

INDENTURED LABOUR AND GROUP FORMATIONS IN APARTHEID SOCIETY



By Fatima Meer

The vast majority of Indians in South Africa are landless, semi-skilled and unskilled workers and, as such, take their place alongside Africans and Coloureds, not only as the working class of the country, but also as the disenfranchised and oppressed. They have shared this position for over a hundred years; yet it is only in the last forty that they have moved towards some sense of "class" consciousness, and only in the last thirty engaged in common economic and political action. What are the factors that have delayed their coming together and continued, to some measure, to inhibit this solidarity? The answer, at the general level, lies within the mode of apartheid production, in the forces it generates to manipulate attitudes and control social formations; more specifically, it is contained in the resultant dynamics of Afro-Asian relations. An important and neglected feature of these dynamics is the system of indentured labour which spawned the Indian South African.

Indentured labour was introduced into Natal in 1860, a quarter of a century after it had been imported into Mauritius on almost the very day that the last slave, having completed the five-year apprenticeship which marked the transition from emancipation to slavery, fled the plantation. Why did Natal, teeming with an indigenous Black population, import labour? Why did the Indians succumb to being indentured?

The colonial explanation (reiterated by its scholars) for importing 'coolies' to Natal was the unwillingness of the 'kaffir' to work – he was regarded as spoilt, both by his polygamous habits and by the land settlement made upon him by a dotting British government. In fact, those reserves could only accommodate a third of the entire African population and were specially designed to push them on to the labour market. Sufficient evidence exists to show that when Natal was anxiously

Professor Meer addresses the rôle of "Indians" as part and parcel of the Black community.

negotiating for indentured labour, the African, pressurised by scarcity of land and by taxes, was being remarkably industrious in the white sector of the colony, performing all the required tasks, both menial and skilled. Thus a local magistrate observed in 1852:

"On a farm he does almost everything – he herds the cattle, milks the cows, churns the butter, loads it on the wagons, the oxen of which he inspan and leads. He cuts wood, and thatch, digs sluits, and cooks. There is little that I ever saw a farmer do, but ride about the country. In the town, there are some familiar cases in which kaffir labour is employed to a ridiculous extent: for in what quarter of the globe would male adults be found performing the offices of nurses to infants and children or as laundresses of female apparel."¹

So the problem was not a lack of labour, but a lack of abundant cheap labour, particularly in the labour-intensive area of industrial agriculture. The white colonists, accustomed to slaves and to semi-slave labour of the Blacks whose land they had appropriated, expected to pay virtually no wages. During

the middle of the last century, Africans still retained some land and some cattle. The mode of migrant labour was still in its embryonic stage – the bureaucracy which would control its movement and violate its value was yet to develop. Africans were relatively free to negotiate their terms, and rather than part with their labour for nothing, or lose most of its value to the hirer, preferred to live on what remained of their productive resources. However, indentured labour weakened the bargaining power of the Natal Africans in the mid-nineteenth century, accelerated their alienation from their means of production – particularly their livestock which, in the absence of wages, they were forced to transform into tax money and transfer to the white sector – stalled their industrial-



"Indian" workers. . . moving towards Black worker consciousness.

ization and urbanization and facilitated their conversion into a labour reserve.

Indentured labour became increasingly indispensable to the colonial economy of Natal in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The indentured could be worked up to fourteen hours a day, with the pitiful wages further reduced through excessive fines for minor transgressions. Well after the discovery of gold and diamonds and general industrial development in the country had pushed unskilled wage rates to £3-£4 per month, Natal continued to have cheap labour, still only paying between 10 shillings and £1 a month for men and 5 shillings for women, a fair proportion of whom were skilled. So precious was this favoured labour position that it was one of the factors that blocked Natal from moving towards Union in 1909.

Indenturing continued until 1911, when it was stopped by spirited Indian agitation, supported by enlightened British interest. By that time, 152 184 Indians had been imported to the country (62 per cent men, 25 per cent women and 13 per cent children) and the Indian population in the colony exceeded the white by 3.2 per cent.

