THE INDIANS OF NATAL: RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID, 1971-1985

BY

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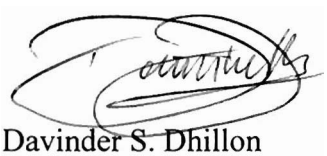
This A.E. represents my own work and I have duly acknowledged in the footnotes and bibliography the sources and information I have consulted for the purpose of this study. This A.E. has not transgressed the maximum word limit of 16 000 words. The total word count for the A.E. is 15 939 words.



Davinder S. Dhillon
March 1999.

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For Dad...

The policy of apartheid created a deep and lasting wound in my country and my people. All of us will spend many years, if not generations, recovering from that profound hurt. But the decades of oppression and brutality had another, unintended, effect, and that was that it produced the Oliver Tambos, the Walter Sisulus, the Chief Luthulis, the Yusuf Dadoos, the Bram Fischers, the Robert Sobukwes of our time – men of such extraordinary courage, wisdom and generosity that their like may never be known again. Perhaps it requires such depths of oppression to create such heights of character. My country is rich in the minerals and gems that lie beneath its soil, but I have always known that its greatest wealth is its people, finer and truer than the purest diamonds. [1]

[1] Nelson Mandela. Long Walk to Freedom, Abacus, London 1995, p.785.

ABSTRACT

This thesis highlights the ebbs and flows of the Indian minority's struggles against the systematic and unjust segregation of mankind along racial lines. Their courage and principled resistance as well as their fears as a minority during the period of 1971 to 1985, are captured in this study.

It begins by briefly tracing the community's struggles from the early 1860s, against the racist laws that targeted them, to how by the 1950s closer inter-ethnic ties were forged with the other oppressed groups and joint struggles against apartheid were launched.

The political and socio-cultural resistance of the community in the province of Natal, during the period concerned, is the subject of detailed scrutiny. Based upon primary materials collected by the author from South Africa, the thesis seeks to capture the dynamics of Indian resistance during these tumultuous years.

The political resistance of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) led Indian community is zeroed on in chapters two and three. The efforts of the NIC to galvanise its constituency, which had turn apathetic during the 1960s under the weight of state repression, are scrutinised. The NIC's links with and contributions to the African National Congress' wider anti-apartheid resistance also remains a constant theme. The development of inter-ethnic unity between the oppressed communities is also highlighted. This unity which grew from strength to strength, finally received a setback, the Inanda violence in 1985. It damaged Indo-African ties, leading to alterations in the resistance dynamics that had been developing.

To paint a composite picture of Indian resistance, the study also explores the role of Indians in the media, the arts and the sports movement to bring about apartheid's demise.

PREFACE

South Africa's multi-ethnic vibrancy is one of the many features of the country's pulchritude. This diversity includes the Indian diaspora in South Africa which has become very much a part of its permanent political and socio-economic landscape. Having a history of settlement since the 1860s and numbering close to a million, Indian South Africans today are conspicuous in their country's political and socio-economic dynamism.

The presence of this Indian community poses several questions: particularly what was their treatment and condition under apartheid, and whether they resisted this unique form of institutionalised racism?

Both of these questions have remained partially answered. Works have been produced on the Indian diaspora in South Africa, especially in relation to their socio-cultural evolution and their early history.[1] However the historiography that does exists

[1] *Inter alia* S. Bhana and J.B. Brain, Setting Down Roots: Indian Immigrants in South Africa, 1860-1911, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1990.
F. Ginwala, Indian South Africans, Minority Rights Group, London, 1977.
R.E. Johnson, Indians and Apartheid: The Failure of Resistance, UMI, Ann Arbor, 1973.
F. Meer, Portrait of Indian South Africans, Avon House, Durban, 1969.
T.G. Ramamurthi, Apartheid and Indian South Africans, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1995.

has not yet been extended to cover the 1970s through to present times, save in the form of some articles.[2] Hence a considerable gap exists in the standing body of knowledge.

While the existence of this lacuna is understandable, considering the lack of written documents and material for the period, those familiar with South African history will appreciate that these were crucial and tumultuous years when resistance movements emerged in various forms and with great energy. With the benefit of hindsight, one may now easily remark that the 1970s marked the beginning of the end of apartheid. Given the importance of these years, it is relevant to closely examine the position of Indian South Africans vis-à-vis the 'liberation struggle', as it has come to be known.

As such, the objective of this thesis is to examine and evaluate the resistance of Indian South Africans to apartheid during the period 1971 to 1985. Bearing in mind the numerous constraints involved in attempting such an exercise, this study will be confined, in geographical terms, to the province of Natal, where the density of the Indian population has been and still is the greatest. Appreciating that it is humanly impossible to re-present the position of the whole Indian community microscopically, the thesis will examine Indian resistance through the activities of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), a political organisation that has long occupied a pivotal position representing Indians and

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[2] P. Hargovan, "Apartheid and the Indian Community in South Africa: Isolation or Cooperation," Journal of Asian and African Affairs, Vol.1, No.2, 1989. The title of the article is misleading for it examines the question of the Diaspora's identity formation rather than offering an account of how, why and what kind of resistance transpired.
M. West, "Indian Politics in South Africa: 1860 to the Present," South Asia Bulletin, Vol.7, Nos.1-2, 1987. This article suffers from a chronic bias of Marxist interpretation of the struggles waged by the Indian community. The author's slavish adherence to such a framework of analysis leaves the reader with a distorted picture. Furthermore the author does not offer a detailed analysis of the 1970s and 80s.
S. Bhana, Gandhi's Legacy: The Natal Indian Congress, 1894-1994, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1997. This recently published monograph, tracing the NIC's broad history, unfortunately suffers from a poor sense of historical balance. Only one brief chapter traces the organisation's activities summarily during the 1970s through to 1994. Such an unjust treatment of the

fighting against the racist laws of apartheid. Since apartheid governed almost all aspects of human relations within South Africa, to merely limit the focus of the thesis to political resistance would be parochial. Hence to give a composite picture of the Diaspora's resistance, it will also explore Indian resistance on a socio-cultural front, with attention being paid to Indians in sports, the arts and the media.

This thesis does not pretend to be a study of apartheid or resistance to it *per se.* Bookshelves are after all replete with various well-researched studies scrutinizing apartheid's history[3] as well as the struggles waged against it,[4] leaving little room for one to contribute, especially within the confines of an Honours Thesis. Hence, in order not to shatter the bounds of this study, it is assumed that the readership has a working knowledge of apartheid's history as well as the broader resistance movements that challenged it.

Neither does this study aspire to explore the role of Indians in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), trade union activism or in the armed insurrection

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period leaves numerous questions unanswered.

[3] Some excellent sources on apartheid are:
B. Lapping, Apartheid A History, George Brazillier, New York, 1987.
T.R.H. Davenport, South Africa: A Modern History, 4th Edn., Macmillan, London, 1990.
IDAF, Apartheid: The Facts, IDAF, London, 1991.
A. Lester, From Colonization to Democracy, Tauris Academic Press, London, 1996.
W. Beinart and S. Dubow (eds.) Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa, Routledge, London, 1995.
S.Dubow, Racial Segregation and the Origins of Apartheid in South Africa, 1919-36, Macmillan, London, 1989.

[4] Some of the sources on anti-apartheid resistance are as follows:
For the International campaign against apartheid one may refer to-
United Nations, The United Nations and Apartheid, 1948-1994, Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York, 1994.
D.J. Whittaker, United Nations in Action, UCL Press, London, 1995,
M. Holden Jr., (ed.) The Challenge to Racial Stratification, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, 1994.
For a general historical survey of resistance-
T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1983.

waged by the ANC against apartheid. These are areas which deserve separate treatments in their own right and for which materials have yet to be documented and compiled. Nor will it discuss the supposed 'resistance' of Indians co-opted into apartheid structures such as the South African Indian Council (SAIC) and its successor, the House of Delegates (HoD). Works have adequately demonstrated how the activities of this co-opted segment cannot justifiably be labeled as 'resistance' for they worked within the confines of apartheid, not against.[5]

The thesis starts with Indian resistance prior to 1971. It will examine the strategy and tactics used for resistance as well as the level of mass mobilisation achieved. Such an analysis will elucidate how the Indian community matured over the years from one which saw itself in isolation from the rest of South Africa's oppressed to a diaspora that staked a claim of permanency in the country's social matrix by linking its cause with the other oppressed ethnic groups. As such Chapter One will provide an analytical background indispensable for a finer appreciation of the study proper itself.

Chapter Two, focuses on the trials and tribulations of the NIC during the 1970s. It traces the NIC's efforts, from revival in 1971, to galvanise a community that had turned politically apathethic and cut off from the other non-whites, due to state repression in the 1960s and through apartheid's engineering such as residential segregation and separate development. The chapter illustrates how by the end of the decade the NIC,

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J. Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa, Maskew Miller Longman, Cape Town, 1997.

[5] Ashwin Desai, The Origins, Development and Demise of the South African Indian Council 1964-1983: A Sociological Interpretation, Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Rhodes University, 1987.
Ismail Omar, Reform in Crisis: Why the Tricameral Parliamentary System Has Failed, Jonathan Ball, Johannesburg, 1988.

through its links with emerging civic structures, managed to establish firm networks within the community. It highlights how the NIC was not just keeping the Charterist Flag flying but was becoming a front to aid the ANC's reemergence in Natal.

Chapter Three assesses how the NIC inspired a socio-economic struggle against apartheid as well as mass based inter-ethnic linkages by establishing the Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC) under whose banner Coloured and Indian 'civics' could launch consolidated protests. At the same time through its anti-SAIC and anti-HoD election campaigns in the early 1980s, the NIC's mobilisation of the community behind its political objectives and thereafter filtering them towards a broader front of resistance: the United Democratic Front (UDF) is evaluated. This chapter also examines the contributions of the NIC and the Indian community within the UDF, arguing that Indians played a vital, at times leading role. It concludes with the effects of the Inanda violence that occurred in 1985, arguing that it set back the cause of community mobilisation henceforth, resulting in a change in the dynamics of Indian resistance that had begun in the late 1970s.

Chapter Four discusses the role of Indian resistance on a socio-cultural front. A pillar of apartheid was strict media and press censorship, so as to silence the voices of opposition. In this regard the role of the *Leader*, a Natal based Indian weekly, that offered critical coverage of state policies and ensured that opposition voices like the NIC had a mouth piece with which to reach the community and challenge state propaganda is examined. On the sports front, the resistance to apartheid gained international recognition with many international sporting bodies boycotting South Africa. At a domestic level there was a strong movement, called the South African Council on Sports (SACOS) that

rejected apartheid structured sports. In this light the role of its Natal affiliate, the Natal Council on Sports (NACOS) which had a strong Indian membership composition is examined. Finally, while its undeniable that political parties play a crucial role in 'conscientising' the masses, they are not the only means of doing so and in this light the contributions of Indians in the arts is assessed. The works of the playwright Ronnie Govender and cartoonists Nanda Soobben, who highlighted the injustices of apartheid, are evaluated in this context.

The study concludes by illustrating that the sensitive and astute political leaders of Indian South Africans succeeded in playing their fair share against apartheid and their contributions have been integral to the wider resistance movement of the ANC. This chapter also argues that the community's activities in South Africa offer a positive case study of a diaspora sinking deep roots when compared to their brethren in other parts of Africa.

A daunting task confronting any researcher trying to document any aspect of apartheid resistance politics, especially for the period concerned, is the collection of relevant primary documents or printed materials. Due to the strict system of censorship and apartheid's laws, organisations and activists involved in resistance faced imprisonment and banning and more importantly risked exposing their organisations and movements as a whole if found with such material. Hence they either destroyed documents and materials or deposited them with families and friends, with whom much of these invaluable sources have remained or have perished. Nonetheless, some NIC documents have been compiled at the South African Historical Archives (SAHA) at the

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and the Documentation Center of the University of Durban-Westville (UDW), Durban.

While I was fortunate to acquire copies of these documents, my research was augmented by materials from Prof. Gail Gerhart's Egypt, private collection and oral interviews with several NIC activists as well as prominent Indians in the sports, arts and media circles. These interviews helped to fill gaps where information on the NIC and BCM was concerned. They also provided the very basis on which the thesis explores the role of Indian resistance on the socio-cultural front, since for this subject, hardly any materials or documents are available.* Last but not least, besides using the limited documents and oral interviews, the thesis depends upon information derived from the *Leader*, the weekly Indian newspaper, based in Durban. It provides a good deal of information on the situation of Indians in Durban during these years.

* The oral interviews and printed materials that I gathered have one particular drawback, they lack details which might otherwise offer one the possibility to write a more personal narrative or an anecdotal type of exercise. Such lack thereof is understandable considering the repression and censorship that took place and until memoirs and biographies are published the researcher has to contend with this. In any case, I hope the reader/s bare with this drawback, and appreciates the primary focus of the thesis: capturing the events and dynamics that took place during the period under consideration.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis has been a challenging learning experience for me but in no way has it been a singular effort stemming from my energies alone. I never expected that I would owe so much to so many in attempting this academic exercise, but I do.

I hope it would not be an exaggeration if I were to compare my efforts as being analogous to the tasks of the Captain of a sail ship in search of new lands, traversing uncharted waters. In similar fashion my task of exploring the role of Indian South Africans saw me traverse through uncharted waters in a search for hitherto unexplored answers. But just like the Captain owes much to many, so do I.

The Captain acquires his seafaring skills from his masters. Similarly I have to thank my supervisor, Associate Professor Yong Mun Cheong, and my History gurus over the years namely A.P. Malcolm Murfett, Dr. Andrew Major, Dr. Tan Tai Yong, Dr. Brian Farrell and Dr. Peter Borschberg. They all imparted to me the necessary historical skills to undertake such an endeavour. I would not have been equipped to carry out such a task if not for their labours.

Just like the Captain seldom conceives of the direction of his journey in isolation, I owe it to Rajen Munnoo for planting in me the idea to undertake research on this topic. I would not have thought of it if not for discussions with him.

The boldness of the Captain to carry out his task may stem from his own personal courage or from those around him. I was fortunate to have the support of various people to pursue this topic. The debt I owe to my mother cannot be expressed in words, hence I shall not reduce its value by trying to asseverate her innumerable contributions. To Ranjit Dhaliwal I owe no less. She supported me through trying times, bolstered my confidence

over the years and allayed whatever doubts I had of my abilities to conduct research in distant South Africa. During the course of writing, she remained a constant source of support. Rajen eased fears by accompanying me to South Africa and making sure I would be in safe hands. Dr. Tan Tai Yong, Dr. Andrew Major and A.P. Malcolm Murfett from the History Department as well as Mr. Adolf Brelage, Second Secretary, South African High Commission in Singapore, expressed encouraging interest and backed me wholeheartedly to pursue the idea. They all gave me instrumental support.

Voyages are expensive enterprises. Just like the Captain would have required financial backing for his journey so did I. In this respect I have to thank the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation, particularly Mr. Bhajan Singh, for providing me with partial financial support to conduct my research in South Africa.

Mother Nature plays an invaluable role in guiding the Captain through his journey in numerous ways; one of which is providing him with the right currents and winds to propel his ship. Similarly historians require materials with which to craft their arguments, for which I have to thank Narissa Ramdhani and her staff at the Documentation Centre, University of Durban-Westville, Durban; Phyllis Connerty and Jean Manaru of the Durban Metropolitan Library; Michelle Pickover and Razia Salleh of the South African Historical Archives, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for access to the their sources and the kind assistance they rendered to me. Their help and sources acted as the propulsive agents underpinning my thesis.

Mother Nature also provides stars that not only illuminate the skies in the night but also assist in navigation and pathfinding. In this regards the time that my interviewees shared with me were momentous. Their willingness to share their experiences and retell

their stories were far more important in my learning about apartheid than any other source(s).

Journeys are often fatiguing and trying experiences. The Captain's performance of his task depends on his physical condition and for that he requires a certain level of comfort during his voyage. In this aspect I shall never forget the warm hospitality that my various hosts in South Africa extended to me. Mr. and Mrs. Ajay Munoo provided a home away from home in Durban. Nikhail Bramdaw showed no less generosity with the use of his flat and time to shuttle me around. Jagdish Munnoo in Pretoria and Yunus Byatt in Johannesburg made sure I was well taken care of and got to my destinations safely. The kindness that was extended to me by these families and individuals was extremely crucial for providing me not only with physical comfort in a foreign country but also a secure frame of mind with which to conduct my research.

The Captain also relies on his crew and fellow Officers to make sure that the voyage is smooth sailing. In similar vein, I am grateful to those who have helped in a variety of ways to ensure that I was on the right track and kept on course. The long drawn out hours of discussion and debates with Nikhil Bramdaw were invaluable. No Captain could have got a better pilot. A.P. Brij Maharaj and Dr. Ashwin Desai's comments and suggestions were very helpful. Prof. Peter Reeves' warm support was heartwarming and encouraging. Gabriel Thomas' advice, comments and expertise steered me from day one and to which I shall remain indebted. Shahul Hameed, friend, intellectual benchmark and sounding board, whose opinions have always broadened my perspective, did not fail me this time either.

GLOSSARY

Banned — A banned person was not allowed to communicate, write, or publish anything. His/her movements were severely restricted and he/she was allowed to meet only few selected people. A banning order kept one isolated.

Charterist — Any organisation or movement that accepted the Freedom Charter as the basis for a post-apartheid south Africa and that worked towards that goal. Also used as a term to signify alliance with the ANC.

