

TOPIC 4 UNIT SUMMARIES: CIVIL RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA 1970s AND 1980s

UNIT 4.1 THE CHALLENGE OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE APARTHEID STATE

- » 1960s: Little open protest in SA
- » Changes in 1970s:
 - » Rise of Black Consciousness
 - » Growth of worker and student movements
 - » Soweto uprising of 1976
 - beginning of the end of apartheid

What was the nature of the apartheid state in the 1970s and 1980s?

- State repression during the 1960s:
 - » ANC and PAC banned
 - » Increased control over the media
 - » Police powers of indefinite detention without trial
 - » Opponents placed under restriction orders or house arrest
 - » Militarisation of state: armaments and conscription
- Economy of SA during the 1960s:
 - » Period of economic growth
 - » More jobs in industry
 - » Increased urbanisation and movement from homelands
 - Housing shortages and lack of services in townships
 - Growing dissatisfaction and anger
- Policy of 'Separate Development'
 - » Government's attempt to control urbanisation:
 - » Creation of 'Bantustans'
 - » Africans seen as citizens of homelands, not of SA
 - » Homelands dependent on SA government
 - » System rejected by most people
 - » 'Independence' not recognised by rest of world

- Economic changes in early 1970s:
 - » 1973 world oil crisis
 - Decline in economy
 - » Shortage of skilled labour (because of Bantu Education)
 - » Wave of strikes
 - Formation of first independent black trade unions
- Political changes in southern Africa:
 - » 1975: Independence of Angola and Mozambique
 - ANC and PAC could have bases closer to SA
 - Independence gave hope of change to many in SA
- Policy of 'Total Strategy' under P.W. Botha:
 - » Limited reforms (e.g. 'separate development' dropped; rights to live in townships accepted; trade unions recognised; mixed private schools)
 - » Increased repression of opposition (e.g. suppression of 'communist threat'; army control in townships; raids on ANC bases in neighbouring states)

How did the opposition operate?

- Some leaders were in prison:
 - » ANC and PAC set up armed wings to continue resistance underground
 - » But leaders of MK imprisoned after Rivonia Trial (1964)
 - » Poqo leaders also imprisoned
- Some leaders were in exile:
 - » Set up headquarters in exile
 - » ANC based in Lusaka (led by Oliver Tambo)
 - » PAC based in Lesotho, then Tanzania
 - » But difficult to infiltrate SA during 1960s and 1970s (strength of SADF: white minority governments to north of SA)
 - » PAC weakened in exile
 - » ANC got greater international support – but West suspicious of its socialist links during Cold War
- The underground struggle:
 - » After 1975, easier for MK to enter SA from Mozambique and Angola
 - » 1983: Formation of UDF provided front inside SA for underground ANC supporters

What were the nature and aims of Black Consciousness?

- Ideas arose among black students at 'bush colleges'
- BC was attitude of mind, not a political movement
- BC rejected the term 'non-white' and used term 'black'
- 'Black' included all who were oppressed by apartheid
- Provided a unified black identity
- Main aims of BC:
 - » To raise black self-respect and confidence
 - » To promote pride in black identity, culture, history
 - » To stop working with white liberals in multi-racial organisations
 - » To promote unity amongst black people
- Influences on BC ideas:
 - » Africanist and PAC ideas of 1950s
 - » Black Power in US
 - » International youth revolt of late 1960s
 - » Independence of African colonies
 - » Growing international criticism of SA
 - » Ideas of African leaders (e.g. Nkrumah, Nyerere, Kaunda)
- Driving force behind BC was SASO (formed in 1968 by Steve Biko)

What was the role of Steve Biko?

