
UNIT 13 CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Structure

13.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

13.2 Discrimination of the Disadvantaged Groups

13.2.1 African Americans

13.3 Black Civil Rights Movements

13.4 Consequences of Civil Rights Movements

13.4.1 Native Americans

13.4.2 Hispanic and Asian Americans

13.4.3 Women and Civil Rights Movements

13.4.4 Rights of Homosexuals

13.5 Democrats and Civil Rights

13.6 Republicans and Civil Rights

13.7 Summary

13.8 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi's influence on civil rights movements around the world is beyond anyone's doubt. Non-violent resistance through non-cooperation and civil disobedience are powerful tools of the deprived over the privileged sections of the society. Gandhi's influence is nowhere more discernible in the developed West than in the United States itself. Martin Luther King, Jr., the leader who led the non-violent civil rights movement, in the United States to empower the African Americans, was highly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi.

Civil rights denote the rights of individuals to equal protection under the laws of the land and equal access to public amenities and services in society. Civil rights differ from civil liberties. Significantly, civil liberties involve freedom of speech and expression and other freedoms of the citizens that are protected from the possible violation by the government. Civil rights, on the other hand, refer to individual members or groups—whether racial, religious and others—who need to be treated equally by the government and even by the private parties to a certain extent. To express in more simple terms, civil liberties deal with personal freedoms and civil rights are related to issues of equality.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The meaning and significance of the concept of civil rights.

- Civil Rights Movement in the United States of America.
- The role of different communities involved in ensuring rights

13.2 DISCRIMINATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

The history of civil rights movements in the United States is by and large group's claims to equality. The US Constitution recognises various rights of the individuals. The American Bill of Rights guarantees individual freedoms of expression, speech, assembly, practice of religion etc., but all American citizens have not been able to exercise this freedom. Since the birth of the republic, various disadvantaged groups in the US had to struggle for decades to acquire equal rights with other fellow citizens. More specifically, Native Americans, women, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans and many others in the US had to launch and sustain long struggles to achieve political and social equality.

These groups, after prolonged discrimination, have been able to achieve in legal terms the equal protection of law, equal access to public amenities and equal rights to vote, even as the US laws do not discriminate against individuals on the grounds of race, gender, ethnicity or religion any more. But the civil rights movements in the US, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, primarily sought to uplift the African Americans and allocate civil rights to them. Legal equality did not translate into *de facto* equality until the civil rights movements succeeded in their goals. The history of America is witness to the fact that disadvantaged groups rarely achieved legal equality without a struggle. Powerful groups always resist granting disadvantaged groups a greater degree of equality.

13.2.1 African Americans

There were hundreds and thousands of African slaves in the US at the time of the framing of the Constitution. The first written constitution of the world did not recognise slaves as human beings deserving equality with the white population and were not given full citizenship. Slave trade was allowed until 1808. Slavery, as a social institution, was dismantled only after a ferocious civil war in the US that threatened the unity and territorial integrity of the nation. The civil war was followed by a period of Reconstruction. When Reconstruction ended in 1877 and the federal troops were withdrawn from the slave-states, the white supremacy in socio-political life returned. The Southern white population adopted a host of new rules and regulations, commonly known as the Jim Crowe Laws, to resume the practice of racial segregation. The black people were debarred from sharing the same public facilities and educational institutions with the white population. Black children were compelled to study in separate schools that lacked adequate infrastructure and facilities. Blacks could not enter hotels and restaurants meant for Whites. Racial segregation was also practised in public transportation facilities.

Significantly, the Supreme Court of the United States sided with the dominant white population by upholding the Jim Crowe laws. In *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case in 1896, the US Supreme court ruled that "separate" facilities for the two races did not violate the Constitution so long as the facilities were "equal". The Court also pointed out that the Constitution could do little to bring about racial equality, if one race happened to be inferior to the other.

The leaders of the Black community resisted such practices and relentlessly fought against racial discrimination and bigotry by resorting to legal means. But the legal method brought little relief until the 1930s when the US Supreme Court began to alter its opinion rather in a modest way. The Court ruled that if no facilities existed for the African Americans, they must be permitted to use the facilities reserved for the white population. About two decades later, in another landmark decision, the Supreme Court reversed its *Plessy* doctrine and ruled in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka* that racial segregation of public schools “generate [among black children] a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.... Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” This case was initiated by the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) for Linda Carol Brown, a Black child in Topeka, Kansas, who was denied admission into an all-white elementary school. The case was argued by Thurgood Marshall who subsequently became the first Black justice of the US Supreme Court.

The *Brown* decision was not welcomed by the Southern White population. Even in the North it was hailed only by a slender section of the White community. Three years after this decision, in the city of Little Rock, Black children were not allowed to enter the white public school and the problem was resolved only after President Dwight D Eisenhower placed the ANG (Arkansas National Guards) under federal control to implement the *Brown* decision on desegregation.

Though public schools were technically desegregated in 1954 by the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs Board of Education*, many were still de facto segregated due to inequality in housing and racial segregation in neighbourhoods. The Supreme Court held that not only were separate but also equal schools “inherently unequal”, the public schools in many parts of the country continued to be segregated by race. In *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* (1971), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality ‘of busing’ to end school segregation, an attempt to further integrate schools.

A federal court in 1974 found that in Boston, schools were constructed and school district lines intentionally drawn to segregate the schools on the basis of race. In the early 1970s, a series of court decisions found that the racially imbalanced schools trampled the rights of minority students. As a remedy, courts ordered the racial integration of school districts within individual cities, sometimes requiring the racial composition of each individual school in the district to reflect the composition of the district as a whole. This was generally achieved by transporting children by school bus to a school in a different area of the district. This practice widely came to be referred to as “busing” or “desegregation busing” in the United States.

However, many White families moved to the suburbs to avoid sending their children to far off schools in unfamiliar (and violently Black) neighbourhoods, and those who stayed back moved their children into parochial or private schools. As a consequence, urban school districts came to be overwhelmingly Black, reducing any effectiveness compulsory busing may have had. Though the U.S. Supreme Court verdict in *Milliken vs. Bradley* (1974) that busing children across districts was unconstitutional, limited the extent of busing to metropolitan areas, there is no doubt that busing integrated ethnic minority school children with the larger community. Since the 1980s desegregation busing has been on the decline.

13.3 BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Soon after the *Brown* decision of the Supreme Court, the African American leaders started a political movement for civil rights of the community. The most well known leader was Martin Luther King, Jr. who persistently organised peaceful marches and demonstrations in Alabama to press for the improvement of socio-economic conditions and civil rights of the African Americans. Such movements faced enormous impediments and antagonism and were often suppressed with heavy handed tactics.

One of the most well known incidents in the movement was a march organised by King in the city of Birmingham in Alabama in 1963. As King and his supporters began their peaceful marches and demonstrations, the Birmingham police led by Sheriff Eugene “Bull” Connor attacked the demonstrators, including King with “dogs, cattle prods and fire hoses.” The entire country watched this ghastly and brutal scene on television. This incident bolstered further the courage and valour of the African- American community to continue the fight and also made a large number of white Americans sympathetic to the cause of the African Americans. In the same year, as a result, on 2nd of August, King and other leaders organised a massive “March on Washington” for jobs and freedom and rights of the African Americans that attracted about quarter of a million marchers. Reverend King made his famous speech where he said: “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.”

This march brought moral triumph and political victory. In 1964, despite the hurdles and barriers erected by the conservatives and racists, the US Congress enacted the Civil Rights Act providing African Americans and other minority communities’ equal access to public facilities and prohibited discrimination in jobs on racial grounds. However, enactment of legislations did not automatically bring to an end discrimination against the minorities nor put an end to the feelings of racial superiority among the people. The southern states began to devise new means to put a damper on the federal Civil Rights Acts. Virginia, for instance, set up a commission to pay the legal expenses of White citizens who were brought to the courts for infringement of civil rights measures. Such tactics and manoeuvrings by former slave-owning states only strengthened the spirit of the federal government to do more with regard to civil rights of the African Americans and minorities. Under the active leadership and efforts of President Lyndon B Johnson, the US Congress passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965 ending racial barriers in elections.

13.4 CONSEQUENCES OF CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

As has been mentioned earlier, there are several minority communities in the U.S apart from African Americans, who had to face problems of social, economic and political discrimination. No other group, however, has been active in launching political movements comparable to the ones embarked on and sustained by the African American communities, who became the pivot of the civil rights movements in the United States.

However, when the civil rights movements triumphed and the U.S. Congress finally enacted the legislations related to civil rights and voting rights in 1964 and 1965 respectively, other minority communities also derived benefits resulting from civil rights movements and legislative measures either directly or indirectly. It is important to give a few instances of benefits or encouragement received by other minority communities.

13.4.1 Native Americans

Native Americans numbered about ten million when the first White settlers from Europe set foot in the United States. The European settlers conquered the territories of the Native American tribes through war, deception, diplomacy and ethnic cleansing. By 1900, as a result, there were fewer than a million Native Americans in the U.S. Like other minority groups this community too enjoyed no civil rights.

In the 1950s, the Native Americans opposed a federal government policy to move them to the cities with an aim to help them assimilate with mainstream American life. Their resistance emanated from the fear of losing their ancestral land, and difficulties of adjusting in the cities. Though the policy was scrapped in 1961, the United States Commission on Civil Rights reported that poverty and deprivation was common among Native Americans. Importantly, the civil rights movements of the 1960s had left out Native Americans. But they certainly inspired them to raise their demands and concerns. The civil rights legislations of the 1960s provided an opportunity to other minority groups to enjoy rights at least on law that were not there earlier.

Influenced by the Third World nationalism and the progress of America's home-grown civil rights movement, Native American activism turned aggressive in the 1960s and 70s. A series of movements for the restoration of land and water rights were launched in these two decades. The American Indian Movement (AIM), the organisation of the Native American civil rights movement, was founded in 1968 ostensibly to encourage self-determination among Native Americans and to establish international recognition of their treaty rights. Over the years, it helped channel government funds to Native American organisations and assisted the marginalised, neglected and poverty-stricken urban Native Americans. In the same year, the U.S. Congress enacted the Indian Bill of Rights that provided constitutional guarantees similar to other U.S. citizens. But it hardly alleviated the genuine grievances of the Native Americans.

Drawing a lesson from African Americans, Native Americans occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the US capital and subsequently seized control of a village in South Dakota. The incident was not absolutely peaceful, as the natives exchanged gunfire when the marshals opened fire. But the incident soon brought to the attention of the people and the governing elite the plight of this minority group and the result was the enactment of another piece of legislation in 1974 granting greater control to these people over federal programmes affecting them.

Though confrontations between Native American groups and government authorities became routine during this time, the mainstream Americans were certainly sensitised toward the requirements and rightful demands of Native Americans. All branches of government were forced to respond to the demand of equal treatment of Native Americans that were long overdue.

13.4.2 Hispanic and Asian Americans

The civil right movements of the 1960s primarily also helped in asserting the rights of the Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans. A large number of Hispanic people who migrated to the United States in search of jobs did not go back to their respective countries in Latin America nor were they able to acquire US citizenship. These illegal aliens suffered much discrimination in the hands of their employers as well as the society at large. It was in the spirit of the civil rights movements and legislative measures of the

1960s that the U.S. Congress passed the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act that offered citizenship to illegal immigrants who could provide residential proof for last five years.

But Hispanics themselves had to share the blame for the discrimination they faced in the U.S. Not only did they continue to live in the U.S. illegally, but also many of them refused to learn English and assimilate into the mainstream American society. Their recalcitrance gave rise to a nativist movement—the Official English Movement, aiming to make English the official language of the United States—and, as a consequence, more than half of the states declared English their official language within a span of three decades. Till date, efforts are on to make the use of English compulsory at the workplace. Bills are pending in the U.S. Congress that gives employers the right to demand that English be used by employees regardless of their language background.

Asian Americans, particularly the Chinese and the Japanese, who were brought to the US to work in coal mines and railroad constructions, faced severe racial discrimination expressed openly by the people as well as the ruling elite. Some of the U.S. legislations too discriminated against them. For instance, in 1921 when the U.S. first enacted a law to restrict immigration and introduced a quota system, Asians got a tiny quota compared to Europeans. Once again in the domestic climate of civil rights movements in the 1960s, Asian Americans were benefited by the 1965 Immigration Act, that sought to balance the quota in favour of those who were discriminated earlier. Unprecedented numbers of Asians and Latin Americans entered the United States as a result of that Act. The rights of Asian Americans were also slowly expanded through court rulings and legislations following the 1964 civil rights acts.

13.4.3 Women and Civil Rights Movements

Women in America were debarred from exercising their right to vote, holding public office or serving as juries both during the colonial times as well as after independence. The U.S. Constitution discriminated against American women. Significantly, the influence of British Common Law was so much on the United States that women in that country usually lost their identity after marriage and were considered the property of the husbands. They were not permitted to purchase, hold or dispose off property without the consent of their respective husbands. The discrimination was also reflected in a Supreme Court judgement that held that adultery was a violation of the property right of the husband.

