits of Rural Resistance**

**Education Policy and Land issues**

Between 1948 and the early 1960s, there were a number of widespread peasant revolts in the South African countryside. In a number of locations, rural Africans protested against agricultural reforms and "against the enclosure of their grazing grounds and cattle culling by the Government" (Desmond 1971, p. 214). Rural dwellers continued to rely on subsistence agriculture, the peasant mode of production, up until the mid-1960s. Though individual incidents were intense, they were localized to specific areas of the country.

In the late 1940s and 1950s, social and political unrest increased in the rural areas of South Africa. State intervention in 1955 caused distress, in particular with regards to the rural schools and specifically to changes in education policy. Outside of the urban areas, a more oppressive local administration raised taxes, and the introduction of Bantu Education were both powerful and explosive factors that stimulated revolt throughout South Africa. These factors created a generalized economic hardship in rural South Africa that led to increased levels of rural violence. Had rural and urban movements "been more closely articulated the challenge to authority might have been formidable" (Lodge 1983, p. 128).

Throughout the 1950s, among the Chiefs who resisted were the Bahurutse in Zeerust and Sekhukhune and the Basotho chief at Witzieshoek (Desmond 1971). Throughout the 1950s,

[a]s the tentacles of apartheid penetrated to every level of African society, African protest against the government steadily mounted. In rural areas opposition to apartheid measures like the Bantu Authorities Act flared into open revolt. There was prolonged violence in the Hurutshe Reserve in the western Transvaal, in Sekkukhuneland and in Pondol­and (Meredith 1988, p. 78).

Prior to 1960, there were also major rebellions in Sekhukuneland in the Northern Transvaal, in Nqutu, in Pondoland and Tembuland in the Eastern Cape, and in the Zeerust and the Marico district of the Northern Cape and Western Transvaal. In the Northern Transvaal reserve areas,

the Sekhukhune people resisted the imposition of the Tribal Authority system from the outset. Most of the chiefs sided with their people and the replanning and resettlement of the region has still not been carried out. Sekhukhuniland is inhabited by people of the Bapedi and the Bakone who are intermingled with sub-chiefs from both tribes (Desmond 1971, p. 175).

The rebellions, going all the way back to the Bambata rebellion of 1906, also suggested a continuity of responses to South African rule that transcend the ascendancy of the Nationalist Party and its policy of apartheid. The long-term major unrest in the Sekhuhkuneland Reserve in the Northern Transvaal throughout the 1950s brought a "reign of terror" sparked off by the introduction of the Bantu authorities and Government cattle‑culling schemes (Kotze 1975, pp. 14-15).

The development of resistance to government policy in the Zoutpansberg, Sekhukuneland, and Witzieshoek regions of the Northern Transvaal were the first of a number of examples of rural resistance in the South African reserves/homelands that would continue to characterize African response to bureaucratic control between 1951 and the mid-1970's. These rebellions, both remind one of the opposition to apartheid in rural South Africa and of the inability of the ANC to harness those revolts.

The Sekhukhuneland revolt played a historical role in the unrest that developed in the rural heartland of the Bapedi area. The area that later became Lebowa, one of South Africa’s most rural homelands, played a special role in the linkage between rural and urban protest that evolved after 1976. In that region, the sparks that started in the urban townships generated rebellion in the rural areas (Lodge & Nasson 1991). Rural dwellers continued to resist in the Northern Transvaal down to the early 1970s.

**Reference Books, Gender and Agriculture**

Between 1956 and 1959, there was serious unrest in the Bahurutshe Reserve in the Zeerust area of the Western Transvaal. In March of 1958, police opened fire on a crowd outside of the Bantu Commissioner's office at Schoonoord in the Northern Transvaal. Serious unrest continued for about a year with the initial cause being the issuing of reference (pass) books to women. Two bitterly antagonistic factions developed in the reserve: supporters of chiefs who were helping to implement government policy, and their opponents (Kotze 1975). At Bafurutse there was "...heroic resistance to Government measures to further apartheid policies. The conflict first came into the open in the mid-1950s... The Government then mounted a campaign of intimidation against the people" (Desmond 1964, p. 160).[[16]](#footnote-16)

A major rural rebellion occurred at Harding, Natal on July 21, 1959 at an agricultural meeting on settlement and conservation measures. Several factors contributed to the episode: "closer settlement..., increases in taxation, influx control, and the collaboration of the local headman with the authorities (Lodge 1983, p. 149). Natal was to see little peace from the 1950s to the 1990s.

In the Transkei, there was almost continual unreset throughout the region in the late 1950s and early 1960s. These initially developed as a result of the introduction of Bantu authorities, cattle‑ culling, and increased taxation. Pro‑government chiefs were attacked and murdered and property was destroyed (Kotze 1975, p. 15). There was significant unrest in Pondoland as well where

resentment against the role of chiefs as 'allies' of the white government was widespread. In Pondoland dissent flared into open rebellion. Police and troops had to be used to crush an underground resistance movement. Emergency regulations were introduced empowering police to detain suspects without trial and impose tight control over public meetings (Meredith 1988 p. 94).

Two years later, the peasant revolts ended and "[o]nly in the remoteness of Pondoland did a movement of peasant revolt continue, and this too was thoroughly crushed by 1961" (Johnson 1977, p. 19). The Pondoland Revolt reflected widespread dissatisfac­tion in the Transkei over government magistrates and government appointed chiefs. As Mary Benson (1966, p. 233) pointed out,

in Pondoland, in the Transkei area, bitter hatred for Government-supporting chiefs had been inflamed by increased taxation and the ways in which land betterment schemes were enforced. In a virtual uprising eight of these chiefs and their councilors were murdered - as well as seventeen commoners - and huts were burned.

