

Remaking African Politics in the 1950s: The “Indian Question” and the Origins of Non-Racial Nationalism¹

At one moment this doctor is the implacable Marxist and the next he is a passive resister—a mystic—the fervent Gandhi disciple he has always been.... One might even say Yusuf Dadoo has a Marxist head, a Hindu heart, Mohammedan nails, and an African blood system. No more a nationalist, he believes in the unity of all democrats and even has White friends.... And for your dessert, Dr. Dadoo is an excellent cook who puts everything in one pot.²

--Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Drum*, October 1956.

For myself, I would say the day of unity has arrived when Coloureds and Indians have enough faith in the Africans and their capacity for leadership as to join, as individuals, the African National Congress and make that the one organisation for non-Europeans. It would then be both national and African. Or are there non-Europeans who object to being called Africans?³

--Peter Abrahams, *Drum*, July 1952.

We aim, politically, at government of the Africans by the Africans, with everybody who owes his only loyalty to Africa, who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of the African majority, being regarded as an African. We guarantee no minority rights, because we think of individuals and not groups.⁴

--*Policy and Program of the P.A.C. of Azania*, Dar Es Salaam, December 1972.

In an important corrective to recent discussions of the nation, the Czech historian Miroslav Hroch observes that much of the recent English language scholarship employs a variety of methodological idealism: theorists have come to equate the emergence of national groups with the “unfolding or spread of the ideas of ‘nationalism.’”⁵

¹ Chapter 5 from Jon Soske, “‘Wash Me Black Again’: African Nationalism, the Indian Diaspora, and Kwa-Zulu Natal, 1944-1960,” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2009). I wish to thank Bill Freund, Sean Hawkins, Omar Badsha, and Melissa Levin for their assistance. As this is very much work in progress, I would greatly appreciate any comments or criticisms: soske.jon@gmail.com

² Ezekiel Mphahlele, “Doctor Dadoo’s Dilemma,” *Drum*, October 1956.

² Peter Abrahams, “Can We Unite?” *Drum*, July 1952.

² *Policy and Program of the P.A.C. of Azania*, Dar Es Salaam, December 1972.

³ Miroslav Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully Formed Nation: The Nation Building Process in Europe,” in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Mapping the Nation* (London: Verso and the New Left Review, 1996), 79. See also Miroslav Hroch, *Social Conditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), xii-xvi.

Undoubtedly, a one-sided reading of Benedict Anderson's now canonical *Imagined Communities* has strengthened this tendency. Too often, studies of nationalism divorce "print capitalism" or the activities of patriotic intellectuals from the broader processes of social transformation produced by mercantile (and subsequently industrial) capitalist development and new forms of democratic governance that began to emerge at the end of the 18th century.⁶ Arguing that the ideology of "nationalism" is too amorphous and chimerical a phenomenon for comparative analysis, Hroch's own research focuses on the composition, timing, and role of *national movements* of non-dominant groups in Eastern and Central Europe. In addition to the structural changes and new forms of social communication emphasized by other writers (for example, Karl Deutsch and Ernest Gellner), Hroch's work underlines the mass, popular dimension of nationalist agitation and political organization—an aspect of nation formation, it should be added, that inevitably influences the content, symbolism, and debates of the resulting nationalist intellectual traditions.

Drawing on the insights of Hroch and others, this chapter argues that the new social dynamics of South Africa's cities (primarily Johannesburg), the organizational structure of the Congress Alliance, and debates within the ANC over collaboration with Indian and—slightly later—white organizations produced a fundamentally new aesthetics and vocabulary of nationalism during the 1950s. Contrary to histories of the ANC that stress the continuity of its founding ideas and principles, I argue that the "inclusive South African nationalism" of the 1950s Congress Alliance and the subsequent concept of "non-racialism" were unprecedented and, in important respects, adventitious. Like their Africanist critics (and, in some respects, the Nationalist Party as well), the ANC leaders' principle concern was the development of a mass movement in the new social and political conditions produced by the South African industrial revolution of the interwar period.⁷ Debates over the organizational form of the national struggle generated new ideologies of nationhood, in particular the concepts of "multi-

⁶ For a useful discussion of Anderson's reception, see Pheng Cheah, "Grounds of Comparison" in Pheng Cheah and Jonathan Culler, eds., *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1-20.

⁷ For a parallel argument regarding the transformations in Afrikaner nationalism in the interwar period, see Dan O'Meara, *Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1996), 40-3.

racialism” and “non-racialism.” In this chapter, I emphasize the political aesthetics of these debates: their rhetoric, imagery, and symbolism. In confronting the tactical and strategic dilemmas of building a unified liberation movement composed of historically distinct groups, the Congress Alliance created a new *image* of the nation, an image whose major inspiration was the organizational form of the alliance itself. It was only at the end of the 1950s that the polemics of the Alliance’s enemies, particularly the Pan Africanist Congress, endowed this image with the coherence of an articulated doctrine.⁸

Historians often depict the 1950s as the high water mark of “multi-racial unity.” In some respects, this characterization is merited. Following the calamitous violence of the 1949 Durban anti-Indian pogrom, the ANC and Indian Congresses were able to regroup, establish closer ties, and jointly launch the Defiance Campaign in 1952. During the ensuing six months of civil disobedience, the ANC metamorphosed into a truly mass organization, South Africans of every racial group held demonstrations and collectively courted arrest, and the new bonds of camaraderie and trust developed among both leaders and some rank-and-file members. The election of Albert Lutuli to the ANC presidency exemplified this ecumenical spirit. In 1953, the ANC and Indian Congresses encouraged the formation of the (white) Congress of Democrats and the South Africa Coloured People Organization. The resulting Congress Alliance led a series of campaigns throughout the rest of 1950s, including pass protests, “stay aways,” strikes, boycotts, and—perhaps most importantly—the 1955 Congress of the People and the adoption of the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter became the central symbol in a transformed nationalist rhetoric and political aesthetics: the Congress Alliance sought to create the image of a unified, singular South African nation that simultaneously affirmed the equal claim of each *racial group* to national belonging. As I explore in the first section of this chapter, the impetus for greater interaction across the race line also

⁸ Even some of the most nuanced discussions of black politics in South Africa, for example George Frederickson’s *Black Liberation* and Malcolm McDonald’s *Why Race Matters in South Africa*, generally focus on the differences between the political ideologies of the ANC and PAC, i.e. “multiracialism” or “non-racialism” versus “African nationalism”—itself an indication of the PAC’s success in fundamentally redefining the discourse of nationalist politics after its formation in 1959. As I argue below, this focus simultaneously diminishes the central question of the ANC and PAC’s tactical and strategic differences, while projecting terms like “multiracialism” and “non-racialism”—which first widely came into use among African political organizations in 1958-9—back onto the formation of the Congress Alliance in 1952 and even earlier. See Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 282-5; Malcolm McDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard, 2006), 92- 123.

reflected a new urban culture and self-consciously modern social style that had developed in Johannesburg and, to a far lesser degree, Durban. Shamelessly appropriating both fashion and lingo from American cinema, a new generation of younger Africans and Indians attended events like boxing matches, soccer games, and jazz concerts—and read about the new, decidedly multi-racial Africa in the pages of magazines like *Drum*. Things “Indian” became part of the urban panorama of a modernist Africa. Whatever the enormous limitations of this novel style (these spaces involved a limited number of Africans and could also generate conflict), it reflected a shift in view point among many urban youth and contributed to a new political mood.

However, the current portrait of the 1950s requires qualification and, in some cases, significant revision. First and foremost, the narrative of growing multi-racial unity rests almost entirely on events and personalities located in the Transvaal. Despite Lutuli’s election, the Natal ANC remained stagnant until the end of the decade and the Natal Indian Congress withered to two active branches in 1952. The majority of Africans strongly opposed the ANC’s policy of collaboration with the Indian Congresses and, in the aftermath of the 1949 pogrom, conservative, Zulu nationalist cooperatives like the Zulu Hlanganani Association established both economic and a degree of political hegemony in shanty towns like Cato Manor. Unsurprisingly, the Natal ANC leadership itself was internally divided over this issue. Both intensified competition for employment and the trauma of the 1949 riots contributed to the growing conservatism of the Indian working class, which largely turned its back on the NIC and embraced registered unions that excluded Africans. Although it probably enjoyed a wider degree of passive support (as did the ANC), the Indian Congresses possessed only a few thousand members throughout South Africa during this period of time. Some Indian merchants sustained the ANC financially and NIC cadre devoted their enormous political energies to ANC campaigns: neither translated into mass support by Indian workers for the alliance. During the late 1950s, the Natal ANC experienced rapid growth driven by the revival of African trade unionism, protests over forced removals from Cato Manor, and the explosion of resistance in the countryside. Nevertheless, this upsurge in protest did not compel an equivalent rejuvenation of the NIC and its consequences for Natal’s racial dynamics were complicated and, ultimately, ambiguous.

Second, the image of “multiracial unity” understates the complexity of motivations for the Congress Alliance and the widespread—even endemic—opposition to the alliance within the ANC during the 1950s. Although some ANC leaders came to see a broad, democratic alliance as a matter of principle (e.g. Lutuli), other ANC leaders had a much more pragmatic approach to collaboration with the Indian Congresses and, later, the Congress of Democrats. In their eyes, the role of Indians was an ancillary question—and, despite close friendships with Indian comrades, many still nurtured bitterness towards Indians, particularly the “merchant class.” Similarly, opposition to the Defiance Campaign and cooperation with the Indian Congresses came from several quarters: conservative African business men and newspaper editors in the Transvaal, the “Old Guard” of the Natal ANC who had opposed the Doctors’ Pact, founding members of the ANC Youth League (like Mda and Ngubane) who continued to advocate elements of Lembede’s views, the former ANC president A.B. Xuma, and the Natal chiefs. The most significant enemy of the alliance, however, was the Africanist current: a group of younger activists, largely based in the townships of the Eastern Cape and the Transvaal, who broke from the ANC in 1958 to establish the Pan Africanist Congress. Drawing on the ANC Youth League’s anti-Communism and earlier rejection of *non-European* unity, the Africanists believed that collaboration with Indian and (later) white organizations had resulted in the abandonment of African nationalism by the ANC and an ultimately disarming confusion of the struggle’s terms: the African against the European, indigenous against foreign. The Africanists rejected the projection that a significant section of the white population could be persuaded to abandon its privileges—only a mass, spontaneous wave of protests by the African majority could disrupt the current system and create a truly democratic government. It was therefore necessary to develop African independence from foreign influences (such as Indians and Communists) and sharpen anger against the white minority “ruling class.” The Africanists viewed the ANC’s espousal of the equal place of each “national” group in South Africa as a de facto acceptance of “group rights” and separate racial identities: a “non-racial” democracy, they argued, would recognize only the political status of individuals. The ANC’s wide-spread adoption of the language of “non-racialism” in the early 1960s was a direct response to this critique, which radically shifted the discursive

and intellectual terrain of African politics. In the aftermath of the PAC split, the ANC appropriated the idea of “non-racialism” for the vocabulary of a *South African* nationalism.

A Partial Transformation: “The Fabulous Decade” of the 1950s

As the new decade began, the once powerful CP-led unions atrophied and the 1949 pogrom had destroyed a significant amount of earlier residential integration, leading to the exodus of Indians from several Durban areas, particularly sections of Cato Manor. Not only did racial antagonisms persist, but in some notable respects animosities worsened. Nevertheless, many newspapers (particularly the English-language pages of the African press) began to emphasize new spaces of racial interaction, including some outside the realm of political activity: dances, jazz concerts, football and boxing matches, and different kinds of cultural events. While articles and letters complaining about Indian exploitation and hypocrisy still graced the pages of *Ilanga*, the overall tenor of its coverage of Indians shifted dramatically. Other periodicals, like *Drum* magazine, both captured and actively promoted the new atmosphere emerging in certain quarters. Deliberate acts of “racial mixing” became a centerpiece of a self-consciously modern, cosmopolitan style. John Didcott's description of a Durban concert (published in the liberal journal *Africa South*) employed all of the urbane imagery characteristic of this mood, including jazz music, an Indian cinema, and labored American slang:

Nearly 1,000 people—Africans, Indians, Europeans and Coloreds—squeezed into a packed Indian cinema in Durban on a recent Sunday night to hear four hours of jazz performed by leading local white and non-white musicians, in a concert arranged by the South Africa Institute of Race Relations....

The audience, overflowing into the aisles, were too preoccupied with pumping their knees and shouting encouragement to the musicians, as they swung from hot Dixieland to cool, intellectual modern music, to care two hoots who was in the next seat as long as he was not “square.” Applause reached its climax in a

thrilling “battle” between a young Coloured and a young white guitarist, each striving to create the more exciting and expressive solo.⁹

An emerging generation of writers, like Nadine Gordimer, detailed the casual transgressions of intimate Johannesburg parties where “white friends and black friends, Indian friends and friends of mixed blood” would gather in unassuming comity, drinking, dancing, flirting, and passionately arguing about the politics of the moment. Of course, the most potent symbols of this carefully groomed atmosphere emerged at the intersection of race and sex: a middle class white woman marrying an Indian communist or couples fox trotting across the color line.¹⁰ Curry also appeared as a sign of urban diversity and the manifold possibilities of Johannesburg life. *Drum* writer Can Themba described Sophiatown—the “Paris of Africa”—in the following terms: “You have the right to listen to the latest jazz record at Ah Sing’s over the road. You can walk a Coloured girl of the evening down to the Odin Cinema and no questions asked. You can try out Rhugubar’s curry with your bare fingers without embarrassment.”¹¹ None of these actions, Themba explained, entailed the slightest “heresy.” They were virtual rights, endowed by the city. Youth League activists regularly dropped by the Pahad family at the Orient House or Ahmed Kathrada’s flat at Kholvad house to enjoy a home cooked Indian food.¹² For some politically conscious younger Africans, the sharing of curry with Indian friends represented a rare and exceptional communion: the experience of cultural and racial difference in a context outside of the social relations imposed by white domination.¹³

This atmosphere was most visible in the domains of culture and sport. In the early 1950s, *Ilanga* began running an English language “Sports, Entertainment, Social and Cultural Page.” Most events advertised in these columns expressed the colonial

⁹John Didcott, “Durban Diary,” *Africa South* (January-March 1957), 37.