The changing status of women's rights has come a long way through movements and struggles spanning decades and in the year 1848, the first ever women convention to press for their rights was held in New York, in response to the prevention of two women leaders from attending an anti-slavery convention. Since then women movements have been quite vigorous, although the success has often come late. Initially, the women rights movements were closely aligned with the anti-slavery struggles, such as the abolitionist movements. When the Civil War was over, the slaves were emancipated and a series of constitutional amendments were enacted to give rights to the liberated African Americans. Women hardly gained anything from it. For example, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution nobly announced that voting rights of individuals could not be abridged on the basis of race or colour, but the amendment was conspicuously silent on gender.

The struggle to empower women in the functioning of the American democracy continued and finally in 1920 the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was enacted that forbade the U.S. or state governments from denying the right to vote “on account of sex.”

Ratification of this amendment inspired the women's rights movements to plead for the fulfilment of other demands, such as "equal rights" with men; equal pay for equal work; removal of discrimination in granting financial credit; and ending sexual harassment at work places. After decades of efforts by women movements, some of these demands have been met. While in 1923, the first proposal was made to bring about another amendment to the Constitution to ensure equal rights for women, it was only in 1973—half a century later that the U.S. Congress approved the Equal Rights Amendment only to be rejected during its ratification by requisite three-fourths of the states.

But the movement continued and society was slowly sensitised about the importunate discrimination against women. Sustained political struggles subsequently paid and the U.S. Congress passed the Equal Pay Act in 1963 in the midst of the civil rights movements in various parts of the country. This Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender in salary and wages of certain types of employment. The 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibited gender discrimination in the administration of grants for programmes of the Federal Government. The Education Amendment Act of 1972 prohibited gender discrimination in education and the Equal Credit Act of 1974 ended similar discrimination in granting of financial credit. Although women have gained considerably, gender inequality still remains in the US. Gender representation in public office, managerial posts and promotion to high offices is still negligible.

Women's rights acquired a new dimension with the debate on abortion that started in the United States in the 1970s, a new movement—supported by the Democratic Party—emerged that sought to give women complete control over her sexuality and the choice to continue or terminate a pregnancy. Highlighting the right of women—especially unmarried women—to safe and legal abortion, this movement came to be known as the "Pro-choice" movement. In *Roe v Wade* (1973), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a woman's constitutional right to abortion and reaffirmed it in *Planned Parenthood v Casey* (1992). The latter case was decided by plurality opinion, and there is no doubt that even today, abortion rights have succeeded in keeping the judiciary divided.

The pro-choice movement drew strong reaction from The Roman Catholic Church—supported by conservative Protestant groups—against the pro-choice activists and the judiciary's decision in their favour. A movement, commonly referred to as the pro-life movement and sponsored unequivocally by the Roman Catholic Church, arose in opposition to abortion. Some within the Democratic Party, which has a large number of Catholics as members, have even sponsored legislation in the U.S. Congress to reduce the abortion rate without seeking to make the procedure illegal and without overturning *Roe v Wade*. However, conservatives still oppose abortion—on the ground that a developed foetus was an individual and had the right to live—and accept only early abortion (during the first two trimesters after conception) and even late abortion when the pregnancy was caused due to incest or rape. What conservatives want to put an end to is abortion-on-demand.

13.4.4 Rights of Homosexuals

Even though Illinois became the first U.S. state in 1962 to decriminalise private homosexual acts between consenting adults, the gay rights movement acquired momentum in June 1969, when the patrons of Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village, rioted for three days with the police when the latter conducted a raid on its premises. The Stonewall Riots transformed the gay rights movement into a widespread protest for equal rights and social acceptance.

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders. By that time the homosexual activity had become quite widespread in the U.S. In 1982, Wisconsin created history when it became the first state to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Its victorious moment came when the U.S. Army allowed gays to serve in the military in 1993 but banned homosexual activity while serving. Though it was not an unalloyed victory as it still outlawed homosexual activity between serving gay and lesbian couples, it opened the door of the military to the gay community. Under this policy—enacted during the presidency of Bill Clinton and known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”—gays and lesbians could be discharged from service in the Army if they either conceded to being gay or indulged in homosexual acts during service, but the Army was forbidden to ask its inmates about their sexual orientation.

In 2000, Vermont became the first state to recognize the same-sex marriages—or civil unions—between gay and lesbian couples and bestowed such civil unions with “the same benefits, privileges, and responsibilities as spouses”. However, it refrained from referring to such unions as “marriage”, reserving the term for heterosexual unions. Same-sex marriages were legalised—over conservative opposition—in Massachusetts in 2004, in Connecticut in 2005, and in New Jersey in 2006.

During the presidential campaign of 2004, and then again in 2006, President George W. Bush came out strongly against “civil unions”, reiterating that marriage was a faith-sanctioned and time-tested institution that solemnised the union between man and woman. He supported the move of the Christian Coalition, a Republican grassroots organisation to amend the Federal Constitution in order to define marriage as exclusively between man and woman and seek a ban on gay marriages. The President even declared that the United States government would “recognize and protect” marriage as it promoted the welfare of children and stability of society.

Interestingly, though in May 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples had a constitutional right to marry; during the November election, voters in the state ratified an initiative—called Proposition 8—that banned same-sex marriages. Similar initiatives banning same-sex marriages were passed by voters in Arizona and Florida as well. Voters in Arkansas approved a measure that barred gays and lesbians from adopting children.

There is no doubt that like other civil right issues, gay rights have left American society deeply divided. As with abortion, the issue of gay rights has created an uncompromising political polarisation. Even after the backlash of the November 2008 election, the Iowa Supreme Court threw out a state law banning same-sex marriages on April 3, 2009. In less than a week later, the Vermont Legislature legalised same-sex marriage by overriding the Governor’s veto of a bill that allowed same-sex couples to marry.

13.5 DEMOCRATS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

The Democratic Party has always seen itself in the forefront of the civil rights movement. Both the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) were passed on the initiative of Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the most influential Democratic presidents ever. With these two measures, the political participation by Blacks became meaningful, and constitutes a solid and unwavering voting bloc for the Democratic Party across the United

States. They now hold elected political office in large numbers, and an outstanding example is reflected in Barack Hussain Obama's assuming office as the President of the U.S. Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of these Black leaders were Democrats.

The 2004 Democratic Platform opposed any move to ban gay marriages by amending the Federal Constitution and wanted that marriage be defined at the state level. For Democrats, the full inclusion of gay and lesbian "families" in national life with equal responsibilities, benefits, and protections as conventional families remains top priority.

Democrats have acquired a sizeable measure of the Hispanic loyalty and an equally sizeable chunk of their vote by opposing Official English in state after state by branding it as nativist and trying to convince language minorities that Official English was nothing but English Only, and that the proponents of the movement wanted to ban the use of non-English languages in the U.S. In place of English *Only*, Democrats have championed the cause of English *Plus*, proficiency in English and a second language or multiple languages. They hold that public facilities, programmes, and assistance be made available to citizens in languages other than English, keeping in mind those who were not proficient in English. But Democrats have been relatively unsuccessful on this count, as many Democratic governors (including Bill Clinton of Arkansas) signed measures declaring English as the official language of their respective states. However, Democrats have been steadfast in their support to bilingual education (introduced first in 1968 and subsequently amended)—which today is nothing but "maintenance" bilingual education and not "transitional" bilingual education—and multilingual ballots (introduced by the Voting Rights Act of 1965) that have not only pushed Hispanics to take up low-paid jobs but have kept them and other language minorities from any meaningful participation in the political process.

Democrats have consistently been pro-choice in matters of abortion: both the 2000 and 2004 Platforms sought to recognise and respect "every woman's right to choose" in line with *Roe v Wade* (1973) and make abortion "safe, legal, and rare". In fact, the party believes that the woman's "right to choose" was a constitutional liberty and needed to be upheld and protected by the courts.

13.6 REPUBLICANS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

It is a matter of supreme irony that despite the abolition of slavery in the hands of a Republican President, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, the Republican Party cannot look toward African Americans today for widespread electoral support. The Black support to the Democratic Party is proof of the fact that they have given more importance to political empowerment than social emancipation. What is more disconcerting is the fact that Black community leaders have often portrayed Republicans as racist and liberal opinion has attempted to somehow link individual Republicans to the White supremacist Ku Klux Klan. It is true that neither Republican leaders nor the party as a whole has found itself in the forefront of the Black civil rights movement. Equally true is the fact that Republicans have been traditionally targeted by the Klan for its steadfast anti-slavery stance.

Republicans have made the retention of family values the core of the domestic issues they champion in election after election. Small-town America is also deeply religious, and Republicans have often supported and articulated the church's opposition to homosexuality and same-sex marriages as an assault on the traditional family. In so doing, it has earned the reputation of being a socially conservative and reactionary political force.

The Republican Party's support to and identification with age-old family values has also made it stand in opposition to abortion and pro-choice activism. In both its 2000 and 2004 Platforms, the party voiced its stringent opposition to abortion, held that the unborn child had a "fundamental individual right to life that cannot be infringed", and called for a ban on using public revenues for carrying out abortion and a stop on funding organisations which advocated it. In November 2003, President George W. Bush signed the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act—a measure to prohibit late-term abortions—and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Act in its verdict in *Gonzales v Carhart* (2007). No doubt, the Republicans' stand on abortion did not make their party any popular among pro-choice activists and liberal-minded women.

The Republican Party has also traditionally opposed "maintenance" bilingual education—the use of public funds for bilingual education through native language instruction that ultimately ended up in maintaining the language of linguistic minority students instead of teaching them English—and have supported the use of "transitional" bilingual education that aimed at imparting the teaching of subject-matter courses to language minority students in all-English classes as early as possible. Individual Republicans have been in the forefront of the Official English movement and it was in the Republican 104th Congress that the first-ever English Language Amendment (ELA), H.R. 123—the Bill Emerson English Language Empowerment Act (1996), seeking to amend the Federal Constitution to declare English the official language of the United States—was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Till date, those who have moved ELAs in the U.S. Congress with varying degrees of success have all been Republicans. Republicans have also repeatedly called for the abolition of multilingual ballots and voter assistance, thus earning the charge of being nativist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Hispanic.

13.7 SUMMARY

Civil rights movements emerged in the United States, as elsewhere, in order to uphold group rights. Though America is not constitutionally multicultural, the success of civil rights movements—whether of Blacks, women, gays, or immigrants—have ensured the preservation and protection of the constitutional rights of various marginalised groups in American society. An era of political correctness was inaugurated, in which Blacks became African Americans, housewives became homemakers, homosexuality came to be referred to as alternative sexuality, and immigrants became hyphenated Americans.

The preservation of civil rights have resulted in the successful exercise of civil liberties by abolishing private and public acts of racial, gender, and ethnic discrimination. It goes to the credit of the civil rights movement that any group that perceives discrimination on the part of the state or other groups can expect remedial action from the judiciary, if not always from the executive or the legislature.

But as the movement expands, new groups come into existence and new rights are manufactured to acknowledge the group and decide on the constitutionality of the rights that it seeks to protect and uphold.

The history of the U.S. civil rights movement is an interesting, though not always an acrimonious one. The American political system provided enough space to civil rights activists and even incorporated their agenda as planks in the platforms of the major parties. Referendums, initiatives, legislations, and court verdicts have all been used either to support or oppose the issues raised by the civil rights activists.

But there is no doubt that the civil rights movements have left American politics and society deeply divided. The domestic policy planks of the two major parties are determined to a large extent by their respective stands on civil rights issues. The churches, the centrepiece of American middle-class life, stand torn by issues of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (especially of the clergy), and abortion. Though race riots are not common any longer, racially-inspired hate crimes have shown a sharp increase.

Nowhere have the civil rights movements succeeded as in the US. If similar movements have appeared elsewhere, it can serve as a measure of the degree of urbanisation, industrialisation, or modernisation that has taken place in that society (for example, the gay rights movement in India emerged in the cities and not in the rural hinterlands). That remains a positive contribution of the American civil rights movement in understanding the degree of development in non-American societies.

13.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by “civil rights”? Which are the disadvantaged groups in the US that have struggled for “civil rights” in that country?
2. Write briefly about the Black civil rights movements in the US in the 1960s.
3. Native Americans, Asian Americans and Women to some extent benefited from Black civil rights movements in the US. Explain with examples.
4. What are the positions of American political parties today on the issues of civil rights?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 14 GREENPEACE MOVEMENTS IN EUROPE

Structure

- 14.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 14.2 Origin and Mission
- 14.3 Early Days and Steady Growth
- 14.4 Other Campaigns
 - 14.4.1 Anti-nuclear Campaigns
- 14.5 The New Beginning
 - 14.5.1 Campaigning Ships
- 14.6 Greenpeace in the 21st Century
 - 14.6.1 Criticism
 - 14.6.2 Major Accomplishments
 - 14.6.3 Connecting Social and Environmental Consequences
- 14.7 Summary
- 14.8 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Greenpeace, the International environmental organisation founded in 1969, during a nonviolent direct action campaign against US nuclear weapons testing in Alaska, probably has been the most successful of the many environmental organisations that use nonviolent action. Certainly it was one of the first, and by combining a philosophical base, clear strategic design, scientific research, political and legal research and lobbying, courageous direct action, and brilliant use of media attention, it has made tremendous gains both for the organisation itself and for the environment it has sought to protect. The central philosophy of that original “Greenpeace” organisation was nonviolent direct action on behalf of the planet earth. It was an inspiring concept, and it created a movement.