Civics — Independent community organisations established by activists in the late 1970s, to champion community grievances over issues like rents and transportation. They also challenged the legitimacy of government controlled Local Affairs Councils.

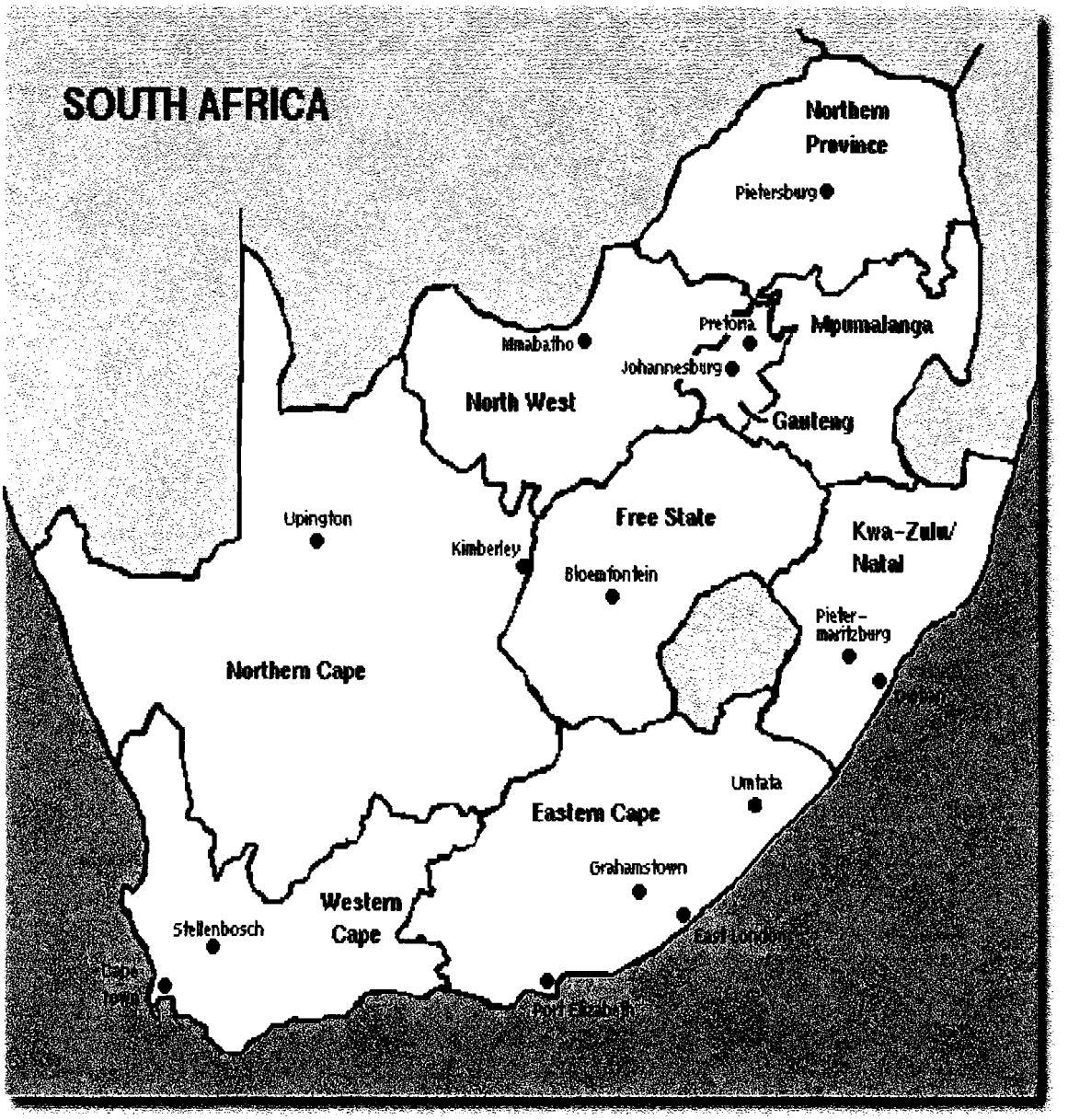
Conscientise — A Term commonly used by activists in the anti-apartheid struggle to explain the process of raising peoples' awareness about apartheid politics.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
ARCC	Anti-Republic Celebrations Committee
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BPC	Black People's Convention
CBSIA	Colonial Born and Settler Indian Association
COP	Congress of People
CTA	Cape Town Agreement
DCC	Durban City Council
DHAC	Durban Housing Action Committee
GAA	Group Areas Act
HoD	House of Delegates
LAC	Local Affairs Council
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
MSC	Million Signature Campaign
NACOS	Natal Council on Sports
NEUF	Non-European Unity Front
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
PAC	Pan African Congress
PWC	Phoenix Working Committee
RMC	Release Mandela Committee
SACOS	South African Council on Sports
SAIC	South African Indian Congress

SAIC	South African Indian Council
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SASA	South African Sports Association
SASO	South African Students Organisation
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
UDF	United Democratic Front
UDW	University of Durban-Westville

LIST OF PLATES



Map of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE:

THE PRELUDE TO 1971

Racism generally provokes emotions of such disgust and anger that living for decades under a government renowned for its racist laws is unimaginable. Such, however, was the situation confronting South Africa's non-whites. Blacks, Coloureds and Indians had their political freedom circumscribed, human rights violated and their very existence regarded as an abominable threat to white civilisation. Paralleling the story of their suffering however is a story of the ebbs and flows of the human spirit as seen in their struggles against racism.

In the story of South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle, the resistance of Indian South Africans has constituted an impressive strand. The history of their resistance against racism and racial segregation predated apartheid's advent. It remains a history that one can ill afford to ignore when seeking to understand the nature of Indian resistance between 1971 and 1985. Hence while the central focus of this study examines Indian resistance from 1971 to 1985, it remains imperative to paint the community's prior struggles so as to acquire a finer appreciation of the period concerned.

Indian Resistance Evolves

The rich and complex history of the Indian diaspora in South Africa, since its introduction into the body politic and economy of Natal in 1860, has been well documented.[1] As such, the following sections will only discuss the resistance of Indian South Africans from 1894 till 1970. They will be analysed in terms of strategies and tactics utilised as well as the level of community mobilisation achieved. Such a survey will delineate not only the patterns of resistance adopted but also the evolution of Indians

[1] Refer to footnote 1, p.ii.

in South Africa into Indian South Africans, illustrating how the community began to identify itself as a part of the country's larger social matrix.

Phase 1, 1894-1914: Narrow strategy, moral tactics, mass mobilisation

Organised Indian politics in Natal began in 1894 with the establishment of the NIC by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the 'half naked fakir' who in later years was to challenge the might of the British Raj in India. However from 1894 till 1914, when he departed South Africa permanently, Gandhi was instrumental in charting the course of Indian political resistance in South Africa.

Gandhi's strategy of fighting for the rights of Indians in South Africa was narrow. His activities were restricted to championing only the cause of Indians and not all non-white oppressed South Africans, but it was well conceived and astutely focussed.[2] It ensured that his actions could exact the maximum possible gains for the Indian community without undermining the white government's authority over the other oppressed racial groups. It was a strategy that allowed his opponents to negotiate more readily than if it had covered the plight of all South Africans.

Carping Gandhi for being un-universal or for not linking his cause with Africans is to operate with the values of hindsight, to judge events of a century ago against the yardstick of contemporary norms.[3] Gandhi's strategy, when framed in the broader South African political context, especially since the ANC emerged only in 1912 and had a

[2] M. Swan, "Ideology in Organised Indian Politics, 1891-1948," in S. Marks and S. Trapido, The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, Longman, London, 1987, p.195.

[3] Examples of such criticisms of Gandhi can be found in Johnson, Indians and Apartheid, p.17.
B. Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," in B. Pachai (ed.) South Africa's Indians: The Evolution of a Minority, University Press of America, Washington, 1979, p.17.
Also see West, "Indian Politics in South Africa," p.101.

similar approach, does not seem parochial at all.[4] It just represented the *modus operandi* of that era.

While Gandhi's strategy was constant, his tactics did change from constitutional petitioning to adopting the moral force of *satyagraha*, or passive resistance. He used the first of these tactics to oppose the implementation of a bill, in 1894, designed to disfranchise the small number of Indians who qualified. Letter sending, petitioning and appealing to the concept of imperial equality in the British Empire was characteristic of such tactics.[5] Gandhi's tactics, however, changed with the passage of the Transvaal Asiatic Registration Act in 1907,[6] provoking the launch of the first *satyagraha* campaign in South Africa.[7] Henceforth, passive resistance, coupled with negotiations, became Gandhi's method of inducing the white authorities to change their position and repeal anti-Indian laws.

This campaign also witnessed mass mobilisation. Between 1907 and 1910, over 3,000 courted imprisonment and hundreds were repatriated.[8] However, Gandhi's second *satyagraha* campaign, in 1913, achieved greater mass participation. Casting his mobilisation net wider, by campaigning against the burdensome £3 tax levied on ex-indentured Indians, the Searle judgement of 1913, which declared traditional Indian marriages to be legally invalid[9] and shrewdly utilising women resisters as well as canvassing the support of indentured workers by inducing strikes, Gandhi achieved

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[4] Pampallis, New South Africa, pp. 67- 69.
Also see D.T. McKinley, The ANC and the Liberation Struggle, Pluto Press, London, 1997, pp. 6 & 7.
[5] Bhana, Gandhi's Legacy, 1997, p.19.
[6] Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," p.18.
The act imposed literacy requirements in a European language, on Indian entrants into South Africa.
[7] Ramamurthi, Apartheid and Indian, p.31.
[8] Ibid, p.31.
[9] A.M. Cachalia, in S. Bhana and B. Pachai (eds.), A Documentary History of Indian South Africans, David Philip, Johannesburg, 1984, pp.133-136.

Plate 1: Gandhian Resisters – Mine and Sugar Workers striking with Gandhi.

greater mass mobilisation than before.[10] The campaign culminated in the repeal of the tax and recognition of Indian marriages by the Indian Relief Act (1914), which Gandhi hailed as a 'Magna Carta' when he bode farewell to South Africa.[11]

Phase 2, 1914-45: Narrow strategy, polite tactics, low mobilsation.

The South African government though, did not regard the Indian Relief Act as a permanent solution to the Indian question. Their objectives remained to reduce the number of South Africa's Indians by encouraging voluntary repatriation and placing economic and residential restrictions on those who remained.[12] These objectives informed their policies vis-à-vis the Indian community till 1961.

The nature of Indian response to the government's racist onslaught after the First World War was determined by the South African Indian Congress (SAIC), which was formed in 1923 and consisted of the NIC, the Transvaal British Indian Association and the Cape British Indian Council.[13] Indian political agitation, under the SAIC's aegis, till 1945 can be characterised as a strategy that remained exclusive and that co-operated and sought accommodation with the white authorities in order to derive maximum benefits for Indian South Africans. Tactics employed reverted to non-confrontation such as negotiations, deputations, conferences and even self-imposed segregation to forestall compulsion.[14] Mass mobilisation was not in the schema of such a strategy and tactics.

The SAIC's politics, however, were unacceptable to various quarters of the community. Its role in the conclusion of the Cape Town Agreement (CTA) of 1927,

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[10] Johnson, Indians and Apartheid, p.39.
[11] Indian Opinion, 8 July 1914, in Bhana and Pachai, Documentary History, pp.136-139.
[12] Ginwala, Indian South Africans, p.6.
[13] Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," p.33.

which provided for voluntary Indian repatriation by monetary inducements from the South African government, as well as its partaking in an inquiry established by the South African and Indian governments to test the viability of colonising South Africa's Indians in some corner of the globe, accrued it increasing criticisms.[15] In Natal for example it led to the establishment of the Colonial Born and Settler Indian Association (CBSIA) whose membership was of first generation South Africans, who did not see India as home, and felt that the SAIC, consisting mostly of rich merchants, was not working for the benefit of all Indians.[16] The SAIC's credibility was gradually waning.

Furthermore, the strategy of exclusively championing Indian rights in the 1920s and 1930s was parochial. While in Gandhi's era such a strategy was understandable, now when movements like the Non-European Unity Front (NEUF) aimed at fostering inter-ethnic solidarity and common struggles, the isolation of the SAIC leadership appeared conservative to say the least.[17] In fact, at the time when a multi-racial challenge to racism in South Africa was emerging, the SAIC's acceptance of the pillarisation of society, made it appear as a governmental arm rather than an opposition force.

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[14] K. Moodley, "South African Indians: The Wavering Minority," in J. Butler and L. Thompson (eds.) Change in Contemporary South Africa, University of California Press, 1975, p.260.

[15] A number of Indians sent petitions to the government arguing in response to the CTA that the SAIC did not represent their aspirations. See "Natal Mercury," 18 March 1947 and 24 March 1947 in Bhana and Pachai, Documentary History, pp.159-62.
Further in opposition to the conclusion of the CTA and the SAIC a South African Indian Federation was launched in December 1928. "Indian Views," 13 January 1928, in Bhana and Pachai, Documentary History, pp.162-165.

[16] Bhana, Gandhi's Legacy, pp.38-40.

[17] Ibid., p.43.
The Non European Unity Front was launched in June 1927. It sought to establish a non-racial political organisation.
Also see "Congress and the Non-European Co-operation Conference, 1927," Bhana and Pachai, Documentary History, pp. 166-168.
At the NEUF's first conference that year, the two SAIC representatives refrained from voting on a resolution calling for co-operation among all black organisations on local and national questions, offering the lame excuse that their constitution prevented them from doing so. In actual fact they withheld so as not to jeopardise their gains by means of tripartite negotiations between the SAIC, the South African and Indian governments.

Coupled with the emergence of movements like the NEUF was an increase in the number of Indians who were educated abroad and had experienced living in more egalitarian societies, as well as those who came into contact with socialism and trade unionism. They began questioning the "accommodationist" strategy and tactics.[18]

In Natal, people like Dr. Monty Naicker, George Ponnen, George Singh and H.A Naidoo were amongst those who disagreed with the politics of accommodation. In 1944, they established the Anti-Segregation Council within the NIC and cultivated mass support to mount an effective challenge to the 'accommodationist' leaders, forcing their resignation on 15 October 1945.[19] On 21 October 1945, the new leadership in Natal, led by Dr. Naicker, was swept into the NIC by over 7,000 supporters. In the Transvaal, this was paralleled by the rise of men like Dr. Yusuf Dadoo and I.V. Cachalia within the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC).[20] Their advent marked the dawn of a new era in the history of Indian resistance.

Phase 3, 1945-60: Broad strategy, radical tactics, mass mobilisation.

The strategy of Indian resistance from 1945 entered a new phase, that eschewed exclusivism and accommodation. It was marked by attempts to confront white supremacy by positing Indian resistance permanently within the broader resistance movement. Essentially, it characterised the maturing of the diaspora into Indian South Africans. As Dr. Naicker declared in 1946, "we are not foreigners, we are South Africans of Indian

[18] Moodley, "South African Indians," p.260.
[19] Anon, History of the Natal Indian Congress, Unpublished paper, c. 1985, p.14.
[20] Ibid., p.14.

descent, in the same way as others are South Africans of English, European or African descent."[21]

The strategy initially materialised with the 'Three Doctors Pact', in March 1947, between Drs. Monty Naicker, Yusuf Dadoo and Alfred Xuma, President General of the ANC. It sought to fashion a practical basis of co-operation between the national organs of the non-European peoples.[22] The spirit of the Pact reached maturity in June 1955 when at the Congress of People (COP), the ANC, the South African Coloured Peoples Organisation, the (white) Congress of Democrats and the SAIC formulated and adopted the Freedom Charter, which thenceforth became the guiding light of the anti-apartheid struggle.[23]

Paralleling the strategic change was the adoption of passive resistance as a tactical means to oppose the government's policies. On 13 June 1946, the new leaders launched a passive resistance campaign against the Pegging Act,[24] lasting till 1948 and seeing almost 2,000 resisters serve imprisonment.[25] In 1952, the passive resistance campaign was resuscitated but this time in unity with the ANC. Deemed the Defiance Campaign, it was conducted between June 1952 and April 1953, and led to the arrest of 8,500 people.[26] No longer was the fight for Indian enfranchisement but for that of all South Africans. No longer was the fight against anti-Indian laws but against all unjust laws. It signified the practical merging of African and Indian struggles.

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[21] "NIC Agenda Book, 31 May-1 June 1947," Bhana and Pachai, Documentary History, p.190.
[22] "Three Doctors Pact, March 9, 1947," http://www.polity.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/gmm1947.
[23] I.C. Meer, "Foreword," in E. Reddy and F. Meer (eds.) Passive Resistance 1946: A Selection of Documents, Madiba Publishers, Durban, 1996, p.24.
[24] Pachai, "Aliens in the Political Hierarchy," p.44.
The Pegging Act imposed restrictions on Indians acquiring and occupying land in Natal from Europeans.
[25] Ramamurthi, Apartheid and Indian, pp.111-122.
[26] Anon, Natal Indian Congress, p.21.

Plate 2: Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Nelson Mandela, Defiance Campaign, June 1952.

Plate 3: Congress of the People, 1955.