The meaning of indenture for the Indian

INDIANS had been driven into indenture by the colonisation of their own country. Their world collapsed about 1837 when the *zamindaris*, upon whom they had leaned for respite from taxes in lean years, small loans and, above all, justice, disappeared and were replaced by the British, absentee landlords and prohibitive money-lenders. In Bihar, the United Province and Madras the position was further aggravated by massive famines. And these regions became the suppliers of indentured labour which mushroomed on the ashes of slavery. As far as tropical agriculture was concerned, the slaves had been emancipated at the wrong time, just when it was evolving a new phase in production and marketing. Had the system of indenture not come to the rescue, the planters would have been forced to meet the wage demands of the ex-slaves.

Instead – and unwittingly – *the indentured workers were forced into becoming the international scabs of the nineteenth century.*

From the point of view of the planter, indenture was even better than slavery because it was cheaper. Enthused the Company of Gillanders and Arbuthnot: "Their cost is not half that of the slaves".² And indeed it wasn't. The price of a slave at the time of emancipation was between £200-£250 for an average life span of ten years, the first three of which were of low productivity because the slave was put out to season to restore his strength. An indentured worker cost the planter £55 for ten years, inclusive of wages, commissions and passage.³

Some did manage to flee indenture and set themselves up on their own account – as small shopkeepers and hawkers, trading with the local Africans and supplying the planters with their coolie rations; as peasant farmers, cultivating small plots, for subsistence and sale, of the poorer lands, leased and sometimes bought from private white owners at three and four times the going price; as skilled artisans, setting up workshops, usually in carpentry, which in a few cases developed into factories. They were joined by the 'passengers', Gujerati peasants who, by paying their own passages, entered the country as free immigrants. They came mainly between 1875 and 1897, at which date their entry into the colony was restricted (to be finally abolished in 1913).

Thus, by 1885 the Indian occupational structure had become somewhat elaborated. While over 95% remained a working class of indentured and reindentured labourers, tightly controlled by laws which entitled their employers to exploit them to the hilt, there was a small but growing *petit bourgeoisie*, made up of both the 'passengers' and the ex-indentured. There was, however, no class divisions; the division was on the basis of the *jaati*, endogamy, which cut across economic and occupational lines.

The plantation, in fact, was not conducive to group formations. The planter was afraid that these would develop into labour solidarities, and workers were forbidden by law to be seen in corporate

bodies. But for all that, residential groupings on regional and linguistic bases occurred even on the 'coolie' lines, reconstructing the traditional *jaatis* – endogamies.

The relationship between these endogamies was friendly and co-operative, which is usually the case in *jaati* – structured societies. This interdependence was probably even more pronounced among the indentured due to the relatively high proportion of mixed marriages (ie. between endogamies), occasioned by the restrictive quota of women (25% of the men). In Natal, one-fifth of the marriages registered between 1873 and 1886 were mixed.¹² By the end of the century, however, exogamous marriages had declined considerably and the endogamy *jaati* had emerged as the fundamental social formation outside the family.

Nevertheless, a distinction of status emerged early on between the 'passengers' and the indentured workers, the residue of which exists to this day. There were substantial linguistic, religious, educational and economic differences between the two groups. The 'passengers' had independent means at home, had come to Natal of their own free will and were more used to business than the ex-indentured. Between 1870 and 1885, the number of shops owned by Gujeratis rose from one to forty in Durban, while the number of shops owned by the ex-indentured rose only from eleven to twenty-six.¹³

There were, of course, also differences within the indentured, as between North Indian and South Indian, but these did not take on a class form. The distinction between the Gujerati 'passengers' and the indentured workers teetered on the verge of doing so. This became particularly apparent when the Gujeratis attempted to distance themselves from the majority of the Indians, in an attempt to escape their indignities, by setting themselves up as 'Arab'. Had the white colonists accepted them as such, the Gujeratis may well have been co-opted into the white class; but, far from considering this, the whites saw them, above all, as the main threat to white domination: "We are convinced that much of the insecurity existing in the minds of European colonists against the whole Indian population of the

colony has been excited by the undoubted ability of the arab traders to compete with European merchants."¹⁴

The emergent Indian 'bourgeoisie' had to be curbed, and the position of the Indian fixed to that of the unskilled workers. This was the essence of white domination. It could not be shared with the colonised, either African, Asian, or those Blacks that the whites helped to procreate, the Coloureds. With this in view, white Natal united against the Indians as a class: "In no colony . . . in South Africa is the colour line drawn deeper than in the case of Natal . . . the Blacks are ten to one at least . . . and yet this vast native population is kept in order . . . why? Because the white rules by prestige."