¹⁰See Nadine Gordimer, “The Smell of Death and Flowers,” [originally published in 1956] in *Some Monday For Sure* (London: Heinemann, 1980).

¹¹Can Themba, “Requiem for Sophiatown,” in *Requiem for Sophiatown* (Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2006), 54.

¹²Luli Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains* (Claremont: David Phillip Publishers, 2004), 192.

¹³In a letter to Ismail Meer written shortly after they had spent an afternoon together in 1947, Anton Lembede meditated of the necessity of developing self-respect on the basis of respecting one’s culture: “The day was full of wonders, but what moved me most was to see all of you eating with your fingers.” Quoted in Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 84.

ethos of the *amakholwa* Christians, although dances, beauty pageants, and jazz concerts rapidly gained in prominence. A distinctly American-influenced, urban consumer culture made itself felt amongst reportage on the achievements of the local African elite and highbrow displays of Victorian civilization. The affairs covered in the *Ilanga* cultural pages were mostly African. But a significant number featured participants from all racial groups. In the face of the Nationalist government's victory and the first sweeping round of apartheid legislation, some of these events were organized in explicit defiance of newly-instituted racial legislation. The South Africa Institute of Race Relations hosted evenings of "African, European and Indian Art" featuring arias, ballet dancing, theatrical performances, choirs, and instrumental performances.¹⁴ Jazz shows and dance competitions, often held at the Grey Street YMCA, attracted a younger and more urbane crowd.¹⁵ Africans, Indians, and Coloureds competed for prizes for the best dressed "gentleman" and "lady" and out danced each other in competitions featuring an eclectic range of steps, including the waltz, jive, quickstep, and tango.¹⁶ City-wide band contests became increasingly popular, and Indian bands frequently triumphed.¹⁷ In 1955, *Ilanga* hailed the annual contest, then entering its fourth year and boasting 20 different ensembles, as "Natal's Most Popular Show." The previous two years an African group, Thomas Ndada's *Swingsters*, won the competition, while in 1954 Indian groups placed second, third, and fourth.¹⁸

Like other leisure activities, sport was largely segregated.¹⁹ "Soccer is one of the most—perhaps the most—popular game among our masses." H.I.E. Dhlomo wrote: "Thousands attend the weekly matches and pay their money without complaint. It is a

¹⁴"Evening of African, European and Indian Art," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 27 August 1955. A rave review of this event appeared afterward, celebrating performances that evoked the "atmosphere of an ageless country—India. Simplicity, art magic." See "Treasured Heritage of a Multi-Racial Durban," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 10 September 1955

¹⁵*Ilanga Lase Natal*, 23 August 1952.

¹⁶"Easter Ballroom Dance Contest," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 26 March 1955. In some cases, competitions charged different entrance fees for Africans and other "non-Europeans."

¹⁷*Ilanga* reported one instance where the Indian group "Rhythm Jazz Band" not only won the competition, but eight of the other ten bands did not bother to show up and play: "It was rumored that most of them were discouraged by the high standard of the Indian Band." This piece (written by H.I.E. Dhlomo) did not mention racial friction, although other articles and letters in the *Ilanga* cultural pages reveal a significant amount of resentment over the behavior of Indians and occasionally whites at multi-racial dances. See "Concert and Bands Competition," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 16 October 1953.

¹⁸"Natal's Most Popular Show to be Held This Year," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 2 July 1955.

¹⁹The major exception was boxing. See Benny Singh, *My Champions Were Dark* (Durban: Pennant Publishing Company, 1963).

huge organization, one of the few Union-wide organizations still in African hands entirely.”²⁰ Beginning in the late 1940s, athletes and a few activists made the first—highly symbolic—efforts to transcend these divisions. Interracial soccer matches took place between Transvaal and Natal teams in 1947, 1953, and 1955, drawing on the “best African, Indian and Coloured soccerites of the two provinces”²¹ Most interracial sporting events, however, pitted competitors against each other along color lines. In a spirit of high fraternity, *Ilanga* reported the annual tournament organized by the Natal Inter-Race Soccer Board for the Singh Cup:

Natal Indian soccer team beat the Natal Africans by one goal in an exciting inter-race match which was replayed at Currie’s Fountain Indian Sports Grounds last Saturday afternoon before a mixed record crowd of Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Europeans. The African team, with the wind in its favour, pressed the Indians almost the whole first half, but due to the skilled work of the Indian full-backs, the African front line could not penetrate their defensive line.²²

Similar developments occurred in the more rarified world of Natal cricket. Although local teams had fielded a handful of mixed matches in the past, an inter-race tournament only began in the mid-1950s in response to growing demand. The Seedat Brothers (a famous Ladysmith cricketing family) donated a trophy in 1955.²³ The following year, the first significant challenge to the racial boundaries dividing African, Indian, and Coloured players occurred during a series of tests against a touring Kenyan Asian team. As Desai et al explain: “The tour, ironically given the make-up of the Kenyans, focused on racial divisions within the ambit of Black cricket. Indians, Coloureds, Malays, and Africans played together at national level for the first time, making this the most widely

²⁰“Foot Ball Critique,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 13 October 1953. According a 1956 report quoted by Desai et al.: “There were six football grounds at Somtseu road, one each at Jacobs, Dalton Location, Lamont Location, Chesterville, S.J. Smith Location, Durban North, Umgeni and Cato Manor for use by the African football association, to which 250 clubs were affiliated and which drew crowds up to 10 000 at Somtseu road.” See Ashwin Desai, Vishnu Padayachee, K Reddy, and Goolam Vahed, *Blacks in Whites: A Century of Cricket Struggles in KwaZulu-Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002), 159. Notably, Albert Lutuli was the “patron” of the African football association.

²¹“Inter-Race Soccer Match,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 24 September 1955.

²² “Natal Indian Soccer Team Beat Africans,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 16 October 1953.

²³ Desai et al., *Blacks in Whites*, 210.

representative South African team ever chosen.”²⁴ Such events obviously did not transform the racial character of sport or—in the vast majority of cases—negate personally-held stereotypes. But they do seem to have encouraged a broader sense of interracial fraternity. Their greatest importance may well have been positive coverage in the African and Indian press. After crowding into the Currie Gardens sporting grounds or some other venue, fans could then read accounts of Indian-African sportsmanship on pages facing stories about the Defiance Campaign or Indian sanctions against the Afrikaner Nationalist government. The representation of local happening in this context, especially when the reader directly knew or participated in the subject matter, facilitated the translation of individual experiences into a shared imaginary encompassing a qualitatively broader geographic and social range. In other words, these events helped manufacture a new public.²⁵

The most striking embodiment of this public was the Johannesburg-based *Drum* magazine. *Drum* was a sensation. In pages cascading with brash monochrome graphics and advertisements for beauty products, *Drum* managed to combine the values of a new middle class (consumerism, modern domesticity, and nationalism), the upright probity of Christian moralism, and a breathless celebration of urban African life. At one level, the magazine portrayed a fantastic lifestyle of leisure and social mobility. Writing during the late 1940s, Henri Lefebvre described a comparable aesthetic in post-war American film: “the display of luxury to be seen in so many films... takes on an almost fascinating character, and the spectator is uprooted from his everyday world by an everyday world *other* than his own.”²⁶ Yet *Drum* also revealed the brutal, capricious, and impoverished demimonde of urban African existence, often in the form of a sermonizing

²⁴ Ibid., 9

²⁵ For one of the earliest version of this argument regarding the novel and the urban public, see Walter Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Fontana Press, 1992), 162-66. Benedict Anderson has famously made a similar argument regarding the novel and newspaper in the development of modern nationalism. See *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, second edition (London: Verso, 1991). For a critical discussion of Anderson’s argument regarding the novel, see Jonathan Culler, “Anderson and the Novel,” *Diacritics* (Winter, 1999), 20-39.

²⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. John Moore (London: New York: Verso, 1991), 10. *Drum* drew its imagery heavily from American cinema, especially gangster films, and the danger of urban Africans imitating the world of the movies is a constant theme. See, for example, David Hancroft’s description of a small-time Durban street gang: “They modeled themselves on American film gangsters; they would often be seen sitting in their ‘cabs’ with slouched hats, and twiddling revolver triggers.” David Hancroft, “Crimson League,” *Drum*, January 1953.

critique of its failings. Lewis Nkosi, perhaps better than anyone else, captured its significance for a younger generation of Africans:

...we longed desperately for literary heroes we could respect and with whom we could identify. In the moral chaos through which we were living we longed to find a work of literature, a drama or a film, home grown and about us, which would contain a significant amount of our experience and in which we could find our own attitude and feelings.²⁷

In Nkosi's words, *Drum* was less a magazine than a symbol of the modern African "cut adrift from the tribal reserve."²⁸ Its brazen antiheroes were gangsters, prizefighters, investigative journalists, shebeen queens, tough-talking PI's—anyone stylish, clever, aggressively refined, and at least slightly dissolute.²⁹ It created a representational space, "a confidence of community in anonymity," in which Africans could recognize themselves in fundamentally new terms.³⁰ While Sophiatown was the undisputed capital of African modernity, the *Drum* universe stretched across the continent and spanned the globe: articles saluted political developments in the Gold Coast, probed the causes of Mau Mau, and celebrated the heroes of American bee-bop. Significantly, Indians and India regularly filled its pages.³¹

Drum's coverage of Durban—no less than its representation of other South African cities—rifted on a string of pat dichotomies: beach front hotels and slum hovels, glitzy boardwalk lounges and underground gambling houses, the faint glimmer of paradise and the realities of a slouching Babylon. South Africa remained largely two

²⁷Lewis Nkosi, "The Fabulous Fifties," *Home and Exile* (London: Longman: 1965), 6.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁹Lefebvre's idea of "reverse image" of bourgeois life captures an important aspect of the *Drum* antihero: "an image of everyday reality, taken in its totality or as a fragment, reflecting that reality in all its depth through people, ideas and things which are apparently quite different from everyday experience and therefore exception, deviant, abnormal." See *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, 12. The *Drum* hero exemplifies many of the values of the urban petite bourgeoisie (ambition, wits, style, class and/or geographic mobility) that are ultimately frustrated by the realities of white supremacy. He simultaneously conveyed the seamy reality of the township, its social pathologies, and its Pyrrhic rebellions. In other words, the *Drum* hero embodied both a modernist, middle class ethos and a symbolic rejection of social realities that ensured it continuing frustration.

³⁰ The quote is from Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

³¹ See also Riason Naidoo, *The Indian in DRUM Magazine in the 1950s* (Johannesburg: Bell-Roberts Publishing, October 2008).

countries: white and black. But *Drum* writers used these same binaries to undercut a simplistic division between African and Indian. At the beginning of the muck-raking survey “Durban Exposed,” the author contrasts the Orient nightclub “where Indians entertain diplomats and delegations in style” and areas like “Jacobs and Magazine Barracks slums: at least as bad as Cato Manor, where three quarters of the Indian population live below the breadline in extremes of poverty.”³² In the ensuing columns, everything was sensationalized *except* Indian-African relations. African Tsotsis, Coloured “Won’t works,” and Indian gangsters—smoking dagga and playing dice on the corners of Grey Street—terrorized hard-working, decent folk of every conceivable race in order to get cash for the bioscope. An Indian con artist, operating with a team of African accomplices, manipulated the racism of Indian factory workers and stole their cash in rigged games of cards. Fatherly Indian pimps capitalized on the dire poverty of young girls, drawing them into prostitution rings with the promise of “good cloths, a shelter, good food and bioscope money.” Zulu “Bad Women” brewed *skokiaan* and serviced factory workers on Saturday night in the slums. *Drum* warned:

Among all races in Durban the face of crime and violence is showing itself more and more. Africans and Indians alike are being corrupted by poverty and want, and turning away from their strong traditions of laws and morals. The glittering lights and gaiety of the seaside city conceal the true character that lurks behind. This terrible degradation must be stopped, NOW.³³

Other stories juxtaposed the respectable, non-European businessman to the criminal element. When a crowd of enraged Africans burnt a recently purchased £7,000.00 bus in September 1953, *Drum* ran an exclusive by the bus company’s owner, D. Nepal

³²“Durban Exposed,” *Drum*, July 1952. See also Mr. Drum, “Sugar Farms,” *Drum*, February 1953. Henry Nxumalo (“Mr. Drum”) described the slave-like conditions of “55,000 labourers, African and Indian...They earn in one month as much as sugar workers in Australia make in one day.” He showed substantial heterogeneity among Indians by writing about both exploitative farm owners and Indians vocally opposed to the mistreatment of African and Indian workers. Critically, Nxumalo not only wrote about class and ethno-linguistic differences among Indians, but highlighted the spread of opinion among Indian politicians and business men regarding the treatment of labor.

³³ Other articles lionized the vitality of Durban nightlife while describing the racket carried out by Indian taxi drivers and African prostitutes on visiting sailors. See “A Negro Sailor Looks at Durban,” *Drum*, October 1953.

Singh. The author vigorously denied that this “disturbance” was a manifestation of “racial animosity towards Indian people” and fulsomely praised the friendship and support shown by Africans after his loss. Singh described an elderly African woman who, while holding his hand in tears, lauded him in the following improbable terms: “Do not be discouraged and give up the wonderful work you are doing for my people by striving to provide us with the best.” Singh went on to blame the arson on unruly, drunken individuals.³⁴ *Drum*’s representation of the African city deliberately rejected the view held by an earlier generation of mission-educated Africans and many white liberals who preached that urbanization and the overly-rapid breakdown of “tribal” life led to crime and moral degeneracy.³⁵ These articles tried to demonstrate the exact opposite. Drawing on post-war American social science, they attributed social pathology to poverty and the frustration of modern aspirations.³⁶ Furthermore, as *Drum* sometimes observed, an identical state of affairs had proven equally devastating for most Indians and Coloureds. The Indian businessman, according to *Drum*, was hardly to be blamed. If anything, he represented a model of race advancement for all non-Europeans.³⁷

Drum’s attitude towards race reflected its location in Johannesburg, where the Indian population—and therefore the African-Indian division—had substantially less social weight than in Natal. Nevertheless, Indians from Durban and across the continent devoured each issue and recognized their concerns reflected in its pages. In close step with the Congress Alliance’s new political aesthetics, *Drum* presented a vision of urban Africa in which Indians had an integral place. At the same time, it created a representational space for the readership to participate in this brave new world, particularly through features like surveys, contests, and write-in columns. *Drum*’s letter

³⁴D. Nepal Singh, “Why They Burnt My Bus,” *Drum*, November 1953. The incident began when the bus hit and killed an African man. Strikingly, Singh implied that the accident was entirely the African’s fault, whose name he does not provide. As I discuss below, this incident in fact precipitated a series of attacks by Africans against Indian targets, mostly stores and homes rebuilt after the 1949 pogrom.