In terms of community mobilisation however, the Defiance campaign was less successful than the 1946 passive resistance campaign. The new leadership of the Indian Congresses had successfully marshalled support in 1946 by making inroads into the Indian working classes through trade unions.[27] Owing to the Durban Afro-Indian riots in 1949, however, Indian support for the 1952 Defiance campaign was hesitant.[28] Even the number of Indians at the COP, while significant, fell disappointingly short compared to participation in the 1946 passive resistance campaign.[29] Notwithstanding Johnson's assertions that NIC structures were in disarray by 1952, it is undeniable that the ramifications of 1949 were damningly apparent on the cause of community mobilisation.[30] Nevertheless, the mode of Indian resistance had been unmistakably set: exclusivism was to be renounced.

Phase4, 1960-70: State paramountcy entrenched.

In 1961, apartheid's architects officially terminated repatriation and established the Department of Indian Affairs, according Indian South Africans recognition of their permanent footing in the country's social make up.[31] This *volte-face* however was no milestone in the diaspora's history.

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[27] Johnson, Indians and Apartheid, p.60.

[28] For details of the riots see Ramamurthi, Apartheid and Indian, pp.138-143.
Besides vast material damages, the riots left 137 dead (1 European, 53 Indians and 83 Africans), 1883 injured (30 Europeans, 1085 Africans and 768 Indians).

[29] Johnson, Indians and Apartheid, pp.81, 85 & 126.
Johnson notes that mass participation and the number of NIC branches in operation decreased. He notes that in 1947 there were 28 branches but by 1959 it had fallen to 12. The drop is indicative not only of the success of state repression but also of the effects of the riots on the political psychosis of the Indian community.

[30] Ibid., p.84.

[31] Ginwala, Indian South Africans, p.8.

Seeing developments of closer Indo-African ties and struggles at a time when apartheid was being instituted, the government carried out a systematic campaign of political repression. By 1960, following the Sharpeville massacre,[32] Pretoria had eradicated practically all legal, open opposition: political parties were outlawed, leaders were imprisoned, banned, detained or forced into exile, leaving resistance movements bereft of their leadership and structures disorganised.[33] Complementing repression, the NP utilised the system of *divida et impera*, with 20th century finesse. They created separate political channels to check the development of inter-ethnic solidarity and buttress racial compartmentalisation and separate development.[34]

One such channel was the Department of Indian Affairs, established in 1961, to which the National Indian Council (renamed the South African Indian Council or SAIC in 1965) consisting of nominated members, would be responsible. The SAIC, a body that worked within the confines of the state system, became a permanent apartheid institution forced onto the Indian political scene, till its replacement by the HoD in 1983. As Desai asserts it was established to ensure that Indian demands would not be expressed in opposition to the state and that potential for extra-parliamentary mobilisation would be neutralised.[35]

The SAIC's governmental parentage and nominated membership, while causing it to suffer a perennial lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the community, produced no serious

[32] In March 1959 the Pan African Congress (PAC), constituting of the ANC's breakaway elements was formed. On 18 March 1960, the PAC announced a campaign to defy pass laws on the 21st. Many heeded the call and were arrested but at Sharpeville, in the Transvaal, 69 Africans were killed and 180 were injured when police opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators. As the shock of the Sharpeville killings spread across the country, the government heightened repression, turning the ratchet tighter for the next decade.

[33] Pampallis, New South Africa,, p.211.

[34] Ginwala, Indian South Africans, p.10.

[35] Desai, South African Indian Council, p.81.

challenge to its survival owing to the determination of Pretoria to sustain it as well as the impotency of the Indian Congresses after Sharpeville. Leaders like Dr. Naicker denounced it, arguing that "the Ministry of Indian Affairs is a logical development of Apartheid."[36] Unfortunately however, state political repression had exacted its toll on the Congresses' ability to mount effective challenges. In fact, resistance politics was to lapse during the 1960s under the weight of state suppression, only to resurface in the early 1970s.

In conclusion it remains imperative to note that racism and racial segregation in South Africa pre-dated apartheid. Paralleling the adoption of this design is a history of resistance from the various non-white communities, within which Indians offered a signal contribution. Their efforts ranged from exclusive politics to forging inter-ethnic solidarity and mounting united struggles. The implementation of this united strategy however has been complicated and tenuous. The hardship of living as second class citizens not only provoked resistance to the government but also resulted in inter-ethnic conflict such as the 1949 Indo-African riots. Their ramifications for community mobilisation were immediately apparent but also caused difficulties in the future especially when viewed in the context of governmental policies such as residential segregation through the Group Areas Act (GAA) of 1950 and repression, which impeded inter-ethnic unity. Furthermore, co-option mechanisms such as the SAIC, designed to neutralise the potential for extra-parliamentary opposition and divide the non-white masses, compounded problems of galvanising mass resistance.

Although by the 1960s united resistance was the *modus operandi*, Pretoria had successfully cut the masses from their leaders and resistance movements. In future,

[36] Ibid., p.76.

resistance leadership had to contend with the power of the state, its co-option strategy and contraptions as well as a community cowed in by repression, the context within which a revived NIC found itself grappling with from 1971.

CHAPTER TWO:

CAPTURING HEARTS and MINDS

The 1970s were marked by struggles between Pretoria and a revived NIC for orientating the political direction of Indian South Africans. The government's repression, intimidating security apparatus, propaganda as well as its co-option mechanisms, such as the SAIC, coupled with an economic boom during the 1960s and early 1970s, led to apathy permeating the community's political culture. Against this backdrop, the NIC's revival in 1971, accompanying teething problems and subsequent search for a strategy to mobilise Indians in Natal are focussed upon in this chapter. It argues that, aided by an economic slowdown from 1975, and a general political reawakening after the Soweto uprisings in 1976, the NIC by 1979 succeeded in mobilising the community. Situational changes were successfully tapped by realisation within NIC circles, in the mid-seventies, that mobilisation had to start from the grassroots and by championing bread and butter issues, rather than merely setting abstract political agendas.

A Community Cocooned

Before analysing the NIC's activities from 1971, understanding the political orientation of the Indian community in Natal during the 1970s is crucial. Indians at large remained anti-apartheid in their political disposition. Enforced residential segregation, differentiated salaries and amenities and the denial of voting rights were amongst apartheid's practices that angered them.

The community however could no longer be easily rallied against the state. Political clampdown in the 1960s through detentions, arrests and bannings had infused fear of political involvement. Segregated racial residency and separate development reduced cross-racial interaction while memories of 1949 lingered on, fomenting doubts

about their position in a post-apartheid South Africa.[1] Furthermore, economic progress during the 1960s and early 1970s saw the community occupying a middle position in the economic hierarchy: below whites and above Africans.[2] Together, these factors acted complementarily to produce an apathetic Indian political culture, shunning political activities. Hence, resistance's advocates had to contend with a constituency that was cocooned, in retreat.

Revival and Reproachments

The NIC's formal revival on 2 October 1971 at the Phoenix Settlement marked a positive step towards plugging the vacuum in anti-apartheid resistance within the Indian community. Its revival was inspired by a growing mindfulness amongst politically conscious sections of the Indian elite, that the dearth of political activity should be checked; and since the NIC was never banned as an organisation, it could be revived.[3] The hope was that the NIC's revival and public profile would help ensure that the politics of the Freedom Charter and the Congress alliance survived at a time when the ANC remained underground.[4] Its revival was also intended to provide Indians with an alternative voice of protest against Pretoria's 'dummy institutions' such as the SAIC and

[1] NIC, An Inivitation to Join the NIC: 93 Fighting Years 1894-1987, c.1988 pp.1-2, South African Historical Archives (SAHA).
Also see Interview with Pravin Gordhan, by Julia Frederickse, SAHA. Henceforth all interviews will be cited wth the prefix IV\ followed by the initials of the interviewee only, except for initial citations which will provide both the interwievee's and interviewer's name in full.
[2] NIC, Inivitation to Join, pp.1-2.
[3] IV\Paul David, by Davinder S. Dhillon.
[4] IVs\Ela Gandhi and Hassem Seedat, by DSD.

Local Affairs Councils (LAC).[5] Finally, the NIC's resurrection was conceived as a means to bridge Indo-African unity through championing common ideals of freedom and fighting against the oppression of all non-whites.[6]

The process of revival was initiated and spearheaded by Mewa Ramgobin, who ran his own insurance agency and was married to Gandhi's granddaughter Ela. On 25 June 1971 a meeting was held, in Durban's Bolton Hall, to seek the community's mandate for revival. The presence of an enormous crowd was taken as a positive indication to proceed.[7] Thereupon, under Ramgobin's chairmanship, an *ad hoc* committee for revival was formed. Consisting mostly of professional Indians, the committee was tasked to revive branches in Durban and Natal. It successfully managed to establish 31 branches for the October revival convention.[8]

Revival was fraught with difficulties thanks to state repression and also criticism from younger generation Indians who adhered to the Black Consciousness philosophy. Pretoria aimed at retarding revival by instilling fear and hence duly punished Ramgobin by slapping him with banning orders in September 1971. His movements and contacts were severely restricted, thereby disallowing him from openly continuing with the NIC's revival.[9] Revival nevertheless proceeded with George Sewpersadh, an attorney, replacing Ramgobin as President.[10]

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[5] Ibid.
Leader, 8/10/71.
[6] Mewa Ramgobin, The Case for The Revival of the Natal Indian Congress, 25/7/71, Karis-Gerhart Collection, SAHA (henceforth Karis-Gerhart).
[7] IV\Mewa Ramgobin, by Jeremy Seekings, Alan Paton Centre.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] In November 1973 Sewpersadh too was banned till 1978. While banned his position was taken over by M.J. Naidoo.

Compounding problems was opprobrium from Indians in the BCM against the *ad hoc* committee for retaining the label Indian in the NIC's name. They argued that the NIC would be anachronistic in an era when the BCM desired to build unity amongst all non-whites by designating them as Blacks, based on their political and socio-economic deprivations, and treating them as a single unit for mobilisation.[11] These Indians, amongst whom were founding members of the South African Students Organisation (SASO) Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper, saw the use of the term Indian in the NIC's name as having a narrow ethnic appeal and advocated that it be changed to a 'People's Congress' instead.[12]

Their charges nevertheless came to naught when at the NIC's provincial congress, in 1972, by a close vote of 32 to 30. It was decided that the name would remain unchanged. The NIC's executive felt that retaining the name would give them mileage within the Indian community, considering the organisation's history as well as the fact that a non-racial 'People's Congress' would probably face greater difficulty trying to mobilise a cocooned Indian community.[13] Those in favour of retention were astutely aware of the community's low level of political consciousness and understood that they had to work first from within the community before broaching non-racialism.

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[11] Memorandum from Durban Central Branch to the Convention for the Revival of the NIC, 2/10/71, Karis-Gerhart.

[12] Ibid.
Also see IVs\Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper, by DSD.

[13] IVs\EG and HS.
G. Sewpersadh, "Natal Indian Congress- The Significance of its Revival," Reality, No.1, Vol.4, March 1972, p.13.

Furthermore the name change would have signified merging into a non-Charterist movement, thereby compromising a raison d'être of the NIC's revival.[14]

Nonetheless the NIC was organisationally affected when Cooper and Moodley broke ranks, taking with them the Durban Central Branch to form the Black Peoples Convention (BPC) in 1972.[15] More importantly it led to a break between these two anti-apartheid forces, dividing their efforts to tap the community. In the final analysis however the break did not paralyse the NIC, for neither SASO nor the BPC made deep organisational inroads into the Indian community, leaving the revived NIC as the dominant extra-parliamentary Indian organisation.[16]

Searching for Strategy and Tactics

The NIC was the dominant extra-parliamentary Indian organisation but in no way did its mere revival inspire mass uprisings or protests against the state. From revival till the late 1970s, the NIC remained in search of strategies and tactics to mobilise Indian Natalians against apartheid.

In these years, the NIC never failed to announce, at annual conferences and in press releases, its goals and ideals, namely that it was anti-apartheid and desired the creation of a new South Africa based on the equality of all races.[17] To give effect to its

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[14] IVs\MR and EG.
[15] IV\SC.
[16] It is generally acknowledged that the BCM was more successful as an ideological movement than an organisational one inspiring a generation of Indian students to view themselves as Blacks rather than Indians. However, in addition to the BCM's ideological rhetoric of Black Consciousness which distressed moderate Indians, Moodley and Cooper's detention in January 1973 setback mobilisation of the Indian community towards the BPC.
[17] Leader, 8/10/71 and Graphic, 23/7/71.
D.M. Naidoo, NIC Secretarial Report, April 1972, Karis-Gerhart.
M.J. Naidoo, NIC Presidential Address, 20/9/74, Karis-Gerhart.
R. Ramesar, NIC Secretarial Report, 26/3/76, Karis-Gerhart.

aims and reflect its broadened vision, in 1972 the NIC's constitution was modified to include objectives such as striving for a united democratic South Africa based on universal adult franchise, promoting the cause of all oppressed people as well as good will and peace amongst all South Africans.[18] The organisation also participated in various activities such as organising symbolic ceremonies as in the commemoration of Bram Fischer's death in May 1975; offering relief for flood victims in the Springfield Flats area in 1975; and echoing the community's grievances that sporadically arose as in the case of the 1973 Durban workers' strikes.[19] The NIC also made repeated calls for a 'National Convention' between Pretoria and various anti-apartheid organisations to negotiate for a new South Africa.[20] Such activities and political announcements ensured that the NIC remained visible on Natal's anti-apartheid geo-political landscape.

Notwithstanding the NIC's anti-apartheid prominence, during these years it failed to galvanise the Indian community behind its aims. As early as 1972, NIC executive members recognised that

> it is essential to formulate plans and involve ourselves in a programme of constructive work prior to achieving political emancipation.[21]

The constructive work identified ranged from establishing study groups and organising literacy campaigns to involvement in unspecified community projects.[22] Nevertheless,

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IV\HS.

[18] NIC Amended Constitution, 1972, Karis-Gerhart.

[19] R. Ramesar, NIC Secretarial Report, 26/3/76, Karis-Gerhart.

[20] M.J. Naidoo, NIC Presidential Address, 20/9/74, Karis-Gerhart
M.J.Naidoo, The White Fear, Paper presented at NUSAS Conference on Race Discrimination, Johannesburg, 2/12/76, Karis-Gerhart.
M.J. Naidoo, NIC Presidential Address, 17/11/78, Karis-Gerhart.
Leader, 13/8/76 and 26/10/79.

[21] D.M. Naidoo, NIC Secretarial Report, April 1972, Karis-Gerhart.

[22] Ibid.

they failed to capture the political loyalties of Indian South Africans. By 1976 the NIC was being openly criticised for lacking direction and appearing as a mere talk shop.[23]

There were several complementary reasons why the NIC was in such a quandary during these years. Firstly, it was unable to resolve a dilemma it faced from the moment it was revived: to participate or not in the SAIC? A primary objective of revival was to provide the Indian community with an alternative voice to that of the SAIC. However, Pretoria's announcement in early 1972 that it would allow for five of the SAIC's 30 members to be elected, via a limited franchise, sparked off a debate within the NIC on its participation in the elections. Some felt that participation would allow the NIC to show the powerlessness of the SAIC to the Indian community while others felt that it would imply acceptance of the institution as well as its underpinning ideology, consequently damaging the NIC's credibility in the eyes of not only the Indian but African community.[24] The issue was temporarily settled with non-participation winning the votes at the first provincial congress in 1972.[25]

The debate nevertheless resurfaced. In 1976 M.J. Naidoo, the President of the NIC, championed participation arguing that

> leaders generated by the Government are growing in stature...while Black leaders of high principles are stagnating in prolonged inactivity and will soon fade away.[26]

The opposite view, of remaining out of system structures, was propounded by Fatima Meer, a former NIC Vice-President, esteemed for her anti-apartheid activities.[27] Again at

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[23] Leader, 2/4/76.
[24] D.M. Naidoo, The Case for Not Being Part of the SAIC, April 1972, Karis-Gerhart. IV\EG.
[25] Natal Mercury, 6/5/72.
[26] Leader, 19/3/76.
[27] Ibid.

the annual conference in March that year abstention was decided.[28] In all likelihood these divided opinions, probably projected to the community the idea that the NIC could not settle on what it stood for or against. Understandably how could anyone follow an organisation that did not know its own direction?

State repression and bannings also hindered the success and workings of the NIC. Frequent bannings deprived the NIC of dedicated and experienced leaders such as Mewa Ramgobin, G. Sewpersadh, Fatima Meer and E. Gandhi amongst others.[29] Hence to avert moribundity through further detentions or bannings, or worse still being outlawed like the ANC, the NIC deliberately kept its activities confined to rhetoric and symbolic gesturing rather than open defiance (notwithstanding doubts on its ability to galvanise Indians for open defiance).[30] Furthermore bannings and detentions reinforced the community's fear of overt political involvement. Hence, Pretoria definitely limited the NIC's operational scope and kept the community cocooned through repression.

The absence of open ANC structures also limited the NIC's appeal. While it championed the cause of all oppressed South Africans, it failed to make headway in African areas.[31] There was no ally with whom it could launch defiance campaigns or protest movements. The dearth of political organisation in African areas confined the NIC's activities.

Finally, the NIC's branches also failed to evolve into strong tentacles reaching and galvanising the community. Branch activities decreased with time, leading to Naidoo's call for participation in the SAIC based on what he saw as inactivity and

[28] R. Ramesar, NIC Secretarial Report, 26/3/76, Karis-Gerhart.
[29] NIC, Invitation to Join, p.2
[30] IV\HS.
[31] IVs\EG and PD.

stagnation.[32] Hence, the NIC's problems were compounded by the failure to create genuine cells with which to keep a pulse on the community's opinion and through which to respond.