Greenpeace has earned a unique role in the international environmental movement due to its willingness to take direct action and its refusal to compromise on the issue of critical environmental import. Greenpeace works on issues of global importance; yet, unlike more mainstream nature and wildlife conservation groups, it uses confrontational tactics to change corporate and government behaviour. Greenpeace is not a local membership group, although its toxics, energy, and genetic engineering campaigns increasingly work at the grassroots level to enhance environmental activism in communities worldwide. Although Greenpeace is a self-proclaimed direct action group, its commitment to non-violence precludes the use of property damaging tactics such as those employed by decentralised and anarchistic direct action groups. Greenpeace does not participate in party politics or support political candidates; however, it does lobby with governments and holds them

accountable for failing to adopt stringent laws to safeguard human health and the environment.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand:

- The concept and mission behind the Greenpeace Movement.
- The nature of its non-violent campaigns.
- Its accomplishments, criticisms and relevance in the 21st century.

14.2 ORIGIN AND MISSION

Origin

Greenpeace is an international group of non-governmental organisation for the protection and conservation of the environment. Greenpeace utilises direct action, lobbying and research to achieve its goals. Greenpeace has a worldwide presence with national and regional offices in 46 countries, which are affiliated to the Amsterdam-based Greenpeace International. The global organisation receives its income through the individual contributions of an estimated 3 million financial supporters. Bill Darnell has received the credit for combining the words “green” and “peace”, thereby giving the organisation its future name. Irving Stowe, Paul Coté and Jim Bohlen are co-founders of Greenpeace.

Greenpeace had its origins in nonviolent action. In October 1969, the newly formed ‘Don’t Make a Wave’ Committee discussed how to continue the momentum of what was both an anti-war and environment movement protesting the US underground nuclear testing at Amchitka Island, Alaska. American Marie Bohlen who, with her husband, Jim, had been one of the founders of the British Columbia chapter of the Sierra Club, suggested sailing a boat to Amchitka and mooring it near the bomb site. At a later meeting, as American Quaker Irving Stowe left the meeting with his usual peace sig, Canadian Bill Darnell added, “make it a green peace”. Jim Bohlen said they could name the boat Greenpeace if they ever found one.

Greenpeace, originally known as the Greenpeace Foundation, was founded in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1971. While the boat never reached its destination and was turned back by the US military, this campaign was deemed the first using of the name ‘Greenpeace’. In 1972, the Greenpeace Foundation evolved as a less conservative and structured collective of environmentalists who were more reflective of the days of counterculture and hippie youth movements who were spearheading the social revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. The social and cultural background from which Greenpeace emerged heralded a period of de-conditioning away from the old world antecedents and sought to develop new codes of social, environmental and political behaviour. The focus of the organisation later turned from anti-nuclear protest to other environmental issues: whaling, bottom trawling, global warming, old growth, nuclear power, and even genetically modified organisms.

Mission

Greenpeace is an independent global campaigning organisation that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to protect and conserve the environment and to promote peace by:

1. Catalysing an energy revolution to address the number one threat facing our planet: climate change.
2. Defending our oceans by challenging wasteful and destructive fishing, and creating a global network of marine reserves.
3. Protecting the world's remaining ancient forests, which are depended on by many animals, plants and people.
4. Working for disarmament and peace by reducing dependence on finite resources and calling for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.
5. Creating a toxic free future with safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals in today's products and manufacturing.
6. Campaigning for sustainable agriculture by encouraging socially and ecologically responsible farming practices.

14.3 EARLY DAYS AND STEADY GROWTH

14.3.1 Early Days

Following in the Quaker tradition of “bearing witness” and the Quaker protest voyages of the Phoenix and the Golden Rule against US nuclear tests in the 1950s and early 1960s, the Greenpeace sailed to the Amchitka test zone from Vancouver in September 1971. Although the first nuclear explosion to be protested was cancelled and the second occurred before the ship arrived, the voyages grabbed mass media attention in a pattern that would work well for Greenpeace on many issues. Shortly after the second voyage, the US military ended its use of the Alaskan area for nuclear testing.

In 1972, the yacht Vega, a 12.5-metre (41 ft) ketch owned by David McTaggart (an eventual spokesman for Greenpeace International), was renamed Greenpeace III and sailed in an anti-nuclear protest into the exclusion zone at Mururoa in French Polynesia to attempt to disrupt French atmospheric nuclear testing. This voyage was sponsored and organised by the New Zealand branch of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. CNDNZ and the New Zealand Peace Media had been lobbying the New Zealand Government and the New Zealand public to place pressure on Britain and France to agree to enforce a nuclear test ban in the South Pacific since the mid 1950s.

In 1973, the yacht Fri spearheaded an international protest of a flotilla of yachts in a voyage against atmospheric nuclear tests at Mururoa in French Polynesia. Fri was an important part of a series of anti-nuclear protest campaigns out of New Zealand and Australia which lasted thirty years, from which New Zealand declared itself a Nuclear free zone which became enshrined in legislation in what became the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987. This voyage was organised by CNDNZ and the New Zealand Peace Media. In 1974, coordinated by Greenpeace New Zealand, the Fri embarked on a 3 year 40,233 kilometres “Pacific Peace Odyssey” voyage, carrying the peace message to all nuclear states around the world.

14.3.2 Growing Area of Influence

Greenpeace's activities and membership has grown beyond its direct action origins so that it now employs a combination of nonviolent direct action, scientific inquiry, and political action to oppose such problems as toxic waste shipment and disposal, acid rain, the

slaughter of seal pups and kangaroos, nuclear weapons at sea, whaling, driftnet fishing, and ocean pollution. By 1976, Greenpeace's active membership was eight thousand, with thirteen very active branches around the world and twenty-eight heard from occasionally, according to Vancouver Sun. By 1980 Boston alone counted twenty-five thousand contributors, and about fifty different actions took place in that year alone. By 1991 a Greenpeace publication listed offices in twenty-three countries. In the mid 1990s however, declining membership and financial concerns forced the organisation to close several local offices.

14.4 OTHER CAMPAIGNS

In 1975, the Vancouver-based Greenpeace Foundation mounted an anti-whaling campaign which encountered Soviet whalers over the seamounts off Mendocino, California. This campaign had been influenced by the work of Paul Spong and Farley Mowat as well as Robert Hunter's encounter with the Orca Skana.

In 1976, a campaign was launched against the killing and skinning of baby seals in Newfoundland for the high-fashion fur trade, targeting Norwegian ships engaged in the trade after receiving a hostile welcome from the Newfoundland fishermen involved in the hunt. Greenpeace used helicopters to move people and supplies to a base camp at Belle Isle. Brigitte Bardot later got involved in this campaign, to great effect. In the same year another anti-whaling expedition, using the James Bay as Greenpeace VII, disrupted the Soviet fleet again, but this time with the assistance of a "deep throat" source and extra funding from Ed Daly of World Airways. At about the same time visits to Japan were arranged to persuade the Japanese people that whaling should end.

By the late 1970s, spurred by the global reach of what Robert Hunter called "mind bombs", in which the images of confrontation on the high seas converted diffuse and complex issues into considerably more media-friendly David versus Goliath-style narratives, more than 20 groups across North America, Europe, New Zealand and Australia had adopted the name "Greenpeace".

In the mid-1970s, the activities of the organisation had expanded as it embraced more singularly environmental issues. Among the first of these was the antiwhaling campaign. Combining scientific research with the direct action of placing their bodies and ships between the Soviet and Japanese whaling fleets and the whales, the Greenpeace brought the issue of whaling to public attention. Their skillful photography of their direct actions was used widely in the news media. This combination became a trademark of Greenpeace work. What was not so obvious to public view, and what is not so clearly played up in Greenpeace publicity, is that this publicly visible action was accompanied by a less visible but no less important action of Greenpeace lawyers and scientists who were lobbying the International Whaling Commission. In a very short span of time, this combination began to have an effect on the positions of countries represented on the commission, and more serious restrictions on whaling began to come out of the commission.

Among the other efforts of the Greenpeace has been the campaign to save Newfoundland harp seal pups from being slaughtered for fur by commercial sealing fleets from Norway and Canada; the campaign to save Antarctica by turning it into an international park; and the campaign to stop several European nations from ocean dumping of radioactive waste. In this last campaign, again, the Greenpeace combined the techniques of careful scientific,

political and legal research, with direct actions (banners, painting emblems on ships, placing themselves in the way of barrels of nuclear waste being dumped), photography of the direct action which was then fed to the news media, and direct negotiation with the London Dumping Convention, which regulates the disposal of nuclear waste.

One of the key factors in Greenpeace's success in capturing the interest of public was the consistency of the direct-action technique employed with the objective which, the Greenpeace was attempting to accomplish. The David and Goliath image was particularly effective in the pictures of Greenpeace members on an iceberg hugging seal pups as the iceberg was about to be hit by a government ship, and the pictures of Zodiac rafts harassing the freighter Pacific Fisher as it carried nuclear fuel rods from Japan to France and Britain. Another common technique was the physical obstruction of something they wished to stop, such as when the Greenpeace ship Sirius attempted to block the arrival of the Pacific Crane, which was carrying spent nuclear fuel rods from Japan into the France's Cherbourg harbour. A similar technique was also used to advantage in many of Greenpeace's acid rain and toxic waste campaigns when activists blocked factory smokestack and outflow pipes. In 1987, for example, demonstrators scaled to smokestacks of a garbage incinerator in Tacoma, Washington, and plugged them with giant makeshift corks.

Greenpeace has always used the technique of exposing the aspects of a debate that might be hidden. For example, the Greenpeace pictures of whaling, driftnet fishing, sealing, and toxic waste operations graphically brought issues to the attention of the international community that might not otherwise have seen the light of the day. One unique example, less dramatic but no less effective, was the chance a Greenpeace member offered the public to see the Seattle mayor's own garbage after a raid on his trash-can a few nights before. The mayor had been advocating the building of an incinerator in the south end of the city, but not in his backyard.

Greenpeace's international network has enabled it to make connections between different levels and locations of a problem and to help others to make connections as well. When Thor (a corporation from the United Kingdom) and American Cyanamid (a US Business) exported toxic waste to South Africa, Greenpeace took samples in the Valley of the 1000 Hills, worked with local organisations to educate people on the danger, and worked with Earthlife Africa to discredit an illegal waste dump and to expose water supply problems. Most of Africa is now off limits to toxic waste dumping as a result of such work.

14.4.1 Anti-nuclear Campaigns

Few of Greenpeace's antinuclear campaigns are better known than the last voyage of the Rainbow Warrior, the ship what was sunk on July 10, 1985, by French Government agents in the harbour of Auckland, New Zealand, while on a trip to protest French nuclear testing at Mururoa Atoll. This trip has demonstrated two of the techniques that had been central to Greenpeace's work. First, the members of the Greenpeace were to bear witness to nuclear testing by putting themselves in harm's way in the test area. Second, the members took others out of harm's way. Prior to the Auckland stop, the Rainbow Warrior had taken four trips from Rongelap to Majeto to relocate three hundred islanders whose home had been contaminated by radioactive fallout from the US nuclear tests conducted between 1946 and 1958.

The sabotage of the Rainbow Warrior, which also killed Greenpeace photographer Fernando Pereira, led New Zealanders to display the slogan "You can't sink a rainbow"

in the streets of Wellington as they began to raise money for Greenpeace. After the discovery that it was French agents who had carried out the bombing, the UN Secretary General mediated the resulting dispute between New Zealand and France. The Greenpeace, which suffered the loss of life, loss of the ship, and cancellation of the immediate campaign, nevertheless gained publicity that tremendously increased its membership. When its French office reopened in 1989, for example, it gained 13,500 members in the very first year alone.

14.5 THE NEW BEGINNING

Since its beginning, there have been signs of unity and of disunity within Greenpeace. Greenpeace's philosophy has been rooted in nonviolence and internationalism. In its willingness to employ direct action, the organisation moved beyond the activities of traditional conservation groups. But Greenpeace's diversity was both in its strength and its weakness. Composed of scientists, journalists, anti-nuclear activists, and people from various walks of life, Greenpeace experienced the usual difficulties of a family on their first voyage. As it grew and became more successful, there were two kinds of conflict. First, the growth and bureaucratisation led to accusations from more radical activists that Greenpeace was losing its direct-action impetus to more conventional political lobbying. In the Greenpeace, organisational set-up, there has been an element of tension between those involved in direct action and those involved in influencing the legal and political system by a combination of scientific expertise and lobbying. But, as the examples above suggest, this combination has also been Greenpeace's strength.