³⁵Nkosi, “The Fabulous decade: The Fifties,” 4.

³⁶For example, see “Sex Problems of Africans: A Short ‘Kinsey ‘ Report for Africa,” *Drum*, February 1954.

³⁷See “Write to DRUM” *Drum*, March 1954: “I enjoyed both your articles on S.A.’s Richest Indians. Until I read the articles I did know there were so many black millionaires in this country, most of them self-made.” *Drum* responded: “It’s a good sign. Many of us could become millionaires!” This is one of the earliest uses of the term “black” to refer to all three racial groups that I have found.

pages published gushing testimonials from Indian subscribers.³⁸ “I am an Indian,” declared one reader, “and am very glad to see that DRUM has helped in some way to break down the barrier between the Africans and the Indians.”³⁹ Indian boys wrote to *Drum* asking for autographed pictures of African Boxers.⁴⁰ Hindu youth penned maudlin letters to the advice column *Heart Breaks*, hoping that “Africa’s magazine” could assist them in reconciling a newfound ideal of romantic love with their family’s unyielding expectations. They also read that other young Africans, Indians, and Coloureds from across the country were wrestling with the challenges of love across the racial, tribal, or religious divides.⁴¹

A New Nationalist Vision: the Beginnings of the Congress Alliance

When the Nationalist government passed a sweeping agenda of racist legislation in 1950 (including the Group Areas Act, the Population Registration Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Immorality Act, and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act), the stage had already been set for a joint response by the ANC and Indian Congress. Nevertheless, substantial opposition arose to the first tentative steps toward organized, mass action. In early 1950, the Transvaal ANC joined a Free Speech convention initiated by the Indian Congress and Communist Party in defense of several banned leaders, including Kotane, Marks, and Dadoo. Without consulting the ANC executive, Dr. Moroka (the ANC president elected in 1949) agreed to chair the convention, which then called for a one day general strike on the 1st of May. The Youth League strenuously opposed this initiative, arguing that the ANC had not initiated the campaign

³⁸A typical letter from N.A.G. Rasoola (Victoria Street, Durban) reads: “Your magazine has thrilling stories and interesting sports features. It completes a man’s weekend. Keep it up!” *Drum*’s response implicitly underlines both the nonracial character of the reader’s identification and the importance of week-end leisure to the *Drum* aesthetic: “Completing a man’s week-end means a lot to us!” In response to a letter signed “Let every African read DRUM” the editor responded “We like patriotism but we also like commonsense. We don’t mind who reads DRUM: the more non-Africans read the magazine, the better for Africa!” On the same page, a Coloured reader is encouraged to participate in *Drum* contests. See “Write to DRUM,” *Drum*, November 1953.

³⁹ “Write to DRUM,” *Drum*, March 1954.

⁴⁰ “Write to DRUM,” *Drum*, October 1954.

⁴¹In almost every case, “Dolly” (the columnist of “Heart Breaks”) recognized the challenges posed by defying tradition, but advised that honesty and romantic love—if truly felt—will prevail. An rare exception was the following advice to an 18 year-old reader who had been threatened with death by a Muslim girl’s parents: “If you are a Muslim I advise you to ask your parents to approach the girl’s parents. Muslim law is very rigid: Muslims arrange marriages for their daughters: they must approve of their prospective son-in-law. But if you are a Hindu, forget her.” See “Heart Breaks,” *Drum*, December 1953. Importantly, Dolly often defended an assertive role for women in relationships. See “Heart Breaks,” *Drum*, May 1954.

and it represented a diversion from the Program of Action.⁴² In addition to denouncing this campaign in a leaflet, Youth League members, including Mandela and Tambo, carried out vigilante attacks to disrupt integrated meetings, including once physically dragging Yosuf Cachalia off a platform in New Clare.⁴³ The initial rally attracted close to 10,000 protestors and between half and two thirds of Johannesburg's African workers joined the May Day strike.⁴⁴ The success of this action—which faced lethal police repression—further polarized the Transvaal ANC and deepened the enmity between the Youth League and Communists.

Increasingly, a diffuse and heterogeneous opposition to the alliance with the Indian Congress became linked with concern over CP influence in both organizations. Earlier that year, the Communist Party leadership had dissolved in response to its banning by the state, leaving former members to focus their political work solely on building the race-based organizations. When CP member J.B. Marks ran for provincial president of the Transvaal ANC in November 1951, his campaign galvanized opposition from both the younger generation and elements of the old guard (some of whom had also opposed the 1947 Doctors' Pact). In 1951, a small “nationalist bloc” emerged around a Transvaal businessman named R.G. Baloyi and Selope Thema, the editor of *Bantu World*.⁴⁵ Thema decried the alliance developing between the ANC and Indian Congresses as “a drowning man holding onto a shark.”⁴⁶ After Thema's expulsion from the ANC, H. Selby Msimang attempted to mediate a reconciliation and, then painfully disillusioned, published a letter in *Ilanga* protesting that the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and NIC had “practically taken over the control and leadership of the African National Congress.”⁴⁷ Msimang—who had become increasingly brazen in his embrace of African development within the confines of segregation—resigned shortly before the Defiance Campaign.⁴⁸

In late 1951, a handful of Youth League members formed a “watchdog committee” to advocate for Lembede's understanding of African nationalism; the Bureau

⁴² Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 33.

⁴³ Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, 62-3.

⁴⁴ Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, 63; Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 101.

⁴⁵ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 409.

⁴⁶ “At Bloemfontein Africans Choose Between—Congress and Convention,” *Drum*, February 1952.

⁴⁷ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 413.

⁴⁸ See “Mr. S. Msimang and Apartheid,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 2 April 1949.

of African Nationalism in East London began publishing material critical of the ANC's new direction at the beginning of 1952.⁴⁹ These efforts were inspired in part by Mda, who produced a document signed "Africanus"—likely a reference to Karl Liebknecht's "Spartakus" statement against the pro-war stance of the German Social Democratic Party during the First World War—that criticized the Congress leadership. While supporting the Defiance Campaign, a faction of the ANC Youth League began to position itself internally as defenders of African nationalism and the imperiled tradition of the earlier ANC.⁵⁰ Although many accounts stress their attitude towards collaboration with whites and Communists, the Africanists' opposition to the Joint Planning Council emerged before the formation of the Congress of Democrats in 1953 and drew its rationale from Lembede's earlier critique of *non-European* unity.

As Gail Gerhart argues, non-Communist African leaders initially saw cooperation with the Indian Congresses in bluntly utilitarian terms.⁵¹ During the 1947 debate over the Passive Resistance Campaign, some ANC leaders had suggested that Indian financial support would provide a form of compensation for profits obtained from Africans; many ANC leaders likely first accepted closer relations with the Indian Congress on the basis of acute financial necessity. By late 1951, a form of strategic realism began to develop among some African nationalists who continued to voice sharp criticisms of Indians within a small group of likeminded individuals, but strongly championed cooperation in public. Based less on idealism than an steely evaluation of the relative balance of forces, this grouping believed that the issue of non-European minorities was ultimately of limited importance: the overwhelming preponderance of Africans would assure their position both within the anti-apartheid struggle and in a future democratic government. Given the unarguable reality of demographics, they reasoned that the need for financial, legal, and international political support in and of itself justified an alliance with the Indian Congresses.⁵² Explaining the shifting

⁴⁹Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 413-414.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 413.

⁵¹Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 101.

⁵² "You begin to try to figure out your resources; not only in relation to these groups, but to the international forces that operate, you see. If you are going to say in your policy, well look, never mind what has happened or what they have done, I think the Indians don't belong in this country. Well then you can't go to India and tell the Indians, people in India, that they must support your struggle, because one of the things they are going to ask you is what's

viewpoints of the Transvaal ANC leadership on this question, *Ilanga* summarized this perspective (which individuals, for obvious reasons, avoided stating publicly):

The more brilliant of them [advocates of cooperation] do not deny that Indians have held aloof from Africans and still exploit them. But they say the European or, more correctly, our system and policy are responsible. That salvation lies in changing the system and policy, not in fighting Indians. They contend that action is the only way out.... The real struggle is between the oppressed (mostly Africans in this case) and the oppressing system. Once this is solved, they maintain, Africans need not fear minority groups like Indians and Coloureds who are themselves blind and helpless victims of the system, and who will be forced to fall in line with the superior African majority once Africans get their full rights.⁵³

During the same period of time, some younger ANC members were increasingly impressed by the radicalism and anti-racism of both white and Indian Communist party members. As even Robert Sobukwe (an Africanist leader and later the first president of the PAC) later observed: “we knew that if someone was a communist it meant he had no colour prejudice. He accepted you as a human being, this you just knew.”⁵⁴ Not only did they watch Indians of all ages and genders go to prison during the Passive Resistance Campaign, but ANC Youth League members—who were largely students and professionals with little to no significant political experience in leading mass struggles—became increasingly aware of the personal and professional sacrifices made by Indian Communists in the service of African working class causes.⁵⁵

A small number of Youth League members also interacted with whites and Indians as students or professionals. Nelson Mandela, for example, first developed

you policy about the Indians?” See Joe Mathews interviewed by Gail Gerhart, 15 August 1970, Gaborone, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interview, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁵³ “Weekly Review and Commentary,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 12 January 1952.

⁵⁴ Robert Sobukwe interviewed by Gail Gerhart, 8 and 9 April 1970, not verbatim, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁵⁵ In their introduction to *Apartheid's Genesis*, Philip Bonner et al. have observed that most accounts of the 1950s minimize the importance of the Communist Party in orchestrating campaigns that established the ANC's mass base. See Philip Bonner, Peter Delius, Deborah Posel, eds., *Apartheid's Genesis: 1935-1962* (Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1993). A similar observation can be made regarding the elision of Indian Congress cadre (many of whom were Communists) in the transformation of the ANC into a mass based organization.

close personal relationships with Indian activists like Ismail Meer, J.N. Singh, and Ahmed Bhoola during his legal studies at the University of the Witwatersrand in the mid 1940s, almost a decade before he entertained the idea of a political alliance between African and Indian organizations. In his autobiography, Mandela fondly recalls his time spent with this group at Kholvad House, a residential building in central Johannesburg: “There we studied, talked, and even danced until the early hours of the morning, and it became a kind of headquarters for young freedom fighters. I sometimes slept there when it was too late to catch the last train back to Orlando.”⁵⁶ According to Mandela, discussions with Ismail Meer—whose fluency in Zulu strongly impressed the young African nationalist—challenged his Johannesburg experience that Indians were all “rich shopkeepers.” Meer introduced Mandela to the history of indentured labor and the fact that Natal’s Indian population was overwhelmingly poor.⁵⁷ Mandela also describes conversations about Gandhi’s concept of *Ahimisa*, Nehru’s socialism, and the militancy of Subhas Chandra Bose—long hours spent analyzing parallels between the nationalist struggles of the respective countries and Gandhi’s place in South African history.⁵⁸ These personal relationships, which developed in situations defined by camaraderie of student life and intimacies of the home, broke down prejudices and broadened Mandela’s understanding of white domination in South Africa (he later admitted to borrowing substantial materials in his speeches from Nehru’s writings).⁵⁹ Ultimately, it was the ongoing arguments, organizing efforts, and individual example of Indian militants that led African nationalists like Mandela, Tambo, and Sisulu to abandon their opposition to common action with the Indian Congresses and, correspondingly, their refusal to work with Communists. In turn, Mandela’s conversion greatly influence other Youth League members like Joe Mathews and Diliza Mji.⁶⁰

In July 1951, a Johannesburg conference of the ANC and Indian Congresses established a coordinating committee of Marks, Sisulu, Dadoo, Moroka, and Y.A. Cachalia to develop a political response to the new laws implemented by the Malan government. The committee proposed a campaign centered on the strategy of defying

⁵⁶ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 79.

⁵⁷ Nelson Mandela, “Forward” in Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, vii.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, 86.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

unjust laws through non-cooperation, although its initial report gave a nod to the possibility of future industrial action. Notably, the Coloured APO was effectively defunct and played virtually no role in the Defiance Campaign.⁶¹ The committee chose the 300th anniversary of settler colonialism—the day of Jan van Riebeeck’s first landing—to inaugurate non-violent passive resistance:

We consider this day to be most appropriate for the commencement of the struggle as it marks one of the greatest turning points in South African history by the advent of European settlers in this country, followed by colonial and imperialist exploitation which has degraded, humiliated and kept in bondage the vast masses of the non-white people.⁶²

The committee's proposal envisioned disciplined volunteer units—all wearing ANC colors—divided according to racial groups, with exceptions made in cases “where a law or regulation to be defied applies commonly to all groups.”⁶³ If Coloured organizations in the Transvaal, Natal, or Orange Free State applied to participate, the proposal stipulated that their members could form separate volunteer corps. Each racial group would defy specific legal strictures: Africans would violate pass laws; Indians would defy provincial barriers, public segregation, and (where possible) the Groups Areas Act. At the Bloemfontein Conference, the majority of the delegates, led by J.B. Marks and members from the Transvaal, voted for the Campaign. Others present dissented, and Natal’s delegation continued to reject the establishment of a permanent Joint Planning Committee of Africans and Indians.⁶⁴ According to Jordan Ngubane, the Natal Youth League and Luthuli held that equal representation on the Joint Planning Committee gave unfair weight to minorities and implied recognition of “groups rights.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 408.

⁶² “Report of the Joint Planning Council of the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress,” presented to the 39th Annual Conference of the African National Congress, 15 to 17 December 1951, ANC Papers (AD 2186/Ba 2), Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ “At Bloemfontein Africans Choose Between—Congress and Convention,” *Drum*, February 1952.

⁶⁵ Jordan K. Ngubane, “An Unpublished Autobiography,” Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, University of Chicago, 155. Ngubane is not clear about where these objections were raised.