As such, till the late 1970s, the NIC's contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle, while laudable for the courage and sacrifices of those involved, remained limited. Detentions and bannings, which hindered the NIC's workings, also infused in the community greater fear of politics. State repression led to proposals for entering the SAIC, which in turn made the NIC appear as a house divided and not one that inspired confidence in a frightened community. Such dilemmas made the NIC look ineffectual against Pretoria, but it was the latter who at the end of the decade allowed the NIC to capture hearts and minds.

Contextual Dynamics

The late 1970s was a period when Pretoria found apartheid's sustenance complicated. As Robert Price notes, in 1975 and 1976 the South African economy registered the lowest GDP in thirty years.[33] Furthermore Portugal's decolonisation of Angola and Mozambique in 1975 altered Pretoria's security arrangements. Their independence taxed the economy further, for Pretoria, left without a *cordon sanitaire* of friendly white minority regimes,

[32] Leader, 19/3/76.
Also see Anon, Natal Indian Congress, p.39.
[33] R. Price, Apartheid State in Crisis: Political Transformation in South Africa, 1975-1990, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, pp.29-34.

had to increase defence and security expenditure.[34] In addition, the Soweto uprisings in June 1976 caused trepidation to a regime accustomed to the post-Sharpeville quietude. Pretoria suppressed the uprisings brutally but understood that a more sophisticated response than mere force was required for the survival of white supremacy in the long term.[35]

To cope with the changing dynamics confronting South Africa and sustain white supremacy, Pretoria adopted a reformist attitude from 1977. This was given a fillip with the rise of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister in 1978. Botha made domestic reform the centrepiece of government rhetoric, arguing that South Africa's whites "must adapt or die."[36] Furthermore in the wake of international backlash over its handling of Soweto, Pretoria was willing to countenance the appearance of certain forms of community expression, which it felt would not constitute a real threat to the state.[37] For example civic movements which emerged in various townships from 1978 were not checked.

However, Botha's reformism was conservative, existing within the parameters of apartheid. Of these reforms, some pertained specifically to the Indian and Coloured communities. In 1977, for instance, the NP's Parliamentary Committee on the Constitution made recommendations for the extension of parliamentary representation to Indians and Coloureds. The proposals envisaged three separate legislative chambers: the House of Assembly for Whites, House of Representatives for Coloureds and the HoD for

[34] Ibid., pp.40-43.
[35] Ibid., pp.46-58.
[36] Ibid., p.73.
[37] Ibid., pp.62-70.

Indians. Members were to be elected by voters on separate ethnic rolls.[38] The extension of parliamentary franchise to Coloureds and Indians was innovatory but the changes were cosmetic. Separate development still underpinned the reforms: Blacks would remain excluded from the new dispensation and political power would still rest in White hands, since the number of members would be fixed at the ratio of 4 Whites: 2 Coloureds: 1 Indian.[39] In the interim, Pretoria announced that the SAIC would become a fully elected body, with elections set for November 1981.[40]

The dynamics that affected Pretoria also echoed with South Africa's non-whites. Economic slowdown caused increasing hardships, while the Soweto uprisings and state repression thereafter saw black militancy resurge. Concomitantly Botha's reformism raised black expectations but failed to satisfy them, while creating new avenues for protest and resistance to white rule.[41] Furthermore, Soweto led the ANC to pay greater attention to events within South Africa and saw an increasing number of *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (MK) recruits thereafter. The ANC gaining from the groundswell of popular frustration, henceforth also promoted the development of small cells of activists engaged in political work to aid its reappearance in South Africa.[42] The impact of it all was a general political reawakening in South Africa.

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[38] Davenport, South Africa, p.382.
[39] Ibid., pp.382-383.
[40] Desai, South African Indian Council, p.139.
[41] Ken Owen, "A Fundamental Shift in South African Politics?" in Helen Kitchen (ed.) South Africa: In Transition to What? Prager, London, 1988, pp.141-143.
[42] H. Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age: African National Congress Operational Strategy, 1976-1986, Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, pp.131 and 178.

The Birth of Civics

Similarly Indian South Africans were not immune to the vortex of change. The NIC from about 1976 had within its ranks a group of dynamic young activists who applied themselves to devise the right strategy and tactics to arouse Indian resistance. Pravin Gordhan (a pharmacist), Yunus Mahomed, Zac Yakoob, Paul David (lawyers), Professor Jerry Coovadia (a sociologist) and Roy Padayachee (a social worker) were notable amongst these younger generation NIC members. Having been active students on campus and influenced to a certain extent by the masses-oriented outlook of the BPC, this group upon leaving university did not shed their activism but carried it into the NIC. They examined the contemporary position of Indians in Natal, the repressive conditions that operated and read into the history of struggles waged in the 1940s and 50s as well as Marxist-Leninist literature on mass mobilisation and understood that the community could not be galvanised merely on political agendas. They saw successful mobilisation requiring the needs and fears of the community to be addressed.[43]

They appreciated that the economic downturn hit working class Indians hard and that forced removals and the relocation of Indians into townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix offered new avenues for mobilising the community. Similarly they saw rents, transportation, housing costs, electricity and water supply as central issues to the Indian community.[44] At the same time they noticed that the community was frustrated with the state-inspired LACs, for failing to 'deliver the goods.' Cash strapped, Pretoria was unable to provide LAC officials with assurances of lower rentals, cheaper housing or better

[43] IVs\ Pravin Gordhan, Yusuf Vawda, Roy Padayachee and Yunus Mahomed, by DSD.
[44] Ibid.

facilities which these officials in turn could use to elicit the community's support.[45] Hence this astute younger generation NIC activists saw that possibilities existed for the community's mobilisation but that it would be achieved only by adopting a systematic strategy of organisation, 'conscientisation' and mobilisation through championing issues that affected the community and not the NIC's political agendas.

Their political foresight and dynamism led to the founding of civic organisations in Indian townships, such as the Phoenix Working Committee (PWC), founded in 1978 and the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee in 1979. Months of tiring work were expended to organise and mobilise the community before these structures were formally established. Activists, aided by a generation of tertiary students inspired by Soweto, made inroads into the community by going door to door and having meetings with small groups of ten to twenty families. They addressed the problems and frustrations confronting residents such as high rents, high utility bills, poor amenities and in the case of Chatsworth the high selling prices set by the Durban City Council (DCC) for sub-economic homes in the township.[46] These meetings raised the consciousness of families and individuals about the malpractices of the state and the ineffectiveness of the LACs and SAIC. The meetings also led to the emergence of volunteers from within the community, who in turn helped to organise more families and meetings. After six months

[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

or so hundreds of families were reached and mobilised via such means.[47] Hence, grassroots structures with tentacles firmly located within the community were established.

The success of the strategy in Phoenix led to its transplantation into other townships. Hence the Cato Manor Residents Association and Asherville Housing Action Committee were established in 1979 and 1980 respectively.[48] It was also not lost on the Indian activists that, since many of the frustrations and problems transcended the racial divide, they should co-operate with the Coloured community to establish similar structures in Coloured townships. Consequently the Sydenham Heights Tenant's Association and Newlands East Residents Association were established in 1978 and strong links were developed with Coloured community leaders such as Virgil Bonhomme.[49] Thus, a practical means for mass-based inter-racial co-operation was being laid.

Once the organisations were established the next phase was petitioning the DCC to seek redress or to boycott rentals and so forth. Through such acts, these grass roots organs were seen as providing genuine representation of the community. By the close of the decade 'civics' were well established and actively supported by the Indian and Coloured communities. They were raising the political and social consciousness of the Indian community while at the same time bridging unity between various races.[50] Hence, the Indian masses were being drawn out of their cocoon albeit for reasons not overtly political yet.

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[47] Ibid.
[48] IVs\YV and RP.
[49] IVs\PD and RP.
[50] IVs\YV and RP.

The NIC Acquires an Audience

The question still beckons: what was the relationship between the NIC and 'civics'? It appears that while these younger activists belonged to the NIC, the NIC's executive did not direct their work in 'civics'. Likewise, appreciating the community's fear of politics, activists mobilised without openly identifying themselves as NIC members. As Pravin Gordhan acknowledges,

> For two years we kept at what later came to be known as civic mobilising...it happened at a time when many of us were on the NIC executive but the people that we worked with on the ground didn't know that. Sometimes we had to ensure that the NIC executive didn't know what was going on the other side, because you didn't want to implicate community based people and community based leadership in political activities.[51]

It was only when these organisations were operational and well received by the community that links with the NIC were drawn. Consequently, only from late 1978 did the NIC's top brass began appearing on civic platforms addressing meetings and offering encouraging support.[52] These links once drawn gave the NIC the means to cultivate mass support and led to the infusion of political goals into the 'civics' movement. The masses through the 'civics' were finally within the NIC's reach.

Besides linking with 'civics', in 1979 the NIC was to gain greater anti-apartheid exposure than ever since revival, thanks to Pretoria's announcement of making the SAIC a fully elected body. The NIC's older executive members, who in previous years had debated the possibility of participating in apartheid structures, were now determined to discredit those structures by rallying the Indian community to boycott the elections. They established an anti-SAIC committee, under M.J. Naidoo's Presidency, and called for an

[51] IV\PG.
[52] Ibid.

anti-SAIC convention to be held in October that year.[53] Throughout the year the NIC constantly exhorted the Indian community to reject the SAIC and LACs. Appeals were made through the press and pamphlets, letters to the community were dispatched through the civic structures, and civic leaders were utilised to issue calls of rejection.[54] Indeed the NIC appeared very dynamic in its opposition to the SAIC elections.

While the NIC prepared to challenge the SAIC, history repeated itself. The debate on participation arose once again. This time, it showed a generational division. Older NIC stalwarts like M.J. Naidoo who in previous years had mooted participation were now bent on non-participation. 'Rejectionist participation' was advocated by some of the NIC's younger activist who were involved in 'civics'. They argued that participation in the elections would be a tactic of discrediting and destroying the system from within.[55] Their argument was not new but the way that the debate was settled indicated how far the NIC had come since revival.

The debate was resolved by the ANC in exile. Mac Maharaj, then the Secretary of the Internal Reconstruction and Development Department, of the ANC's Revolutionary Council, played a crucial role in breaching the gap in NIC ranks. Pravin Gordhan and Yunus Mahomed left South Africa in 1979 to visit the ANC in London. In London, Maharaj told them that "rejectionist participation would not dovetail with the tactics in African areas which favoured boycotts of all sections for state created structures."[56] Pacified with a letter from Yusuf Dadoo explaining the ANC's position, they returned to South Africa and toed the non-participation line. Although Gordhan and Mahomed on

[53] Leader, 18/5/79.
[54] Leader, 12/10/79.
[55] IVs\PG and YM.
[56] IV\ Mac Maharaj, by Howard Barrell, Prof. Gail Gerhart's personal copy.

hindsight argued that they were not given commands from Maharaj,[57] it has to be said that it in 1979 it appeared highly unlikely that the participationists would have compromised with those against their stand had it not been for the ANC's intervention.[58] Secondly Gordhan and Mahomed's meeting with the ANC in London made apparent one other facet of the NIC in 1979: very close links between some NIC members and the ANC in exile had developed.

These younger NIC activists who had applied themselves to civic organisation and were in the 'rejectionist participation' camp were labelled the Gordhan unit and held up as a model group for aiding the ANC to develop grass roots cells within South Africa.[59] They had in fact, from around the mid 70s, been helping to feed recruits into MK and providing support to local ANC structures.[60] Clearly these NIC activists were dual operatives, openly working for the NIC but clandestinely for the ANC. Hence NIC membership for them was only a mask for their ANC loyalties. They would strive hard in the years ahead to aid the popular re-emergence of the ANC through their positions within the NIC and civic structures.

Conclusion

The dynamics of Indian resistance in the 1970s revealed the existence of two different levels of political consciousness within the Indian community. On one level the NIC and its members, both old and new, represented the strata of highly conscious Indians who throughout the decade remained vigorously anti-apartheid. They sought to resist in

[57] IVs\PG and YM.
[58] IV\ MM by Howard Barrell.
[59] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, pp.214- 215.
[60] IV\PG.

various ways as well as develop closer links with their community and the other oppressed groups to mobilise them. The second strata occupied by the mass Indian community, due to apartheid engineering, state repression and insecurity about their position in a post-apartheid South Africa were politically cautious in their attitude. Mobilising them to resist required determined and astute planning from the more conscious elements of the community. By the turn of the decade, however, the masses' hearts and minds were captured due to conditional changes as well as the rise of a dynamic generation of NIC members, who were concurrently ANC operatives helping the latter's re-emergence within South Africa. The organisation and mobilisation efforts that these activists pursued through 'civics' allowed for the bridging of the two stratas. Hence, the possibilities for mass resistance in the coming years appeared immense.

CHAPTER THREE:

REACHING OUT

The first half of the 1980s was a period of extremes so far as the resistance of the Indian community in Natal was concerned. From 1980 to 1984 the two strata of Indian political consciousness narrowed, with the masses rallying under the aegis of the NIC and subsequently the UDF. This chapter assesses how the NIC first, through its links with civics, galvanised the community in a socio-economic struggle against apartheid and thereafter from 1983 channeled this momentum into the UDF to dent Pretoria's reforms. It also explores the development of the NIC's symbiotic relationship with the ANC, which was crucial to the latter's popular re-emergence. Hence, the first part of the chapter captures how the NIC merged Indian resistance into the wider struggle and was instrumental in the latter.

The chapter, however, concludes with an evaluation of how the August 1985 Inanda riots broke the momentum of Indian resistance that had been developing since the mid 1970s, breaching again levels of political consciousness between the Indian masses and the determined anti-apartheid strata.

The Community Marches

The founding of 'civics' spurred the mobilisation of Indian Natalians around daily issues, but these structures remained rooted within their own localities and fought the DCC individually against issues that were peculiar to them. As such although there was co-

operation between the various 'civics' and their leaders, there was no broad integrative leadership or organisation within which they could unite.[1]

Cognisant of the situation, in 1980, the NIC called for and spearheaded the establishment of the DHAC under which all civics could combine to mount consolidated protests against the DCC and the socio-economic injustices of apartheid. On 29 March, in opposition to the DCC's attempts to impose a 15% rent increase, the NIC and 29 Indian and Coloured 'civics' gathered at Durban's Kajee Hall to form DHAC. With NIC members like D. K. Singh elected as DHAC's Chairman, Pravin Gordhan as joint secretary and numerous others closely linked to DHAC, it became manifest that civic struggles would now be politically oriented, with the NIC blazing the trail.[2]

Beginning from March 1980, the Indian and Coloured communities marched in droves, hand in hand, against apartheid's socio-economic policies. Rent boycotts, protest marches and meetings were hallmarks of the DHAC's opposition to the DCC and LACs.[3] While the DCC did not alter its position,[4] the DHAC's struggles had several crucial effects on the resistance movement. Firstly, through marches, boycotts and meetings the level of mass participation and militancy in the Indian and Coloured communities rose to heights similar to those of Gandhi's *satyagraha* campaigns and the Defiance Campaign of the 1950s.[5] At the same time the DHAC provided the means for realising practical unity across the racial divide. The joint struggles defied governmental attempts to

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[1] DHAC, Durban's Housing Struggles, 19 July 1981, p.5. (SAHA)
[2] A Brief History of DHAC and JORAC, n.d., p.2. (SAHA)
[3] DHAC, Durban's Housing Struggles, p.5.
[4] Ibid., p.6.
After several protest marches and rent boycotts, in April the DCC postponed rent increases. However, in September residents faced rent increases again only to produce a fresh round of boycotts and protests. Such a pattern repeated itself, as far as the sources indicate, with the government using delaying tactics rather than making genuine concessions.
[5] Leader, 10/10/80.