The second kind of conflict that Greenpeace experienced was due to the tremendous growth in its membership during the 1970s. Offices had varying fund-raising capabilities, and many experienced difficulties juggling assets, expenses, debts, and campaigns. Factionalism grew, resulting at one point in a lawsuit between the Vancouver and San Francisco offices. When Robert Hunter resigned as president in April 1977, Patrick Moore tried unsuccessfully to set up an international board of directors. Resolution of the various crises came when David McTaggart stitched together an agreement in which Greenpeace Europe paid Vancouver debts, and the US, Canadian and European groups formed the new umbrella organisation, Greenpeace International, headquartered in Netherlands.

Formation of Formal Global Organisation

In 1979, the original Vancouver-based Greenpeace Foundation encountered financial difficulties. Disputes between offices over fund-raising and organisational direction split the global movement. David McTaggart lobbied the Canadian Greenpeace Foundation to accept a new structure, which would bring the scattered Greenpeace offices under the auspices of a single global organisation. On October 14, 1979, the Greenpeace International came into existence. Under the new structure, the local offices would contribute a percentage of their income to the international organisation, which would take responsibility for setting the overall direction of the movement.

Greenpeace's transformation from a loose international network to a global organisation enabled it to apply the full force of its resources to a small number of environmental issues deemed of global significance, owing much to McTaggart's personal vision. McTaggart summed up his approach in a 1994 memo: "No campaign should be begun without clear goals; no campaign should be begun unless there is a possibility that it can

be won; no campaign should be begun unless you intend to finish it off". McTaggart's own assessment of what could and could not be won, as well as how, frequently caused controversy.

In re-shaping Greenpeace as a centrally coordinated, hierarchical organisation, McTaggart went against the anti-authoritarian ethos that prevailed in other environmental organisations that came of age in the 1970s. While this pragmatic structure granted Greenpeace the persistence and narrow focus necessary to match forces with government and industry, it would lead to the recurrent criticism that Greenpeace had adopted the same methods of governance as its chief foes, the multinational corporations.

For smaller actions and for continuous local promotion and activism, Greenpeace has networks of active supporters that coordinate their efforts through national offices. The United Kingdom has some 6,000 Greenpeace activists.

14.5.1 Campaigning Ships

Since Greenpeace was founded, sea-going ships have played a vital role in its campaigns. In 1978, Greenpeace launched the original Rainbow Warrior, a 40-metre (130 ft), former fishing trawler named for the Cree legend that inspired early activist Robert Hunter on the first voyage to Amchitka. Greenpeace purchased the Rainbow Warrior (originally launched as the Sir William Hardy in 1955) at a cost of £40,000. Volunteers restored and refitted it over a period of four months.

First deployed to disrupt the hunt of the Icelandic whaling fleet, the Rainbow Warrior would quickly become a mainstay of Greenpeace campaigns. Between 1978 and 1985, the crew members also engaged in non-violent direct action against the ocean-dumping of toxic and radioactive waste, the Grey Seal hunt in Orkney and nuclear testing in the Pacific. Japan's Fisheries Agency has labeled Greenpeace ships as "anti-whaling vessels" and "environmental terrorists".

In 1985, the Rainbow Warrior entered into the waters surrounding Mururoa Atoll, the site of French nuclear testing. The sinking of the Rainbow Warrior occurred when the French government secretly bombed the ship in Auckland harbour on orders from François Mitterrand himself. This killed the Dutch freelance photographer Fernando Pereira, who thought it was safe to enter the boat to get his photographic material after a first small explosion, but drowned as a result of a second, larger explosion. The attack was a public relations disaster for France after it was quickly exposed by the New Zealand police. The French Government in 1987 agreed to pay New Zealand compensation of NZ\$13 million and formally apologised for the bombing. The French Government also paid £ 2.3 million compensation to the family of the photographer.

In 1989, the Greenpeace commissioned a replacement vessel, also named the Rainbow Warrior, which remains in service today as the flagship of the Greenpeace fleet.

In 1996, the Greenpeace vessel MV Sirius was detained by the Dutch police while protesting the import of genetically modified soybeans due to the violation of a temporary sailing prohibition, which was implemented because the Sirius prevented their unloading. The ship, but not the captain, was released half an hour later.

In 2005, the Rainbow Warrior II ran aground on and damaged the Tubbataha Reef in the Philippines while she was, ironically, on a mission to protect the very same reef. Greenpeace was fined \$7,000 USD for damaging the reef and agreed to pay the fine, although it said that the Philippines government had given it outdated charts.

14.6 GREENPEACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

On August 21, 2007, Yvo de Boer, head of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), angered the environmental groups with his suggestion that “rich nations should be absolved from the need to cut emissions if they pay developing countries to do it on their behalf”. Doug Parr of Greenpeace opposed Mr. de Boer’s suggestion: “The current trading system is not delivering emissions reductions as it is ... Expanding it like this to give rich countries a completely free hand will simply not work.” On August 22, 2007, the Philippine Department of Energy’s plan to develop nuclear energy as an alternative source of power was opposed by Von Hernandez, campaign director of Greenpeace Southeast Asia, who warned that exploring nuclear options to bolster energy demand is “dangerous and misleading.” He said the risks of accidents like Chernobyl or the most recent Kashiwazaki nuclear plant leak in Japan after an earthquake are real.

Four Greenpeace activists breached security at Heathrow Airport on February 25, 2008 to climb on top of a British Airways plane and protest plans to build a third runway. On May 23, 2008, Greenpeace blocked coal shipments of Team Energy Philippines and the intention was to prevent expansion of coal power plants in the country. They sprayed a banner saying “Quit Coal” on the ship, but after negotiations they withdrew.

In August 2008, a Greenpeace ship started dropping 150 2-3 ton boulders into the North Sea in order to stop trawling, which it says harms marine life, demanding that Germany and the European Union implement a ban on heavy net bottom trawling in the protected area. The German fishermen said that the rocks could damage boats and threaten fishermen’s lives. The Federation of Fishermen Associations refused to talk with Greenpeace after the action and its president Ben Daalder made the statement “We don’t negotiate with a criminal organisation.”

In September 2008, 6 Greenpeace activists who damaged a chimney at a power plant in the UK were declared “not guilty” of property destruction by a jury because they argued, through James Hansen, who supported them in person, that they actually prevented greater property destruction due to climate change.

14.6.1 Criticism

Greenpeace has at times been criticised for pursuing an environmental issue at the expense of legitimate social or economic concerns. For example, in the mid 1980s, Greenpeace was criticised for advocating the “zero kill” of baby harp seals in Newfoundland, Canada, because the organisation failed to consider the effects it would have on the indigenous people. Seal hunting not only provides a subsistence livelihood for many Newfoundlanders and Eskimos but the practice also holds important cultural meaning for hunters. After this issue was brought to Greenpeace’s attention, the organisation modified its position to oppose large-scale government subsidised hunts and to support subsistence hunts which have helped people meet their clothing and food needs for centuries.

In 1984, the Greenpeace was criticised by the New Jersey’s Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) for failing to consider the economic and job loss implications for their campaign against the discharge of toxic waste into the Atlantic Ocean from Ciba Geigy’s chemical plant. Although Greenpeace had networked with local environmental groups, it failed to contact the union despite objections from some Greenpeace campaigners. The snub backfired as potential allies turned into enemies and the union launched a

statewide smear campaign against Greenpeace. It took several years of working with unions during subsequent campaigns against polluting chemical companies before Greenpeace gained the union's trust, respect, and at times, assistance.

14.6.2 Major Accomplishments

Noteworthy Greenpeace accomplishments include securing a ban on hazardous waste trade from highly industrialised nations to less-industrialised ones; scuttling oil industry plans to bury the Brent Spar oil rig off the British coast; achieving a moratorium on the planting of genetically engineered crops in Europe; and eliminating toxic (polyvinyl chloride) plastic in baby toys manufactured by a leading toy company. At the political level, Greenpeace has helped persuade national governments to adopt international agreements that curtail environmentally destructive practices worldwide. These agreements include also establishing Antarctica as a world park, a global moratorium on the burning of toxic waste at sea and a global moratorium on nuclear waste dumping at sea and commercial whaling.

14.6.3 Connecting Social and Environmental Consequences

Greenpeace illuminates the connections between the social and environmental consequences of global industrial and agricultural production. For example, during protests against Dutch Royal Shell's oil drilling operations in Ogoniland, Nigeria, Greenpeace witnessed the company's pipelines leaking and parching the Earth in local communities. When the Nigerian government hanged nine local activists in 1995 for demanding that Dutch Royal Shell clean up its operations, Greenpeace denounced both the human and environmental abuses suffered by the Ogoni people. Similarly, in Bhopal, India, Greenpeace has participated in protests against Union Carbide (now Dow) for its failure to compensate more than 150,000 people still suffering the ill-effects from the gas leak at its pesticide plant in 1984. Greenpeace has joined local groups in their demand for health care, compensation, and environmental reparations.

In 2002, when the US government responded to the hunger epidemic in Zambia by offering genetically engineered (GE) corn against the will of the people, Greenpeace publicly demanded that the United States instead donate some of its vast supply of non-GE food stocks.

In the future, it is likely that the Greenpeace will be increasingly challenged to address social issues within the context of its environmental framework. Terrorist attacks such as the one that devastated New York City's World Trade Centre in 2001 and the subsequent reinvigoration of armed forces around the world heighten this challenge as Greenpeace seeks to define a "green" peace within a politically sensitive climate. Thus one of the greatest challenges for Greenpeace remains how to situate its campaigns within broad global, economic, and geopolitical frameworks without losing sight of its environmental mission.

14.7 SUMMARY

Greenpeace remains one of the premier environmental organisations, combining the traditional political activities and coalitions with nonviolent direct action. It is largely because of its innovative uses of nonviolent action, it has had a large influence on both the agenda of the global environmental movement and various national and international policies. Its activists spearhead six major campaigns to (1) stop global warming, (2) save

ancient forests, (3) eliminate toxic chemical production and pollution, (4) halt the genetic engineering of food, (5) achieve a nuclear-free future, and (6) protect the world's oceans.

14.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Why is Greenpeace called a peaceful non-violent movement?
2. What are the early accomplishments of Greenpeace?
3. How has Greenpeace contributed to anti-nuclear movements?
4. What kind of criticism has Greenpeace attracted for its activities?
5. What accomplishments can Greenpeace be credited with?

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UNIT 15 ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Structure

15.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

15.2 What is *Apartheid* System?

15.2.1 *Apartheid* Laws before 1948

15.2.2 Institutionalisation of *Apartheid*: *Apartheid* Laws after 1948

15.3 Origin of AAM: Gandhi's Contribution

15.4 AAM: Role, Impact and Strategies

15.4.1 Struggle against *Apartheid*: Role of ANC and African Leaders

15.5 The Role of the United Nations and its Impact

15.6 Summary

15.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

15.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has the distinction of being the only country in the world which adopted the policy of officially discriminating its citizens on the basis of race/colour of the skin. This system of official racial discrimination in South Africa was in existence for almost 90 years, whereas, the *apartheid* system continued for four and half decades (1948-1994). Such inhuman system continued due to the support extended to South Africa by major Western States which had huge investments. Those who opposed *apartheid* were either put in jails, without trials sometime or killed. Though the United Nations was seized of the question of racial discrimination and *apartheid* in South Africa since 1946, its pressure had only the weight of moral and international public opinion. The strong Anti-Apartheid Movement (hereafter, AAM) launched inside and outside South Africa played a significant role in dismantling the apartheid system in 1994.

Aims and Objectives

This unit will enable you to understand:

- The meaning, manifestations and legal structure of *apartheid* system as it prevailed in South Africa till 1994.
- Gandhi's contribution in laying the foundation of AAM in South Africa.
- The role / the involvement of the United Nations to solve *apartheid* system in South Africa.
- The role, impact and strategies of AAM.

- The role of ANC, its leaders, and mass of its supporters in resisting / opposing the *apartheid* regime.

15.2 WHAT IS APARTHEID SYSTEM?

Apartheid is Afrikaans word (literally “apart-hood”) meaning racial segregation as practised by the National Party which came to power in South Africa in 1948. The UN adopted the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of *Apartheid* in 1973, in which *apartheid* has been declared as “a crime against humanity and that inhuman acts resulting from the policies of apartheid ... are crimes violating the principles of international law, in particular the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations....” The Convention also provides a definition of *apartheid* in its Article II, as applying “to the following inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination by one racial group of persons over any other racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them”: (a) denial of right to life; murder; infliction upon the racial group/s serious bodily or mental harm by subjecting them to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment; deliberate imposition of living conditions calculated to cause the members of the racial group their physical destruction in whole or in part; any legislative / other measures calculated to prevent a racial group from participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of a country and the deliberate creation of conditions preventing the full development of such a group, in particular by denying to members of a racial group/s basic human rights and freedoms; any measures, including legislative ones, designed to divide the population along racial lines by the creation of separate reserves and ghettos for the members of a racial group/s, the prohibition of mixed marriages among members of various racial groups, the expropriation of landed property belonging to a racial group; exploitation of the labour of the members of a racial group/s, in particular by submitting them to forced labour; and, persecution of organizations and persons, by depriving them of their fundamental rights and freedoms, because they oppose *apartheid*. After reading the following sections in the Unit, you will able to fully understand the definition of *apartheid* as it appears in the Convention.