- Biko's early life:
 - » 1946: Born in King William's Town
 - » Studied medicine at University of Natal
 - » Became active in student politics through NUSAS
 - » Rejected domination of NUSAS by white liberals
 - 1968: Formed SASO (separate union for black students)
- Biko's ideas:
 - » Influence of Frantz Fanon (psychological effects of colonialism)
 - » Blacks in SA needed to reject feelings of inferiority
 - » Needed to liberate minds from effects of colonialism and apartheid
 - to gain psychological, physical and political power
 - » First step in liberation was to accept themselves as 'black'
 - » Not black racism; did not seek revenge on whites
 - » Seen as means of creating solidarity and pride

- Biko's writings:
 - » Publications Director of SASO
 - » Wrote articles promoting BC philosophy
 - » Used pseudonym 'Frank Talk'
 - » Many writings published in *I Write What I Like* (1978)

What was the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM)?

- BCM was broad term for different organisations (under BPC – Black People's Convention):
 - » South African Students' Movement (SASM) formed in Soweto by school students
 - Encouraged formation of SRCs
 - » Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU)
 - » Black Communities Project (BPC)
 - set up economic cooperatives, literacy campaigns, health projects, cultural forums, advice clinics, social upliftment projects
- At first little contact with ANC in exile: differed in policy towards non-racialism
- But from early 1970s: secret links between BC and ANC

What was the government reaction to the challenges posed by Black Consciousness?

- At first government positive towards BC because:
 - » Idea of black separateness fitted in with separate development
 - » Saw it as a philosophical rather than political movement
- But then government saw BC as a challenge to its policies:
 - » Expelled SASO members from universities
 - » Harassed SASO and BPC leaders

What was the 1976 Soweto uprising?

- Attitudes among black school students:
 - » Angry about inferior system of Bantu Education
 - » Determined to bring about change
 - » In Soweto, SASM became forum for discussion of educational and political issues
 - » SASM produced a militant newspaper, Thrust
 - » SASM and Thrust spread BC ideas among student activists
- Government reaction:
 - » Newspaper banned
 - » Leaders imprisoned or banned
- SASM supported more radical approach
- 1976: Soweto uprising:
 - » Government enforced Afrikaans as medium of instruction
 - » Students in Soweto boycotted classes
 - » Teachers, students who criticised policy detained
- Formation of Soweto Students' Representative Council (SSRC)
 - » 16 June: SSRC organised mass demonstration
 - » Harsh reaction from police
 - » Start of Soweto uprising
- Soweto uprising became countrywide protest about:
 - » Education policies
 - » System of apartheid
 - » Repressive government policies
- Nature of protests:
 - » Teachers, parents, workers supported students
 - » Boycotts, clashes with police, destruction of government property, community stay-aways
- Government response to Soweto uprising:
 - » Afrikaans language policy abandoned
 - » Student leaders detained
 - » Over 1000 killed; thousands wounded
- Aftermath of Soweto uprising:
 - » 12 000 students left SA and got military training in camps
 - » More ANC and PAC sabotage missions into SA
 - » Armed struggle intensified
- 1977: Government moves against BC movement:
 - » Banned all BC organisations
 - » Arrested BC leaders
 - » Steve Biko died in prison
- Significance of Soweto uprising:
 - » Biggest challenge to government since 1948
 - » Inspired new spirit of defiance

What was the legacy of Black Consciousness on SA politics?

- 1977: Black Consciousness organisations banned
- 1978: Ideas continued with formation of AZAPO:
 - » Many supporters at University of the North (Turfloop)
 - » Also support by intellectuals and journalists in Soweto (especially on *Post* and *Sowetan* newspapers)
 - » But AZAPO did not have as much appeal or impact as ANC
 - » Many BC supporters joined exiled or underground ANC
 - » BC ideas renewed sense of pride and assertiveness
 - Emerged in mass-based protests of 1980s
- BC ideas influenced some Christian theologians:
 - » Developed 'Black Theology'
 - » Stressed moral need to resist apartheid
 - » Believed that Christians should be political activists
- BC ideas seen in community and social welfare organisations:
 - » Health projects (e.g. Zanempilo Clinic in King Williams Town)
 - » Rural home industries for women
 - » Leadership training for young black activists
 - » Many BC leaders gained leading positions after 1994 (e.g. Mamphela Ramphele, Barney Pityana, Tito Mboweni)

UNIT 4.2 THE CRISIS OF APARTHEID IN THE 1980s

- 1980s were crucial turning point
 - » Start of 1980s: Leaders in jail or exile; government in control
 - » Mid-1980s: Government facing a crisis from internal resistance and international pressure
 - » By 1989: Apartheid about to collapse

What were the government attempts to 'reform' apartheid?