The issue was economic, the dividing line race. All Indians, whatever their status, came in for simultaneous legislative attack. Immigration of free Indians and the issue of licences for trade purposes was restricted, and Indians of indentured origin because liable to a poll tax of £3 (males from the age of 16, females at 12) if they did not re-indenture or return to India. The Indian community responded as one. The two sectors coalesced and recognised their mutual interest. The 'passengers' had no option but to identify with the indentured. The indentured accepted the 'passengers' because they needed the capital and the expertise they brought to the 'struggle'. In claiming the 'passengers', the indentured claimed a share of their wealth and insisted that it be used to build the necessary infrastructure of educational, religious, welfare and other institutions necessary for Indian advancement. This came relatively easily to the Muslims, who were obliged by their religion to spend two-and-a-half per cent of their capital assets on charities.

There is little doubt that the 'bourgeoisie', drawn from both the 'passengers' and the ex-indentured, hastened the conflict between the Indians and their white masters. Their expectations were higher, and under the leadership of Gandhi the necessary ignition was effected. The resultant political formation of an 'Indian class', which occurred between 1894, with the founding of the Natal Indian Congress, and 1913, the launching of the second passive resistance movement and the massive strike of Indian workers

which virtually stopped industry in Natal, was remarkably strong. The technique was passive resistance, the aim to expose the injustice and immorality of the racist legislation against Indians; and in this, the struggle succeeded, even though few real changes occurred in objective conditions. Most important, the Indian workers had confronted their white masters on a political plane. The issue had not remained confined to small disputes about small modifications of highly exploitative wages. It had been pushed to a moral demand, for a moral share in the whole system. The 'indentured mentality' in the labour situation ended. From that point on, the Indian was no longer a preferential labour commodity and ceased, in that context, to threaten the African.

Jaati and caste

It has often been said that Indians are too caste-contained to be able to relate to other South Africans, and that they are as contemptuous of the Africans as the high castes among them are of the low castes. But the concept of caste as popularly understood in European circles is not that of the Indians – Indians remain proud

of their *jaati*, but *jaati* is not synonymous with caste. Nor does such a view take account of the aspects of *jaati* – the emphasis on communal support and solidarity – that came to the fore in the South African context. The indentured workers, brutally uprooted from their native land, were yet, in a sense, never utterly bereft. There was still *jaati*, the sacred repository of their culture, within which they could preserve a sense of self and community – a defence against their double colonisation.

Jaati has been distorted into caste by British administrators and European scholars and, as such, projected as a heredity trap, condemning its victims to social and occupational immobility. It has been rejected as anti-democracy, anti-Christianity and anti-all the fundamental tenets of the equality and brotherhood of man. It is highly unlikely that this distortion was a result of a colossal misunderstanding, but rather that it was motivated by the dominator's need to justify the exploitation of the dominated. It was the *jaati*, with its elements of local (village-based) and family-based solidarity, not the armies of the *maharajahs* and the *nawabs*, that



remained impregnable to British domination. And so the *jaati* became the target of a psychological war to relieve the guilt of racism itself, since the latter, by comparison, was so much more preferable, even liberatory.

The Indian experiences *jaati* as a personal and social identity, as the closest social formation holding person, family and community together. The *jaati* is the group within which marriages are arranged, wedding feasts shared, funerals attended, rituals performed. Others may be invited, *jaati* members have a right. Academics have distilled hierarchy out of *jaati* and transcribed *that* into caste.¹⁶ The Indian mind has almost a mythical notion of two extreme points, Brahmin and Harijan, within which thousands of *jaatis* are contained, but it resists attempts to place these in a sort of hierarchy.¹⁷ Such a placing would have little, if any, relevance in a feudal society where people have to do more or less the same work in order to subsist, or in an industrial economy where hundreds of *jaatis* coexisting in a *common* society bring their labour in *common* to a *common* market.