15.2.1 *Apartheid* Laws Before 1948

Though *apartheid* system was institutionalised in 1948, the previous governments in South Africa had passed many laws during the 19th and first half of the 20th century, which were precursors of *apartheid*. The British colonial rulers had enacted Pass Laws during the 19th century, which restricted the movements of blacks into the areas occupied by whites and coloured. Blacks were not allowed on to the streets of towns in the Cape Colony and Natal after dark and had to carry their passes at all times. Important legislations passed between 1905 and 1946 imposed many restrictions on blacks and Indians. In 1905 the General Pass Regulation Bill denied blacks the right to vote, limited them to fixed areas and inaugurated the infamous Pass System. Then followed the Asiatic Registration Act (1906) requiring all Indians to register and carry passes, the South Africa Act (1910) that enfranchised whites, giving them complete political control over all other race groups and removing the right of blacks to sit in Parliament, the Native Land Act (1913) which prevented blacks from buying land outside “reserves”. Some Bills introduced residential segregation and some prevented blacks from practising skilled trades. The Asiatic Land Tenure Act (1946) banned any further sale of land to Asians.

15.2.3 Institutionalisation of Apartheid: Apartheid Laws after 1948

With the installation of Daniel Malan's government in 1948, the process of institutionalisation of *apartheid* system began. Malan of Nationalist Party became the first *apartheid* Prime Minister, as government passed many laws to institutionalise *apartheid*. The state passed laws which paved the way for "grand *apartheid*", which was centred on separating races on a large-scale, by compelling people to live in separate places defined by race. In addition, "petty apartheid" laws were passed. Following were the principal *apartheid* laws.

The first grand *apartheid* law was Population Registration Act of 1950. It classifies every person in South Africa by "race" into such groups as a white, coloured, African or Asian. Once classified and issued an identity card to that effect, it determines where one can live, which schools one can attend, job reservations on the basis of skin colour and also separate health services for blacks, whites and coloured. Official teams or Boards were established to come to an ultimate conclusion on those people whose race was unclear. This caused much difficulty, especially for coloured people, separating their families as members were allocated different races.

The second pillar of grand *apartheid* was the Group Areas Act of 1950. Until then, most settlements had people of different races living side by side. This Act put an end to diverse areas and determined where one lived according to race. Each race was allotted its own area, which was used in later years as a basis of forced removal. Further, the Act reserves 87 per cent of the land for the whites constituting 4.5 million people; it reserves only 13 per cent of the land for the 27 million blacks.

The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 prohibited marriage between persons of different races, and the Immorality Act of 1950 made sexual relations with a person of a different race a criminal offence. Under the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act of 1953, municipal grounds could be reserved for a particular race, creating, among other things, separate beaches, buses, hospitals, schools and universities. Signboards such as "whites only" applied to public areas, even including park benches. Black people were provided with services greatly inferior to those of whites, and, to a lesser extent, to those of Indians and coloured.

Further laws had the aim of suppressing resistance, especially armed resistance, to *apartheid*. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 banned the South African Communist Party and any other political party that the government chose to label as 'communist'. Disorderly gatherings were banned, as were certain organisations that were deemed threatening to the government.

Education was segregated by means of the 1953 Bantu Education Act, which crafted a separate system of education for African students and was designed to prepare blacks for lives as a labouring class. In 1959 separate universities were created for blacks, coloured and Indians. Existing universities were not permitted to enroll new black students. The Afrikaans Medium Decree of 1974 required the use of Afrikaans and English on an equal basis in high schools outside the homelands.

The Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 created separate government structures for blacks and was the first piece of legislation established to support the government's plan of separate development in the Bantustans. The Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1958 entrenched the National Party's policy of nominally independent "homelands" for black

people. The so-called “self-governing Bantu units” were proposed, which would have devolved administrative powers, with the promise later of autonomy and self-government. The Black Homeland Citizenship Act of 1970 marked a new phase in the Bantustan strategy. It changed the status of blacks so that they were no longer citizens of South Africa, but became citizens of one of the ten autonomous territories. The aim was to ensure whites became the demographic majority within South Africa by having all ten Bantustans choose “independence”.

During the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, the government implemented a policy of ‘resettlement’, to force people to move to their designated “group areas”. Some argue that over three and a half million people were forced to resettle during this period. These removals included people re-located due to slum clearance programmes, labour tenants on white-owned farms, the inhabitants of the so-called ‘black spots’, areas of black-owned land surrounded by white farms, the families of workers living in townships close to the homelands, and ‘surplus people’ from urban areas, including thousands of people from the Western Cape (which was declared a ‘Coloured Labour Preference Area’) who were moved to the Transkei and Ciskei homelands. The best-publicised forced removals of the 1950s occurred in Johannesburg, when 60,000 people were moved to the new township of Soweto, an abbreviation for South Western Townships.

Interracial contact in sport was frowned upon, but there were no segregatory sports laws. The government was able to keep sport segregated using other legislation, such as the Group Areas Act (1950).

The government tightened existing pass laws, compelling black South Africans to carry identity documents to prevent the migration of blacks to ‘white’ South Africa. For blacks, living in cities required employment. Families were excluded, thus separating wives from husbands and parents from children. Up until 1956, women were- for the most part - excluded from these *pass* requirements as attempts to introduce *pass laws* for women were met with fierce resistance. Thus, many other similar discriminatory laws were passed.

15.3 ORIGIN OF AAM: GANDHI’S CONTRIBUTION

The seeds of AAM in South Africa were sown by Gandhi. He established the first anti-colonial and anti-racial discrimination movement there and founded the Natal Indian Congress on 22 August 1894. When Gandhi learnt that the South African Government is likely to pass a law to disfranchise Indians, he urged the Indians to protest. On his suggestion a petition was sent to the South African legislature on 28 June 1894. Wide publicity of the petition was made. Despite the Indian opposition the Bill was passed. Gandhi sent another petition to Lord Rippon, Secretary of Colonies in London. Ten thousand Indians signed this petition. Lord Rippon disallowed the Disfranchising Bill. Thus the petitioner Gandhi succeeded.

Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* experiment began in 1906. He opposed the 1906 legislation requiring the registration of Asians. Opposing this law, thousands of Asians boycotted registration. Gandhi and his satyagrahis were arrested and the jails were full. Following an agreement between General Smuts, the Prime Minister, and Gandhi, an agreement was evolved whereby the Indians would voluntarily register and the Registration Act would be repealed thereafter. Gen. Smuts, however, went back on his words and did not repeal the Act. Then Gandhi began his *Satyagraha* and asked Indians to burn the passes, which led to the arrest of thousands of Indians. Gandhi’s *Satyagraha* reached its climax in 1913

with the epic march of 5000 workers indentured on the coal mines of Natal. This event evoked a massive response from the Indian women who, in turn, provoked the Indian workers to come out on strike. That was the beginning of the marches to freedom and mass stay-away-from work which became a characteristic feature of AAM in later years.

When Gandhi left South Africa in 1915, he had left behind his legacy- Phoenix Settlement (in which he placed his third son Manilal in charge of his work there), the Natal Indian Congress and Transvaal Indian Congress and the weapon of Satyagraha to struggle against the racial discrimination policies. In 1946, Manilal played a leading role in a major campaign of protest against new laws that discriminated against the persons of Indian origin. The Satyagraha continued for two years, with mass rallies and the picketing of and squatting on land reserved for 'whites-only occupation'. Indians of all classes were involved and around 2000 were jailed. Although confined to the Indian community, many blacks were deeply impressed by the power of the protest. As Nelson Mandela later wrote:

It instilled a spirit of defiance and radicalism among the people, broke the fear of prison, and boosted the popularity and influence of the NIC [Natal Indian Congress] and TIC [Transvaal Indian Congress]. They reminded us that the freedom struggle was not merely a question of making speeches, holding meetings, passing resolutions and sending deputations, but of meticulous organization, militant mass action and, above all, the willingness to suffer and sacrifice. The Indians' campaign harkened back to the 1913 passive resistance in which Mahatma Gandhi led a tumultuous procession of Indians crossing illegally from Natal to the Transvaal. That was history; this campaign was taking place before my own eyes. (Mandela, p.98)

Blacks felt a novel sense of solidarity with a community hitherto regarded by them as being little better than lackeys of the whites (Mandela, pp.97-98 and 119).

15.4 AAM: ROLE, IMPACT AND STRATEGIES

The AAM was the first successful transnational social movement in the 20th century. What is unique about the AAM is the extent of support it received from individuals, governments and organisations on all continents. Few social movements in history have garnered anywhere near the international support that was mobilised against the racist *apartheid* regime in South Africa. Although national liberation and Marxism might both be considered as successful trans-national social movements, neither of these had the global support that the anti-apartheid movement garnered.

There were two main aspects of the AAM: the internal campaign to destabilise the racist apartheid regime in South Africa, and the external campaign for political, economic, and cultural sanctions. At the heart of the movement was the struggle of black Africans to end white supremacy in South Africa. This internal movement was both a catalyst for actions at the international level and the critical link that gave coherence to the movement as a whole. The external effort can be divided into two fronts: (1) regional efforts to provide military bases, material, and diplomatic support for liberation movements; and (2) the diaspora movement, which focused on seeking international sanctions against the regime and providing direct aid to the liberation movements.

There were three phases of AAM. **First**, the resistance movement responded with nonviolent direct-action tactics under the leadership of organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Indian

National Congress (INC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). On May 1, 1950, this coalition organised a national strike to oppose the Suppression of Communism Act. When thousands of workers boycotted their jobs, the government responded by sending troops to the townships, and eighteen workers were killed. Nevertheless, the coalition called another strike for June 26, and workers again responded in good numbers. These strikes were a prelude to the mass civil-disobedience campaigns of 1952-1953 known collectively as the “Campaign of Defiance of Unjust Laws.” Between June and December 1952, thousands of activists were arrested for defying petty *apartheid* laws, such as “whites only” drinking fountains, train compartments, and waiting rooms. The ANC’s volunteer-in-chief Nelson Mandela made hundreds of speeches across the country urging black people to defy apartheid laws, and the government responded by shooting demonstrators and arresting movement leaders, including Mandela; Yusuf Dadoo, president of the INC; and J. B. Marks of the Mineworkers Union.

In the 1960s, the apartheid regime responded to the internal struggle by declaring emergency, banning anti-apartheid organisations such as the SACP, ANC, and PAC. In response, the liberation movement went underground and into exile where they launched the second phase of the movement: the armed struggle. This was the **second phase**, which was characterised by the internationalisation of the struggle, with support from the African Union (previously OAU – Organization of African Unity). The exiles acquired bases of operation, military training, and political education through both the AU and a coalition of South Africa’s neighbours known as the “Frontline States”. The apartheid regime responded by attacking its neighbours – Angola, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

In the 1980s, the movement entered a **third stage**: massive resistance. The movement reached its climax in this stage, which was characterised by the determination of anti-apartheid activists within South Africa to make the country ungovernable through strikes, boycotts, demonstrations, and acts of sabotage. In 1983 a coalition of the internal organisations and church groups formed the United Democratic Front to lead the new phase of the movement. In an attempt to split the opposition, the regime offered Indians and Coloured (people of mixed race background) limited franchise in the elections of 1984. The strategy failed, however, and instead galvanised further acts of civil disobedience and sabotage. Moreover, the international anti-apartheid movement had matured, and most countries in the world had imposed military and economic sanctions against South Africa.

Thus, it was the combined pressures of international sanctions and internal strife that led to the demise of the apartheid state. The retreat began with the repealing of the pillars of apartheid legislation, beginning with the repeal of the pass laws in 1986. By 1990 the government had lifted the ban on the SACP, ANC, and PAC and repealed the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts, the Population Registration Act, and the Separate Amenities Act. Nelson Mandela was released in 1991, having spent twenty-seven years in prison. Four years later, on May 10, 1994, Mandela became the President of South Africa.

In England the AAM was established in 1959 in which leaders and people from Britain, African nations and from Commonwealth participated. It was a very active movement and achieved much. Three of its achievements were to lobby successfully in 1961 with Commonwealth to expel South Africa from the Organization (when the Canadian Prime Minister moved a resolution in 1961 Commonwealth conference that every Commonwealth country should agree to adopt a Bill of Rights, the next day South Africa resigned from the Organization), securing the exclusion of South Africa from Olympic sport and the

imposition of sanctions by the UN against South Africa. The idea on which the Movement was based was very simple. The boycott call was essentially an appeal from the people of South Africa not to collaborate with apartheid. As Julius Nyerere said in 1959 “We are not asking you, the British people, for anything special. We are just asking you to withdraw your support from apartheid by not buying South African goods”. Father Huddleston, of course, was far more passionate at that founding meeting in demanding an end to collaboration with an evil ideology that amounted to a blasphemy against God. And there were others who used different bases for trying to mobilise people to support the boycott. The members of AAM adopted a novel method of boycotting South African produces; they would go into British shops to buy oranges and would say “where are these from”? Knowing that they were from South Africa, “Oh! South African, no thank you” walking out as though the shop stank.

