

## Written test – Example

*The following criteria will be assessed: factual accuracy, linguistic and grammatical correctness, clear reference to the quote and its components as well as to course contents, and creativity.*

### **Comment and elaborate on the following quote by relating it to our course:**

[T]he ANC's Christian liberal politics [...] was a patient politics, advancing moderate proposals, working with and often deferring to white liberals and accepting the values of British liberalism. [...] It was tame, pragmatic, nonviolent, and [...] predicated on faith that goodwill eventually would pay off and specifically that white liberals would win elections and dismantle white supremacy. (97–101<sup>1</sup>)

---

### **Sample solution:**

This quote apparently describes the African National Congress (ANC) – founded as the South African Native National Congress in 1912 – in its earlier days. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three political organisations emerged and strove to improve the fate of the subordinated people in the Southern African states. Besides the ANC, there was the African Political Organization (APO), a Coloured organisation founded in 1902, and the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), established in 1923. All three organisations were founded and led by relatively well-to-do Western-orientated, mission-educated middle-class individuals, who were not in equally precarious situations as the overwhelming majority of black and brown South Africans at that time. Such mission-educated clergy and teachers, as well as successful peasants, formed a new hierarchy in competition with the old chiefs and provided the basis for the ANC, APO and SAIC.

As the quote suggests, their approach towards reaching equality was not radical. Instead, their aim was to realise the promise inherent in the Cape colonial tradition, first by gaining full equality with Whites for their kind, namely the middle classes they represented, hoping it would later lead to the gradual extension of rights to the poor and working-class masses of their own people. The founders and early members of the ANC were among the most privileged black South Africans of their time. Many of them attained qualifications as lawyers and received higher education at prestigious institutions

---

<sup>1</sup> MacDonald, Michael. *Why Race Matters in South Africa*. Harvard University Press, 2006.

abroad, including Oxford and Columbia Universities, where they earned their degrees. They were particularly interested in economic participation and elective franchise with parliamentary representation; they made clear that this should be achieved through rational arguments and pressure within the framework of the constitution to persuade the white populations to reverse the discriminatory tide. So the ANC notably lacked a critical stance on racial capitalism, unsurprising given the ANC's historical lack of roots in the working class and the strong ideological and political influence of British liberalism mentioned in the quote above.

The anticipated dismantling of white supremacy, however, did not happen. As a matter of historical fact, the opposite occurred for the next 75 years. The approaches of the ANC, APO and SAIC, which relied on appealing to reason and goodwill of whites, had little to no effect. Most whites were firmly determined to uphold their own privileges and maintain their hegemony. Neither substantial victories were won, nor was the ANC able to mobilise the less fortunate black masses. There were, however, also more radical and less appeasing people within the ranks of the ANC, who wanted to pursue a more radical approach. The most striking example is perhaps the formation of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU), founded by the mission-educated African Clemens Kadalie in 1919 among Coloured dockworkers in Cape Town. Within the next ten years, it grew significantly, claiming more than 150,000 African members. The ICU was drawing ideas from Marxism and from the back-to-Africa movement of Marcus Garvey. It was able to mobilise rural communities with strong rhetoric, including promises of land repossessions and national liberation. Their strikes and protests, however, were ruthlessly crushed by the white government. Still, it brought the ANC closer to other organisations, like the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), which was founded by white intellectuals in 1921 and, although initially focused on white workers indifferent to African interests, it soon turned into the only political organisation in South Africa which recruited members from all racial groups and even had a multiracial leadership. When the Communist International (Comintern) prompted a reorientation to unite subject populations in pursuit of national rights, to ally with national liberation movements with the goal to bring together oppressed people, regardless of class, behind the demand for national self-determination, and even call for an independent South African 'Native Republic' or 'Black Republic', turmoil and heated debates were caused within the CPSA.

The idea behind this approach was based on Lenin's notion, outlined in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), that the capitalist heartland in Europe would have to face much more significant challenges from its own proletariat once deprived of the 'super-profits' made in the colonies. The challenges and class contradictions in Europe had been avoided (externalised or outsourced so to speak) to some extent by making 'super-profits' abroad through imperialism.

However, it was able to attract some of the more radical, influential ANC members. Despite the fact that the ANC generally denounced communism, it entered into a strategic partnership with the CPSA, later renamed South African Communist Party (SACP). This strategic partnership with the ANC allowed the CPSA to exert considerable influence on the liberation struggle in South Africa, even though the party was comparably small in terms of membership. The alliance proved to be very sustainable, as it continues to exist at least in formal terms to this day. It also demonstrates one of the main strengths of the ANC, namely to align and coordinate with other organisations behind a common goal despite potential ideological differences. Moreover, this collaboration with the SACP, and later also with trade unions like the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), painted the ANC as a proponent of 'real' working-class solidarity, committed to proletarian causes, and as having an anti-capitalist agenda. The considerable influence of the SACP is also one of, if not the main reason for the anti-Apartheid struggle to change strategy at the latest by 1960/61 and resort from patient, tame and peaceful protest to armed resistance including the formation uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) as their military wing and carrying out acts of sabotage against public facilities such as electricity pylons and other symbols of oppression, including pass and government offices or police stations.