

History of the African National Congress

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This article covers the history of the African National Congress, the current ruling party in the Parliament of South Africa.

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Origins

Formed initially on 8 January 1912 by John Dube, Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Sol Plaatje along with chiefs, people's representatives, and church organizations, and other prominent individuals to bring all Africans together as one people to defend their rights and freedoms, the ANC from its inception represented both traditional and modern elements, from tribal chiefs to church and community bodies and educated black professionals, though women were only admitted as affiliate members from 1931 and as full members in 1943.

The formation of the ANC Youth League in 1944 by Anton Lembede heralded a new generation committed to building non-violent mass action against the legal underpinnings of the white minority's supremacy.

In 1946 the ANC allied with the South African Communist Party in assisting in the formation of the South African Mine Workers' Union. After the miners strike became a general strike, the ANC's President General Alfred Bitini Xuma along with delegates of the South African Indian Congress at the 1946 session of the United Nations General Assembly where the treatment of Indians in South Africa was raised by the Government of India. Together, they raised the issue of the brutal police brutality against the miners strike and the wider struggle for equality in South Africa.^[1] The ANC also worked with the Natal Indian Congress and Transvaal Indian Congress.

Opposition to Apartheid

The return of an Afrikaner-led National Party government by the overwhelmingly white electorate in 1948 signaled the advent of the policy of Apartheid. During the 1950s, non-whites were removed from electoral rolls, residence and mobility laws were tightened and political activities restricted.

In June 1952, the ANC joined with other anti-Apartheid organizations in a Defiance Campaign against the restriction of political, labour and residential rights, during which protesters deliberately violated oppressive laws, following the example of Mahatma Gandhi's passive resistance in KwaZulu-Natal and in India. The campaign was called off in April 1953 after new laws prohibiting protest meetings were passed.

In June 1955 the Congress of the People, organised by the ANC and Indian, Coloured and White organizations at Kliptown near Johannesburg, adopted the Freedom Charter, henceforth the fundamental document of the anti-Apartheid struggle with its demand for equal rights for all regardless of race. As opposition to the regime's policies continued, 156 leading members of the ANC and allied organisations were arrested in 1956; the resulting "Treason Trial" ended with their acquittal five years later.

The ANC first called for an academic boycott of South Africa in protest of its Apartheid policies in 1958 in Ghana.

The call was repeated the following year in London.^[2]

In 1959 a number of members broke away from the ANC because they objected to the ANC's reorientation from African nationalist policies. They formed the rival Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), led by Robert Sobukwe.

Protest and banning

The ANC planned a campaign against the Pass Laws, which required blacks to carry an identity card at all times to justify their presence in White areas, to begin on 31 March 1960. The PAC pre-empted the ANC by holding unarmed protests 10 days earlier, during which 69 protesters were killed and 180 injured by police fire in what became known as the Sharpeville massacre.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, both organisations were banned from political activity. International opposition to the regime increased throughout the 1950s and 1960s, fueled by the growing number of newly independent nations, the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Britain and the civil rights movement in the United States. In 1960, the leader of the ANC, Albert Luthuli, won the Nobel Peace Prize, a feat that would be repeated in 1993 by the next leader of the ANC, Nelson Mandela, and F.W. de Klerk jointly, for their actions in helping to negotiate peaceful transition after Mandela's release from prison, which was a great step towards better rights for blacks.

Violent political resistance

Following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, the ANC leadership concluded that the methods of non-violence such as those utilised by Gandhi against the British Empire during their colonisation of India were not suitable against the Apartheid system. A military wing was formed in 1961, called Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), meaning "Spear of the Nation", with Mandela as its first leader. MK operations during the 1960s primarily involved targeting and sabotaging government facilities. Mandela was arrested in 1962, convicted of sabotage in 1964 and sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, along with Sisulu and other ANC leaders after the Rivonia Trial.

During the 1970s and 1980s the ANC leadership in exile under Oliver Tambo made the decision to target Apartheid government leadership, command and control, secret police, and military-industrial complex assets and personnel in decapitation strikes, targeted killings, and guerilla actions such as bomb explosions in facilities frequented by military and government personnel. A number of civilians were also killed in these attacks. Examples of these include the Amanzimtoti bombing^[3], the Sterland bomb in Pretoria^[4], the Wimpy bomb in Pretoria^[5], the Juicy Lucy bomb in Pretoria^[4] and the Magoo's bar bombing in Durban.^[6] ANC acts of sabotage aimed at government institutions included the bombing of the Johannesburg Magistrates Court, the attack on the Koeberg nuclear power station, the rocket attack on Voortrekkerhoogte in Pretoria, and the 1983 Church Street bombing in Pretoria, which killed 16 and wounded 130.