Ilanga's coverage of the Bloemfontein conference emphasized an atmosphere of lurking controversy and high emotions: the Cape and Natal delegations had not seen the main documents in advance; a motion transferred responsibility for the campaign from the ANC executive to the Joint Action Planning Council; and a polarization seemed evident between an "inner group" guiding ANC policy behind the scenes and the Transvaal-based nationalist bloc who opposed the growing influence of former members of the Communist Party and declared "frankly that real co-operation between Africans and Indians is not possible at this time... co-operation of equality, honour, and respect."⁶⁶ Exacerbating an already tense situation, Manilal Gandhi reportedly delivered a speech in which he boasted of giving African passengers chocolates during his train journey and warned against the strategy of passive resistance on the basis of Africans' impulsive natures and lack of civilization.⁶⁷ Although Indian activists demonstrably walked out of the room, significant damage had been done. Following the conference, the Natal African press immediately descended into speculation over whether the provincial leadership would implement the campaign given the hostility of most Africans to cooperation with the Indian Congresses. Amidst wide-spread rumors that it might exempt itself from the campaign, the ANC executive waited more than two months to publicly announce its participation.⁶⁸

Other debates soon followed. In the months preceding the Defiance Campaign, Manilal Gandhi publicly rebuked the ANC for failing to approach the protests in the proper spirit of *satyagraha*. In an interview with *Drum* magazine, Gandhi decried a Communist take-over of the ANC ("Communist are behind the whole plan") and predicted that the undertaking would result in violence.⁶⁹ Speaking from his bed in the middle of a hunger strike, Gandhi sagaciously lectured the ANC:

⁶⁶ "Weekly Review and Commentary," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 12 January 1952.

⁶⁷ In an effort to minimize the impact of this speech, Ahmed Bhoola responded to this column by sending a blistering attack against Gandhi to *Ilanga*: "Mr. Manilal Gandhi is in fact a far cry from his great father. He has cut himself away from his own people, and quite rightly cannot claim to represent their views. Mr. Manilal Gandhi has spoken once again. It is of little consequence and signifies nothing. We should treat it strictly on its merits—with contempt!" See "M. Gandhi and Congress," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 20 January 1952.

⁶⁸ "Weekly Review and Commentary," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 23 February 1952.

⁶⁹ See "Gandhi Fasts—and Talks with DRUM," *Drum*, May 1952.

I support the African National Congress in their struggle, but I think the resolution to boycott the Van Riebeeck Festival which was passed at Bloemfontein last year is being prosecuted in the wrong way.... To make passive resistance effective, there must be spiritual discipline among those taking part in it. In order to serve, one must deny oneself: there should be no drinking or gambling. The soul should be perfect. Passive resistance should be truly spiritual.

The ANC leadership decided that it would be best for Indian activists to answer Gandhi's views, which had little—if any—following inside of the Natal Indian Congress.⁷⁰ Within the ANC and Indian Congresses, however, Gandhi's statements propelled a broader exchange over the political significance of non-violence, which many older Indian Congress members continued to argue was a fundamental principle until the early 1960s. Mandela and younger African leaders strongly disagreed, arguing that non-violence was “a tactic to be used as the situation demanded.”⁷¹ According to Walter Sisulu, the Youth League insisted on the terminology of “defiance” to differentiate its intended militancy from the “passive” element of passive resistance.⁷² Tambo's later writings invoked a sharp opposition between the ANC's strategy of “aggressive pressure from the masses of people” and Mahatma Gandhi's strategy of appealing to the moral consciousness of the oppressor. “The African National Congress,” Tambo insisted, “expressly rejected any concepts and methods of struggle that took the form of self-pitying, arms-folding, and passive reaction to oppressive policies.”⁷³ When Mandela quoted Nehru at the end of his 1953 address “No Easy Walk to Freedom” (the title itself was taken from Nehru's writings), he may well have had these debates in mind. In their statements regarding the campaign, ANC leaders avoided invoking Mahatma Gandhi and the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign.⁷⁴ More strikingly, Lutuli failed to so much

⁷⁰See the reply to Gandhi by T.N. Naidoo, Vice President of the Transvaal Indian Congress and an adopted son of Mahatma Gandhi, in the same issue of *Drum* cited above. See also “M. Gandhi and Congress,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 20 January 1952.

⁷¹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 111.

⁷² Callinicos, *Oliver Tambo*, 180.

⁷³ Oliver Tambo, “Passive Resistance in South Africa,” 1966 in Sheridan Johns and R. Hunt Davis, Jr., eds., *Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress: The Struggle against Apartheid, 1948-1990: A Documentary Survey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 134.

⁷⁴ Neither Mahatma Gandhi or the Passive resistance campaign are discussed in the initial proposal (cited above), the published speeches of Mandela and Lutuli during the campaign, or the flyer issued by the ANC (Transvaal) and

as mention the senior Gandhi or his time in South Africa in his famous defense of non-violent civil disobedience, “The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross.”⁷⁵ In all of their pronouncements, ANC leaders carefully avoided any intimation that Gandhi or the Indian Congresses had inspired the campaign.⁷⁶

The first acts of defiance occurred in Natal some two months later than the beginning of the campaign elsewhere. In September, a crowd of 3,000 Indians and Africans assembled in Red Square to listen to speeches by Lutuli and Naicker before accompanying the first 21 volunteers to the Berea railway station, where the resisters entered the “Europeans only” seating area.⁷⁷ A photo in *Drum* showed a group of African and Indian women—striking in their immaculate saris—later exiting the female gaol, their faces beaming and arms raised in a clinched fist “Africa” salute. Across South Africa, over 8,000 individuals participated in acts of defiance. Only 300 people offered themselves for arrest in Natal, all in Durban (some sources provide a lower number of 192).⁷⁸ In his book *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, Lodge attributes the meager nature of Natal defiance to the ineffectiveness of the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign, the political divisions still enflamed by the battle to oust Champion from ANC leadership, organizational disarray, and awareness that any common action would be far from popular.⁷⁹ According to a letter written by Joe Mathews, tensions emerged early on between Indian and African leaderships: “You see that the Indians are perturbed over the fact that throughout this campaign the Congress is not leaning on them at all. Our organization is entirely independent, and if anything is giving orders to them.”⁸⁰ By and large, the Indian working class showed very little enthusiasm for the protests.⁸¹

the TIC. See “April 6: People’s Protest Day,” flyer issued by the ANC (Transvaal) and the Transvaal Indian Congress in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 482-3.

⁷⁵ “The Road to Freedom is VIA the Cross,” statement by Chief A. J. Lutuli, issued after the announcement on 12 November 1952 of his dismissal as chief [n.d.] in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 486-9.

⁷⁶ Privately, it was a different matter. Joe Mathews wrote to his father, ANC veteran Professor Z.K. Mathews, the following lines: “I am quite sure in the long run Natal will beat everybody in the response they get. I only hope it will be possible to keep down the spirit of Chaka and infuse the spirit of Gandhi among the Zulu masses.” Quoted in Baruch Hirson, “The Defiance Campaign, 1952: Social Struggle or Party Stratagem?” in *A History of the Left in South Africa*, 144.

⁷⁷ “‘Defiance’: Crowd of 3,000 Watches First Natal Resisters,” *Drum*, November 1952.

⁷⁸ Hirson, “The Defiance Campaign,” 152.

⁷⁹ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 61.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Hirson, “The Defiance Campaign,” 142.

⁸¹ Surendra Bhana, *Gandhi’s Legacy: The Natal Indian Congress 1894-1994* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1997), 84. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 248.

When the Joint Council suspended the Defiance Campaign near the end of 1952, the ANC and Indian Congresses hailed the outcome as an enormous success. Although ANC's membership grew by orders of magnitude, the campaign only developed a mass base among Africans in the Eastern Cape (where, perhaps significantly, Indians and whites played no real role in its leadership).⁸² Despite the weak response in Natal and among Indians and Coloureds generally, both ANC and Indian Congress leaders declared that the experience had established the unbreakable unity of the "Non-European" peoples. Speaking to a 1953 conference of the Transvaal ANC, Mandela declared: "In the past we talked of the African, Indian and Coloured struggles.... Today we talk of the struggle of the oppressed people which, though it is waged through their respective autonomous organizations, is gravitating towards one central command."⁸³ At a February 1953 gathering of the NIC, Naicker went so far as to predict the eventual abandonment of race-based organizations: "With the development of the national liberation movement, a day must come when there will be no need for separate political organizations for the different sections of the oppressed people of the Union."⁸⁴ Statements by Congress leaders equated the collaboration of political organizations with the "unity" of racial groups and substantially overstated the degree of support for both parties, particularly the Indian Congresses.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, a genuine shift in attitudes had occurred, especially among a layer of militants. Following the Defiance Campaign, close working relations existed between

⁸² Naicker claims that ANC membership jumped from 7,000 to 100,000 and the organization was transformed from "a loose-knit body to an effective mass movement with branches in almost every single area of the country." See M.P. Naicker, *Defiance Campaign in South Africa 1952* (New Delhi: A Mainstream Publication, undated [1972?]), 16. However, the ANC was itself aware of a sharp drop in enrolled members in the year following the Campaign. By the end of 1953, the ANC claimed the following total membership: 16,000 in the Cape, 11,000 in the Transvaal, 1,300 in Natal, and 600 in Orange Free State. As Hiron observes, these numbers are clearly gross approximations, and the Natal figure is four or five hundred higher than given by other sources. See "The Defiance Campaign," 154-5.

⁸³ Nelson Mandela "No Easy Walk to Freedom," in *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, ed. Ruth First (London, Heinemann, 1965), 28.

⁸⁴ Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, 21 and 22 February 1953, Hassim Seedat Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁸⁵ It is significant that the following statement by Dr. Naicker was printed in *Ilanga*: "The present campaign is further strengthening the already harmonious relationship between the Indian and African peoples whose struggle against oppression is one and indivisible. Unity in action gives a death blow to the Government's attempt to create hostilities on the part of the African people against the Indian people. It is the task of every Indian in every walk of life to work in co-operation with the African people on the basis of complete equality." See "Dr. Naicker's Call to the Indian People," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 26 July 1952.

the Transvaal Youth League and the Indian youth organization. Activists later described the level of interaction as “constant, constant, they were one, they were a single movement...”⁸⁶ and claimed that Ahmed Kathrada, the young Indian firebrand, had become a member of the ANC/YL.⁸⁷ Based on the successes of mixed rallies, some Orlando youth leaders proposed replacing the YL with a new organization including all races, arguing “the days of African inferiority have passed, when the African feared and felt small in the circles of Indians, Coloureds and Europeans.”⁸⁸ In Durban, the apparatuses of ANC and NIC virtually fused. Both organizations had their offices in Lahkani Chambers on Saville Street. Together, they published a common information bulletin entitled *Flash*, which regularly quoted Gandhi and Nehru.⁸⁹

The published statements by political leaders offer little insight into the psychological drama of evolving views and lingering resentments that certainly occurred during this period. Amidst the declarations of non-European unity, such issues became increasingly taboo outside of a small circle of leading cadre. Many ANC and NIC members no doubt struggled with the contradiction between a sincere intellectual abhorrence of racial attitudes and personal discomfort with individuals of other races. Others probably believed that they were free of prejudice while still holding onto unexamined stereotypes or an engrained sense of superiority. Racial consciousness can take many forms, and not all of them are particularly conscious. Returning to South Africa after several years abroad, the novelist Peter Abrahams described some of the tensions and condescension that still remained in social interactions:

There is a new move towards unity among the non-Europeans. This is being spearheaded by the A.N.C. and the I.N.C. But within these two bodies there are still reservoirs of very sharp prejudice. I saw this at an Indian social gathering

⁸⁶ Interview with Dr. Ismail Nagdee, Johannesburg, 4 April 2006.

⁸⁷ Interview with Victor Sifore by Gail Gerhart, Ga-Rankuwa, Pretoria 19 October 1972, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand; Charles Lakaje, “Unpublished Autobiographical Notes,” Nairobi, February 1970, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁸⁸ The quote is a summary of positions argued by Duma Nowke and Robert Resha by Lakaje. See “Unpublished Autobiographical Notes,” Nairobi, February 1970, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

⁸⁹ See *Flash*, issued by African National Congress and Natal Indian Congress, ANC Papers (Hb1.6), Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

where there was a very conscious toleration of an African friend. There is then, platform unity between the two Congresses and a degree of social apartheid in personal relations.⁹⁰

Some Africans who came to support cooperation with the Indian Congress still maintained profound bitterness regarding the racism of some Indians and the privileges of the “merchant class.” Ezekiel Mphahlele’s classic autobiography, *Down Second Avenue*, describes arguing with Indian and Coloured friends about the “Group Area Politics” of their communities: “How long, I asked, was the Indian merchant class going to dole out money to support their Congress only when a particular law was being resisted which threatened Indian business?” As if to provoke his interlocutors, the next sentence collapses the distinction between merchant and Indian: “Why had not the Indians ever helped Africans in their fight against, say, the Pass Laws, and only come in when Indian trade was being strangled by group area legislation?”⁹¹ If the average Indian was so different than the merchant in his attitudes, Mphahlele seemed to imply, why did he too remain aloof from the struggles of the country’s indigenous majority, leaving the Indian political organizations in the hands of a self-serving elite? Although he recognized the class divisions among Indians, and enthusiastically cultivated a multi-racial circle of intellectual associates, Mphahlele could not shake the impression that most Indians wished to remain separate and protect their modicum of privilege—however petty and ultimately humiliating.

Natal African Politics During the 1950s

At the time of Lutuli’s election to the Presidency of the ANC in December 1952, Africans from across the country understood that a momentous transition had occurred. Less than a month before, the Native Affairs Department had stripped Lutuli of the Groutville Chieftainship in response to his leadership of the Natal ANC during the Defiance Campaign. His almost immediate ascension to national office not only served as an unmistakable rebuke to the government, it also symbolized the transformation of the ANC itself into a mass movement dedicated to civil disobedience and the

⁹⁰ Peter Abrahams, “Can We Unite?” *Drum*, July 1952.