- 'Total Onslaught – Total Strategy': mixture of repression and reform
 - » 'Total onslaught': communist conspiracy to seize power in SA
 - » 'Total strategy': to meet onslaught.
 - Harsh repression (e.g. military build-up; bannings; detentions without trial; state of emergency)
 - Limited reforms (attempt to win support from black middle class)

The contradictions of apartheid emerge

- Apartheid economy based on:
 - » Black unskilled workers (Bantu Education)
 - » Colour bar in industry
 - » Pass laws
 - » Homeland system
- But more jobs in industry and increasing need for skilled workers
 - » Pressure on government from business leaders and workers to reform labour policies

The pass system breaks down

- More people moved to cities to fill jobs
- Women joined husbands in cities
- Informal settlements expanded rapidly
- Attempts by state to prevent this with:
 - » Arrests and forced removals
 - » Destruction of informal settlements
 - » Charges under the pass laws
 - Courts and prison system overloaded
 - Pass system began to break down
- By early 1980s, fewer prosecutions under pass laws
- 1986: Pass system abolished
 - » End of apartheid vision of 'separate development' in independent homelands

Labour movements become more powerful

- Black workers barred from forming trade unions
 - » Pressure on government from business and workers
- 1979: Wiehahn Commission:
 - » Black trade unions now legal
 - » Policy of job reservation relaxed
- Union membership grew rapidly
- New unions formed:
 - » 1979: Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU)
 - » 1982: National Union of Mineworkers (NUM)
 - » 1985: Most existing unions formed Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)
 - » Also other unions (e.g. UWUSA – linked to Inkatha)
- Unions focused on pass system
 - » Pressure from unions and employers led to scrapping of pass laws (1986)

The economy is dependent on black labour

- System of migrant labour not working
 - » industry needed stable, skilled work force
- Economic growth depended on this

The 1982 Black Local Authorities Act

- After 1976: government set up Community Councils to administer townships
 - » Controlled by white officials
 - » But limited powers to blacks at local level
- 1982: Black Local Authorities Act:
 - » More powers to local councils
 - » Councils elected by local residents
 - » Councils responsible for collecting rents and service payments
 - This made them unpopular

The Tricameral Parliament

- 1983: Introduction of new constitution – 1983 Tricameral Constitution [and Tricameral Parliament]:
 - » House of Assembly (for whites) had all the power
 - » House of Representatives (for coloureds) controlled 'own affairs'
 - » House of Delegates (for Indians) controlled 'own affairs'
- Aims: to win support from coloured and Indian communities; retain white control
- Africans totally excluded
 - » Only had representation in homelands and Community Councils

What internal resistance was there to the 'reforms'?

Response to tricameral constitution

- Mass resistance
- Protests by trade unions, civic organisations, students, church leaders
- By mid-1980s: it became a national uprising

The growing power of the trade union movement

- 1973 strikes: start of growth of black trade unions
- 1979: Black unions legally recognised
- 1980s: rapid growth of union membership
- Concerns and actions of unions:
 - » Workplace issues (e.g. wages, working conditions)
 - » Community resistance (e.g. boycotts, stay-aways)
 - » Support from communities (e.g. boycotts of companies with poor labour practices; support for strikers)
- 1983: Many unions joined the United Democratic Front (UDF)
 - » Helped to organise boycotts of tricameral parliament elections
- 1985: Formation of COSATU
- 1987: COSATU adopted Freedom Charter
- Unions called for:
 - » end to apartheid and racism
 - » unbanning of political parties
 - » release of political prisoners
 - » one person one vote for a Constituent Assembly
- Union strike action in support of:
 - » May Day holiday
 - » Living Wage campaign
 - » Unions' right to strike