15.4.1 Struggle against Apartheid: Role of ANC and African Leaders

For nearly 80 years, the ANC was the primary source of AAM. Prior to the 1940s, its activity had remained strictly political. Its leaders and the nationalists were continuously resisting the policies of *apartheid* regime through Gandhian tactics of non-violence and constitutional forms of protest. In 1949, it made a change from the strictly constitutional protest of the past to peaceful yet unlawful demonstrations. To facilitate this, it launched the Defiance Campaign of 1950. This Campaign was the beginning of mass movement of resistance to *apartheid*. The Campaign adopted in 1955 “Freedom Charter” and submitted it to the government. The government claimed it was a Communist document and arrested leaders of ANC and other political organisations who had collaborated with ANC to draft the Charter. In 1960, the ANC was declared an unlawful organisation. They decided to defy this decree and went underground. Though it still believed in non-violent methods to deal with *apartheid*, the government was intimidating the people by establishing harsher laws and penalties and dispatching military forces into African townships. It may be noted that in March 1960, several thousand Africans had assembled at Sharpeville to demonstrate against “the pass law” (the passes issued to South African blacks which restricted their movements to limited areas) and to get them arrested. **It is horrifying to note that the South African authorities not only sought to terrify them with low-flying jets but ordered police to open fire. As a result, 69 Africans were killed in firing, and 180 wounded.**

The ANC was in a difficult position and after much deliberation decided that violent forms of political protest were inevitable, as the outlets for peaceful protest had been banned. In 1961, feeling they had been left with no other choice, the ANC took up arms against the South African government. The Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) organisation was formed to carry out acts of sabotage by attacking strategic buildings of significance to the white government. In a span of 18 months, MK carried out 200 acts of sabotage. The government threatened to take strong action, but the morale of the black population was only strengthened.

Despite the efforts of the ANC, the *apartheid* system continued to grow stronger and exert more control over the people’s lives. In the 1970’s, increasing prices made it more difficult to survive on small incomes. Strikes broke out and workers walked away from jobs demanding higher wages. Fed up with the situation, student anger exploded in June of 1976. More than 10,000 students engaged in peaceful protest against coercive use of

Afrikaans at schools. Feeling threatened, police unjustifiably opened fire on the students. This led to an uprising that spread to other parts of the country. In the end, over 1000 blacks were dead, killed by police. The most serious incident happened in Soweto, where school children were demonstrating against the *apartheid* system and demanding education in English. More than 2000 policemen were trying to control the crowd. The policemen, instead of using humane and simpler methods to control the crowd, resorted to firing, in which (as their own report stated) around 100 people had been killed and more than 800 injured.

Despite stiff and organised resistance to *apartheid* system, the Pretoria regime was engaged in indiscriminate killings and arrests of thousands of blacks who opposed the policy of *apartheid*. Citing some of the facts from the 1980s is a sufficient attestation to establish the horrendous scenario of White oppression of blacks, which in a way was the order of the day, in South Africa. For instance, in 1982 over 4,400 people were convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act and other provisions. Between 1981 and 1986, mass protests and demonstrations against *apartheid* led to the conviction of 44,300 people of whom 8,200 were less than 18 years old. According to a study conducted at the University of Cape Town, eight million men and women were arrested or prosecuted under the pass laws. Under the Terrorist Act of 1967, and the 90-day detention provision of 1963, thousands of persons were arrested for indefinite period and detained without trial. In February 1981, South African Prison Population stood at 104,622, about 38.4 per cent more than the jails could accommodate (Banerjee, p.6). During 1985-86 (i.e. just in 20 months) the death toll of anti-*apartheid* demonstrations had reached the figure of 1,700. Joseph N. Garba (Nigeria), the Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid*, in a statement said that on 12 February 1987, South African authorities had acknowledged in Parliament that they were detaining children aged 11 years or younger and that a total of more than 13,000 persons had been in detention. The UN Secretary General, expressing his deep concern, had said on 17 December 1986 that the South African authorities have reported that 256 children between the ages of 11 and 15 were being held under emergency regulations. The previous day, Desmond Tutu, while meeting the Secretary General at the UN Headquarters had informed that many of the detained children have been made to share accommodation with "hardened criminals" (Vijapur, pp. 112-13).

As a result of growing opposition to *apartheid* regime the government declared a state of emergency in some parts of South Africa in July 1985, which lasted for six months. Eventually the national state of emergency was declared in June 1986, which lasted till 1990. In February 1990, the *apartheid* regime was forced to officially recognise the ANC and other affiliated organisations. This recognition indicated the government's possible willingness to solve South Africa's problems peacefully. In 1991 Mandela was elected as President of ANC, who later became first President of the multi-racial South Africa.

Let us now discuss about the Key Figures in AMM from South Africa. Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo, Stephen Biko, Desmond Tutu, Joe Slovo, and Nelson Mandela were some of the prominent leaders. Luthuli was President of ANC from 1952 to 1960. He received Nobel Peace Prize for his opposition to racial violence in 1960. Tambo was acting President of ANC in 1967 and President in 1977. Biko was founder and leader of the Black Consciousness Movement. He was also the founder and first President of all black South African Students Organisation in 1969. He died while in police custody as a result of severe beatings. Biko was the subject of the film "Cry Freedom" directed by Sir

Richard Attenborough in 1987 (Attenborough had earlier made the film “Gandhi”). Desmond Tutu chose to seek peaceful negotiations between blacks and whites as a means of bringing an end to apartheid. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. Slovo was one of the most influential **white South Africans** who fought apartheid. He was a member of the Communist Party. Nelson Mandela, who had joined ANC in 1942, was the most prominent leader in organising the mass civil disobedience campaign against apartheid. In 1964 he was sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage. He remained in jail for 27 years and later shared, in 1993, the Nobel Peace Prize with de Klerk.

15.5 THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS IMPACT

No other issue has engaged the United Nations, almost from its inception, for as long a time as that of South Africa and its policy of *apartheid*. Both the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted more than 500 resolutions / recommendations concerning the racial policy of South Africa constituting probably the largest number addressed to a single country on a single issue. It may be noted that India brought, as a complaint, the question of human rights in South Africa to the General Assembly as early as in 1946. The Indian complaint was concerned with the treatment of the people of Indian origin (later, it was re-titled as Indo-Pakistan origin) in South Africa who were discriminated by the Racist Government of South Africa. Initially, the Government of South Africa and some Western Powers considered that the question of human rights fell exclusively within the domestic jurisdiction of member States, in which the United Nations cannot interfere. Six years later, another question entitled “Race conflict in the Union of South Africa Resulting from the Policy of *Apartheid*” was brought to the Assembly by 13 Arab and Asian States, including India. In their complaint, these States argued that the gross violation of human rights in South Africa not only constituted a breach of the UN Charter obligations but also constituted a threat to international peace and security under Chapter VII of the Charter (which enabled the UN to take enforcement measures, including sanctions). This charge made against South Africa in 1952 remained valid till 1994. With the coming into power of a multi-racial democratic government in South Africa replacing *apartheid* regime in 1994, the UN discontinued its discussion of this question.

On the broad aspects of *apartheid*, the General Assembly annually adopted resolutions requesting: (1) South Africa to modify its policies; (2) member States to take retaliatory action against South Africa; (3) special committees to study the situation and recommend action; (4) the Security Council to use economic sanctions or to consider the expulsion of South Africa from the United Nations; and (5) the specialized agencies to take by all appropriate means to apply pressure on South Africa to modify its policies. In 1962, the General Assembly requested member States to: (1) break off diplomatic relations with South Africa; close their ports to South African vessels; (3) forbid their ships to enter South African ports; (4) prohibit all imports from or exports to South Africa, specially sales of arms or ammunition to that country; and (5) refuse landing rights to all South African aircraft. An additional resolution had called for dissemination of information concerning the apartheid policies. **In a 1971 resolution apartheid was declared as a “crime against humanity”.** Another resolution reaffirmed the recognition of the legitimacy of the struggle of the people of South Africa to eliminate apartheid by all means at their disposal and to attain majority rule in the country by universal suffrage. These resolutions/recommendations (as they represent only moral weight) have made little apparent impact on the leaders of South Africa; new legislative measures were enacted from time to time

to reinforce apartheid policies. In protest over the General Assembly's invasion of what South Africa claims to be a matter of domestic jurisdiction, that government for three years, beginning in 1955, refused to participate in General Assembly sessions and has subsequently refused to attend any committee meetings dealing with the *apartheid* issue. In a reverse move, the Assembly in 1970, for the first time, questioned the legitimacy of the credentials of the South African delegation to the Assembly, but on technical grounds the delegates were allowed to participate in spite of this manifestation of disapproval.

There have been in the 1970's suggestions from some members that South Africa should be expelled or suspended from the United Nations. The Assembly Resolution 2505 (xxiv) welcomed the Manifesto on South Africa (S/7754) which *inter alia*, urged the exclusion of South Africa from the UN. Later, in 1974, when the Credentials Committee of the Assembly rejected South Africa's credentials on the ground that the white minority regime, because of its policy of *apartheid*, could not represent the 80 per cent of the country's black population, the Security Council extensively discussed the question of South Africa's membership in the United Nations. **Thus from 1974 to 1994 South Africa was not allowed to participate in General Assembly sessions.** However, the resolution which sought to expel South Africa was finally defeated by three vetoes cast by the United States, United Kingdom and France. **This was the first time in the history of the United Nations that three vetoes were cast.** This shows how some of the great powers were directly supporting *apartheid* regime.

The Security Council first got involved in the apartheid question in 1960 after the Sharpeville incident (discussed above). It adopted a resolution stating that a continuation of South Africa's racial policies might endanger international peace and security. Some members of the Security Council have not been willing to impose sweeping sanctions, as reflected in 1962 Resolution of the General Assembly, but in 1963 the Council called on all States to embargo the sale of arms, ammunition, and military vehicles to South Africa, including equipment or materials for arms manufacture in South Africa.

By 1977, the Western Powers had dramatically altered their position and supported the passage of Security Council Resolution 418. This resolution condemned the South African use of violence against black dissidents and the "defiant continuance" of the *apartheid* system and called for strengthening of the 1963 arms embargo. The most significant feature of this resolution is that it established that the South African policies and acts constituted a threat to international peace and security under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, a careful reading of this resolution reveals that though it termed export of arms to South Africa a threat to the peace and invoked mandatory arms embargo, it did not declare explicitly that the internal situation of South Africa constituted a threat to peace.

It must be noted that the 1977 arms embargo remained only on paper as far as the major Western powers were concerned. The clandestine arms trade of Western States with South Africa continued to flourish. Therefore, the General Assembly urged the Security Council to impose comprehensive mandatory sanctions. Attempts to pass such a resolution in 1981 and 1988 were vetoed by France (in 1981 only), U.K. and USA.

There had been a great cumulative effect of UN resolutions and condemnations of South Africa's policy of *apartheid*. At the outset, it seems there was no impact whatsoever of the United Nations on the *apartheid* regime, but one can cite examples to highlight the UN influence. The first reaction to the ever increasing concern of the international

community with *apartheid* came from South Africa itself. In response to the UNESCO's Programme adopted in 1956 which, *inter alia*, would launch studies of race and race relations, South Africa withdrew from the Organization. Since on 5 December 1963, FAO adopted a resolution stating that South Africa would no longer be invited to participate in its activities, South Africa withdrew from its membership. Due to ILO's programme of action for the elimination of apartheid in labour matters, South Africa withdrew from the Organization in 1966. Also the WHO suspended its voting rights in 1964. In 1964, the Universal Postal Union (UPU) became the first inter-governmental organisation to expel South Africa from membership for maintaining its policy of *apartheid*. From 1964 the UPU adopted an annual resolution excluding South African participation in the deliberations of the Union. Similarly in 1960, as a result of a prolonged and bitter discussion of South Africa's racial policies at the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth of Nations.

It is also gratifying to note that the United Nations has adopted three important human rights Conventions to deal with the problem of racial discrimination. They are: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973), and the International Convention against Apartheid in Sports (1985).

As rhetoric (and also as lip-sympathy) many States had called upon the Security Council to impose effective sanctions against South Africa, but most of them were not really serious/ sincere in their assertions. For instance, most States, which had often spoken strongly in support of South African people, had not adhered to the Council and Assembly resolutions on arms embargo and severance of diplomatic/trade relations with South Africa. It is interesting to note that, in 1979, according to an estimation of *New York Times* (9 April 1979, p.1) as many as 25 African nations, including some of the outspoken critics of *apartheid* regime, were engaged in \$1 billion a year trade with South Africa. The bulk of this clandestine trade has involved food and other items. Among the Great Powers, the UK's trade involvement and investment in South Africa was so profound that the effective sanctions would have threatened the viability of the British economy. This was the main reason for Britain's opposition for UN action/sanctions against South Africa. It may be noted that by 1980s, the Western investments had reached unprecedented heights. According to the report of *The Times of India* (9 August 1986), the investments of these States were as follows: Britain: \$ 12,000 million; USA: \$ 10,000 million; West Germany: \$ 2,000 million; France: \$ 1,500 million and Switzerland: \$ 1,000 million.