The ANC was classified as a terrorist^[7] organisation by the South African government and by some Western countries including the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

During this period, the South African military engaged in a number of raids and bombings on ANC bases in Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland. Dulcie September, a member of the ANC who was investigating the arms trade between France and South Africa was assassinated in Paris in 1988. In the ANC's training camps, the ANC faced allegations that dissident members faced torture, detention without trial and even execution in ANC prison camps.^{[8][9]} In South Africa, the campaign to make the townships "ungovernable" led to kangaroo courts and mob executions of opponents and collaborators, often by necklacing.^{[10] [11]}

As the years progressed, the African National Congress attacks, coupled with international pressure and internal dissent, increased in South Africa. The ANC received financial and tactical support from the USSR, which orchestrated military involvement with surrogate Cuban forces through Angola. However, the fall of the USSR after 1989 brought an end to its funding of the ANC and also changed the attitude of some Western governments that had previously supported the Apartheid regime as an ally against communism. The South African government found itself under increasing internal and external pressure, and this, together with a more conciliatory tone from the ANC, resulted in a change in the political landscape. State President F.W. de Klerk unbanned the ANC and other banned organisations on 2 February 1990, and began peace talks for a negotiated settlement to end Apartheid.

Coming to power

In April 1994, in a tripartite alliance with the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions,

Apartheid in South Africa

the ANC won a landslide victory in the 1994 general election, and Nelson Mandela was elected the first black President of South Africa.

In Kwa-Zulu Natal, the ANC maintained an uneasy coalition with the Inkatha Freedom Party after neither party won a majority in the 1994 and 1999 provincial elections.

In 2004 the party contested national elections in voluntary coalition with the New National Party (NNP), which it effectively absorbed following the NNP's dissolution in 2005.

After the 1994 and 1999 elections it ruled seven of the nine provinces, with Kwa-Zulu Natal under the IFP and the Western Cape Province under the NNP. As of 2004, it gained both the Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal after a combination of the NNP's electoral base being eroded by the DA and a poor showing by the IFP.

Signs of strain

By 2001 the tripartite alliance between the ANC, COSATU and SACP began showing signs of strain as the ANC moved to more liberal economic policies than its alliance partners were comfortable with. The focus for dissent was the GEAR program, an initialism for "Growth, Employment and Redistribution."

In late 2004 this was again thrown into sharp relief by Zwelinzima Vavi of COSATU protesting the ANC's policy of "quiet diplomacy" towards the worsening conditions in Zimbabwe, as well as Black Economic Empowerment, which he complained benefits a favoured few in the black elite and not the masses.

As of 2005 the alliance was facing a crisis as Jacob Zuma, who was fired from his position as Deputy President of South Africa by Thabo Mbeki, faced corruption charges. Complicating the situation was the fact that Zuma remained Deputy President of the ANC, and maintained a strong following amongst many ANC supporters, and the ANC's alliance partners^[12]. In October 2005, top officials in the National Intelligence Agency, who were Zuma supporters, were suspended for illegally spying on an Mbeki supporter, Saki Macozoma, amid allegations that ANC supporters were using their positions within organs of state to spy on, and discredit each other^[13]. In December 2005, Zuma was charged with rape^[14] and his position as Deputy President of the ANC was suspended.^[15]

Jacob Zuma was acquitted of the rape charges, and was reinstated as Deputy President of the organisation. A battle for leadership of the ANC followed, culminating at the party's national conference in Polokwane (16-20 December 2007), where both Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki were nominated for the position of president. On 18 December 2007, Jacob Zuma was elected President of the ANC at the ANC conference in Polokwane^[16]

The ANC also faced (sometimes violent) protests in townships over perceived poor service delivery, as well as internal disputes, as local government elections approached in 2006.^{[17][18]}

Leaders of the ANC

Presidents of the ANC

- 1912 - 1917 John Langalibalele Dube (1871 - 1946)
- 1917 - 1924 Sefako Mapogo Makgatho (1861 - 1951)
- 1924 - 1927 Zacharias Richard Mahabane (1881 - 1970)
- 1927 - 1930 Josiah Tshangana Gumede (1870 - 1947)
- 1930 - 1936 Pixley ka Isaka Seme (1882 - 1951)
- 1937 - 1940 Zacharias Richard Mahabane (2x)
- 1940 - 1949 Alfred Bitini Xuma (1890 - 1962)
- 1949 - 1952 J. S. Moroka