The response to Botha's 'reforms': new methods of mobilisation

- Botha's 'reforms' led to mass protests:
 - » Formation of UDF
 - » Boycott of tricameral elections by coloured and Indian voters
- 1984-86: 'Township Revolt':
 - » Started in Sharpeville, Sebokeng and Boipatong
 - » Started with school boycott and rent boycott
 - » Became a nationwide uprising of 'rolling mass action'
 - » Aim: campaign of sustained resistance until government agreed to end apartheid and negotiate

The role of civics in the protests

- Civic organisations played an important role
- Features of civics:
 - » Included parent-student committees, women's organisations, youth groups, residents' associations
 - » Sometimes focused on specific issues (e.g. rents, bus fares)
 - » Acted as pressure groups on authorities to improve facilities
 - » Mobilised people to take action to improve lives
 - » Joined rent boycotts, consumer boycotts, worker stay-aways, boycotts of local elections
 - » Sometimes involved in violent confrontations with police
- Actions of civics:
 - » Targeted black Community Councillors and black police
 - Accused them of collaborating with government
 - Many forced to resign or flee the townships
 - Some were 'necklaced'
 - » Took over administration and justice in townships:
 - Formed street and area committees; 'people's courts'
 - Referred to it as 'people's power'
- Government used State of Emergency to crush uprising:
 - » Police and army given extra powers
 - » Sent army into townships
 - » Thousands killed or arrested
 - But security forces never regained control of townships

The United Democratic Front

- 1983: UDF formed in Mitchell's Plain:
 - » Made up of 400 smaller organisations of all kinds
 - » Supported by ANC in exile
 - » Based policies on Freedom Charter
 - » By 1985: had 3 million members
 - » Prominent leaders: Archbishop Tutu; Rev Allan Boesak
- Actions of UDF:
 - » Promoted boycott of tricameral elections and local councils
 - » Organised rent boycotts, school protests, worker stay-aways, consumer boycotts
 - » Worked closely with civics
- Government accused some UDF leaders of treason
 - » Accused of plotting with ANC and SACP to overthrow state
 - » Albertina Sisulu and 15 others acquitted
 - » 'Delmas' treason trial: 19 convicted, but this later set aside

- Role of UDF:
 - » Intensified struggle against apartheid on national scale
 - » United wide range of opposition with non-racial approach
 - » Unified and co-ordinated effective opposition
- 1988: Government banned UDF

The End Conscription Campaign and the Black Sash

- End Conscription Campaign (ECC):
 - » Formed in 1983
 - » Was part of UDF
 - » Opposed conscription for national service
 - » Conscripts were used to fight in Angola and to crush protests in townships
 - » Refusal to serve meant 6-year prison sentence
- Activities of ECC:
 - » Proposed alternative forms of service
 - » Supported conscientious objectors
 - » Ran awareness campaigns (e.g. 'Troops out of the Townships')
 - » Hunger strikes to draw attention to cause
 - » 1985: 1 750 conscripts failed to report for duty; many 'draft dodgers' left SA
 - » 1988: Government banned ECC
- Activities of Black Sash in 1980s:
 - » After pass laws removed, focused on welfare issues
 - » Also involved in issues affecting rural communities (e.g. Transvaal Action Committee, National Land Committee)
 - » Also involved in feminist issues (e.g. Rural Women's Movement to support women's property rights in rural communities)

Protests from students and church leaders

- Role of students in mass protests:
 - » Congress of South African Students (COSAS) organised protests and school boycotts
 - » Adopted slogan 'Liberation before education'
 - » Schooling seriously disrupted
- 1985: Formation of National Education Crisis Committee (NECC)
 - » Formed by students, teachers, parents, political and community organisations
 - » Concerned about breakdown in education
 - » Used alternative slogan: 'Education for liberation'
 - wanted to use education to empower students to fight apartheid
 - called for 'people's education'
 - developed alternative teaching materials