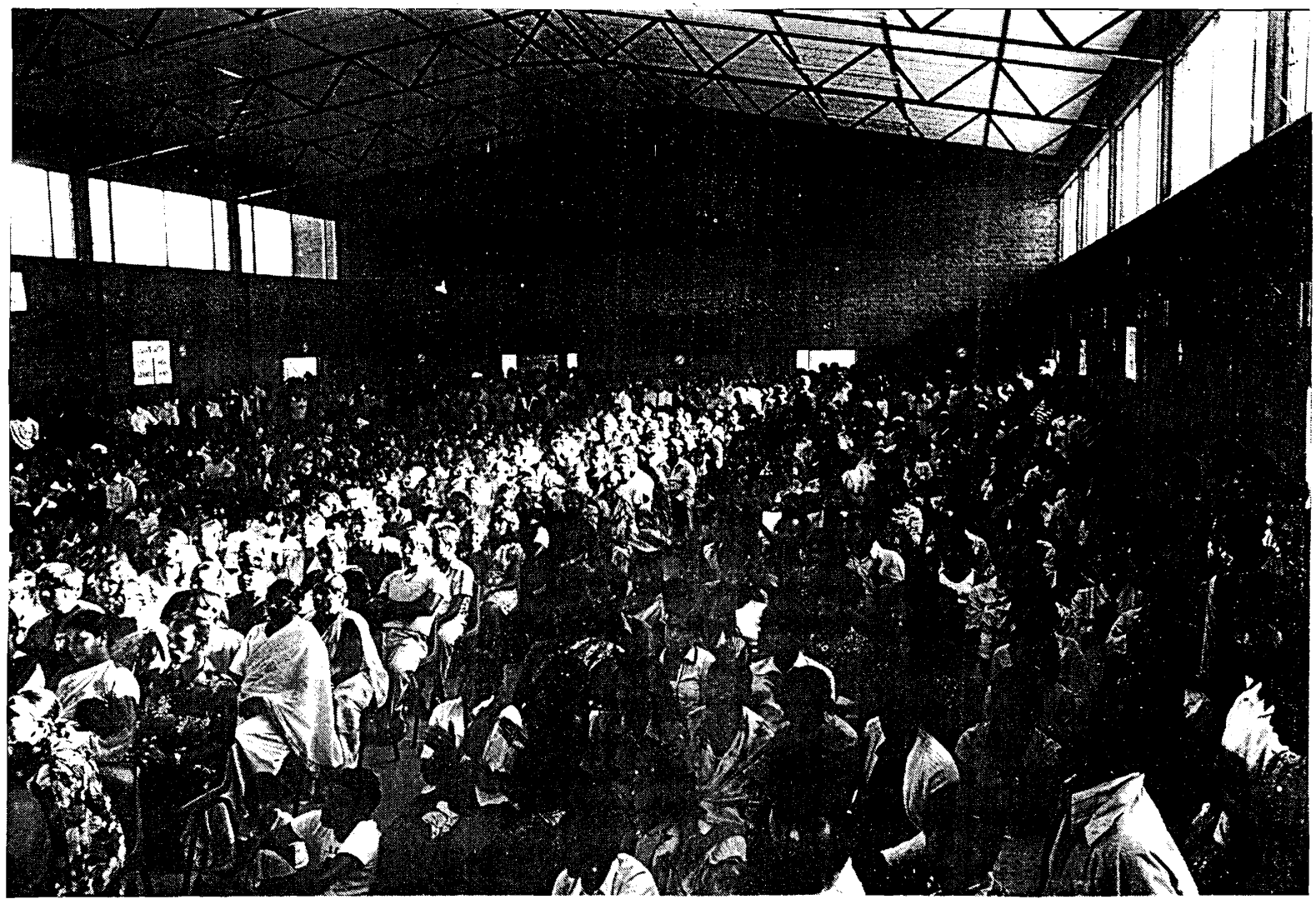

Plate 4: Rent Protest meeting Phoenix, 1980.

buttress racial separation.[6] The DHAC's close ties with the NIC also provided for greater political 'conscientisation' of the community and the means to link the housing struggles with the broader anti-apartheid struggle. In this case Pretoria's dummy institutions, the SAIC and LAC, became foci of resistance.[7]

Concomitant with the increasing militancy of the Indian masses was the rising tempo of Indian student activism. What started in April 1980 as protests by Coloured students in the Western Cape, against textbook shortages and the discriminatory nature of black education, quickly developed into nation-wide protests involving hundreds of students in every province.[8] Natal's Indian students joined their national counterparts in protest as well. Mass demonstrations and boycotts of educational institutions such as UDW, University of Natal and M.L. Sultan Technikon were symptomatic of the growing solidarity between Coloured, African and Indian students in South Africa.[9]

To these students, protests and boycotts were not merely to seek redress for personal grievances but an attempt to contribute to the wider struggle.[10] Hence, they actively engaged in the DHAC's struggles, working closely with the community and the NIC. In October, UDW students launched a fund-raising drive to aid rent-boycotting tenants.[11] At a DHAC mass meeting Mo Shaik, a member of UDW's Students Representative Council, declared

> If any action is taken against the tenants for non-payment of rentals, the City Council would have every student at the university to deal with as well.[12]

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[6] DHAC, Durban's Housing Struggles, p.8.
[7] Leader, 15/08/80, 26/09/80, 10/10/80, 26/12/80.
At DHAC and civic meetings SAIC and LAC officials were constantly condemned and called to resign.
[8] Leader, 26/12/80.
[9] Ibid.
[10] IV\Kovin Naidoo, by DSD.
[11] Leader, 10/10/80.
[12] Ibid.

Plate 5: Indian students boycotting, 1980.

Their increasing involvement in the struggles waged by the NIC and the DHAC was instrumental because they acted as the foot soldiers of the various campaigns, providing essential manpower to reach the community *en masse*.[13] In fact student activism grew increasingly important to the NIC's efforts and students remained in the forefront of the resistance struggle.

It is no surprise then that student protests and boycotts were met with baton charges, tear gas and howling police dogs. State repression against the students reached climactic heights on Black Wednesday, 18 June, when UDW students became victims of police violence.[14] In the same week the NIC's high command of G. Sewpersadh, M.J. Naidoo, Billy Nair, Dr. Farouk Meer, Rabbi Bugwandeen, Paul David and Thumba Pillay, among others, were detained under the Internal Security Act, in the biggest crackdown on the NIC in two decades.[15] Pretoria was realising that Indian resistance was reaching new heights and that the solution once again lay in repression.

Nonetheless, the community's growing support for the NIC was amply demonstrated when Indian shops in Natal closed in protest and 4 000 people thronged the Orient Hall, demonstrating against the detention of the Congress leaders.[16] The mass meeting marked the community's political arousal and identification with the NIC, ending the era of being cocooned.

[13] IVs\Charm Govender and KN, by DSD.
[14] Leader, 26/12/80.
[15] Leader, 01/08/80.
[16] Ibid., 11/6/80.

The NIC's Political Links

Ever since the signing of the Three Doctors Pact in 1947, the NIC had constantly sought to contribute to the anti-apartheid struggle, beyond just championing Indian grievances. From the late 1970s the Gordhan unit had visibly emerged as a component of the NIC that worked simultaneously for the latter as well as the ANC. Continuing such efforts, in the 1980s NIC members to establish committees and structures that extended beyond the scope of Indian politics. They aided the ANC's efforts at a time when the latter sought to promote its popular re-emergence within South Africa.[17]

Since 1980 was the 25th anniversary of the Freedom Charter's adoption, a campaign for its popularisation was planned by the ANC.[18] Endeavouring to assist, the NIC linked up with this campaign by establishing a committee to request the release of political prisoners. Accordingly in March, the Release Mandela Committee (RMC) was formed under the chairmanship of Paul David, an NIC executive member. Together with ANC veterans like Archie Gumede and Griffiths Mxenge, the RMC sought to raise the ANC's popularity by highlighting the plight and suffering of its long-detained leaders like Nelson Mandela.[19] The RMC was also conceived as means to generate African political leadership and promote the Charterist movement.

In May, the RMC organised a mass rally calling for Mandela's release. It was a huge success with more than 5 000 people attending to support the call.[20] The RMC hence was an example of NIC involvement in broader-scope resistance activities, the importance of which in the long run would be affirmed by the ANC's growing

[17] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, p.210.
[18] Ibid., p.224.
[19] IV\PD by JS.
[20] Leader, 2/5/1980.

popularity, the revival of Charterist politics in African areas and Mandela's growing stature in the 1980s.[21]

Similarly the NIC contributed valuably to the anti-Republic Celebrations Campaign of 1981. In early 1981, Pretoria announced the holding of a month of celebrations commemorating the 20th anniversary of South Africa's declaration as a republic. The ANC saw it as opportunity to unite the pockets of resistance, which it and its allies had developed within South Africa against the state.[22]

Playing its part, the NIC swung into action. An Anti-Republic Celebrations Committee (ARCC) comprising of people like Gumede, Naidoo and Sewpersadh was formed.[23] Through the NIC's established links with civics and with the aid of tertiary students, school students who were central to Pretoria's celebration plans were successfully tapped by the ARCC to boycott the celebrations. Propaganda pamphlets and graffiti with captions like "Racist Republic No, Peoples Republic Yes" were circulated and painted in schools and elsewhere to rally support.[24] Students delegated for performances withdrew, athletes boycotted races and festival workers resigned, dampening Pretoria's festive mood. The success of the ARCC's campaign was evident by the government's response: Naidoo, Gordhan and Mahomed, among other NIC members, were detained.[25]

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[21] IV\PD by JS.
[22] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, p.262.
[23] IV\CG and RP.
[24] IV\CG.

In the final analysis, the NIC's contributions to the RMC and ARCC were not only important in building the resistance momentum and aiding the ANC but also crucial in fostering inter-racial politics and solidarity since these committees and campaigns cut across the racial divide. Through such organisations the NIC also acted as a conduit between the ANC and the Indian community.[26]

The Anti-SAIC Elections

On 4 November 1981, Pretoria held elections for the SAIC only to suffer an embarrassing blow to its reforms. Having decided to boycott the elections, from 1979 the NIC waged an incessant campaign to rally the community behind its stance. Through the anti-SAIC committee and its links with 'civics' and the DHAC, the NIC systematically denigrated the institution as well as those who opted to participate in the elections. At civic and DHAC meetings the 'toothlessness' of the LACs and SAIC was constantly stressed. The NIC also held anti-SAIC meetings where parties and politicians who chose to stand were castigated as proponents of apartheid and sell outs, while its own Gandhian roots and history of resistance epitomised by the sacrifices of its past leaders Drs Naicker and Dadoo were emphasised.[27]

The efforts bore fruit when on polling day only an average turnout of 10.5% materialised,[28] leading Natal's Chief Electoral officer, Peter de Bruyn, to comment that there were more policemen than voters at the polling stations.[29] The low poll represented

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[25] Ibid.
[26] IV\PD, RP, YV and CG.
[27] Leader, 12/10/79, 10/07/81, 25/09/81, 16/10/81.
[28] Ibid., 13/11/81.
In some constituencies the turnout was less than 5% of the registered voters.
[29] Ibid., 6/11/81.

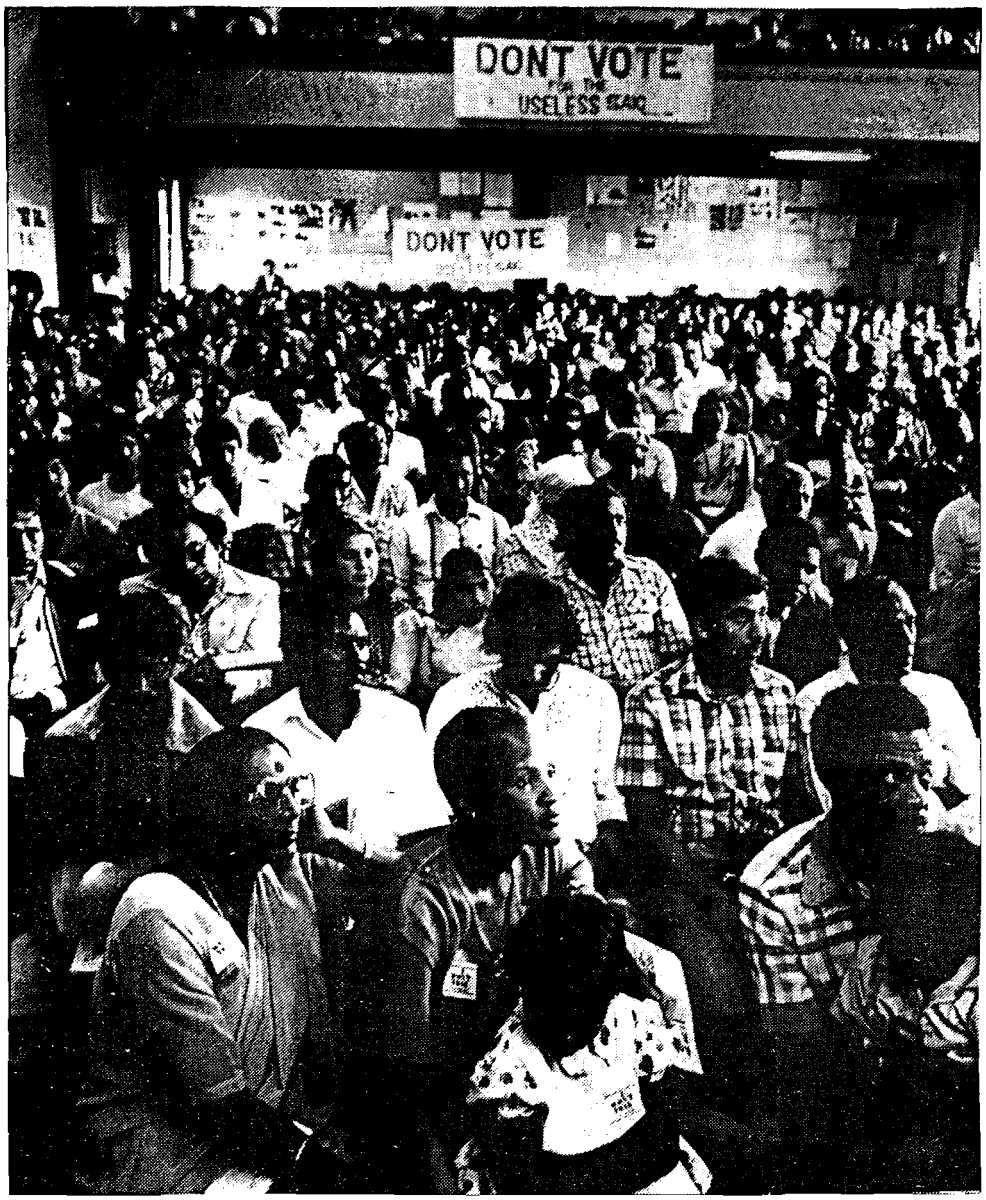

Plate 6: The NIC leads the Anti-SAIC Boycott, 1981.

a severe reversal for Pretoria's attempts to co-opt the Indian community.[30] On the other hand, it marked an advance for the NIC and ANC with the community rallying behind their boycott call.[31]

Anti-Tricameralism

The rejection of participatory politics by the Indian community, demonstrated by the pathetic voter turnout for the SAIC elections, did not deter Botha's government from pushing ahead with the constitutional reforms that it had been contemplating since 1977.[32] Tricameralism, the division of parliament into three ethnically structured and separate chambers, was Pretoria's sophisticated instrument for entrenching apartheid. By ensuring political racial division and by giving the semblance of greater participation in legislation making, Pretoria hoped to co-opt the Indian and Coloured communities to shore up support while neutralising opposition.[33] However, long before white South Africans could sanction the constitutional reforms in a referendum held on 2 November 1983, the NIC had embarked on an intense campaign to mobilise the Indian community against the forthcoming tricameral parliament.

The NIC's opposition to the new constitutional dispensation was based on the same principle as its rejection of the SAIC: the rejection of apartheid-inspired apparatuses. The NIC systematically refuted the new constitution. Its imposition from above without the Indian community's approval, the exclusion of Africans from parliament, the numerical superiority of Whites in parliament on the basis of a ratio of 4

[30] Rand Daily Mail, 5/11/81.
[31] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, p.272.
[32] Refer to Chp.2, p.22.
[33] P. Frankel, N.Pines and M. Swilling (eds.) State, Resistance and Change in South Africa, Croom Helm,

Whites: 2 Coloureds: 1 Indian, the retention of the Internal Security Act, GAA and continued imprisonment of political prisoners were all highlighted as proof that Pretoria's reforms were merely cosmetic reforms and that apartheid remained entrenched while efforts to foster inter-racial unity were being impeded.[34]

Akin to the NIC's systematic criticism of the new constitution, its efforts to mobilise the community against Pretoria's reforms now grew in sophistication and scope. The new constitution was seen as a focal point around which various anti-apartheid organisations, not just the NIC, could unite to challenge Pretoria. This unity was to take place under the aegis of the UDF.

The Birth of the UDF

The UDF was launched on August 20 1983, at the Rocklands Community Centre in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town. Its launch however was preceded by seven months of furious organisational activity in which Indian activists, not just from the NIC but from Transvaal too, played instrumental roles in hatching the idea of a united front and subsequently ensuring its materialisation.

In late 1982, Indian activists in the Transvaal decided on holding a conference of Transvaal based anti-SAIC campaigners for resuscitating the dormant TIC to challenge the tricameral elections scheduled for August 1984.[35] In the run up to the conference, speculation over the possibility of creating some form of a united front, comprising a

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USA, 1988, pp.5-6.

[34] NIC, The Congress Position on the New Constitutional Proposals, c.1983, Karis-Gerhart, pp.20-26. Leader, 06/08/82.

[35] IV\CG.

wider spectrum of forces against Pretoria, remained rife.[36] In his interview with Cassim Salojee, a prominent Transvaal based Indian activist, Howard Barrell noted that at about 10 p.m. on 21 January 1983, the eve of the conference, members of the Gordhan unit, Pravin Gordhan, Zac Yakoob and Yunus Mahomed, arrived from Durban. They supported the idea of using the occasion to propose the creation of a broad front and although having arrived at the eleventh hour their views were heeded, demonstrating their influence.[37]

There were several reasons why ideas of a broad front were percolating. From the ANC's vantage-point, it was keen to promote the development of legal political structures within South Africa. In his New Year address to South Africans on 8 January 1983, ANC President Oliver Tambo outlined the need to organise the people into strong mass democratic organisations, all revolutionaries into ANC underground units and all democratic forces into one front for national liberation.[38] Hence, Indian activists who were in contact with the ANC, like the Gordhan unit and others in the Transvaal, adhered the ANC's call and mooted the establishment of the front.[39]

At the same time that the ANC had conceived of the front, Indian activists within South Africa too were independently thinking about such an organisation. The NIC, historically keen to foster inter-ethnic solidarity between Indians and Africans, saw the blatant exclusion of Africans from the new parliament as an issue that could draw Africans into the NIC's struggle to mobilise the Indian community against the tricameral

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, p.287.
[38] Ibid., p.285.
[39] IV\CG.

system.[40] Rather than merely galvanise the Indian community through its own links, NIC members were keen to draw the larger populace not just against the HoD but Pretoria's reforms generally. It was felt that the best means of doing so would be a broad front of organisations.[41] Thus, both internal and external dynamics were encouraging the development of a front and Indian activists applied themselves to its realisation.