Events and Projects

Sharpeville Massacre · Soweto uprising
 Treason Trial
 Rivonia Trial · Church Street bombing
 CODESA · St James Church massacre

Organisations

ANC · IFP · AWB · Black Sash · CCB
 Conservative Party · ECC · PP · RP
 PFP · HNP · MK · PAC · SACP · UDF
 Broederbond · National Party · COSATU
 SADF · SAP

People

P. W. Botha · Oupa Gqozo · D. F. Malan
 Nelson Mandela · Desmond Tutu · F. W. de Klerk
 Walter Sisulu · Helen Suzman · Harry Schwarz
 Andries Treurnicht · H. F. Verwoerd · Oliver Tambo
 B. J. Vorster · Kaiser Matanzima · Jimmy Kruger
 Steve Biko · Mahatma Gandhi · Trevor Huddleston

Places

Bantustan · District Six · Robben Island
 Sophiatown · South-West Africa
 Soweto · Vlakplaas

Other aspects

Afrikaner nationalism
 Apartheid laws · Freedom Charter
 Sullivan Principles · Kairos Document
 Disinvestment campaign
 South African Police

- 1952 - 1967 Albert Luthuli (1898 - 1967)
- 1967 - 1991 Oliver Reginald Tambo (1917 - 1993)
- 1991 - 1997 Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela
- 1997 - 2007 Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki
- 2007 - present Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma

Deputy Presidents of the ANC

- 1952 - 1958 Nelson Mandela
- 1958 - 1985 Oliver Tambo
- 1985 - 1991 Nelson Mandela
- 1991 - 1994 Walter Sisulu
- 1994 - 1997 Thabo Mbeki
- 1997 - 2007 Jacob Zuma
- 2007 - present Kgalema Motlanthe

Secretaries-General of the ANC

- (1912 - 1915) Sol Plaatje
- (1915 - 1917) Selope Thema
- (1917 - 1919) H. L. Bud M'belle
- (1919 - 1923) Saul Msane
- (1923 - 1927) T. D. Mveli-Skota
- (1927 - 1930) E. J. Khaile
- (1930 - 1936) Elijah Mdolomba
- (1936 - 1949) James Arthur Calata
- (1949 - 1955) Walter Sisulu
- (1955 - 1958) Oliver Tambo
- (1958 - 1969) Duma Nokwe
- (1969 - 1991) Alfred Nzo
- (1991 - 1997) Cyril Ramaphosa
- (1997 - 2007) Kgalema Motlanthe
- (2007 - present) Gwede Mantashe

Other key figures in ANC history

1948-1994: Joe Slovo, Tatamkulu Afrika, Robert Sobukwe, Raymond Mhlaba, Thomas Nkobi, Dulcie September, Chris Hani, Ahmed Kathrada Since 1994: Sydney Mufamadi

See also

- Africa Hinterland (Arms smuggling operation)
- Anti-Apartheid Movement
- Radio Freedom
- Shell House Massacre
- Henri Curiel

References

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<http://www.queensu.ca/sarc/Conferences/1940s/Henshaw.htm> accessed 16/10/08
2. ^ Building the Academic Boycott in Britain, Hilary Rose, Resisting Israeli Apartheid: Strategies and Principles, An International Conference on Palestine, London, 5 December 2004
3. ^ five people are killed and over sixty injured in an explosion at an Amanzimtoti shopping centre in December
4. ^ *a b* STERLAND THEATRE COMPLEX; LION BRIDGE FEEDS AND VAN ASWEGEN BROTHERS: BOMBINGS
5. ^ An explosion at 14h00 injures 16 people at a Wimpy Bar
6. ^ TRC TO HEAR MCBRIDE MAGOOS BAR BOMBING AMNESTY APPLICATION
7. ^ US National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism web site
8. ^ Cleveland, Todd (2005). ""We Still Want the Truth": The ANC's Angolan Detention Camps and Post-Apartheid Memory". *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* **25** (1): 63-78.
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11. ^ South Africa: The Lost Generation
12. ^ Alliance cracks widen as Zuma goes for broke *IOL*
13. ^ New ANC spy vs spy bombshell *Sunday Independent*
14. ^ Details of the Zuma rape allegations *iafrica.com*
15. ^ Jacob Zuma's ANC duties suspended *BBC*
16. ^ http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=328048&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__national/ Zuma is new ANC President
17. ^ ANC says more cities to be run by women *Mail & Guardian*
18. ^ ANC poll rebels 'have as good as resigned' *Cape Argus*

External Links

- Historical documents of the ANC

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