Concluding the discussion, it can be said that due to the double standards in the policies of member States (which are governed by their national interests), lack of strong political will and sincerity in their approach, and the lack of unanimity among Great Powers, the *apartheid* system remained intact so long. But we should not be pessimistic to conclude that the UN impact was nil or minimal. On the UN influence, one can agree with the analysis of Moses Moskowitz, who asserted that "but for the concerted drive against the policy of *apartheid*, the question of human rights would likely to have long ago disappeared from the active agenda of the United Nations." He believes that hostility toward South Africa's racial policies has provided a political motive force which a more general effort on behalf of human rights "could not even remotely command" (Cited in Vijapur, p.112). Moreover, on the impact of UN--imposed sanctions, one study concludes that they did influence the racist government. It sifts abundant data to suggest that the

sanctions had adverse impact on South African economy, and hence on white living standards. This was seen as a threat both by the business community and by the government; that is why the *apartheid* regime negotiated with African National Congress and other parties for the creation of a “new South Africa,” which became a reality in 1994.

15.6 SUMMARY

In South Africa, racial discrimination was an official policy of the white minority government for over 80 years. Gandhi laid the foundation of AAM in the first decade of the 20th century, which got matured, enlarged with mass following with the involvement of ANC and its affiliated bodies and other political organisations. Since the 1950s ANC has been at the forefront to run this AAM. Initially, African leaders and organisations used the Gandhian method of non-violence to resolve *apartheid*. Subsequently, they were compelled by South African authorities to use violent measures to achieve their goal of dismantling *apartheid*. During their long struggle against apartheid thousands of people and many of their leaders lost their lives. The AAM got international support from the AU, the UN, and the Commonwealth. The UN even debated and voted to expel South Africa from the UN in the 1970s. The UN not only adopted three important human rights instruments to deal with the problem of racial discrimination, but also imposed arms embargo and sanctions against South Africa. The AAM was the first successful transnational social movement in the modern world. Although national liberation and Marxism might both be considered as successful transnational social movements, neither of these had the global support that the AAM garnered.

15.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define the *apartheid* system.
2. Briefly discuss the features of the *apartheid* laws passed by South African Government before and after 1948.
3. What was the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to AAM?
4. Examine the role of the United Nations to bring an end of the *apartheid* regime. Why was the UN not very successful in dismantling *apartheid*?
5. Discuss the role, impact and strategies of AAM adopted by people inside and outside South Africa.

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UNIT 16 SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT IN POLAND

Structure

- 16.1 Introduction
 - Aims and Objectives
- 16.2 History of Solidarity
 - 16.2.1 The Origin
 - 16.2.2 The New Power
- 16.3 The Solidarity
 - 16.3.1 The Underground Phase
- 16.4 Catholics, Conscience and History
- 16.5 Soviet Fissures
 - 16.5.1 The Shape of the Struggle
 - 16.5.2 Influence Abroad
- 16.6 Fall of Communism
- 16.7 Summary
- 16.8 Terminal Questions
 - Suggested Readings

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Poland is an ancient nation that was conceived near the middle of the 10th century. Its golden age occurred in the 16th century. During the following century, the strengthening of the gentry and internal disorders weakened the nation. In a series of agreements between 1772 and 1795, Russia, Prussia and Austria partitioned Poland amongst themselves. Poland regained its independence in 1918 only to be overrun by Germany and the Soviet Union in World War II. It became a Soviet satellite state following the war, but its government was comparatively tolerant and progressive. The Labour turmoil in 1980 led to the formation of the independent trade union “Solidarity” that over time became a political force and by 1990 swept parliamentary elections and the presidency.

“Solidarity” was the first non-communist trade union in a communist country. In the 1980s, it constituted a broad anti-communist social movement. The government attempted to destroy the union during the period of martial law in the early 1980s and several years of repression, but in the end it had to start negotiating with the union. The Roundtable Talks between the government and Solidarity-led opposition led to semi-free elections in 1989. By the end of August, a Solidarity-led coalition government was formed and in December, Lech Walesa was elected as the President of Poland. Since then it has become a more traditional trade union.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this unit, you should be able to understand:

- The non-violent solidary Movement in Poland,

- Different classes that worked for this movement,
- The fall of Communism in Poland.

16.2 HISTORY OF SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

The Solidarity movement of Poland was one of the most dramatic developments in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. It was not a movement that began in 1980 but rather a continuation of a working class and Polish intelligentsia movement that began in 1956 and continued in two other risings, in 1970 and 1976. The most significant of these risings began in the shipyards of the “Triple City”, Gdansk, Sopot and Gdynia in the 1970. The first and by far the most violent and bloody of the workers revolts came in June of 1956, when at least 75 people died in the industrial city of Poznan. The third uprising took place in 1976 with workers striking in Warsaw, and rioting in the city of Radom.

16.2.1 The Origin

The ‘Polish October’ of 1956 did not begin with Stalin’s death in 1953. In fact, Poland was quite calm, in stark contrast to other Eastern bloc countries. While demonstrations took place in Plzen, Czechoslovakia and a revolt was taking place in East Germany in mid-June, Poland was slow to follow the ‘New Course’ that was being offered by neighbouring countries. This was the result of a much slower relaxation than the other countries experienced. Regardless, the social and intellectual unrest began building up; with collectivisation being slackened and censorship showing cracks, the nation had a sense that a new start must be made.

The Polish intelligentsia was one of the most important groups to emerge during this period. The Polish intelligentsia is, and remains, a distinct social class that is composed of those with a higher education, or those who at least share similar tastes. The Polish intelligentsia originated in the nineteenth century, when Polish nobility moved to the cities to occupy itself with literature, art and revolutionary politics, due to its loss of estates and land. This distinct social group was feared and recognised by both Stalin and Hitler; 50 per cent of the Polish lawyers and doctors and 40 per cent of Polish university professors were murdered in the World War II. The re-emergence of this group leading to the “Polish October” is significant in that it would play a crucial role 25 years later. Unfortunately, for Poland, the Polish intelligentsia and the working class often led separate uprisings, and had trouble connecting in the causes that they were fighting for.

Many events and reasons, many similar to that of 1980 culminated in the uprisings in October, and the crackdown that followed. The focus has to be put primarily on the fact that it was only in part a workers rebellion, because the workers’ movement in Poznan had no central structure or leadership. It was instead a rebellion of the intelligentsia, which was in a system that denied them access to the elite. The intelligentsia did not put both the movements together; the different social classes were divided in what they wanted. It is incredulous that the intelligentsia did not look to make a concerted effort with the workers, as it would not do in 1970 or 1976.

16.2.2 The New Power

The following events were prelude to 1980, and they were tragic. On the twelfth of December 1970, a series of unexpected price changes were announced. Consumer goods only rose to a small percentage in price, but certain goods had huge price increases -

as high as seventeen percent. The next morning, around three thousand workers from the Lenin shipyard at Gdansk marched on to the provincial party headquarters. The workers were ordered back to work, and they incited a riot. The city militia could not hold the masses back, and on Tuesday, December 15, the workers at the Paris Commune Shipyard in Gdynia stopped work and demonstrated in the main streets. A general strike was announced in Gdansk, and the police opened fire on demonstrators. Men on both sides were killed. In the fighting, the Party building and the railway station were burnt down. The next day the rebellion spread to the towns of Slupsk and Eblag, and the workers at the Warski Shipyards in Szczecin were preparing to strike. Other cities were reportedly joining in.

On Wednesday, the workers began occupation strikes in factories. On Thursday morning, workers walking to the Paris Commune shipyard were fired on and at least thirteen of them were killed. Later that day, workers from the Szczecin shipyard surged out into the city, and street fighting, costing at least sixteen lives, continued through Friday. By Saturday, it appeared that a nation-wide strike would ensue. Twenty-one demands were drawn up by the workers, one of which asked for 'independent trade unions under the authority of the working class'. Although this was not achieved in 1970, it is apparent that this was clearly a marking of a new era in the thought process of Polish workers. The course of action that Prime Minister Gomulka took cost him his job, as he was the one who ordered the use of fire-arms against workers. Gomulka's fate was sealed and the reign of Giersk ensued.

The movement was far from over, but the most important developments had already happened. The lack of the Polish intelligentsia was apparent in a face to face meeting with Giersk, and other party officials, that the workers at the shipyards in Szczecin and Gdansk had on the 24th January, 1971. Giersk coerced the workers to stop the strike by appealing himself as Polish patriot, and a man who wanted to prevent Poland from collapse. These workers neither had the thought nor the conceptualisation that a collapse could very well be what Poland needed. The intellectuals could have done exactly what was done in 1980, the opportunity was just as ripe, but it passed, and another opportunity would not arise for another five years.

The government could do nothing but appeal to the workers to help them out; otherwise more demands would have to have been met by them. In mid-February, with uneasiness in the country, Giersk restored the old prices. This was the first time a decision by a communist government was overturned by the working class, the class that theoretically was in power.

Although a larger victory could have been had, the workers had no concept of overthrowing socialism; they merely wanted a better socialism. In 1976, another price increase went into effect, this time raising meat prices by as high as 69% and sugar prices by 100%. With memories of the successful 1970 campaign, on 25th June work stopped all over the country. Almost immediately Giersk repealed the increases. It was clear that the working class had a lot of power, power that it had not yet maximised, power that the intelligentsia was only beginning to see as a source for future social change.

16.3 THE SOLIDARITY

So far most of the work in revolutionising Poland was done by the workers. So where was the Polish intelligentsia that seemed to disappear from the landscape after the 1950s?

It was always there; while it was respected by the workers, the Polish intelligentsia had not worked very hard to unite itself with them. A social split existed that made the intelligentsia feel somewhat superior to the workers.

That view and feeling slowly changed, the biggest of these changes in the social thought appeared when the printings of illegal, uncensored leaflets and books by a group of intellectuals calling themselves the Committee for the Defense of Workers' Rights and the Movement for the Defense of Civil and Citizens' Rights emerged. In September of 1979, a press briefing by the Ministry of the Interior listed twenty-six 'anti-socialist' groups. These groups were not publicly denounced, but they were open to beatings and imprisonment by the secret police. One of the major events to occur in 1977 was an informal alliance between the Catholic Church and the opposition. The Church would be instrumental in uniting the cause of workers in the Baltic to those in other regions of the country.

On the other hand, Poland's economy showed disastrous results and fell by two percent in 1979. Industrial output was showing negative growth of five percent. From having one of the highest growth rates in the world, only five years later, Poland had an economy in such shambles that it was dependent on the Western financial institutions to keep functioning. The time was ripe for strike.

On 14th August 1980, the members of a little group called the Free Trade Union planned to start a strike at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, which employed 17,000 workers. The pretext was that a crane driver named Anna Walentynowicz would get her job back after being fired. The reason behind this was that she was one of the most powerful orators in the whole strike movement. They had tried to start a strike a month before under the pretext of a meat price increase, but they had failed. This time they brought posters and leaflets, which they promptly put up. They declared "We Demand the Reinstatement of Anna Walentynowicz and a Cost of Living Rise of 1,000 Zlotys".

It had an immediate effect as the people quickly gathered around to read the signs and leaflets, ignoring the party officials' calls to go back to work. The meeting started losing momentum as some workers began to go back to their jobs. At that moment, a man embittered by the deaths of the strikes of 1970, and maddened by being imprisoned over one hundred times, stepped out. He was still furious over being fired four years earlier from that very shipyard; he had a keen understanding of the workers struggles and started angry arguments with Klemens Gneich - the manager, who argued and pleaded with the workers not to form a strike committee. Lech Walesa, as he was called, began to lead the strike.

By next day strikes began to spread throughout the "Triple-City". The demands were far bigger now, even asking for the right to establish free trade unions. The leaders began to negotiate with Gneich, but what they had not realised was that the whole city had gone on strike. The strike committee agreed on a 1,500 Zloty pay raise, and was ready to return to work. Walesa went out and announced the news, but he was misunderstood while strikers jeered at him. Instantly he changed his mind and went around the shipyard pleading everyone to continue striking. The strike continued and it spread as one of the biggest developments in the history of Polish strikes and uprisings. Intellectuals came in to help out the workers in drafting various documents and demands. They began what eventually led to the legalisation of the trade unions. They played for the high stakes and they issued ultimatums that they would not negotiate until political prisoners were freed.

These were demands that previously would not have been made. With both groups working together, both benefited while the government, having no choice, complied.

Solidarity was founded in September 1980 at the Lenin Shipyards, where Lech Walesa and others formed a broad anti-communist movement ranging from people associated with the Catholic Church to the members of the anti-community Left. Solidarity advocated non-violence in its members' activities. In September 1981, the Solidarity's first national congress elected Lech Walesa as president and adopted a republican programme, the "Self-Governing Republic". The Solidarity Union would soon have ten million members, one-third of the Polish workforce. The government attempted to destroy the union with the martial law in 1981, and several years of repression, but in the end it had to start negotiating with the union. The changes that ensued promised the downfall of socialism in Poland. Although martial law slowed down the process in 1981, Solidarity was working in the underground. Solidarity forced the roundtable talks that led to free elections in 1989, and the eventual fall of communism, not only in Poland, but also in all the Soviet bloc countries.