At the conference, on 22 January, the guest speaker, Reverend Alan Boesak,* declared to the 2,000 odd crowd about a united front of democratically minded organisations to advance the politics of refusal, the boycott of government-created institutions, to work for a non-racial, open democratic South Africa. His call set in motion the wheels for UDF's establishment.[42]

A national interim committee was appointed at the conference to prepare for the UDF's launch but it failed to make much headway. In March however, progress was made with Yunus Mahomed, Zac Yakoob and Jerry Coovadia reconstituting the committee. Regional UDF structures were established prior to its national launch. In Natal the first regional structure in the country was formally established on 14 May 1983. Its executive committee comprised of Gumede (President), Coovadia (Chairperson) Virgil Bonhomme (Vice-Chairperson), Rabbi Bugwandeen and Victoria Mxenge

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[40] IV\PD, by DSD.

[41] Ibid.

* Boesak was a prominent Cape Town based pastor in the Coloured Dutch Reformed Mission Church who had been elected President of the World Alliance Reformed Churches in 1982

[42] T. Lodge, B. Nasson, S. Mufson, K. Shubane and N. Sithole (eds.) All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991, p.48.

Plate 7: The Transvaal Anti-SAIC Conference where Rev Alan Boesak called for the UDF, Jan 1983.

(Treasurers) and Yunus Mahomed (Secretary).[43] Clearly Indian activists were diligently engaged in the UDF's regional and national establishment.[44]

Civic groups, youth organisations, worker unions, student organisations, the RMC and NIC were all drawn into the Natal UDF, mirroring the national makeup as well. Hence, for the first time since the launch of the Congress movement in 1955, was such a broad conglomeration of anti-apartheid forces brought together. Indian, African and Coloured politics, civic struggles and student activism were finally being merged into one broad-based national mass movement, spanning the racial divide to challenge Pretoria.

The UDF/NIC Mobilises

In Natal, the UDF was publicly launched at a meeting at the Orient Hall on 12 November 1983. More than 5,000 African, Indian and Coloured people attended this joint UDF/NIC meeting, which also sought to condemn the constitutional proposals. The meeting was given a further ballast by the arrest of prominent NIC leaders earlier that day. They were amongst 43 people who held a placard demonstration outside the City Hall where Botha was to address invited guests on the new constitution. Nevertheless, the crowd at the Orient Hall cheered the UDF/NIC speakers who spoke of Pretoria's sham, demonstrating its enthusiasm and support for the UDF/NIC. Furthermore, its multi-racial composition revealed the development of inter-ethnic solidarity.

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[43] IVs\YM, PD and MR, by JS.

[44] Ibid.
Also see IVs\CG and PD, by DSD.
From mid to late 1983 the Natal leadership were actively engaged in building the UDF at the national level. Ramgobin who was banned was active in fund raising for the national launch. Yunus Mahomed was integral to national strategising. Other banned NIC personnel like G. Sewpersadh, M. J. Naidoo and Gordhan all played active roles behind the scenes.

Plate 8: NIC leaders demonstrating outside Durban's City Hall against PW Botha's meeting, 1983.

Plate 9: UDF Rally, 1983.

Plate 10: UDF/NIC Anti-Constitution Rally, Chatsworth 1983.

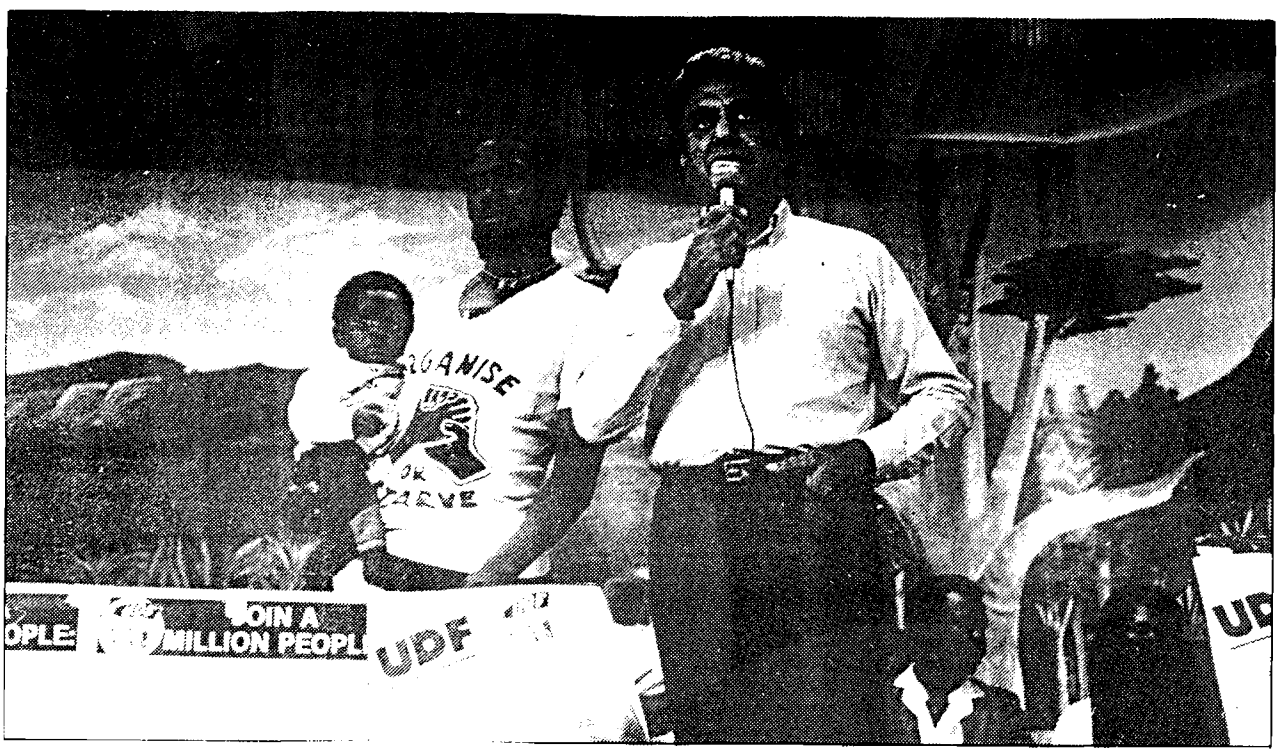

Plate 11: Professor Coovadia launching Million Signature Campaign, 1984.

After the meeting at the Orient Hall, in early 1984 the UDF launched an ambitious national Million Signature Campaign (MSC). Intended to promote organisation and mobilisation of the masses behind the UDF, the MSC was executed in two ways: the collection of signatures at popular meetings (most of which were UDF organised) and by blitzes.[45] The blitzes were carried out with the help of civics and student volunteers. Multi-racial teams of activists visited peoples homes and explained the UDF, encouraged the boycott of the tricameral elections as well as collect the signatures. They helped allay peoples' fears of political involvement, raise support for the UDF/NIC as well as 'conscientise' the community about the 'deceit' of the new constitution. In addition the blitzes allowed volunteers to acquire greater experience in mass work such as public education and discussion, as well as raise new volunteers.[46] However, the campaign in Natal failed to meet its regional target of 300,000, gaining only 35,000 signatures by June 1984.[47]

Nevertheless, the UDF/NIC in Natal adopted various other tactics to mobilise the masses to boycott the coming elections. House visits by students and volunteers still continued.[48] NIC members and activists also attended meetings organised by participating candidates, where their questions highlighted the self-serving opportunism

[45] IV\Khetso Gordhan, by JS.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Leader, 8/06/84.

of the latter.[49] To further undermine the position of the participationist elements, the NIC drew up a list of counter candidates, who had an exemplary record of community service, to spearhead the boycott movement.[50] Such a tactic allowed the NIC to pose as a high calibre organisation and that had the community's interest at heart and the integrity of character not to participate. The UDF/NIC also took out newspaper advertisements advocating non-participation. These tactics had the dual effect of influencing prospective voters and heightening general political awareness.[51] Finally, in the immediate run up to the elections, on 20 August 1984 meetings were held to commemorate the UDF's first year anniversary and a week later another to celebrate the NIC's ninetieth anniversary.[52] Both meetings drew cosmopolitan crowds of about 9,000 people. At these meetings pamphlets and UDF/NIC literature criticising the new plans were distributed, and the alternative to apartheid- the Freedom Charter was promoted. These mass rallies also advanced unity amongst the masses.

The UDF/NIC's maelstrom of activity finally paid dividend when only an abysmal average poll of only 20% of the registered voters was achieved.[53] Once again the NIC had managed to throw cold water on Pretoria's plans. This time, however, the significance of the pathetic turnout ran deeper, conclusively leaving Botha's reforms in tatters, without any claim to popular legitimacy. The failure to co-opt was a severe blow to the maintenance of white supremacy, and with no backup plans the alternatives were a negotiation of apartheid's demise or repression. Pretoria decided on the latter.

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[49] IVs\HS and PD.
[50] Daily News, 2/08/84.
[51] IVs\RP and CG.
[52] Leader, 24/08/84.
[53] Ibid., 21/12/84.

In the aftermath of the anti-tricameral campaign, the UDF/NIC too encountered difficulties in sustaining the momentum of resistance within Natal. In fact on 21 August 1984, a week before the tricameral elections 35 UDF/NIC leaders were arrested in a major pre-dawn swoop and charged under the Internal Security Act.[54] However after a successful court application by the NIC, they were released on 7 September. Their respite was sadly temporary for, immediately after their release, the Special Branch obtained fresh orders for their re-arrest. Six of the UDF/NIC's top leaders, Gumede, Sewpersadh, Ramgobin, Naidoo, Billy Nair and Paul David, then staged a dramatic coup: on 14 September they sought refuge in the British Consulate in Durban.[55] The Consulate Six, as they were known, brought the UDF international coverage.[56] They also aroused the community's support, as witnessed by the 6 000 odd crowd that poured onto Durban's streets when Gumede, David and Nair finally surrendered themselves in mid-December.[57]

After the Consulate saga state repression severely dented the cause of the UDF/NIC. In December, eight UDF/NIC leaders were charged with treason and the number soon increased to sixteen, amongst whom were Sewpersadh, Naidoo, Ramgobin, David and Gumede. Their arrests impeded the UDF/NIC's operations in Natal.[58] Moreover, on 21 July 1985 the government declared a state of emergency, coupled with the arrests, further undermining the UDF/NIC's ability to mount effective opposition.[59]

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[54] Ibid., 24/08/84.
[55] IV\PD.
[56] Leader, 28/09/84.
[57] Ibid., 21/12/84.
The other three, Sewpersadh, Nair and Ramgobin had left the Consulate on October 6 and were arrested.
[58] Leader, 15/03/85.
[59] Barrell, Conscripts to Their Age, p.401.

The Setback

The resistance of the Indian community finally broke momentum in August 1985. While state repression and detentions of the UDF/NIC leaders led to a reduction in the tempo of resistance, the community was still aroused. It was only the outbreak of Indo-African violence in Inanda that finally led the community to re-cocoon itself.

Inanda, a settlement 30 kilometres north of Durban, where Indians and Africans had been neighbours for more than 50 years, was the site of bloody ethnic strife for one week beginning on Monday, 11 August 1985. What had started as demonstrations against the assassination of UDF leader Victoria Mxenge soon turned into mob fury when 'lumpen' elements got involved. As a result Indians were evicted from their homes, their shops were looted and destroyed and the violence culminated in the razing of the Gandhi Phoenix settlement, site of Gandhi's *ashram* and of the NIC's 1971 revival. By Saturday, there were 2,000 Indian refugees in Phoenix, the bordering Indian township. By the end of the carnage 4 Indians were dead, 44 Indian businesses and shops destroyed and as many houses.[60]

In the absence of an official commission of inquiry, various reasons have been offered for the tragedy. Theories include state engineering so as to breach inter-ethnic unity, deep seated anti-Indianism due to jealousies stemming from the latter's better material position and even population pressures on the settlements' constraint

[60] H. Hughes, "Violence in Inanda, August 1985," Journal of Southern African Studies, Vol.13, No.3, April, 1987, pp.347-354.

infrastructure.[61] Nonetheless in so far as this study is concerned, why the carnage occurred is less important than its impact on the Indian community's susbsequent resistance propensity.

Understandably the violence proved a major setback for the NIC's efforts to mobilise Indian Natalians.[62] Memories of 1949 were evoked and fear of Africans struck home. The impact of the event on the community's political consciousness was retrogressive causing many to question their opposition to apartheid. In fact, the refrain "better the devil you know than the devil you do not know" began to find currency.[63] Surveys conducted in the wake of the violence revealed that the community's consciousness was turning conservative and apathetic again.[64] In fact collaborationist Indian politicians registered increasing support and this mirrored the growing Indian support for P.W. Botha.[65] Essentially the violence and effective government propaganda produced a retreat from solidarity with Africans and entry into the white system.[66] As such the violence saw the community re-cocoon itself. Its galvanisation against apartheid thereafter would take the NIC several years, the study of which has to be conducted in another academic exercise.

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[61] IVs\PD, HS and EG.
[62] IVs\PD and PG.
Also see IV\PG, by JF.
[63] IV\PD.
[64] Institute for Black Research, The Power of the Powerless, Madiba Publications, Durban, 1991, p.53.
[65] Leader, 27/09/85.
[66] NIC, Invitation to Join, pp. 1-3.

CHAPTER FOUR:

SOCIO-CULTURAL RESISTANCE

Apartheid not only excluded South Africa's non-whites from the levers of political power but also structured racism on more mundane levels, for instance ensuring that whites had exclusive sections of the beach, that the children of each racial group attended their own schools, that non-whites could not attend white theatre and that inter-racial sports were not played. Hence apartheid did not just govern the political life of South Africa's many races but was a complex web of laws that spared no aspect of life and inter-racial relations.

In similar fashion, resistance to apartheid did not just occur on purely political fronts as characterised by NIC and UDF led protests, boycotts and demonstrations. Indian resistance also emanated from and through channels such as sports movements, mass media and the arts. The central focus of this thesis has been the examination of Indian political resistance in Natal but to provide a more holistic picture of the struggles waged by the community this chapter will address the role of the *Leader*, the contributions of Indians within NACOS (the Natal anti-apartheid sports body) and finally, the works of playwright Ronnie Govender and cartoonists Nanda Soobben. While their contributions cannot be examined in detail, assessing them remain necessary in any composite academic study of Indian resistance to apartheid.

The Leader: A Resistance Paper

In his seminal work on censorship in South Africa, Christopher Merret notes that

> an ideology that arrogated itself the right to determine the outcome of so many of the factors which frame the life histories of individuals must be convinced of the purity of its ideas. Once such certainty had taken hold, it was but a minute step towards the suppression of the ideas of others. Censorship, therefore was not only logical but inevitable in a country which embraced apartheid...[1]

Hence to maintain apartheid, Pretoria created a massive structure of press censorship and self-censorship. Beginning from the Suppression of Communism Act (1950) to the Internal Security Act (1976), the government spawned a legal labyrinth to muzzle the press[2] and often because the legislation was so complex, vast and vague, it gave the independent press the impression that it was walking blindfolded through a minefield, trying to anticipate what would upset the government. As a result caution and self-censorship were exercised.[3]

Operating in such an environment, the *Leader* played an important role in the anti-apartheid struggle. The paper was established in November 1940 by Dhanee Bramdaw, a first generation South African Indian. Then in his late 30s and having gained considerable journalistic experience after serving with the *Natal Witness*, *Reuters* and as a foreign correspondent for the *Hindu* and the *Times of India*, Dhanee Bramdaw saw that the white press was giving insufficient exposure to Indian issues and hence decided to

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[1] Christopher Merrett, A Culture of Censorship: Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa, David Philip, Cape Town, 1994, p.5.

[2] Richard Pollak, Up Against Apartheid: The Role and the Plight of the Press in South Africa, Southern Illinois Press, 1981, pp.47-56.
Other legislation which severely circumscribed the press were the Terrorism Act (1967), the Riotous Assemblies Act (1956), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1953), the Public Safety Act (1956), the Official Secrets Act (1956) and the Prisons Act (1969).

[3] Ibid., p.8.

launch an English medium Indian newspaper. From about 1962, Dhanee's son, Sunny Bramdaw, began running the paper and continues to do so till today.[4]

During the period concerned, the contributions of the *Leader* in the anti-apartheid struggle were three fold: providing the NIC with a means to circulate its views and position to Indian Natalians; denigration of state structures such as the SAIC and HoD, as well as those who collaborated; and finally covering issues and events which the white press ignored or gave limited exposure.