⁹¹ Ezekiel Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (Berlin, Seven Seas Publishers, 1962), 190.

recognition that South Africa was “a multi-racial society.” In an article on the 1952 national conference, *Drum* depicted Lutuli as “a conservative turned radical” who personified a more inclusive and popular style in African politics.⁹² Even at the level of personal affect, Lutuli’s warm, humane, and accessible manner distinguished him from avowedly patrician forerunners like Drs. Xuma and Moroka.⁹³ The Youth League, which strongly urged Lutuli to stand for the Natal and then national presidencies, depicted his election as the end of the “great man” style of African politics and the beginning of a new era of leadership. “Today it is the people who dictate the course along which they want to march to freedom,” Ngubane wrote in *Drum*, “it is they who set the pace, the leader is only their servant.”⁹⁴

Lutuli had traveled to Madras in 1938 for an International missionary conference on “the place of the indigenous church in missionary endeavor,” an experience he claimed opened his mind and broadened his horizons.⁹⁵ But his autobiography (partially ghost-written by the liberal priest Charles Hopper) does not discuss the evolution of his views regarding Indians and only mentions Gandhi in a brief factual footnote.⁹⁶ Mary Benson claims that Lutuli initially rejected collaboration with the Indian Congress following the 1949 pogrom.⁹⁷ Whatever his earlier beliefs, Lutuli’s opponents in Natal attacked him over the Defiance Campaign’s program of joint action with the Indian Congresses⁹⁸ and *Drum* interpreted his election as a rejection of Champion’s influence and a strong endorsement of the ANC’s closer relationship with other non-European groups.⁹⁹ In May of 1953, *Drum* published an interview with the new ANC president that addressed the topics of Communism, the dangers of “extreme nationalism,” and future congress policy. When asked if common cause existed between Africans and Indians, Lutuli replied: “Yes, our immediate objects are bound to be the same, and we can and must work closely together. Since we welcome the sympathy and support of all races in the rest of the world, it would be absurd and contradictory to reject Indians in our own

⁹² “Congress Moves to Natal,” *Drum*, February 1953.

⁹³ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 62

⁹⁴ Jordan Ngubane, “Durban Diary,” *Drum*, March 1953.

⁹⁵ Luthuli, *Let My People Go*, 78

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 251

⁹⁷ See chapter 3.

⁹⁸ “Chief A.J. Lutuli,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 8 September 1952.

⁹⁹ “Congress Moves to Natal,” *Drum*, February 1953.

country.”¹⁰⁰ In the opening address at the NIC conference on 1953, Lutuli insisted that the alliance was not a matter of tactics or circumstance, but dictated by fundamental principle: “In concluding this observation on our formidable alliance, I must state that ours is not a marriage of convenience but is a political alliance based on a common, genuine regard for true democracy, and is resulting in a growing spirit of friendship between our respective communities.”¹⁰¹ Denouncing government efforts to generate hostility between Indians and Africans, Lutuli stated that responsible African public opinion completely rejected the expatriation of Indians and endorsed the creation of a “partnership in the system of governing our country.” After the Defiance Campaign, the language of “cooperation” appeared less and less frequently in the statements of ANC leaders. The rhetoric of unity seemed to prevail.

In other matters of policy, Lutuli embodied the considerable degree of continuity that historian Andrew Walshe describes in the ideology of the ANC between the 1940s and early 50s.¹⁰² Even as the influence of both African nationalism and the CPSA grew considerably, an older generation of widely respected figures, like Lutuli and Professor Z.K. Mathews, continued to have a significant influence on the rhetoric, political perspectives, and campaigns of the ANC. A devoutly Christian man who placed immense faith in human dignity and kindness, Lutuli believed that the Defiance Campaign and similar acts of non-violent struggle would awaken the conscience of a large section of South Africa’s white population, resulting in the electoral defeat of the Nationalists and a transformation of government policy toward Africans. In order to appeal to potentially sympathetic whites, he consistently employed a language of racial understanding and human brotherhood deeply indebted to both Cape Liberalism and the Race Relations tradition. While Lutuli sometimes described his outlook in terms of an “inclusive African nationalism,” most of his statements emphasized the importance of the coexistence of *racial groups* and the need for mutual respect between them. He shunned language that could feed into European fears of rising “black peril.” As Tom Lodge observes, Lutuli expressed the ANC’s goals in terms of “participation” or

¹⁰⁰ “Interview with Luthuli!” *Drum*, May 1953.

¹⁰¹ “Let Us March Together to Freedom: Opening Address to the Sixth Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, Durban, February 21, 1953,” African National Congress, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/1950s/sp530221.html> (accessed 6 July 2009).

¹⁰² Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, 327-8.

“partnership in the government of the basis on equality” rather than majority rule or self-determination.¹⁰³ Far more frequently than Xuma and in sharp contrast to earlier Youth League statements, Lutuli continuously returned to the theme that South Africa was a “multi-racial society.”

Lutuli’s election did not, however, result in a rejuvenation of the Natal ANC. In the last months of the Defiance Campaign, the morale of Congress members in the province ran high. In an editorial on the 1952 Natal ANC congress, *Ilanga* optimistically trumpeted the increased vitality of rural ANC branches, the new spirit of fraternity among African professionals and working class congress members, and the fact that “thousands of Africans and Indians meet together as one united force.”¹⁰⁴ Given the prominence of Lutuli, Ngubane, and Yenga, *Drum* even speculated that the ANC’s center of gravity would shift to Natal. It was not to be. Membership grew modestly from its low in the mid 1940s, but remain desultory compared to the Transvaal or Eastern Cape. Billy Nair claims that the ANC could boast some 800 members at this time.¹⁰⁵ Although crowds of thousands responded to protests called by the ANC, the Congress struggled to transform the passive loyalty of many Africans into sustained political activism.¹⁰⁶

There were several reasons for this continued stagnation. State repression and political rivalries undoubtedly contributed. After the crushing of the 1949 Riots, the Durban City Council ordered a wave of arrests and expulsions aimed at drastically reducing the number of “surplus” Africans in the city. According to the estimates of the Native Commissioner for Durban, the enforcement of influx control had resulted in the expulsion of 4,000 Africans by the end of 1950.¹⁰⁷ During this period, the African unions founded in the 1940s “disintegrated in a period of declining wages and official repression.”¹⁰⁸ Simultaneously, the European press and Natal Nationalist Party encouraged the rise of the rabidly anti-Indian Bantu National Congress, a reactionary

¹⁰³ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 68.

¹⁰⁴ “Congress Conference,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 8 November 1952.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Billy Nair, Tongat, 25 May 2006. Walshe states that membership was no more than 250 in 1945. See Walshe, *The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa*, 394

¹⁰⁶ Tom Lodge, *Mandela: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 52

¹⁰⁷ Hemson, “Class Consciousness and Migrant Workers,” 357-8; See also Edwards, “Mkhumbane, Our Home,” 205. Edwards quotes a lower number of 3,166 African deported.

¹⁰⁸ Hemson, “Class Consciousness and Migrant Workers,” 358.

organization led by the herbalist S.S. Bhengu. This new party received a significant amount of support from Natal's chiefs and other local opponents of the Defiance Campaign until a series of articles in the Natal African press, orchestrated by Ngubane and Dhlomo, exposed Bhengu's pro-apartheid policies.¹⁰⁹ Even after Bhengu's conviction for fraud in 1953, the Bantu National Congress held the allegiance of powerful African trading interests in Cato Manor.¹¹⁰ In 1955, the Natal executive submitted a report bemoaning the lethargy of the Zulu "once renowned for their courage." It went on to state: "We are working among an extremely conservative people, the Zulus, who sometimes show too docile respect for the whites in South Africa."¹¹¹ Although editorials in *Ilanga* continued to warn other provinces about the fraught character of Natal's racial dynamics, the ANC leadership failed to confront a main political reason for the organization's weakness: continued anti-Indian sentiment following the pogrom and the rejection of cooperation with the Indian Congress by a majority of Durban's Africans.

Perhaps the most significant expression of this sentiment was the growth and transformation of cooperatives or "buying clubs" in African areas following the 1949 pogrom. Immediately following the riots, African residents of Cato Manor occupied vacated Indian locations and began to establish small stores with the purported approval of the Minister for Native Affairs and later support from the Durban Corporation, which allocated abandoned sites to African traders.¹¹² Seizing on the power vacuum and smoldering anti-Indian sentiment in the area, two organizations emerged that sought to pool resources and establish their economic preeminence: the Zondizitha ("Hate the Enemies") Buying Club and Zulu Hlanganani ("Zulus Unite") Association. Both groups represented the assertion of an emerging layer of African shack lords, shebeen owners, and illegal petty traders in the shanty towns, especially

¹⁰⁹ "Weekly Review and Commentary," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 13 February 1952. In 1953, Bhengu was convicted of fraud and sentenced to five years and nine months of prison in Pietermaritzburg. See Henry Swanzy, "Quarterly Notes," *African Affairs* 53, no. 213 (1954), 300.

¹¹⁰ Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 305; Z.A. Ngcobo interviewed by Simeon Zulu, 13 September 1980, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 361), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, *Challenge and Violence 1953-1964* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 42.

¹¹² Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 302-6.

Cato Manor.¹¹³ Far less secure than the majority of their Indian counterparts (simply characterizing both as “petit bourgeois” implies a misleading equivalence), these elements nevertheless asserted themselves with a self-confident vigor following the pogrom: they opened stores, established wholesale outlets, invested in land and buses, applied for traders licenses, wrote appeals to the Durban Corporation and Governor General, and managed to impose a loosely-knit structure of political authority. Although most of these ventures failed in short order, they nonetheless represented a new spirit of entrepreneurship and political assertion among the motley and heterogeneous shantytown elite. Zulu Hlanganani—the larger of the two associations—organized an annual celebration of the 1949 pogrom. Iain Edwards’ dissertation provides a masterful portrait of Mkhumbane (Cato Manor) society during this period:

Dominated by a new proletarian consciousness, Mkhumbane was based around complex networks of patron-client relationships. From African shacklords or rackrenters, minor entrepreneurs, messianic priests, squatter leaders and other “nobodies” emerged a new leadership stratum. Having either control over or decisive influence over access to material resources, such a new leadership element offered residents a form of protection and guidance in return for money, goods and the services of loyalty and obedience so essential to patron relationships.¹¹⁴

The strength of these organizations and the anti-Indian sentiment of African shantytown residents posed an enormous challenge for Congress leadership—whose influence in

¹¹³ *The Durban Housing Survey* reports the operation of buying clubs and three African shops in New Town as well as “a self-appointed headman” who sold water, let sites, collected rents, and looked after “good order of the little community.” See University of Natal, *The Durban Housing Survey*, 377. It is interesting to note that the Zondizitha Buying Club was an alliance between small traders from other areas with aspirant store owners in Cato Manor.

¹¹⁴ Edwards, “Mkhumbane, Our Home,” 9. My debt to Edwards’ ground-breaking research throughout this section is extensive. I have serious reservations, however, about the use of the term proletarian to describe the consciousness of this stratum or Edward’s political conclusion that the “growth of assertive shantytown communities,” i.e. the temporary consolidation of a heterogeneous dominant layer, “gave to the ordinary African, whether worker, lumpen or newly migrant, a vital control over the substance and pace of African political and organizational advance,” 32. Edwards’ remark that the dominant layer had “control over or decisive influence over material resources,” significantly complicates his general tendency to treat the support given to these organizations by shantytown dwellers as simply expressing the popular agency and an alternative set of cultural values developed by shantytown dwellers as a community.

Cato Manor was weak in the years immediately following the 1949 anti-Indian pogrom.¹¹⁵ The major questions of concern to shack dwellers concerned residential security, buses, and trading rights: issues that directly involved the business practices and property rights of Indian groups. Indian-owned bus service (now sometimes employing African drivers or attendants) resumed almost immediately after the pogrom; following an absence of a few years, many Indian shop keepers rebuilt their stores and landlords appeared again, asserting their right to collect rent. When the city proposed the expropriation of Indian-owned land in Cato Manor to construct housing for Africans, both the NIC and Cato Manor Rate Payers Association voiced their stringent opposition: these groups had called for the expulsion of Africans from the area on several occasions.¹¹⁶ In 1953, another outbreak of anti-Indian violence followed the death of an African in a bus accident. African rioters targeted Indian shops and homes rebuilt after the 1949 Riots.¹¹⁷ As Edwards documents, most shantytown dwellers believed that they had won “the battle for Cato Manor” and liberated the area from the Indians. Shantytown leaders mobilized around this sentiment and threats of renewed violence frequently appeared in petitions sent by the co-operative groups to the Durban City Cooperation or the Native Affairs department.¹¹⁸

Although the Natal ANC understood the importance of organizing within Cato Manor and other shack settlements, Congress actively avoided campaigns or forms of agitation that either directly targeted “Indian interests” or could assume an anti-Indian dimension. Partially based on a defense of the Alliance in principle, the calculations behind this strategic decision were likely complex: a boycott against Indian businesses could devolve into further violence, drive larger sections of the Indian community further into the arms of the conservative Natal Indian Organization, fracture the Alliance in the Transvaal, provoke a new round of state repression, frighten white allies, and alienate badly needed international support. At another level, this policy reflected both the Alliance’s reliance on Indian Congress funds and the increasingly disadvantageous

¹¹⁵ According to Leo Kuper, one prominent ANC leader was “associated professionally” with Zulu Hlanganani and defended the commemoration of the 1949 Riots on the grounds that “there was nothing really anti-Indian about it.” See Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 304.

¹¹⁶ Bhana, *Gandhi’s Legacy*, 105.

¹¹⁷ Edwards, “Mkhumbane, Our Home,” 205.

¹¹⁸ Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 305.

situation in Natal Indian politics, particularly the growing conservatism of the Indian working class and the weakness of the NIC. During the 1950s, NIC members devoted the much of their energies to Congress campaigns and the Indian Congress continued to support the ANC financially.¹¹⁹ However, the NIC itself underwent a severe decline: it had shrank to the miniscule size of two active branches in 1952 and many former strongholds, including in Cato Manor, shifted their allegiance to more conservative Indian forces. When the South African Trades and Labour Council split in 1955, most Indian workers affiliated with a legally recognized union which excluded African workers rather than the Congress-led South African Confederation of Trade Unions (SACTU).¹²⁰ Protests or campaigns that targeted Indian businesses—if only incidentally—would have imperiled Indian financial support and seriously, if not fatally, weakened the ANC's embattled ally.