- Role of churches and church leaders:
 - » SA Council of Churches (SACC) co-ordinated opposition
 - » Voiced support for conscientious objection to service in SADF
 - » Called on foreign companies to refuse to apply job reservation
 - » 1985: 'Kairos document' called on Christians to support liberation struggle by non-violent means
 - » Some Muslim and Jewish organisations openly supported liberation struggle
 - » After banning of UDF, churches were only legal voice of opposition
 - » 1989: SACC called on members to support non-violent action to end apartheid; DRC also condemned apartheid

The Mass Democratic Movement

- 1989: ANC called for 'Year of Mass Action'
 - » Hunger strike by political detainees
 - Released from jail
- Formation of Mass Democratic Movement
 - » MDM launched Defiance Campaign
 - » Protests against tricameral elections and nationwide strike
- Growing mood of defiance
 - » People ignored banning orders and restrictions
 - » Deliberately broke segregation laws
 - » ANC flag openly displayed
- Freedom Marches:
 - » March by 40 000 in central Cape Town
 - » Marches in other cities
- Government took no action to stop protests
 - » No longer in control of situation
 - » Stage set for major changes in SA

What was the international response to apartheid?

- During 1980s: International pressure on government increased
- These external pressures included:
 - » anti-apartheid movements
 - » sanctions and boycotts
 - » ANC in exile
 - » frontline states

International anti-apartheid movements

- Increasing awareness of apartheid after Sharpeville (1960) and Soweto uprising (1976):
- Criticism from Western governments and UN
- Protest demonstrations
- Calls for sporting and cultural isolation of SA
- Anti-Apartheid organisations established
- Financial support for ANC from some European governments (e.g. Sweden and Netherlands)

Anti-apartheid movements in Britain and Ireland

- 1959: Formation of Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in Britain
- Supported by:
 - » SA exiles
 - » Labour Party and trade unions
 - » Father Trevor Huddleston
- 1964: Labour Party came to power
 - » But did not support AAM
- 1980s: British government under Margaret Thatcher opposed to sanctions because:
 - » Wanted to protect British investments in SA
 - » British economy relied on minerals and other exports from SA
 - » Feared communist influence on ANC
- 1965: Formation of International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF):
 - » Published material to raise awareness about apartheid
 - » Collected funds to pay legal fees and support families of opponents of apartheid
 - » Worked with ANC in exile
- Anti-apartheid protests in Ireland:
 - » 1960s: Irish trade unions called for boycott of SA goods
 - » 1963: Student protests during Rivonia Trial
 - » 1964: Formation of Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement (IAAM)
 - Kader Asmal a founder member
 - IAAM supported by church leaders, trade unionists, students

Activities of the anti-apartheid movements

- Increasing isolation of SA:
 - » Regular criticism at UN
 - » Arms embargo
- Protests in Britain:
 - » Demonstrations outside SA embassy in London
 - » Protests to force British companies to withdraw from SA
 - » Some (e.g. Barclays Bank) disinvested
 - » Some consumers refused to buy SA products (e.g. fruit, wine)
 - » Cultural boycotts (e.g. by actors union Equity)

- » British TV programmes and films not shown in SA
- » Academic boycott
 - academics from SA excluded from international conferences
- Sports boycott:
 - » SA teams barred from international competition
 - » 1977: Gleneagles Agreement called on Commonwealth countries to cut sporting links
 - » 1981: Massive protests during Springbok Rugby tour to New Zealand

Disinvestment and sanctions

- Growing support for economic sanctions against SA from:
 - » ANC in exile
 - » Prominent South Africans (e.g. Archbishop Tutu)
- UN oil embargo on SA
- Strong support for sanctions in USA:
 - » 1986: US Congress passed Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act:
 - banned new investments and loans; SAA planes barred from US; ban on some SA products
 - » Institutions sold shares in companies with SA connections
 - » Large corporations (e.g. General Electric, IBM, General Motors, Coca-Cola, Mobil and Kodak) sold off holdings in SA
- European Union:
 - » Banned sale of Kruger Rands
 - » Imports of coal, iron and steel from SA