The components of a *jaati* constellation are neither political nor economic, nor do they exist for the exploitative gain of the one over the other. A *jaati* may have its preferred traditional occupation, but it does not constrain occupational choice or mobility – as is shown in British census data compiled since the eighteenth century, which record the highest caste, the 'Brahmins', plying occupations varying from trading to menial agricultural labour, incidentally explaining the fair proportion of Brahmins among the indentured. Ghurye explains that trading, agriculture, labouring and military service were regarded as everybody's occupations; that it was in officiating over rituals alone that the Brahmins had a monopoly, and even that was challenged in a part of Madras where artisans claimed ascendancy over the Brahmins.¹⁸

Jaati has also been deprecated as a divisive and anti-nationalistic force. Yet the records show that villages resisted powerful attacks upon them because of the facility with which their '*jaati*' components combined to offer common defence. Ghurye states:

"The various castes, in so far as they contributed their respective services towards the common life of the village, were welded together and interdependent for the purpose of civic life. Interdependence of caste was such a deep rooted principle that it prevented other exclusive aspects, inherent in the system, from getting the better of the idea of a common civic goal and human sympathy for co-residents and hardening into caste-spirit or caste-patriotism."¹⁹

Jaati consciousness, thus, is not only mutually supportive but also prepares its members to co-ordinate with others in a community of interests.²⁰ Had it been personally and communally destructive, it would have been quickly shed by those degraded by it, particularly the indentured, who were drawn from a very depressed sector of Indian society. The very fact of its restructuring suggests its positive value.

Jaati is the web of privacy within which Indians learn and maintain their identity. Just as each has *jaati*-communal privacy, so have others, but the privacy of none is more precious or more fundamental than that of the other. Indians understand very well the need to maintain respectable and respecting distances, but at the same time they know the value and the necessity for forming larger fraternities when faced with a common danger. So *jaati* consciousness does not undercut 'class consciousness'; in fact, it facilitates such consciousness, having already laid the basis for it in its control of preoccupation with personal status problems.

It is not so-called caste that inhibits Indian assimilation or Afro-Indian solidarity – the inhibitor is white domination, which feeds on Black fragmentation.

Toward a Black class

WHATEVER the Africans' perception of Indian indentured workers was in 1860, included in it must have been the suspicion, if not the knowledge, that they had been brought in by the white colonist to replace the Africans and to be used against them in ways perhaps not immediately understood. It was in the interest of the white colonist to fan any hostility, for any consolidation of interest between

the two labour contingents would have been fatal in a situation where the ratio between white and Black was already in the region of 1:10. Consequently, *Indians and Africans were separated from each other, and in separation, projected as dangerous to each other.* They were at the same time kept within 'viewing' distance of each other, so that they could be constantly reminded of their strange and different ways. There was the use of African 'whipping boys' on the estates, and the sentencing of a transgressing 'coolie' to the 'kaffir' barracks where he could be terrorised and ridiculed as the master intended; there was the appointment of an Indian overseer over African mill-hands and the use of African police to suppress Indian strikes; and running through it all, constantly reinforced, was the use of stereotypes calculated to present each with an adverse image of the other. Such stereotypes were fabricated, in the first instance, for the peace of mind of the whites themselves, to relieve them of Christian guilt for the humanity they degraded. The degradation was intrinsic to the race – one did not provide latrines for 'coolies', "because they had difficulty in carrying out the latrine systems," it would "only concentrate their filth which at present is diffused."²¹ Even a liberal-minded white scholar, writing seventy years later, sympathised with the planters who had to contend with 'inveterate shirkers', with a people possessed with a high degree of "stupidity, illiteracy, susceptibility to rumours and colossal ignorance."²²

Up to the Second World War, Indians followed the political orientation established by Gandhi, which was that the South African government through its subsidiary, Natal, had a treaty obligation with the government of India to accord Indians full and equal citizenship rights in the country, and should be coerced into doing so through the moral pressure of passive resistance. Thus, politically, the issue of discrimination against the Indians was separated from that of the other two Black groups and there was a great reliance on India and on representatives of the two governments getting together and sorting things out. There was, however, progressive disillusionment with the role of the Indian Agent General, who represented India in South Africa, and a

growing awareness that the Indians did not in fact have a different case from other oppressed 'non-whites'. For example, when in 1932 the Natal Indian Congress resolved to launch a further passive resistance campaign, *Indian Views*, one of the then two Indian newspapers, commented in an editorial: "Success of passive resistance presupposes existence in the enemy of a measure of the milk of human love, of human decency . . . The Pirows, the Malans and the back-veld, back-benchers are by no means handicapped with a superabundance of these commodities." Instead, it proposed Afro-Indian solidarity:

"To Britain we say may the curse of an oppressed people drag you to your doom. To India - spare us your sympathy, your delegations and your Round Table conferences, to ourselves - purge yourself of every iota of the snobbery that keeps you aloof from the native African - turn native. In this country you are nothing more and nothing less than the native. Thicker than ties of blood are the ties of slavery - one common destiny, one common tyrant, one common hell of tyranny ordains that the two of you shall merge and give battle to the oppressor as one."²³

There was considerable thinking along these lines in the Indian community. Student and worker talk shops had emerged - the Non-European United Front and the Communist Party began making radical incisions into traditional political thinking. The escalation of industry in Durban, where half the Indian population is concentrated, resulted in the rapid movement of Africans into the urban areas, and in the absence of housing or public squatting land, they began living with Indians, as tenants or sub-tenants, but effectively as neighbours. There were tensions, but above all, there was improved understanding and relationships. Most important of all, Africans, debarred from trade union rights, were being drawn into Indian trade unions and gaining from both their experience and the success of their negotiations with the employers. Many of the new trade union organisers were drawn from the radicalised Non-European United Front and the Nationalist Bloc within the Indian Congress.

In 1946, the Anti-Asiatic Land Act was passed, segregating Indians into ghettos. The Nationalist Bloc captured political leadership of the Indian Congress and launched the third massive passive resistance campaign against the United Party government. The timing was internationally opportune, and the campaign exploded racial discrimination in South Africa into a world problem. For all the strength and self-confidence it engendered, Indians realised that their 'class formation', to be truly effective, had to include the other Black oppressed groups.

The realisation had come none too soon. The whites had sustained a vicious campaign for the repatriation and, failing that,

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the segregation of the Indians for almost half a century. As early as 1896, whites had gathered together their "Zulu" domestics and employees and marched them to the docks to repel the new Indian arrivals, among whom was Gandhi. The campaign had been pushed to a new peak during the 1948 elections, when many candidates used extreme anti-Indian tirades to get into parliament. *The Indian was projected as the scapegoat in popular opinion and it was easy to unleash African frustrations - already at flash point due to intolerable slum conditions, scarcity, high prices and low wages - on to them.* And then, in January 1949, Africans carried out a violent attack against Indians on the streets of Durban.

At the same time, Africans and Indians were living cordially in mixed neighbourhoods and the attack came not from the Indians' African neighbours (who, indeed, as inquest records show, attempted to protect the Indians), but mainly from the dock workers. Single men, imprisoned in compounds at the end of each day's work and housed some eight miles away from the nearest Black neighbourhood, they had virtually no social contact with the

Indians. Armies of men, formed in the labour compounds, were allowed to leave their work and to march unrestrained through Durban, attacking and looting, while the police did little to hinder them. Was there, perhaps a connection between the police inactivity and one politician's (earlier) public statement? Said Senator Peterson: "Personally, I would like to solve the Indian problem by shooting them, but a man cannot lay himself open to a charge of murder . . ."²⁴ Had he, and others like him, taken advantage of the late afternoon scuffle and fanned it into a conflagration?

The Commission of Inquiry, subsequently established, was boycotted by the accredited African and Indian organisations - the Indian and African Congresses - represented jointly by a common council, the trade unions and the combined Native Location Advisory Board - they realised it would be racist in orientation. Not unexpectedly, the commission did not confirm the organised nature of the violence - but it did recognise the relations between the two groups had been cordial before the outburst. That cordiality continued as the Indian and African congresses reaffirmed, in joint statements, that "There was no movement afoot of Africans against Indians, that Africans as a whole were not hostile against Indians as a whole," that there were Africans who had in fact "sacrificed their lives for Indians."²⁵