Every political organisation requires a mouthpiece with which it can disseminate its views and capture an audience/base. In the United Kingdom there are Conservative and Labour Party newspapers, while in the United States of America there are Republican and Democratic Party newspapers. Even the Nazis had the *Volkïscher Beobachter* to peddle their anti-Semitic views. Similarly the NIC required a medium through which it could disseminate its anti-apartheid message and aid its mobilisation of the community. This medium was the *Leader*.

Sunny Bramdaw acknowledges that the *Leader* was a mouthpiece for the NIC and the Congress position saying,

> We gave them full coverage because it was important for us to put across these views rather than the views of the government. We weren't sympathetic to the government's attitude and policies. We were more in tune with what the Congress movement was pronouncing.[5]

Bramdaw's claims can be easily verified through an examination of the *Leader*'s reporting during the period under consideration. They are given greater credence by the fact that Ismail Meer, a banned NIC executive member, wrote a column for the *Leader*, titled 'I Recall', using his brother's name, A.C. Meer. It traced the struggles of the NIC

[4] IV\Sunny Bramdaw, by DSD.

over the years and sought to promote similar resistance through such recollections.[6] Hence, the *Leader* played a crucial role in Indian resistance by providing the NIC with a mouthpiece.

In addition to pronouncing the NIC's views, the *Leader* also contributed by constantly criticising the government's superficial reforms and apartheid structures such as the LACs, SAIC and latterly the HoD in editorials as well as columns.[7] Collaborators who participated in such structures were also portrayed as ineffective and selfish.[8] Such a reporting slant served to impress upon the community that these structures and collaborators would never adequately address their needs or champion their grievances. The *Leader* sought to raise the political awareness of its readership and impress upon them that the only solution was the end of apartheid and this inevitably aided the process of community mobilisation for resistance.[9]

Finally, the contribution of the *Leader* also has to be noted in the context of state censorship as well as the self-censorship exercised by other newspapers over information on resistance movements or events such as protests and demonstrations. The *Leader* gave full vent to events like the NIC's revival, the Soweto uprisings, DHAC's struggles, student boycotts and the low voter turnout for the SAIC and HoD elections.[10] Such events, ignored or covered only briefly by the white press, were extensively covered in the *Leader*. According to Bramdaw, it was done deliberately to keep the Indian community informed of the struggles being waged around them and arouse their political

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[5] Ibid.
[6] IV\Ismail Meer, by DSD.
[7] See, Leader, 20/12/70, 07/12/79, 21/12/79 and 20/12/82.
[8] *Inter alia,* Leader, 04/06/82, 21/10/83 and 08/06/84.
[9] IV\SB.
[10] See Leader, 21/06/76, 08/10/71, 13/11/81, 21/07/84.

awareness.[11] Although difficult to ascertain the impact of such coverage on the community's mindset, it probably did arouse greater awareness and political activism. More importantly, such reporting also reflected the determination of the *Leader* to contribute to the struggle considering that it invited threats and physical harassment from the Security Branch.[12]

Apartheid-Sports Resistance: Indians in NACOS

While Pretoria did not introduce specific legislation to prohibit racially-integrated sport, the sporting arena did not escape apartheid's racism. Historical antecedents as well as apartheid's general legislation ensured that one's sporting life was governed by his pigmentation. Even before the advent of apartheid, sports in South Africa were played between people of the same class and race, with little provision made for non-whites. From 1948, apartheid legislation such as the GAA and the Separate Amenities Bill entrenched racial segregation and gave it legal sanctioning, making integrated sport a distant dream.[13] In fact, in 1954 T.E Dönges, the Minister of the Interior, announced that that the government would assist blacks to participate in legitimate sporting activities provided they accorded with the policy of separate development.[14]

The deprivations and humiliations that non-white sportsmen encountered under apartheid were numerous. The experiences of Sewsunker Sewgolum, a South African Indian golfer, captures them quite well. Sewgolum won the Dutch open in 1959, 1960

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[11] IV\SB.
[12] Ibid.
[13] For apartheid sports refer to:
Douglas Booth, The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa, Frank Cass, London, 1998.
Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, The South African Game: Sport and Racism, Zed Press, London, 1982.
[14] Booth, The Race Game, p.58.

and 1964 and was a member of the British Golfer's Association. However, when he applied to play in the 1961 Natal Open Golf Championship, the Natal Golf Union referred him to the South African Golf Union to obtain a permit under the GAA to play. Nevertheless he was still not allowed to use the course for practice and nor was he allowed to enter the clubhouse! Even more ridiculous was when he won the Natal Open in 1963 only to have to stand in the rain to receive his trophy because his permit did not grant him the privilege to enter the clubhouse.[15]

Beset with such restrictions and humiliations, it is unsurprising that the sports arena too became a battleground for non-whites in the anti-apartheid struggle. In 1958, Dennis Brutus, a Coloured teacher with a passion for basketball, and Alan Paton, the writer and Liberal Party politician, called a conference which led to the formation of the South African Sports Association (SASA)- the first non-racial sports organisation. It aimed to promote non-racial sports and lobbied the international sporting fraternity to boycott whites-only South African sports organisations.[16] In 1963, faced with repression SASA's, officials reconstituted themselves into the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) with the primary aim of getting South Africa expelled from the Olympic movement. Again due to state repression, SANROC was forced to go into exile and from 1966 operated in London.[17] Thereafter, SANROC led a massive campaign to rally the international community to boycott South Africa and from the early 1970s,

[15] Ibid., pp.60 & 66.
[16] Krish Mackerdhuj, History of Resistance in Sport in South Africa, Paper presented at NACOS Conference on Sport Mobilisation and Transformation, 28/01/89, (UDW Documentation Centre, henceforth Documentation Centre).
[17] Ibid.

under President Sam Ramsamy, it gained increasing success in its efforts.[18]

While SANROC led the assault from London, within South Africa in the early 1970s there was increasing clamour to establish a non-racial sports body to assist SANROC as well as promote non-racial sports. At the time of the growth and revival of bodies like the NIC and the BCM, a convention to test the viability of forming a non-racial sports body was held in Durban in 1970 resulting in 1973 in the birth of SACOS.[19] Indian personalities like Hassan Howa, M.N. Pather and Goerge Singh figured prominently in the drive to establish SACOS.[20]

SACOS had its regional affiliates (amongst which was NACOS) and each province had delegates, presiding over various sporting codes ranging from table tennis and swimming to soccer.[21]

NACOS aided SACOS to promote non-racial sports within South Africa as well as aid the SANROC to isolate South Africa from the international sporting community.[22] NACOS, from its very inception, predominantly consisted of Indian and Coloured members, a social makeup not very different from its parent body. Official records from the late 1970s and early 1980s indicate the strong presence of Indians in the leadership of NACOS as well as of the provincial codes of sports.[23]

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[18] Booth, The Race Game, p.110.
Booth notes that Ramsamy untiringly campaigned to highlight the injustices that bedevilled Black sportsmen in South Africa. His efforts led to South Africa's increasing isolation from the international sporting community from the mid 1970s.

[19] Mackerdhuj, History of Resistance in Sport.

[20] IV\Krish Govender, by DSD.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] See NACOS, Annual General Meeting Reports, 20/09/79 and 31/10/81, (Documentation Centre).
NACOS, Minutes of General Meeting, 29/04/84 , (Documentation Centre)

These Indians attempted to foster inter-ethnic solidarity by trying to organise non-racial clubs, teams, tournaments and meets.[24] In soccer, tennis and hockey, amongst other sports, NACOS' members and leaders established mixed teams and promoted tournaments.[25] Such efforts were integral in trying to break down apartheid's racial barriers.

SACOS and NACOS remained neutral in their official disposition towards any anti-apartheid political movement like the NIC or UDF but that did not restrict their challenge to apartheid sports.[26] In fact SACOS began to consider itself as the sports wing of the liberation struggle.[27] To give effect to its broader anti-apartheid views, in 1977 Hassan Howa, who was President of SACOS from 1977 to 1981, coined the slogan "No Normal Sports in an Abnormal Society", encapsulating SACOS' and NACOS' commitment to the wider struggle.[28]

In 1977, SACOS and its regional affiliates also adopted the 'Double Standards Resolution' whereby

> No person, whether a player, an administrator or a spectator , committed to the non-racial principle in sport shall participate in or be associated with any code of sport which practices, perpetuates or condones racialism.[29]

Those found disregarding this principle were seen as guilty of double standards and subjected to powerful social ostracism and blacklisting from SACOS and NACOS. In Natal, as Krish Govender who served as a Treasurer for NACOS recalls, the 'Double Standards Resolution' was a powerful instrument of ensuring that apartheid sports was

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[24] IV\KG.
[25] NACOS, Annual General Meeting Reports, 31/10/81.
[26] IV\KG.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Booth, The Race Game, p.117.
Also see Mackerdhuj, History of Resistance in Sport.

devoid of participants: the social ostracism levelled on those Indians who disregarded it was too humiliating.[30] Friends and colleagues remained silent when such people walked into parties or functions, at the end of the day compelling them to rethink racialism.[31]

In Natal, NACOS extended the use of the 'Double Standards Resolution' to ostracise 'collaborators'- those Indian who participated in the SAIC and the HoD. Govender recalls how their children would be ostracised at school sports meets. For instance, if a collaborator's son or daughter was running a race, once the starter's gun was fired none of the athletes would run.[32] Hence, through its own sporting channels, SACOS and NACOS undermined the position of those who partook in system structures as well as the system itself. SACOS' principles on non-collaboration were further highlighted when it made clear its opposition to the new Tricameral constitution and the HoD. Conferences were held to pronounce its anti-tricameral stance and ensure boycott of the elections.[33]

Although organisational details are sketchy and the scope for further research into the sports struggles remains vast, one can conclude that Indian South Africans did involve themselves actively in resistance through this channel. Their efforts helped promote inter-racial sports and thereby inter-ethnic solidarity, as well as raise the consciousness of the average person of the broader injustices of apartheid. Their 'Double Standards Resolution' and non-collaboration stance also served to undermine Pretoria's co-option strategy.

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[29] Mackerdhuj, History of Resistance in Sport.
[30] IV\KG.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

The Arts: A Playwright and A Cartoonist

Political parties and newspapers play key roles in raising people's political awareness and shaping their political culture, but they are not the only means of doing so. In the anti-apartheid struggle, Black theatre also became an arena of contest between the state and the oppressed communities.[34] Although there was not one single theatre in any South African township, Black playwrights and theatre did exist and, within this small talent pool, the efforts of Ronnie Govender, who is now the Director of the Natal Playhouse, deserve mentioning.

Having had a hectic career as a journalist, editor, teacher, writer, director and sports administrator from the mid-seventies, Ronnie Govender gained greater prominence as a full-time playwright. In 1964, together with Muthal Naidoo and Bennie Bersee, also playwrights, Govender founded the Shah Theatre Academy in Durban to stage plays of relevance to the Indian community. They sought to challenge the Eurocentric plays that White theatre offered Indians, who were willing to countenance separate seating galleries.[35]

The theatre soon went defunct. That however, did not stop Govender from writing. In 1974 he produced, 'Lahnee's Pleasure', a comedy that subtly highlighted the injustices of apartheid affecting the Indian community.[36] In 1981, Govender wrote 'Nomquase's Dream' especially to promote the Release Mandela Campaign. Mandela's

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[33] SACOS, Sport and Liberation, n.d., (Documentation Centre).
[34] Bhekizizwe Peterson, "Apartheid and the Political Imagination in Black South African Theatre," in Liz Gunner (ed.) Politics and Performance: Theatre, Poetry and Song in Southern Africa, Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1995, p.35.
[35] IV\Ronnie Govender, by DSD.
[36] Leader, 07/12/84.

youngest daughter, Zini, and Griffiths Mxenge of the RMC, who were present at the play's opening, expressed admiration for it and the writer.[37]

In terms of contribution to the struggle, Govender's play 'Off-Side' which opened in Durban in August 1984, shortly before the Indian community went to the polls for the HoD elections, was far more significant. The play was a satire on collaborators in a system which had been rejected by the vast majority of Indians. Tit-for-Tat Pookadinkum and Bun Tharsee ludicrously battled for the dubious honour of being elected.* The open responsiveness and vocal interjections of the capacity audiences were a testament to the relevance of a theatre of protest, in the absence of a public platform where alternate political opinions could be voiced.[38] Although Govender continued to write plays thereafter, and still remains prolific, for the purposes of this thesis it would suffice to note that his plays, particularly Off-Side, were not only a form of alternate protest but also played an educational and 'conscientising' role which aided the efforts of the NIC and UDF against Pretoria' tricameral reforms.

Another talented Indian who used his gifts to contribute to the struggle through the arts was the cartoonist Nanda Soobben. Soobben started out as a editorial cartoonist for the *Post Natal*, a government run Indian newspaper in 1980, but today runs his own art studio in Durban.[39] His works have varyingly reflected on the abnormality of apartheid society, from separate amenities to the devastating upheaval effects of the GAA on Indian families and spoofs on Indian politicians who participated in the SAIC and the

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[37] Ibid.

* There were two opposing politicians who fought for seats in the HoD elections: Pat Poovalingam and Amichand Rajbansi.

[38] IV\RG.

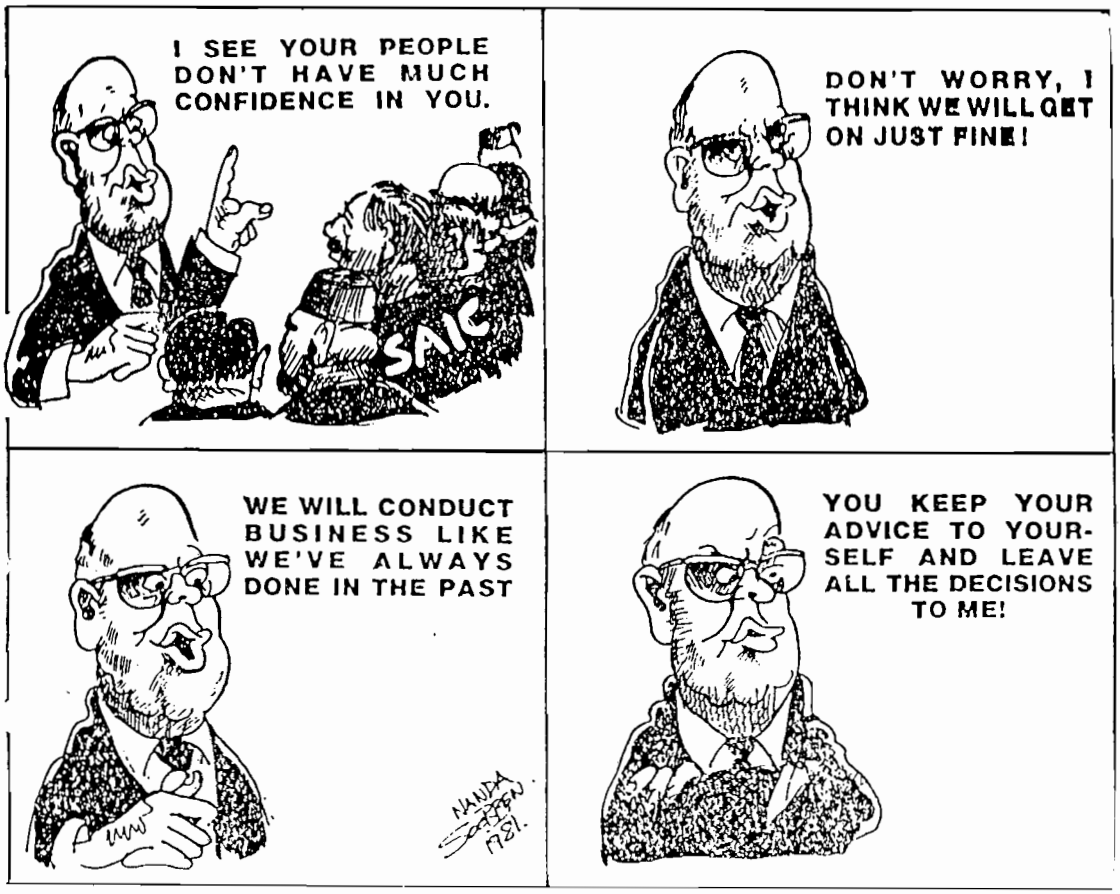
[39] IV\Nanda Soobben, by DSD.

HoD.[40] While many Indians contributed to the struggle by participating in 'civics' or NIC and UDF protests, Soobben remained politically neutral but endeavoured to play his part by projecting the injustices of apartheid subtly through his cartoons. The message and the theme have always been clear: apartheid is harsh and unjust and the actions of those who collaborated must be undermined.[41] His works too played a 'conscientising' role which aided the political struggle for the end to apartheid.