Not only did many Africans outside the ANC believe that the organization was protecting the interests of Indian merchants, but this policy also resulted in a series of bitter struggles within the Natal ANC beginning in the mid 1950s. Informed by the increasingly vocal opposition to the Alliance in other provinces, activists began to accuse the Communist Party and the ANC executive of undermining African political initiatives when they threatened "Indian interests" (i.e. the interests of merchants and bus owners). In an unpublished autobiography, Jordan Ngubane describes two instances of Congress and Communist Party leaders intervened in order to prevent boycotts directed, at least in part, at Indian buses:

The Natal Branch of the ANC was led for a while by Gabriel Nyembe while Luthuli was involved in the treason trial. At one stage the Africans wanted to boycott Indian and municipal buses....He once came to my house in a very bad

¹¹⁹ Former NIC member Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim recalls: "The only issue we were able to mobilize the Indians around was the Group Areas Act. We succeed there, but with Africans there was the pass law, the beer hall struggle, it was mainly African struggles.... The money came from the Indian Congress, they [the ANC] got the money whenever they wanted." Interview with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Praetoria, 2 May 2006. This support took other forms as well. During strikes, trade unionist would sometimes approach Indian merchants for donations of food and other groceries and the NIC often used its connections with sympathetic merchants to provide relief to African individuals and families referred by the ANC and SACTU. See Ken Luckhardt and Brenda Wall, *Organize or Starve! The History of the South African Congress of Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), 313.

¹²⁰ Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*, 58.

temper. He complained bitterly that the communists in Durban had sabotaged his and the ANC's plans to stage a Boycott—because they did not want Indian interests threatened by the Africans. He was eventually shunted out of the ANC. On another occasion the Indian bus owners decided to raise fares in Durban. The PAC called a meeting in the Bantu Social Centre which decided on a boycott. That night the Congress Movement leaders in Durban ran all over the city telling the Indian bus owners not to raise African fares. For some months the Indians and the Coloureds from Mayville paid a higher fare while the Africans paid less.¹²¹

In 1956, the Natal executive expelled two well known leaders of the ANC Women's league who possessed significant followings among the Cato Manor shack dwellers. As Edwards explains, "At the root of the conflict lay the desire of certain ANCWL organizers to uphold an exclusive African and even Zulu populism which had developed in Mkhumbane during the later 1940s."¹²² One of these women, Bertha Mkhize, was respected across the country: a member of the ICU during the 1930s, she served as one of four national vice presidents of the Federation of South African Women in 1954, and was a defendant in the 1956 Treason Trial. A number of members within the provincial executive supported the expelled women and both rejoined the ANC in 1958.¹²³

By the late 1950s, the Durban ANC had become increasingly polarized between ANC members active in SACTU and close to the Communist party and a "nationalist" group whose base of support was largely in the shantytowns.¹²⁴ In his memoir, Ntoko Babenia claims this later grouping was "often very racist towards whites and Indians and took issue with SACTU people over the role of the working class."¹²⁵ Whatever the truth of this accusation, this faction included several popular and dedicated ANC

¹²¹Jordan K. Ngubane, "Unpublished Autobiography," Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, 154 .

¹²² Edwards, "Mkhumbane, Our Home," 258.

¹²³ Ibid., 259.

¹²⁴ Bernard Magubane et al., "The Turn to Armed Struggle," in South Africa Democracy Education Trust, *Road to Democracy in South Africa: 1960-70*, vol. 1 (Cape Town: Zebra, 2004), 109

¹²⁵ Ntoko Babenia and Iain Edwards, *Memoirs of a Saboteur: Reflections on My Political Activity in India and South Africa* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1995), 75.

leaders, including George Mbele (who in exile would join the group of eight senior ANC members who opposed the ANC's 1969 adoption of a nonracial membership policy), Youth League official S.B. Ngcobo, and Dorothy Nyembe, a branch leader in Cato Manor and indomitable activist who led protests against the city-owned beer halls in the late 1950s and later joined *Umkhonto we Sizwe*.¹²⁶

In some respects, the sheer force of events soon eclipsed these internal divisions. Natal's political landscape began to dramatically change in the course of 1958. Three separate developments converged that radicalized different layers of Durban Africans and resulted in the explosive growth of the ANC in the following year. First, the government began the resettlement of Cato Manor residents to Kwa Mashu in 1958: bulldozing houses, deporting African without proper documentation (principally women) to the impoverished wastelands of the reserves, and cracking down on illegal brewing in order to improve sanitation.¹²⁷ African women responded in June of 1959 by launching a protest movement against city-run beer halls—including occupying and burning some beer halls to the ground—that nearly culminated in a city wide insurrection. Over 20,000 people attended a Congress Alliance rally held at the end of June and ANC membership swelled.¹²⁸ Second, the resulting influx of women into the countryside and the state's drive to remove "Black Spots" (areas of land owned or occupied by Africans outside the reserves) inspired a series of rural rebellions. When Lutuli visited Ladysmith earlier in the year, between 3,000 and 4,000 people packed a meeting organized by the ANC and NIC on the question of Black Spots.¹²⁹ By late July, militant protests involving tens of thousands of men and women had begun to spread throughout the countryside. Third, membership in SACTU, which had risen steadily in the previous few years, expanded prodigiously. As a new layers of African workers had entered into low-wage industries in areas like Pine Town and Hammarsdale during the mid 1950s, the horrendous conditions and unregulated wages drove them to demand unionization.¹³⁰ Propelled by the waves of township protest, new members flooded the

¹²⁶ Bernard Magubane et al., "The Turn to Armed Struggle," 109

¹²⁷ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 147-8.

¹²⁸ Edwards, "Mkhumbane, Our Home," 317.

¹²⁹ Chizuko Sato, "Liberal Opposition to Forced Removals and Non-racialism in South Africa," *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies* vol. 6 (2007), 87.

¹³⁰ Luckhardt and Wall, *Organize or Starve*, 209.

unions in 1959. According to Billy Nair: “We went flat out for the organization. Just in Durban alone 16,000 were recruited in one year. Sixteen thousand workers were recruited, right at the factory floor, were recruited to the ANC.” As banning orders removed subsequent layers of the union leadership, SACTU rushed to bring forward and train African shop stewards. Nair recalls:

We had mass based political classes of about 800 to 1000 workers, leading workers, shop stewards and so on at the YMCA. It used to be packed on Saturday afternoons. We used to pay for it. Workers themselves...one penny and so on each they contributed for the hiring of the hall. They were educated and the workers were actually able to express themselves publicly, get onto the platform, take the PA (the large speaker) and speak. You know they learned public speaking. They were politicized....

It was mostly African, but Indian as well. They were all groomed and moved up and the leaders of the various trade unions overtime became increasingly African.

Unable to address the immanent threat of forced removals, the “mayors” of Cato Manor, local advisory board members, shack lords, and the big men of the cooperative associations—whose essentially local and insular politics centered on securing trading and land rights—descended into infighting, mutual recriminations, and near total paralysis.¹³¹ In both Cato Manor and in the factories, a new layer of grass roots leaders emerged (many of them women infuriated by the incompetence and hubris of the shantytown elite) that quickly adopted the language and symbols of Lutuli and the ANC. As one Cato Manor resident stated during a meeting with the Bantu Affairs commissioner, S. Bourquin: “During the Indian Riots, the people’s war cry was ‘Zulu!’ because people had faith and confidence in the chiefs then. But today the cry is ‘Afrika!’”

¹³¹ For a fuller account of this complex events—which also places them in the context of the gendered hierarchies of Cato Manor’s social structures—see Iain Edwards, “Cato Manor, 1959: Men, Women, Crowds, Politics and History,” in *The People’s City: African Life in Twentieth-Century Durban*, ed. Paul Maylam and Iain Edwards (Pietermaritburg: University of Natal Press, 1996), 112-4.

It is a demand for peace and freedom in Africa.”¹³² However, the growing identification of Cato Manor residents with the ANC did not displace the earlier force of anti-Indian sentiment. The first protests against the removals began after residents heard that the City Council planned to rezone the area for Indian occupation.¹³³ While occupying Bourquin’s offices, a group of women from Cato Manor confronted him in the following terms: “why should they be expelled merely to make room for Indians and Europeans, why should they be moved if Indians were allowed to stay, why did I act like an enemy instead of a father, in what way had they wronged me that I should destroy their homes?”¹³⁴ Other evidence indicates that acute differences persisted within Durban’s African population over collaboration with the Indian Congress. Only 20 to 25 percent of Durban responded to the ANC’s call for a strike to protest the Sharpeville Massacre on 18 March 1960 (compared with 85 to 95 percent in other major urban areas).¹³⁵ Even after the removal of Cato Manor residents to the Kwa Mashu township in the early 60s, the ANC’s attempts to establish organizational structures encountered some opposition on the basis of “Africanist” distrust of the Congress Alliance and its affiliates.¹³⁶

By the end of the 1950s, Natal had the greatest number of ANC branches (49 versus 41 in the Transvaal) and the highest number of delegates at the annual ANC conference.¹³⁷ The ANC stopped advertising its planning meetings because it could no longer find a venue to accommodate everyone who would show up.¹³⁸ Concurrently, the first seizure of Indian properties under the Group Areas Act and the general rise in militancy resulted in a degree of greater political activism among a much smaller number Indians and the revitalization of some NIC Branches. During a protest outside of the Victoria Street beer hall, a crowd of “Native males, females, and Indians” encircled the building and Indian store owners threw a volley of bottles at the beer hall’s staff form

¹³² “Meeting between Bantu Affairs Commissioner and Cato Manor Residents,” 18 July 1959, Bourquin, Papers (KCM 55252), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

¹³³ “Protests against Shack Removal, Memorandum by S. Bourquin,” 2 March 1959, Bourquin Papers (KCM 55170), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

¹³⁴ “Memorandum on Events Arising out of the Clearance of Native Shacks at Mnyasana, Cato Manor,” February 1959, 4 March 1959, Bourquin Papers, Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

¹³⁵ Benjamin Pogrand, *How Can Man Die Better: Sobukwe and Apartheid* (London: Halban, 1990), 142.

¹³⁶ Babenia and Edwards, *Memoirs of a Saboteur*, 75.

¹³⁷ “Report on the A.N.C Conference Held in Durban on the 12th and 13th December, 1959,” South Africa Institute of Race Relations Confidential Document, ANC Papers (AD2186/C8), Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹³⁸ Interview with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Pretoria, 2 May 2006.

their balconies across the street.¹³⁹ At its 1961 conference, the NIC appointed Babenia district organizer of sixteen Durban branches, some of which (Clairwood, Bayhead, Magazine Barracks, Happy Valley, and Quarry Road) possessed active working class members.¹⁴⁰ When the government banned the ANC in 1960, the Alliance organized public meetings under the aegis of the NIC and SACTU—Congress joint structures served as the de facto policy making bodies of the banned African organization.¹⁴¹

In the midst of this constant political activity, the greater education, skills, and economic resources of Indian activists undoubtedly bred some resentment among ANC members. But ANC stalwarts rarely voiced these sentiments in public. At the level of leadership, the prominent role played by Indians—and its potential ramifications—was discussed bluntly, especially among senior cadre of Communist Party, who met frequently in Natal. Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim explains: “yes, there was this resentment, I think more from saying that they’re wary that the Indians should not play a role that is more important than their numbers.”¹⁴² According to Ismail, most interaction across racial lines occurred in the course of organizing campaigns: “there was very little interaction on a social level between Indians and Africans or in all the racial groups.... I think in the 50s it was easier, but there were still those differences.” Another NIC activist, Phyllis Naidoo, vividly captures the mundane, but nonetheless pernicious, barriers to greater individual intimacies among rank-and-file activists: “You see, if you came from work to meetings it was nice to say ‘Hello, hello’ but you went back to your group areas. So where the hell is interaction?”¹⁴³

During the late 1950s, Phyllis Naidoo and a group of Indian and African students at Natal University petitioned the provincial leadership to establish a branch of the ANC. Despite their invocation of the Freedom Charter and direct appeal to Lutuli, the ANC ultimately refused the request. Naidoo’s description of this episode deserves quotation

¹³⁹ “Memo to Manager re Disturbance Victoria street Beer Hall,” 24 July 1959, Bourquin Papers, Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

¹⁴⁰ Babenia and Edwards, *Memoirs of a Saboteur*, 52. According to Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim: “The Natal Indian Congress didn’t grow so much . . . the entire leadership was demobilized, was banned. The African masses were in the forefront of the struggle. The Indian Congress, we made attempts in the late fifties to revive the branches, with very limited success.” Interview with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Pretoria, 2 May 2006.

¹⁴¹ Babenia and Edwards, *Memoirs of a Saboteur*, 53.

¹⁴² Interview with Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, Pretoria, 2 May 2006.

¹⁴³ Interview with Phyllis Naidoo, Durban, 24 May 2006.

in full. It provides something of an allegory for Durban politics during this era—the malignancy of social prejudice, the tremendous efforts made by individuals to overcome racial divisions, and the ultimate limitations of the ANC’s inclusive South African nationalism. She begins by describing a walk to the ANC offices with Lutuli:

We walked down Grey Street toward the ANC offices—this was before '60—and coming through two Africans, myself, George, we walked near a taxi rink. These fellows were saying in Hindi: “Look, there’s a woman with these Kaffirnese,” which is really ugly, ugly, ugly.

So I said to Chief: “Do you know what he said?”

He was such a loving human being, so he bent down, I told him, so he stopped, we went back and he says: “Gentlemen, I’m Lutuli, Chief Lutuli of the ANC and these comrades”—introduced the four of us to them—and said, “we’re all South Africans.”

And they walked up, virtually on their knees to the Chief, “sorry for the mistake” and all that. They were laughing. They were all bloody rascals, thugs they were. Anyway, we go to the ANC office and they have this meeting telling them why we need to open up a branch and they listened to us and said, look we need time to think.

A couple of weeks later they called us and said: “No, the ANC constitution hasn’t been changed up till now. The ANC constitution says only African members of the ANC.”

The Africanist Faction, the Congress of the People, and the Freedom Charter

The 1952 Defiance Campaign and the formation of the Congress of Democrats in 1953 strengthened the influence of the self-identified Africanist faction of the ANC,

particularly in the Transvaal and the Eastern Cape.¹⁴⁴ Initially based in the Johannesburg branches of Orlando, Evanton, and Alexandra, the Africanist opposition sought to mobilize the wide spread discontent within the ANC over the increasingly prominent role of Indians and white activists in the Congress Alliance. Describing the mood in Orlando during the early 1950s, Mathew Nkoana states: “there were a great many people, whether they were Africanist or not, who were very dissatisfied with the ANC’s collaboration with Indians, the Indian Congress and the Congress of Democrats.”¹⁴⁵ This remained true throughout the decade.