The riots brought the two Congresses to a sharp realisation that matters had been left to run an unguided course for too long. And it was with the fourth and largest passive resistance campaign that the alliances which already had been forged between the African and Indian congresses took a far more meaningful momentum. In January 1952, Dr Moroka and Walter Sisulu agreed to inaugurate a campaign for the repeal of six unjust laws - the Pass Laws, the Stock Limitation Acts, the Bantu Authorities Act, the Group Areas Act, the Voters Representative Act and the Suppression of Communism Act. In June 1952, the Port Elizabeth Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign began, in which 52 people were arrested, among them Nelson Mandela. Some three years later, (March 1955) the

South African Congress of Trade Unions came into existence, with around 20 000 members. Durban became one of its strongholds, with joint Indian and African involvement. The Nationalist Government responded quickly to the Congress Alliance and by 1960 had banned both the political and trade union congresses.

In the '70s, Black Consciousness which partnered the Congress in formal opposition politics outside the system of apartheid emerged as the most powerful challenge to white domination and had a significant effect on consolidating a Black class consciousness. Unlike the Congress Movement, which had worked through "racially" affiliated organisations, the Black Consciousness bodies – the South African Students Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention (BPC), the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU), the Black Community Programmes (BCP) – were completely integrated. A large number of other supportive bodies, youth, women, cultural, church, theatre, etc., intensified and spread Black solidarity throughout the country. *The massive Durban strikes of the '70s' were reported as African strikes; in fact, they involved a high level of Indian participation, reflecting a Black rather than an African consciousness.*²⁶

Today, the bulwarks of white domination are the homelands and the group areas, and they are also its nemesis. Created to fragment Black solidarity, they are concentrations of irrepressible Black frustrations which must burst the dykes. Ironically, the security and longevity of apartheid lies not so much in the South African police, but in the black government appointees who "govern" the Black people and who are projected through an elaborate system of government-controlled media as representatives of their peoples. Take the Kwa Zulu leader, who operates not only through the Kwa Zulu Legislative Assembly but through a second front, the tribally based Inkatha, and has, unsuccessfully, tried to develop a third, the Black Alliance, of Africans and Indians and Coloureds. The intention is to give him a credibility beyond that of the government imposed homeland administration. Inkatha, however, predictably

operates as a reactionary tribal force, ultimately servicing white domination.

But little of this appears to deter the "liberal" establishments, both local and international, from anchoring their hopes in the Kwa Zulu leader. He continues to be seen as a bastion of enlightened capitalism in the face of excessive radicalism. That any radicalising twist given to black apartheid institutions should come from Natal (where Kwa Zulu is geographically located) is no accident. It is a reflection of Afro-Indian tangle that has characterised Natal and made each indispensable to the other. However, it is inconceivable that tribal formations can contribute to Black solidarity, they can only sponsor tribalism, inhibit Black class consciousness and

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preserve white domination, as they are intended to do. The government thus gives large latitude to anti-apartheid rhetoric within tribal formations, to give them credibility and to confuse the Black masses. The banning of practically all Black Consciousness organisations in 1977 left the "tribalists" in almost complete control, but *there is far more to Black Consciousness than audible articulations – there is the whole grinding experience of unfreedom in a social climate which has become highly sensitive to freedom.*

The present political onslaught on the government is at least two-pronged from the United Democratic Front and the National Forum. The 80s saw the emergence of a considerably strengthened Natal Indian Congress and the re-emergence of the Transvaal Indian Congress, which have made common cause with a large number of Coloured and African communities, religious and labour organisations, under the umbrella of the United Democratic Front; while the National Forum is a regrouping of Black Consciousness movements.

Conclusion

THE system of indentured labour based the economy of Natal on slavery and depressed Black wage rates. The effect of this survives to this day and Natal continues to have the lowest Black wage rate in the Republic. More important, the system laid the basis for economic competition within the labour ranks between indentured Indians and "free" African workers, the potential conflict being aggravated by cultural differences. Employers, anxious to counteract the emergence of labour solidarity between the two labour contingents, exploited the situation further through segregation and projection of adverse stereotypes of each to the other, finally provoking the 1949 riots. Progressive urbanisation, on the other hand, identified Afro-Indian interests, and from the end of the Second World War, these began to be expressed in common industrial and political action, laying the basis for common consciousness. Homeland and township governments, and the prevailing repression of all Black Consciousness, is a direct response to that "class" consciousness.