16.3.1 The Underground Phase

The breakthrough in ending the political monopoly of the PZPR came in 1980 with the emergence of the Interfactory Strike Committee, which rapidly evolved into the Solidarity mass movement of some 10 million Poles. Guided by Lech Walesa, the Interfactory Strike Committee won historic concessions from the communists in the Gdansk Agreement of August 31, 1980. The PZPR granted recognition of the basic right of workers to establish free trade unions, but in return the strike committee agreed not to function as a political party. The workers promised to abide by the constitution and conceded the leading role in state affairs to the PZPR.

Despite the pledges of the Gdansk Agreement, Solidarity did not remain simply a trade union movement. It rapidly changed into an umbrella organisation under which a broad range of political and social groups united in opposition to the communist regime. At Solidarity's first national congress in the fall of 1981, the political nature of the movement became explicit. The congress adopted a programme calling for an active Solidarity role in reforming Poland's political and economic systems. In the following months, the outspoken radicals urged their leaders to confront the communist authorities, to demand free elections, and to call for a national referendum to replace the communist government. The radical challenge precipitated the imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981.

In 1981, the government adopted a harder line against the union, and General Wojciech Jaruzelski, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish armed forces, replaced Stanislaw Kania as party leader in October. Jaruzelski's very profession symbolised a tougher approach to the increasingly turbulent political situation. At the end of 1981, the government broke off all negotiations with Solidarity, and tension between the antagonists rose sharply. Solidarity, now illegal, was forced underground until the late 1980s. Within six months after the start of the Round Table talks in February 1989, Solidarity not only had regained its legal status as a trade union, but also had become an effective political movement that installed Eastern Europe's first post-communist government.

During its underground phase, Solidarity lost much of its original cohesion as tactical and philosophical disagreements split the movement into factions. The radical elements, convinced that an evolutionary approach to democratisation was impossible, created the organisation Fighting Solidarity in 1982. Ultimately, however, Walesa's moderate faction prevailed.

Favouring negotiation and compromise with the PZPR, the moderates created the Citizens' Committee, which represented Solidarity at the talks in 1989 and engineered the overwhelming election triumph of June 1989.

When Mikhail Gorbachev assumed control over the Soviet Union in 1985, he was forced to initiate a series of reforms due to the worsening economic situation across the entire Eastern Bloc. These reforms included political and social reforms, which led to a shift in policy in many Soviet satellites, including Poland, and led to the happy release of hundreds of political prisoners connected with Solidarity. However, Solidarity members continued to be the objects of persecution and discrimination. By 1988, Poland's economic situation was worse than ever due to foreign sanctions and the government's refusal to introduce more reforms. A new wave of strikes swept the country after the food costs were increased by 40%. Finally on August 26, the government announced that it was ready to negotiate with Solidarity and met with Walesa, who incredulously agreed to call an end to the strikes. In preparation for an official negotiating conference with the government, a hundred-member committee was formed within Solidarity, composed of many sections, each of which was responsible for presenting specific demands to the government at the forthcoming talks. This conference, which took place in Warsaw from February 6th to April 4, 1989, came to be known as the 'Polish Roundtable Talks.' Though the members of Solidarity had no expectation of major changes, the Roundtable Talks would irreversibly alter the political landscape and Polish society.

On April 17, 1989, Solidarity was again legalised and the party was allowed to field candidates in upcoming elections. With its members immediately jumping to 1.5 million after legalisation, the party was restricted to fielding candidates for only 35% of the seats in the new Sejm. Despite aggression and propaganda from the ruling party, extremely limited resources and pre-election polls that promised a communist victory, Solidarity managed to push forward a campaign that surprised everyone, including themselves. The party won every contested seat in the Sejm and 99 of 100 Senatorial seats: the new 'Contract Sejm' as it was called would be dominated by Solidarity. As agreed beforehand, Wojciech Jaruzelski was elected president; however, the communist candidate for prime minister now failed to rally enough support to form a government and the Sejm elected Solidarity representative Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister of Poland. Mazowiecki became the first non-communist prime minister in Poland since 1945 and the first anywhere in Eastern Europe for 40 years. Under Mazowiecki a Solidarity-led government was formed, and only Jaruzelski remained of the old regime. Communism had collapsed in Poland and within months the famous Wall in Berlin too collapsed, signifying important developments.

Following a series of events within Poland and across the Eastern bloc, including a top-down movement towards Glasnost and Perestroika in the Soviet Union, a series of Roundtable Talks between Solidarity and the Polish Workers Party in 1989 resulted in the historic agreement to hold free elections for a certain number of parliamentary seats. The stunning defeat of PZPR in the June 1989 parliamentary elections removed Solidarity's most important unifying force – the common enemy. By the end of August, a Solidarity-led coalition government was formed and in December Tadeusz Mazowiecki was elected Prime Minister. By January 1990, the Communist Party was dissolved and Lech Walesa was elected the President.

Despite the success of the Solidarity candidates in the local elections, serious divisions soon emerged within the Citizens' Parliamentary Club concerning the appropriateness of

political parties at so early a state in Poland's democratic experiment. The intellectuals who dominated the parliamentary club insisted that the proliferation of political parties would derail efforts to build a Western-style civil society. But deputies on the right of the political spectrum, feeling excluded from important policy decisions by the intellectuals, advocated rapid formation of strong alternative parties.

16.4 CATHOLICS, CONSCIENCE AND HISTORY

The accession of Papacy of Karol Wojtyla of Krakow in 1978, and his visit to Poland in 1979, had stirred the national pride of which Solidarity was an expression. The Catholic groups, most active in the movement, envisaged a Poland defined by social justice. Joining secular intellectuals who sided with the workers, Catholic thinkers the Polish Communist Party for its defective attachment to its own ideas.

The Catholic philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, originally a libertarian Marxist, had left Poland in 1968, in disgust at the regime's repressiveness and anti-Semitism. From Oxford, his influence merged with that of the regime's critics inside Poland, like the historical Bronislaw Geremek. Solidarity's spiritual resistance demoralised those Communists who actually believed in a just social order. The Polish Communists were riven by the legacies of their own inner debates. One custodian of a reformist heritage was the writer Isaac Deutscher, who at his London home all through the fifties and sixties, received an unending stream of Polish ambassadors, ministers and intellectuals – who were free, abroad, to confide to him about their doubts.

In Poland, voicing national resistance to Soviet domination was the mission of the Catholic Church. As early as 1956, and to the immense irritation of the Soviet leadership, the Polish Communists reached an accord for uneasy co-existence with the Church. There were larger currents. The Vatican, under Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, sought dialogue with the Communists with their own inner contradictions. A workers' state run by a privileged elite was not the least of these. In Italy, Catholics and Communists collaborated freely: they joined to support Solidarity.

No doubt, sympathy and support from the western world helped. The Polish emigrant communities in North America and Western Europe provided encouragement and funding. The BBC, the Voice of America, Radio Vatican and Deutsche Welle, especially in the period of martial law, cast some light into the official blackout of information.

16.5 SOVIET FISSURES

Meanwhile, the Soviet bloc was hardly monolithic. Even under Stalin there had been the Titoist schism and the anti-Stalin opposition in other Communist regimes. Four months after Stalin's death in 1953, the Germans in the East revolved. Khrushchev denounced Stalin in his famous Cult of Personality speech of 1956 and emptied the concentration camps. The suppression of the Hungarian rising of 1956 failed to deter the Czechoslovak 1968 experiment in open Communism. Faced with the Chinese schism in the East and restless parties and peoples to the West, the Soviet Party in the seventies made space for technocratic reformers who discreetly agreed with the bitter literary philosophical dissenters: the regime had to change.

The Soviet reformers asked if the only answer their nation had to the failure of its model abroad was to keep its armoured divisions at the ready. They proposed, indirectly but

effectively, rethinking the authoritarianism, bureaucratisation and repression, which worked, imperfectly, only in the short run. With its armed forces stationed in Poland and its agents implanted in the Polish government, the Soviet Union could not, in the end, hold on to an increasingly burdensome conquest.

16.5.1 The Shape of the Struggle

In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, a major document of Catholic Social Teaching, Pope John Paul II identified the concept of solidarity with the poor and marginalised as a constitutive element of the Gospel and human participation in the common good. The Roman Catholic Church, under the leadership of Pope John Paul II, was a very powerful supporter of the union and was greatly responsible for its success.

Solidarity was supported by the western trade union movement, and the military coup d'état was officially by the western governments. They could do little else in a nation on the Soviet Union's side of the Cold War boundary. Significant segments of the elite and public opinion in the west, regretting the coup, thought it preferable to the unpredictable consequences of a Soviet invasion. That view was shared by the elite and public in the two German states, for whom any form of European instability evoked the possibility that they would be reunited in a radioactive graveyard. Those in the Soviet Union opposed to the imposition of Communism on neighbouring states began to speak out, hesitantly, only after Gorbachev took power in 1985.

16.5.2 Influence Abroad

The survival of Solidarity was an unprecedented event not only in Poland, a satellite state of the USSR ruled by a one-party Communist regime, but also in the whole of the Eastern bloc. It meant a break in the hard-line stance of the Communist Polish United Workers' Party, which had bloodily ended a 1970 protest with machine gun fire (killing dozens and injuring over 1,000), and the broader Soviet communist regime in the Eastern bloc, which had quelled both the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and the 1968 Prague Spring with Soviet-led invasions.

Solidarity's influence led to the intensification and spread of anti-communist ideals and movements throughout the countries of the Eastern bloc, weakening their communist governments. The 1989 elections in Poland, where anti-communist candidates won a striking victory, sparked off a succession of peaceful anti-communist revolutions in the Central and Eastern Europe known as the Revolutions of 1989. Solidarity's example was, in various ways repeated by the opposition groups throughout the Eastern bloc, eventually leading to the Eastern bloc's effectual dismantling, and contributing to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

16.6 FALL OF COMMUNISM

The fall of communism in Poland thrust Solidarity into a role it was never prepared for, and in its life as a political party it saw much infighting and a decline in popularity. Walesa decided to resign from his Solidarity post and announced his intent to run for president in the upcoming elections. In December 1990, Lech Walesa was elected president of Poland and became the first Polish president ever elected by popular vote. The 1990 elections in Poland, which scored astonishing victories for anti-communist candidates, set-off a string of peaceful anti-communist revolutions throughout the Central and Eastern

Europe which led to the fall of communism in these regions. In the Baltics people were joining hands in solidarity, and the cry for freedom could be heard in the Estonian Singing Revolution and its Lithuanian and Latvian counterparts. The example of Solidarity had emboldened the oppressed people of the entire Eastern Bloc to stand together and demand their independence. By Christmas of 1991, the USSR had ceased to exist, and all the former communist territories across Eurasia became sovereign entities once again.

Today Solidarity's role in Polish politics is limited and the organisation has again reverted back toward the role of a more traditional trade union with a membership that currently exceeds 1.1 million. The Summer of 2005 marked the 25th anniversary of the historic Solidarity movement, remembering the hardships of its humble beginnings and celebrating the changes those hardships inspired across the continent.

16.7 SUMMARY

The victory of the movement that changed the history of Poland was the world's most striking display of people's power against the oppression since Mohandas K Gandhi shook the foundation of British rule in India. For a century and a half, the British controlled India by having Indians collaborate in running the raj. Likewise, for thirty years, the communists in Poland kept the lid on discontent by co-opting reformers and isolating disruptive voices - until another way to oppose oppression was found, by disengaging from the state and engaging the people.

If we look at the components of Solidarity, we can say that each of them played out in very different ways. First of all, as a national liberation movement it was an unprecedented success. Poland liberated not just itself, but all the other nations of the former Soviet bloc. Certainly, Hungary and Czech Republic had a role to play, but without Solidarity, both in 1980-81 and in 1989, the process would have taken much longer. Further as a movement for democracy, Solidarity was also a huge success. Solidarity paid a stiff price for this success; it fell apart in the process of creating pluralist democracy. If Solidarity had remained united, perhaps the post-communists would not be as strong as they are today, but this would not be a pluralist democracy.

Several lessons emerge from Solidarity's success. Firstly there is no substitute for the will of a tyrannised population to re-take the control of its own destiny. Secondly, even the most doctrinaire and rigid regime has internal fissures, which widen under stress. Solidarity's pressures brought the conflicts within Polish Communism to the surface. Finally, the universal ideals, democracy and social justice, can only be achieved in culturally specific forms. Poland's Catholics and secularists, aware of Polish traditions, came together to reclaim their nation's history.

The work of the Polish worker, and that of the Polish intellectual accomplished what many thought would never happen. Poland is a country with a history of uprisings, all of which failed, except for this one. No other movement connected the Polish intelligentsia and the Polish worker. Would Polish insurrections have worked earlier in history if this was also the case? One can always second-guess, but it is clear the changes that occurred in Poland, occurred because of the intellectuals working with the workers. They had the vision and the workers had the mass to demand that vision to become a reality.

16.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What was the historical backdrop to the Solidarity Movement?
2. What reasons gave rise to the Solidarity? In what terms can it be called peaceful?
3. What change did Solidarity bring about?
4. How did Solidarity influence the regional European countries, which were under Soviet occupation?
5. What role did the Church play in the proliferation or influencing the movement?

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