The rhetoric of the Africanists initially centered on three issues related to political organization and the alleged corruption—the moral and political became inextricably fused in their rhetoric—of the ANC leadership. First, the Africanists alleged that the equal voting weight of each organization (the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, SACTU, and COD) gave Communists and minority groups inordinate influence over the decisions of the Congress Alliance. Arguing that both Communist and Indian groups worked to extend the influence of foreign powers in Africa, they attacked the “false diabolical machinery—the Joint Council of Non-European Organizations—for political intrigue and conspiracy against the A.N.C.” whose orders came from the “Downing Streets of Moscow and New Delhi.”¹⁴⁶ From the perspective of the Africanists, the undemocratic character of the Congress Alliance was compounded by the fact the recently-founded COD and CPO

¹⁴⁴For a full discussion of the politics of the Africanist current, see Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. While probably the best single discussion of the ANC and PAC’s political ideology, Gerhart’s tends to privilege the debates over collaboration with whites and communists in her discussion of the 1950s. In doing so, she projects the PAC’s formulations from the late 1950s and 1960s back onto the formative discussions of the earlier period. This telescoping also affects her use of some oral testimony. In describing the evolution of “multi-racialism,” she excerpts her interview with Joe Mathews so that it appears that he is only discussing the problem of collaboration with whites, while in fact he speaks of both whites and Indians in the same passage and throughout the interview. (Compare Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 113-114 with her interview with Joe Mathews, 15 August 1970, Gaborone, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand). Gerhart accurately describes the anti-Indian attitudes of many Africanist leaders. Nevertheless, by compartmentalizing the Indian question, she tends to downplay the ongoing ideological importance of debates over the Indian question and anti-Indian racism in the development of African nationalist politics.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Mathew Nkoana by Gail M. Gerhart, London, September 1969, Not verbatim, PAC Interviews, Gerhart Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁴⁶ Black Savage [Victor Sefora], “African Nationalism and the 1949 Programme of Action,” *The Africanist* (Jan./Feb 1956), p. 6.

had a few hundred members, the Indian Congresses several thousand at the most (compared to the ANC's claimed membership of tens of thousands).¹⁴⁷

Second, this grouping voiced intense disquiet over the growing dependency of the ANC and its leaders on outside financial resources, particularly funding obtained from the Indian Congresses. In an interview with Gail Gerhart conducted in 1970, Sobukwe stated that ANC leaders initially welcomed the Indian Congresses and the Congress of Democrats into the Defiance Campaign and then grew increasingly dependent on Indian support: "These communists from the Indian Congress—Dadoo and Cachalia—came and supplied the ANC and Sisulu with money. Also Sisulu's business was in trouble. You couldn't blame him for being grateful to these men."¹⁴⁸ Similar rumors circulated about Lutuli's relationship with Indian merchants.¹⁴⁹

Third, the Africanists expressed tremendous unease regarding social interactions at the leadership level: interracial parties in wealthy suburbs of Johannesburg, drinking alcohol (at the time, illegal for Africans),¹⁵⁰ interactions between African men and white women, and the predominance of Indians and whites at gatherings which doubled as clandestine planning meetings.¹⁵¹ Most African activists were intensely aware of the economic and cultural abyss between them and their would-be allies. Describing the personal resentments of many Africans, Ngubane aptly captures this discomfort: "Social stratifications followed racial lines.... Try as he would, the White communist could not identify himself completely with the African worker. This went for the Indian too."¹⁵²

The Africanists alleged that the ANC leadership had abandoned the African nationalism of the 1949 Program of Action and the goal of African majority rule in order to maintain their bloc with the Indian merchant class and white Communists, whom they

¹⁴⁷ Edward Feit, *South Africa: The Dynamics of the African National Congress* (London, Oxford University Press, 1962), 14.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Robert Sobukwe by Gail M. Gerhart, August 8 and 9, 1970, Kimberly, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁴⁹ Talk with T.T. Letlaka, A.B. Ngcobo, Mathew Nkoana, and Andrew Tsehlana, 7 September 1969, London, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁵⁰ See interview with Nkoana; Interview with Charles Lakaje by Gail M. Gerhart, February 1970, Nairobi, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁵¹ See also Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 156.

¹⁵² Jordan K. Ngubane, "An Unpublished Autobiography," Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, the University of Chicago, 199.

described as liberal members of the ruling class (the “so-called Communists”). Influenced by a combination of nationalist ideology and deeply engrained racial bitterness, Africanists denied that members of minorities would work to dismantle a system that guaranteed their own privileges: any assertion of group identity—especially in the form of a separate political organization—represented an acceptance of racial segregation and identification with the status quo. Even if non-Africans could fully identify with the African cause, Africanists rejected including them within a common organization on the basis that it would have the psychological effect of undermining African initiative and self-reliance.¹⁵³

In 1956, the Orlando-based *Africanist* published an article by N. Ka Linda entitled “Congress and Other Organizations.” The author began with the fiercely asserted axiom that African nationalism—which, he wrote, was aimed at “building a higher civilization based on the African’s ethics”—represented the irreplaceable instrument for the liberation of the African people. The great crime of the Communist Party and Indian Congresses, Linda alleged, was that they actively worked to supplant African nationalism with other ideologies in the service of “the capitalists and socialists colonizers of the Twentieth Century.” Further, Linda claimed that the very existence of national organizations representing minority groups—and here he included the CPO, the “Indian National Congress” (in effect denying that a South African Indian Congress is a possibility), and the “chameleon” Congress of Democrats—represented a “declaration of war” on the values of the ANC, especially African majority rule. He continued:

If for humanity’s sake we are to tolerate them the only alternative which will create a reasonable understanding, is that they should disband and dissolve their political organizations or reduce them to the status of non-political organizations. If they want to create good relations, they ought to be mere spectators in this chess political game. If they have to take sides then they must go to the side of the enemy.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Interview with Robert Sobukwe by Gail M. Gerhart, August 8 and 9, 1970, Kimberly, Gerhart Papers. PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁵⁴ N. ka Linda “The Congress and Other Organisations” *The Africanist* (Orlando), April-May 1956.

Why must these organizations, in the course of political battle, necessarily adhere to the white supremacist regime? Linda asserted that minority groups should receive “every conceivable right” to concern themselves with the preservation of customs, traditions, and non-African cultures. (In this regard, Linda is more tolerant than some Africanists, who frequently rejected the continued development of “foreign” cultures in South Africa.)¹⁵⁵ But once they assume an active role within the liberation struggle, minority races both to dilute the historic centrality of African nationalism and threaten to vivisection land according to race. The Freedom Charter’s “The land shall be divided equally among the people,” he charged, was analogous to Major Warden drawing his knife and cutting apart the country of the Basoto. An editorial note following the piece offered a slight correction. Saluting the frankness of the article, the editor suggested that there was no need for these organizations to disband “now,” if only they leave the ANC “to run its affairs ITSELF.”

Behind the sensationalist rhetoric and often tendentious argumentation, the Africanist dispute with the ANC leadership concerned the nature of South African society and the Congress Alliance’s strategy for ending white supremacy. Formally, the ANC had not abandoned earlier policy statements like *African Claims* (1943) that advocated universal suffrage and, by implication, African majority rule. However, Lutuli and most other ANC leaders believed that that mass protest and international pressure could impel a large enough section of the white population to reject the racial policies of the Nationalist government and insist on negotiating a new political compact with the African population. Consequently, the speeches of ANC leaders avoided slogans like “Africa for the Africans” or “African majority rule” and left open the possibility for a variety of interim power-sharing arrangements by stressing the need for mutual understanding between racial groups.

Addressing the Natal Indian Congress in 1953, Lutuli explained: “we work for the creation of a partnership in the system of governing our country as shall give all people in the union of South Africa, regardless of their race, creed or land of origin, a voice in

¹⁵⁵ For a statement of these views, see Interview with Peter Molotsi by Gail M. Gerhart, August 25 and 17, 1969, New York City, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

the government of the country.”¹⁵⁶ Indian Congress leaders openly intervened into ANC meetings to support this posture. At the 1954 ANC national conference, NIC president Dr. G.M. Naicker congratulated the ANC leadership for rejecting the slogan “South Africa for the Africans” and, consciously echoing Mda's language from 1949, warned that the growing Africanist current in the ANC “can become an anti-democratic force giving rise to the emergence of black fascism in the Union.”¹⁵⁷ While Lutuli argued that Congress Alliance was a matter of principle, a strong current within the ANC leadership viewed its organizational form and fundamentally liberal rhetoric in terms of tactical expediency. As Communist party member and former ANC Youth League leader Joe Mathews told Leo Kuper: “Many African nationalists would regard the Africanists as blunderers who have let the cat out of the bag too early whereas at this stage we should work with other groups.”¹⁵⁸ Such elements had little doubt that their ultimate goal was African majority rule, but embraced the Congress Alliance and Lutuli's brand of inclusive African nationalism on the basis of political expediency. Crucially, the ANC's perspective of internal, democratic reform and the rhetoric of racial understanding contributed to the emphasis on a South African struggle—rather than, for example, a regional or Pan-African perspective—and a democratic understanding among South Africa's component groups.

In contrast, Africanist writings described white domination as a form of *foreign rule*: they denied that South African society differed significantly from settler colonial societies elsewhere in the continent (Kenya, Algeria, Southern Rhodesia). Placing far less emphasis of the current Nationalist government, they denied that a significant component of the white population would ever agree to abrogate its privileges—particularly, its near monopoly control of land—and accept a government controlled by Africans. According to their logic, the influence of “foreign ideologies” like Marxism and the political role of minorities groups could only obfuscate the true nature of the liberation struggle: the overthrow of white minority rule through a series of direct

¹⁵⁶ Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, 21 and 22 February 1953, Hassim Seedat Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁵⁷ Address delivered by Dr. G.M. Naicker at the Opening of the National Conference of the A.N.C, Durban, Thursday, 16 December, 1954, ANC Papers (Ad 2186/Ba 3.3), Historical Papers, Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁵⁸ Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 373.

(although still non-violent) confrontations by the African people themselves, the only group which ostensibly lacked an immediate material interest in upholding a system of racial privileges. In their eyes, the questions of organization, rhetoric, and even the struggle's imagery were thus absolutely key: the prominence afforded to a small number of Indians and whites in the Congress Alliance prevented Africans from seeing their true enemy (foreign domination) and simultaneously forced the ANC to make concessions regarding the eventual goal of building a society governed by Africans based on (a vaguely defined) "African values." In opposition to the ANC leadership, the Africanists adopted a Pan-Africanist stance that openly challenged both the historical and political integrity of the state resulting from the 1910 unification of South Africa.

Since the Defiance Campaign, the rhetoric and political aesthetics of the ANC had begun to change substantially. In large part constructed around the statements and persona of Lutuli, the new imagery of struggle drew selectively on the earlier history of the ANC, the terminology of the Communist Party, and the imagery of national liberation movements throughout Asia and the rest of Africa. Growing out of the organizational form of the Congress Alliance itself, this iconography and lexicon focused on articulating two seemingly disparate political claims: the national unity of South Africa's diverse peoples and the recognition of each racial (or national) group's fundamental place within South African society. Contrary to the arguments of critics like Neville Alexander, the ANC did not clearly articulate this new political stance at the level of a consistent doctrine (i.e. the "four nations thesis"): ANC leaders continued to hold a wide variety of views on the "national question," including liberal pluralist, African nationalist, and orthodox Stalinist positions.¹⁵⁹ Rather, the ANC strived to reconcile the two political

¹⁵⁹ On the "four nations thesis," see Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 35-7; and earlier, Neville Alexander, "Approaches to the National Question in South Africa," *Transformation* 1 (1986), 77-80. I have three main points of disagreement with Alexander's invaluable work. First, Alexander tends to write as if unchanging theoretical schemas drive political practice. While this might sometimes be the case, I have found the opposite dynamic at work in the Congress Alliance during this period: political strategies, often shared by groups espousing a variety of world views, are the basis of post facto generalizations at the level of theory. Second, the evidence does not show that a single view point on the national question—whether "multi-racialism" or the "four nations thesis"—was hegemonic in the Congress Alliance during the period before 1960 or inspired (among other things) the Freedom Charter. Rather, a contradictory set of views were reconciled through a political aesthetics that simultaneously affirmed the unity and plurality of a South African nation. Third, I therefore find it somewhat confused to compare this political aesthetics with various theories of the nation because, at a fundamental level, they are phenomena of a different kind. The political aesthetics utilized by the alliance reconciled a historic antinomy at the level of imagery: any

claims of national unity and racial diversity in the organization and imagery of the Congress Alliance itself. The mixed platforms at Congress meetings, the four-spoke wheel representing the component racial “sections” of the Congress Alliance, and the Freedom Charter came to symbolize a new, inclusive “South African nation” in which each racial group had—at least symbolically—an equal claim to belonging.

The ANC also aligned itself with the image of Afro-Asiatic unity forged at 1955 Bandung Congress in Indonesia, which Moses Kotane and Maulvi Cachalia attended on behalf of the Congress Alliance. At the 1956 Natal ANC conference, Lutuli emphasized this association: “I wish especially to cite the Bandung Conference that unequivocally declared against discrimination, racialism, exploitation and colonialism generally and the nations there assembled pledged to fight these evils anywhere they are found in the world.”¹⁶⁰ In a 1957 editorial, *Liberation* declared: “A new force in world politics has emerged, the Afro-asiatic bloc of powers, holding the balance of world power between the lands of socialism and the lands of imperialism.”¹⁶¹ The 1958 ANC Handbook included Afro-Asian Day (April 24) in the Congress’s official calendar.

The major event in the development of this new political aesthetics was the 1955 Congress of the People and the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Since its conception, the Freedom Charter has been the subject of enormous controversy and searing criticism from multiple political perspectives.¹⁶² As much as its content, these debates have often concerned the Freedom Charter’s status as a symbol: statements by ANC leaders at the time emphasized its importance as a democratic expression of *the* South African people. Indeed, its most unprecedented idea was that there existed a singular people within South Africa whose will could be collectively embodied and represented. This imagery differed substantially from the Congress Alliance’s rhetoric even two years before, let alone the earlier positions of the ANC and the Youth League. Although the

translation into the language of theory necessarily results in incoherencies, as the ongoing debate over the meaning of “non-racialism” demonstrates.