The Release Mandela campaign

- AAM called for release of political prisoners in SA
- 1978: Nelson Mandela (still on Robben Island) turned 60:
 - » AAM supporters sent petitions and protest letters to government
 - » Formation of Release Nelson Mandela Committee in London
- 1980s: More international campaigns demanding his release
- 1987: Renewed campaign launched at UN (led by Bill Cosby)
 - » Mandela's name became international symbol of AAM
 - » Received international honours
 - » US Congress called for his release
 - » Streets in Britain and Netherlands streets named after him
 - » His image used on T-shirts and campaign posters
- Also demands for his release by UDF and others in SA

- 1985: Botha offered Mandela conditional release:
 - » Rejected by Mandela
 - » He remained inspiration to AAM
 - » SA government realised that no solution to crisis possible while Mandela still in jail

The role of international trade unions

- Trade unions mobilised support for AAM in many countries:
 - » Wanted to show solidarity with black workers in SA
- Earliest boycott campaigns led by trade unions
- Support for ANC by international trade union movement: International Confederation of Trade Unions, the World Confederation of Labour and the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity
 - » Called for trade boycott; disinvestment; raised funds for anti-apartheid movements
- International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (federation of unions in 150 countries) also supported boycott campaigns

Support for the anti-apartheid struggle in Africa

- Actions by OAU:
 - » Got SA expelled from world bodies (e.g. World Health Organisation, International Labour organisation, International Olympic Movement)
- Situation of 'frontline' states:
 - » These included Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe
 - » Strongly opposed to apartheid, but economically dependent on SA
 - 1980: formed Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC)
 - Aim: to reduce economic dependence on SA
- Actions by frontline states:
 - » Allowed ANC and PAC to set up bases
 - » This helped MK to intensify armed struggle:
 - Attacked targets such as SA Airforce headquarters (Pretoria); dockyards (Durban); Koeberg nuclear power station (Cape Town)
 - By mid-1980s: MK had structures throughout SA
- Frontline states suffered because of this support:
 - » Became target for 'destabilisation' policy of SA government

- SADF tried to destroy bases and weaken support for liberation movement
 - » Launched raids by hit-squads; bombing attacks
 - Innocent civilians killed
 - » SA government tried to hinder economic development in socialist states:
 - Supported anti-government groups in Angola (UNITA) and Mozambique (RENAMO)
 - Thousands killed in civil wars; injured by landmines
 - Food production affected; widespread suffering
 - » SA agents targeted opponents living in exile in frontline states, such as anti-apartheid activists (e.g. Ruth First, Albie Sachs)
- ANC in exile:
 - » Headquarters in Lusaka, Zambia, led by Oliver Tambo
 - » Promoted increasing international support for sanctions
 - » Recognised by UN and OAU as official representative of SA people
 - » ANC envoys operated in many overseas capital cities

The beginning of the end of apartheid

The effects on the South African economy

- Beginning of 1980s: SA economy in recession:
 - » Low economic growth
 - » Falling gold price
 - » Balance of payments crisis
 - » Government dependent on loans from IMF
 - » People affected by lower standard of living, poverty in townships, unemployment
- 1985: Business leaders concerned about:
 - » effects of political instability on economy
 - » SA's international image
 - » Growing support for sanctions
 - Wanted government to announce major reforms
- 1985: Botha made major speech (Rubicon speech)
 - » Rejected reform and international pressure
 - » Opted for stubborn isolationist position instead
- Speech led to financial crisis:
 - » Overseas banks cancelled loans
 - » Value of the rand dropped by 35%
 - » Johannesburg Stock Exchange closed for 4 days
 - » Results:
 - Support for sanctions grew
 - Economy declined further
- Situation by end of 1980s:
 - » Sanctions, disinvestments, boycotts having serious effect on economy
 - » Internal mass resistance growing
 - External and internal pressures were key