

XUMA, Alfred Bitini

One. Xuma was born in 1893 at Manzana, Transkei. He herded his father's cattle and went to the mission school. Like so many contemporaries he became a teacher, but friends sent him to America where he qualified as M.D. He studied further in Hungary and Scotland, and returned to practise in Johannesburg in 1928. He brought back a black American wife, who survived the strange society with stoical humour.

Cartoon: The herdboyc and the doctor?

Two. But politics claimed him too. In 1935 with Jabavu and Matthews he helped to organise the All Africa Convention. With them he went to see Prime Minister Hertzog, and urged him in vain to leave the Cape African franchise alone.

Cartoon: Jabavu, Matthews, and Xuma with the P.M.

Three. In 1940 Xuma was elected president of the African National Congress. He held it for nine years but in 1949 was not re-elected. The African National Congress was preparing for more active resistance, and did not regard him as a leader of mass action. That was true, for he was a gentle, though outspoken man, and in another world would have been a conservative. But he served the A.N.C. well in the less turbulent years of the '40s, and was listed as a co-conspirator in the Treason Trial. He died in Johannesburg in 1962.

Cartoon: I find this difficult. Could you show Xuma at the operating table while crowds are marching outside? A wistful Xuma