The introduction of indentured labour in 1860, and the position of the two labour contingents against each other, complicated the line of conflict between Black labour and white capital. Marxist theorists have looked for and found white workers and black bourgeoisie and have, on the basis of this, conceptualised a class rather than a race conflict in South Africa. In South Africa, class and race have become exactly superimposed upon each other, so that race is class in the sense that access to resources is finally determined by race. It is precisely because the line of conflict is between two races that any expectation of any evolutionary solution within the apartheid system of white polity ultimately sharing resources equitably with the disenfranchised or under-franchised Blacks, is futile. This is the relevance of the Black Consciousness position which uses race, not to dominate, but to liberate the country from race. It must, by the sheer size of the oppressed race, also go a long way towards liberating the country from the domination of resources by a class.

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2. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, London, 1974, p.63.
3. *Ibid*, pp.5 and 78.
4. Aboobaker in *Indian Immigrants Commission Report*, Natal, 1885-87, Chairman W T Wragg.
5. H J Stokes, quoted in Tinker, *op cit*, p.129
6. *Coolie Commission Report*, Natal, 1872.
7. *Ibid*.
8. *Ibid*.
9. *Indian Immigrants Commission Report*, 1887.
10. *Coolie Commission Report*, *op cit*.
11. *Records, Protector of India Immigrants*, ca 1880 onwards.
12. *Indians Immigrants (Wragg) Commission Report*, *op cit*, p.7.
13. *Ibid*, p.84.
14. *Ibid*, p.74.
15. 'The Chinese Labour Question', *Handy Notes Imperial South Africa Association*, n d, pp.16f.
16. See, for example, the contributions to A Reuck and J Knight, *Caste and Race*, London 1967.
17. The official British censor, John Fryer, looked for a hierarchy of castes in 1670 and did not find it: "As the society now stands . . . the place due to each community is not easily distinguishable, nor is any common principle of precedence recognized by the people themselves by

which to grade the castes. Excepting the Brahmin at one end and the admittedly degraded castes like the Haleyas at the other the members of a large proportion of the intermediate castes think, or profess to think, that their caste is better than their neighbours' and should be ranked accordingly."

Martin, commenting on the 1901 Mysore census, reported: "The people who assisted me in making up this account, could not with certainty refer each caste to its class, for they never had bestowed pains to enquire concerning the various claims of such low persons." (G S Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, Bombay, 1956.)

18. G S Ghurye, *Caste, Class and Occupation*, Bombay, 1961, p.13.
19. *Ibid*, p.25.
20. Sir Charles Metcalfe, in his evidence to the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company in 1832, stated: "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last within themselves where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds revolution . . . but the village communities remain the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves: . . . if a country remains for a series of years the scene of continued pillage and massacre, so that the villages cannot be inhabited, the scattered villagers nevertheless return whenever the power of peaceable possession revives. A generation may pass

away but the succeeding generation will return. The sons will take the places of their fathers, the same site for the villagers, the same position for the houses, the same lands will be occupied by the descendants of those who were driven out when the village was depopulated; and it is not a trifling matter that will drive them out, for they will often maintain their post through times of disturbance and convulsion, and acquire strength sufficient to resist pillage and oppression with success . . . all action in union with a common interest as regards the Government, and adjusting their own separate interests among themselves according to established usage" (Ghurye, 1956, *op cit*, pp. 24-5.)

21. *Indian Immigrants Commission (Wragg) Report*, *op cit*.
22. L. Thompson, "Indian Immigration into Natal 1860-1872" (unpublished thesis, 1931).
23. *Indian Views* (9 September 1932).
24. *Daily News* (12 May 1948).
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26. Following the 1973 Durban strikes, the Institute for Industrial Relations investigated Indian labour relations with Africans through a sample study of 120 Indian workers. The results revealed that Indians had come out in support of Africans widely, only 22 per cent had expressed any fear of African violence spilling on to Indians, and 82 per cent believed in common trade unions (*The Durban Riots Institute for Industrial Education Durban*).



Commemoration service in Merebank, Durban for guerillas killed in the 1982 Maputo Raid.