The Fighting and the rebellion sometimes approached the levels of an armed revolt. Resistance in the Transkei was linked to exile groups and in the Transkei, "Poqo was suspected of the murder of a tribal headman and of attacks on the Government-supporting Chief, Kaiser Matanzima, whose accession to power caused upheavals, which police, aided by his impis, subdued" (Benson 1966, p. 242). In the early 1960s, "Chiefs and headmen who collaborated with the Government were assaulted, and some murdered. Tribal huts were burnt down, and police and officials attacked. Power pylons, post offices, railways, and other places were dynamited" (Hepple 1967, p. 160).

Opponents of Bantu authorities began to create new systems of administration including informal peoples' courts (Mbeki 1964). The ANC leaders who came from the Transkei were deeply affected by the rural rebellion that broke out there in 1960 (Ellis & Sechaba 1992). Government, to punish the revolutionaries, established bush courts during the uprising in the Transkei. In these bush courts, charges on various pretexts could be brought up against rebellious farmers. The real goal, according to Govan Mbeki (1964), was to break their opposition to government land controls.

Similar patterns developed in most homeland areas plagued by urban squalor where small town and peri-urban youths challenged the tainted traditionally based homeland regimes. (This was particularly common in Bophthatswana, parts of Kwa Zulu, and Ciskei). As Mark Swilling (1988a, p. 15) notes:

 The coercive ap­paratuses governed by the logic of maintain­ing 'law and order'; the traditional apartheid organs epitomized by the ailing Department of Co-operation and Development; some of the independent Bantustans which are resisting threats to their sovereignty (e.g. Bophuthatswana); and the reformist apparatuses concerned with the restructuring of the political economy.... The State Security Council seems to preside over the points of intersection of these axes....

In the 1980s, a further revolt in the Northern Transvaal was caused in part by the perceived widespread collapse of the moral authority of Lebowa's traditional chiefs, the rising consciousness of the many unemployed youth of Lebowa, six years of drought, a fiscal crisis in the homeland administration, a decline in the purchasing power of agricultural workers and producers, and an usurpation of the role of witch-hunters by youth. The causes and leadership of the revolt were not different from that which occurred in the urban areas of South Africa. In the end, the rural revolts could be put down. However, merged with and complementing the township revolts, the rural challenge influenced the transformation process.

**Conclusion**

Before 1960, the ANC was a moderate liberal organization that would not take action before the leadership developed a consensus within its diverse membership. This was a period when the organization was barely legal, though thoroughly harassed by the regime. For all intents and purposes, liberal political organizations had abandoned blacks in South Africa and the ANC, which was still very much a liberal advocate all of those opposed to apartheid rule.

Though exile changed the organization, traditional, Marxist, and international liberal norms and values continued to influence the ANC during and after the exile period. The leadership style and organizational structures of the ANC evolved as a result of the long, clandestine, and violent conflict against apartheid. However, the internal debates about non-racialism, Africanism, socialism, and what relationship the ANC should develop with liberal political movements remained largely unchanged. The issues would remain into the post-apartheid period.

The ANC has had an ideology that at least some of its adherents promoted, a politics of redemptive liberation drawn from Franz Fanon and Che Guevara (Gevisser 2009a). Interestingly, this resistance was embedded in the less than complete rural revolts that had characterized South Africa since before the Union. Despite the continuation of rural distubences, albeit at a low grade level, there has been little examination of these events within the broader context of negotiation and transition.

1. The two best sources (both used in this book), are the various editions (1975-1994) and under somewhat different names of the *Race Relations Survey* of the South Africa Institute of Race Relations published annually in Johannesburg, the various statistics published by Stats SA, published the South African Bureau of Statistics are also important. Stats SA publishes statistics on all matter of things annually, usually in July of each year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To Klaaste reforming the electoral process to make it non-racial was not enough. South Africa was incomplete as a nation. A nationalism based on African values was necessary to ensure a future democracy in South Africa, Kane-Berman 1990b. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. While all cities are divided on class and income lines, the South African situation is unique in that those with low incomes had to travel very long distances. Travel costs, which had been subsidized by the state, could be as long as two or three hours, McCall 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The urbanization process that occurred in spite of influx control and job reservations laws. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Taken from Wentzel 1995. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. An English speaking South African academic, Richard Humphries made this comment. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The large multi-national mining corporation controlled by the Oppenheimer family for many years. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Edmond Burke, the eighteenth century conservative leader believed that political leaders should not reflect their constituency’s views but use their own best judgment. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. De Beer was generous of his time and granted Picard several interviews over the period 1988 and 1992. Recorded in Picard’s research diary on August 17, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For a first hand discussion of this see Joseph 1998. The book was originally published in London in 1963. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sometimes referred to as the Kliptown Document. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The Black Peoples Convention was one of the several Black Consciousness Groups founded and influenced by Steve Biko. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. When the Communist Party was legal, before 1950, the party’s name was the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA). After the party went underground and into exile, the name changed to South African Communist Party (SACP). The latter name continued in use after it was legalized in 1990 and down to the present day. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The Russian term for a Communist Party Bureaucrat, often used in a negative sense. Slovo 1997, p. 240. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. *A World Apart*, a 1988 film. The script was written by Shawn Slovo, another of Ruth and Joe Slovo’s daughters. Their other daughter, Gillian (Slovo, G 1997) wrote a family history. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See also Hooper 1960 & Mbeki 1964, p. 114 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)