Conclusion

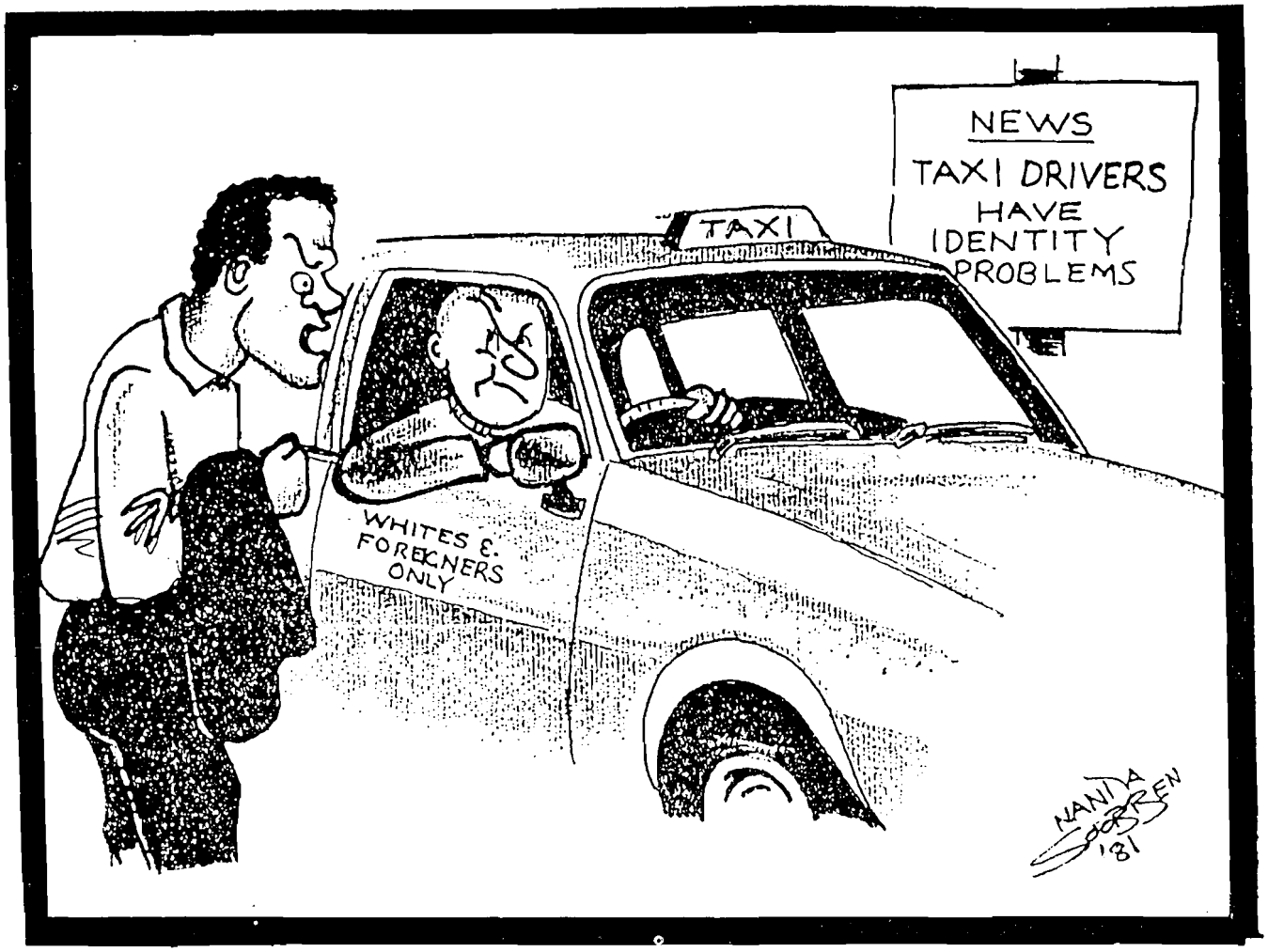
While this chapter has only briefly traced the anti-apartheid resistance of Indians beyond the purely political arena, it has demonstrated that Indians played their part in a variety of ways, some of which require further investigation. The owner-editor of a small newspaper who printed stories which otherwise would have been left untold and offered opposition forces the opportunity to peddle their views at the risk of physical harassment from the Security Branch as well as closure of his establishment; sports administrators who endeavoured to integrate sport in South Africa as well as call international attention to the racist nature of sporting life in South Africa, when they could easily have continued to play within the system; and playwrights and artists whose works deliberately reflected the injustices of apartheid at the risk of state censorship and harassment- all played valuably aided the anti-apartheid struggle. They did so because apartheid affected them all in several ways. To them, it was a system that they felt compelled to challenge and overthrow. The historian who rests in the comforts of his office trying to re-capture

[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.



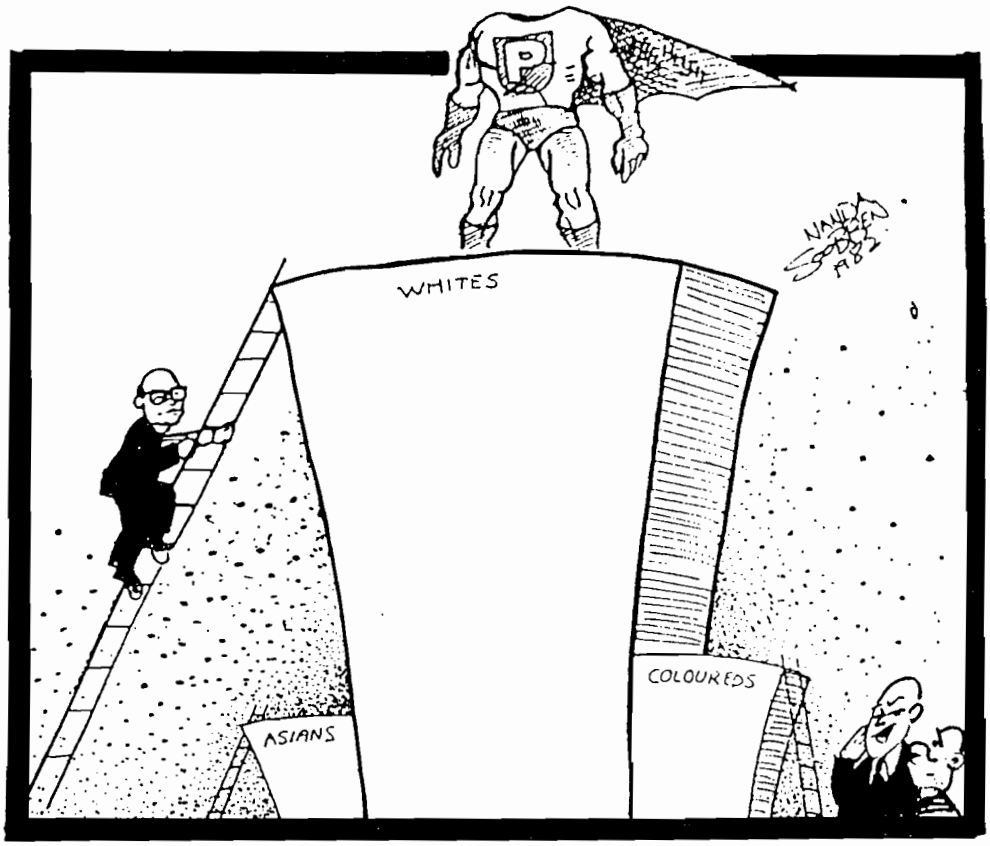
WHAT do we do now? Do we confront him about that, or do we turn a blind eye and concentrate on more interesting business like "party politics"

Plate 12: Mocking the SAIC.



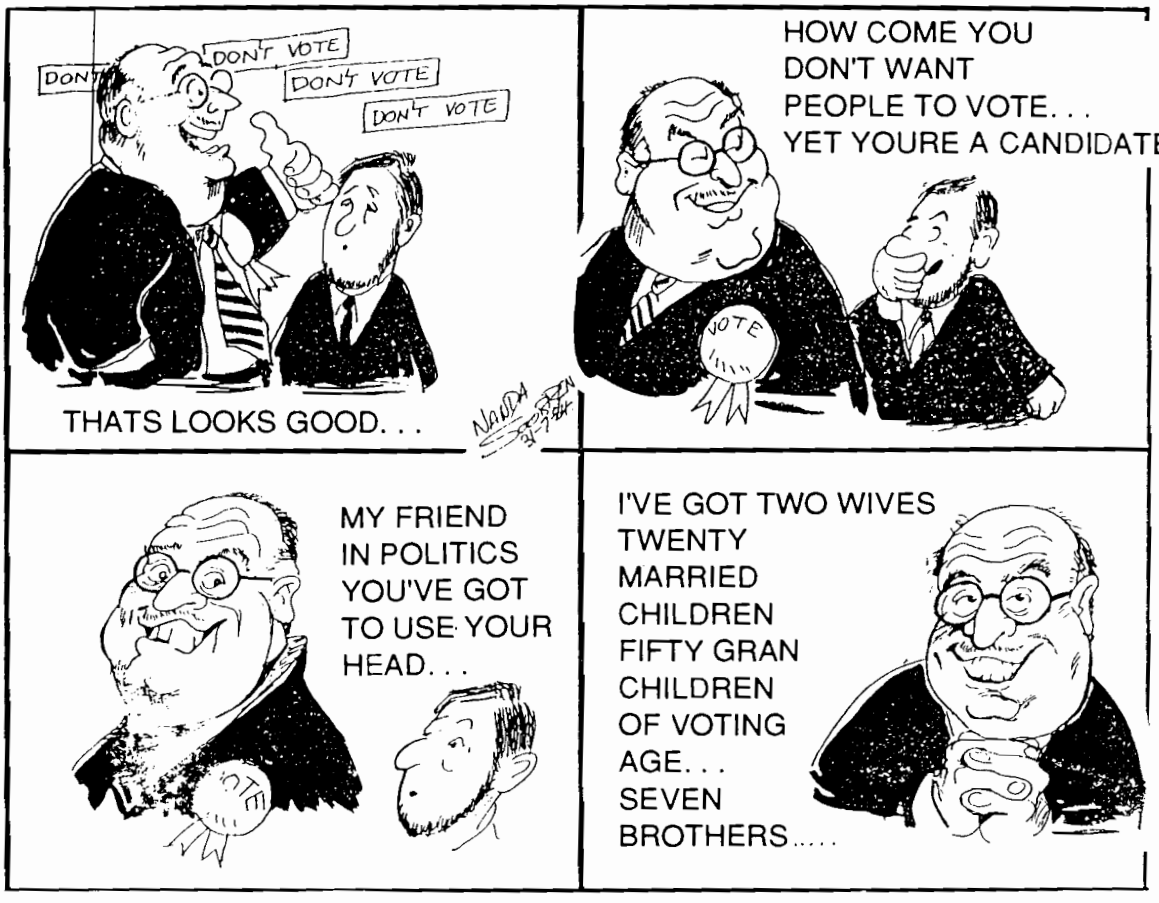
What do you mean you want to see my passport, I just want to go into town, not out of the country!

Plate 13: Reflecting on apartheid's absurdities.



YOU won't believe this, but they call this power sharing

Plate 14: Challenging the Tricameral Constitution.



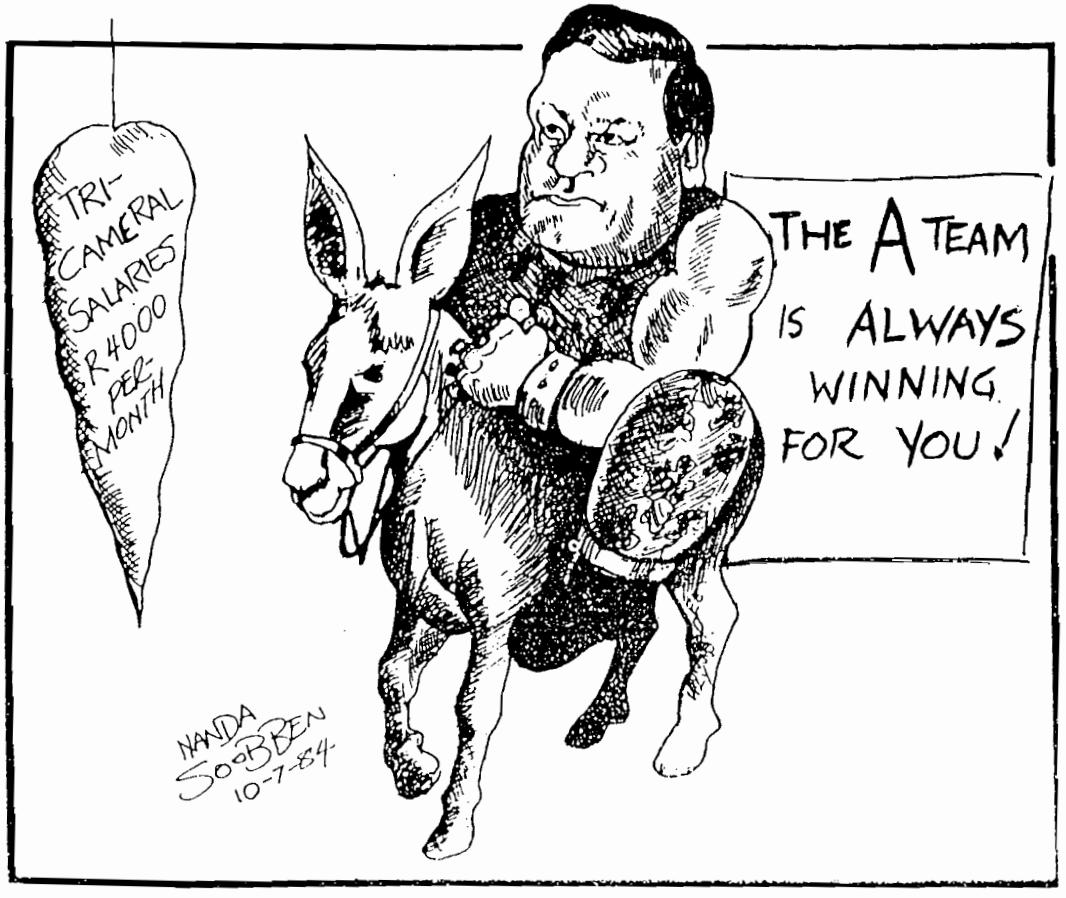


Plate 15: Spoofs on the collaborators.

Courtesy of Nanda Soobben

the dynamics of the period often ignores the efforts of such people, but in doing so does a grave injustice to those who also struggled against apartheid. Hence, their efforts have been addressed here, albeit briefly.

CONCLUSION

The Indian diaspora in South Africa is a positive case of a minority sinking deep roots in its adopted country, where in fact the word adopted is a misnomer. Their determined struggles for a just and equal South Africa has accorded them prominence outweighing their minority status.

Beyond merely re-hashing the struggles of the Indian community, in conclusion it is necessary for the reader to acquire an appreciation of the dynamics of Indian resistance during 1971 to 1985 from a broader perspective.

The instinct of minority groups is to protect their interests and existence whenever these are threatened, or perceived to be threatened, by majorities or ruling groups, actually or potentially. In such a case the minority has basically three strategic options:

1) to move towards the oppressor and try to assimilate or be accepted
2) to move away from the oppressor and try to retreat or escape
3) to move against the oppressor and try to openly oppose and depose.

The three options have characterised the disposition of different elements within the community at different times. For instance, the strategy of the South African Indian Congress during the 1920s till 1945 was informed by option 1. In later years Indians who participated in the SAIC and HoD essentially exercised option 1. The position of the Indian community during the 1960s and early 1970s, when state repression was severe and resistance movements were forced into exile and leaders either detained or banned, was characterised by option 2.

The position of the NIC from 1947 onwards, however was governed by option 3. Since the signing of the Three Doctors Pact, the NIC determinedly applied itself to moving away from the oppressor, trying to openly oppose and bring about apartheid's

demise. In doing so, it contributed significantly to the wider struggle and particularly the ANC's efforts. The NIC's participation in the Defiance Campaign, its efforts in the early 1970s of ensuring the survival of Charterist politics and thereafter assisting the ANC's popular re-emergence within South Africa as seen in its efforts in the establishment of the RMC and UDF, highlights not only its open opposition to the oppressor but also identification with the other oppressed groupings.

However, while the NIC's position was characterised by option 3, it found the community retreating into itself during the early 1970s. As such, to mobilise the community behind its position, the NIC from the mid-seventies adopted a strategy that sought to protect and champion the material interests of its constituency. The establishment and struggles of 'civics' were precisely for that. Coupled with contextual dynamics, such as an economic slowdown, by 1980 the community's position too could be characterised by option 3: moving against the oppressor in open defiance.

Nonetheless, the positions of the NIC and its constituency remained entwined during the early 1980s, with opposition to the government emerging in 'civics' struggles as well as boycotts of Pretoria's apartheid contraptions such as the SAIC and HoD. Hence, the Indian minority had come to a position of identifying itself with the oppressed majority against the oppressor, by refusing to be co-opted. This movement in positions reflects how with astute and sensitive leadership a minority can be mobilised in such a way that its actions can have significance which belie its numerical inferiority. The contributions of Indian Natalians during this period were vast and many as seen in the 'civics' and student struggles, the anti-SAIC and anti-HoD elections as well as the

establishment and workings of the UDF. The Indian community remained at the forefront of the struggle from 1980 to 1985.

The position of any minority is always fraught with insecurities. The slightest perception of a threat sometimes lead to far exaggerated responses. The Inanda violence had precisely that effect. It impressed upon the community that its position and interests were threatened by the Africans, leading to a shift in the community's position once again. Henceforth, the community retreated into itself and the efforts of the NIC to galvanise its constituency out of that position remains an area of further research and the subject of another academic study.

* * *

All said and done, it remains to be noted that the Indian diaspora in South Africa remains today as one of the oldest in Africa and one that is acknowledged for its contributions in the anti-apartheid struggle. Compared to their brethren in East Africa or the fate of Indians in Uganda, who were expelled by Idi Amin in 1971, South Africa's Indian community has offered a signal contribution not only in the country's socio-economic development but also to bring about the end of a racist governmental structure: apartheid.

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