¹⁶⁰ Albert Lutuli, “The Struggle Must Go On,” report to the 1956 annual provincial conference, in Gerald J. Pillay, ed., *Albert Lutuli*, vol. 1 of *Voices of Liberation* (Pretoria: HSRC Publishers, 1993), 103.

¹⁶¹ Editorial “The Weakest Link,” *Liberation* 25, June 1957.

¹⁶² For an introduction to these debates, see Martin Legassick, “Myth and Reality in the Struggle against Apartheid,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, no. 2 (June 1998); Console Tleane, “**Is There Any Future in the Past? A Critique of the Freedom Charter in the Era of Neoliberalism,**” in Amanda Alexander, ed., *Articulations: A Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture Collection* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2006) ; and Gavin Williams, “Celebrating the Freedom Charter,” *Transformation* 6 (1988).

ANC's political language during the Defiance Campaign was inconsistent, ANC leaders generally advocated "cooperation" or "understanding" between racial groups and sometimes described South Africa as a "multiracial" country. In a 1952 interview, for example, Moroka characterized South Africa as a "multi-racial society" and explained that the policy of the ANC towards other non-European groups was to "cooperate fully, not combine."¹⁶³ When ANC leaders used the term "multi-racial" in the early 1950s, it simply referenced an empirical facet of the country: it did not have any particular doctrinal or ideological significance.¹⁶⁴ The ANC's dominant idiom, in fact, largely came from the traditions of Cape Liberalism and the South African Institute of Race Relations. The Working Committee of the Cape ANC summarized the organization's predominant viewpoint during this period in the following terms: "The A.N.C. is the only organization with a policy that can lead to harmonious relations between the races in this country and indeed the policy places the A.N.C. in par with progressive and civilized mankind."¹⁶⁵

By the end of the Defiance Campaign, the earlier language of cooperation had largely given way to the call for a common, democratic movement and the celebration of unity between the non-European peoples. Particularly in the speeches of younger leaders like Mandela, a militant rhetoric inspired by the CPSA became increasingly prominent: "In the past we talked of the African, Indian, and Coloured struggles.... Today we talk of the struggle of the oppressed people which, though it is waged through their respective autonomous organizations, is gravitating towards one central command."¹⁶⁶ At the same time, ANC statements began emphasizing the need for a South African loyalty and shared set of democratic values that would eventually build a single nation out of the "apparently conflicting racial groups."¹⁶⁷ As Malcom McDonald observes, the argument that the shared belief in a set of democratic ideals and

¹⁶³ "Dr. Moroka Gives His Views," *Drum* (February 1952).

¹⁶⁴ Lutuli made the following statement in a 1952 speech: "In these past thirty years or so I have striven with tremendous zeal and patience to work with other sections of our multi-racial society in the Union of South Africa." See "The Road to Freedom is by the Cross," 12 November 1952, in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 486-7.

¹⁶⁵ "Circular Letter to All Congress Branches of the Province," December 1952 in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 2, 491.

¹⁶⁶ "No Easy Walk to Freedom," Presidential Address to the Transvaal ANC, 21 September, 1953 in *Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress*, 44.

¹⁶⁷ Dr. J.L.Z. Njongwe, "Who Doubts the Results?" reprint of a speech given at the November 1952 Cape ANC Conference, *Afrika: Newsletter of the African National Congress and Natal Indian Congress* 3, 7 November 1952.

institutions could produce a unified nation was central to many ANC statements during the 1950s.¹⁶⁸

In the campaign for the Congress of the People, two important transformations took place in the ANC's language and political symbolism. First, African leaders, particularly Lutuli, began to use the word "multi-racial" to refer to an essential characteristic of the South African nation itself. Describing the COP, Lutuli explained that "people from all walks of life in our multiracial nation will have the opportunity to write into this great Charter of Freedom their aspirations for freedom."¹⁶⁹ The language used to describe the elements of this nation remained enormously inconsistent: Africans, Whites, Coloureds, and Indians were variously described as "national groups," the "four sections of the people of South Africa," and "races."¹⁷⁰ However, the overwhelming emphasis became that all racial groups (rather than, for example, all individuals) belonged to a single, *existing* South African nation and these different groups collectively defined South Africa's national essence.¹⁷¹ Second, the ANC leaders began to argue that the Congress Alliance—and particularly the campaign for the Freedom Charter—embodied the collective will of South African and provided a model or image of the nation itself. In this context, the otherwise unremarkable singular in "Congress of *the* People" was an extraordinary and deliberate statement (infamously, the ANC invited the National Party to contribute to the proceedings as well). Leaders of the ANC and Indian Congress repeatedly emphasized that the Kliptown gathering was far more representative of "the people" than any other body convened in South African history.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ McDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa*, 111.

¹⁶⁹ Albert Lutuli, "Resist Apartheid!—July 11, 1954" in *Voices of Liberation*, vol. 1, 73.

¹⁷⁰ Albert Lutuli, "The Challenge of Our Time – September 5, 1954," in *Voices of Liberation*, vol. 1, 77; "Call to the Congress of the People," leaflet issued by the National Action Council of the Congress of the People [n.d.] in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 182.

¹⁷¹ Lutuli seems to have differed with other Congress leaders over whether racial and cultural differences would eventually disappear in a future democratic South Africa. In discussions following the Kliptown Congress, the Natal ANC raised concerns over the Freedom Charter's emphasis on racial differences and proposed instead a clause emphasizing the need to build "one united nation." See Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3., 66. In response to the Charter's defense of language rights, Lutuli suggested that there should be a single "lingua franca," but conceded it would be best to remain silent on this question in the Charter. See Albert Lutuli, "The Implications of the Freedom Charter," speech made at the 44th Annual Meeting of the ANC (16-18 December 1955) in *Voices of Liberation*, vol. 1, 85.

¹⁷² See "Presidential Address" by G.M. Naiker at the Opening of the 9th Provincial Congress of the NIC, 22 June 1956, Hassim Seedat Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

In 1955 his speech on the Congress's significance, Mandela quoted the following remarks made by Lutuli:

Why will this assembly be significant and unique? Its size, I hope, will make it unique. But above all its multi-racial nature and its noble objectives will make it unique, because it will be the first time in the history of our multi-racial nation that its people from all walks of life will meet as equals, irrespective of race, colour, and creed to formulate a freedom charter for all people in the country.¹⁷³

Echoing the U.S. *Declaration of Independence and Constitution*, the first incantatory lines of the charter declared: "We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: That South Africa belongs to all that live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people." This imagery also informed the pageantry of the Congress itself: representatives of each Congress organization occupied the platform while speakers drawn from across the country addressed the crowd in front of the four-spoke wheel of the Congress Alliance. At least 320 Indians were present among the 2,884 delegates, including a delegation of "young Indian wives, with glistening saris and shawls embroidered in Congress colours [and] smooth Indian lawyers and business men, moving confidently through the crowd in well-cut suits."¹⁷⁴ The congress bestowed the title of *Isitwalandwe* on Trevor Huddleston, Lutuli, and Dadoo, whose aged mother accepted the honor on behalf of the banned leader.¹⁷⁵

Despite later claims that the Freedom Charter articulated a "multi-racial nationalism," the document never employed the words "multiracial" or "multiracialism." Nor did it contain the language of "an inclusive African nationalism," the terminology that Lutuli preferred during the mid 1950s. The text also managed to avoid the word "African," which most whites still refused to utter in the 1950s (nor, for that matter, did it mention "Indians"). It did not articulate a coherent idea of the South African nation or a

¹⁷³ Quoted in Nelson Mandela, "Freedom in Our Life Time," in Nelson Mandela, *No Easy Walk to Freedom*, ed. Ruth First (London: Heinemann, 1965), 55.

¹⁷⁴ Quoted in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3., 61.

¹⁷⁵ "Police Record of the Congress of the People, Kliptown, Johannesburg," 25-16 June 1955 in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3., 187-8.

clearly conceptualized policy regarding minority groups. Although many critics charged that its second section implied the equal representation of racial groups in state institutions, its wording was notoriously vague—the ANC did not directly address the issue of group rights or communal representation until after the PAC split, when it publicly denied that it advocated minority privileges beyond the legal protection of language and culture.¹⁷⁶ Rather, the Freedom Charter distilled the organizational and (especially) rhetorical tactics of the Congress Alliance: a calculated ambiguity designed to facilitate the greatest possible unity among “democratic forces” by leaving open the possibility of significant guarantees for minorities or a power sharing agreement with the white population. At the same time, the ANC incorporated the Freedom Charter and the Congress of the People into a broader political aesthetics, which emphasized the national unity of South Africans while presenting an image of a nation comprised of four distinct racial groups, each represented by a distinct party within the Congress Alliance.¹⁷⁷ The organizational form of the alliance had, effectively, undergone an apotheosis.

A critique of the Charter written by Ufford Khoruha and Kwame Lekwame, despite its recourse to innuendo and demagoguery, was perhaps the most sophisticated article produced by the Africanists in the 1950s. In the eyes of the Africanists, any vision of a future South Africa that did not explicitly affirm its African character denied the historic reality of European conquest and the socio-economic foundations of African exploitation. Employing ideas and terms culled from the intellectual traditions of their political opponents (Marxism, Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, the Jan Smuts’ preamble to the United Nations Charter), the authors moved beyond earlier Africanist statements, which relied almost exclusively on asserting the principle of African nationalism in their polemics. Frequent reference was made to existing social and economic relations—a clear attempt to refute the arguments of the CPSA using the terminology and concepts of Marxism. Khoruha and Lekwame argued that the “people” of the Charter was an abstraction with no reality in South Africa: the assertion that “South Africa belongs to all

¹⁷⁶ See my discussion below.

¹⁷⁷ Earlier ANC history was then rewritten in accord with this imagery. The first item in the 1958 *ANC Handbook*’s section on program and policy is entitled “A Multi-racial Country.” It read: “The African Nation Congress has always accepted that South Africa is a multi-racial society and has stated its aims a common multi-racial society based upon equality of rights for all national groups and equal respect between them.... the A.N.C. and its co-Congresses stand for a broad and true South Africanism, extending to all irrespective of color.” *African National Congress Handbook*, ANC Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

who live in it”—i.e. both the European occupier and the dispossessed African majority—implicitly denied “the fundamental right of the African people to control their own country.” By merely protesting the unjust and unequal form of government, they continued, the Charter implied “a general acceptance of the existing framework” and avoided the underlying social relationship of oppression and national degradation. Ridiculing the document’s lack of “realism,” the authors asserted that the Charter’s universalistic rhetoric obscured the fundamental antagonism between European and African:

To them master and slave—exploiter and exploited, the oppressor and oppressed, the degrador and the degraded are all EQUALS, to them African Nationals and Alien Nationals—the disposed indigenous peoples and their alien dispossessors are all COUNTRY MEN. For them the tribalist and the nationalist, the Herrenvolkist and the Africanist are all BROTHERS.¹⁷⁸

“The problem of the synthesis of opposites,” they caustically instructed “cannot be resolved by a magic wand.” Although emphasizing that Europeans could remain in South Africa under an African government, Khoruha and Lekwame argued that a transformation must occur in both the material relations of exploitation and the philosophical outlook of the master group. However, they believed the Freedom Charter’s recognition of the place of whites and Indians was premature. Only a government of the African majority would have the moral authority to grant citizenship rights to members of minorities: “For the alien nationals to become African nationals, they must restore the control of the country and be nationalized by them.” Accordingly, the Charter’s acceptance of distinct ethnic and national groups simultaneously denied “the common community of man” and typified the racial arrogance of minority groups whose desire to maintain and develop separate cultures from African represented a refusal to abandon their privileges. The “Herrevolkenist” could become an “Africanist.” He must place the economic interests of the subjected majority above those of his own class interest. Since “the social question is primarily a national question,” political

¹⁷⁸ Ufford Khoruha and Kwame Lekwame [Peter Raboroko and Robert Sobukwe?], “The Kliptown Charter,” *The Africanist* 11, vol.4 (Orlando, June/July 1958).

democracy necessitated a government that would promote the interests of the African majority, organizing and distributing national wealth on an equitable basis among Africans. Only after the destruction of the racial and economic hierarchy between groups, Khoruha and Lekwame intimated, would a relationship of “brotherhood” develop between people as individuals.

As in many Africanist documents, the authors took great pains to emphasize the unity of the human race and their opposition to racial chauvinism in all of its forms. Nevertheless, their argumentation relied on a crude equation of socio-economic relationships with interactions between cohesive racial groups. Witness the genuflection before the *Communist Manifesto* in the passage quoted above. Racially-defined blocs—African, Indian and European—were the protagonists of South African history, their scripts determined by the confluence of material interest and historical origin. The equation of national oppression and class exploitation was likely drawn from the writings of the Communist Party: it played a central role in the schema of “colonialism of a special type.” The authors, however, had deftly inverted this analysis into an *a priori* indictment: white and Indian activists involved in crafting the Charter, as putative members of South Africa’s ruling class, were necessarily defending the racial status quo. Regarding Indians, they wrote: “The elements [at Kliptown] were the Indian Merchant Class who though politically repressed are in fact not in fact not oppressed. They are an exploiting alien group whose material interests are in direct conflict with those of the Indian masses.” Despite recognizing the anomalous situation of the “Indian masses,” this article nevertheless struggled with a paradox at the heart of Africanist politics: the coexistence of militant anti-racism and a worldview constructed through a crude racial typology. In their eyes, this antinomy reflected an objective political dilemma created by the South African situation: the social system oppressed Africans on the basis of a falsely-ascribed racial status and only the oppressed majority, mobilized around the ideals of revolutionary nationalism, could abolish racial domination by overthrowing the “white oppressor.” Rhetorically, the Africanists sought to overcome this contradiction by defining “Africans” on the basis of indigenous status and ideological loyalty rather than ethnicity, culture, or skin color (the founding conference of the PAC in 1959 raised the slogan “Africa for the Africans from Cape to Cairo, from Morocco to

Madagascar!"). But in practice, the Africanists deliberately appealed to the force of popular resentments against whites and Indians.¹⁷⁹

In April of 1959, a section of the Africanists established a new political party, the Pan Africanist Congress. As the PAC managed the transition from an internal faction to an independent party, its rhetorical focus largely shifted from opposing Indian and Communist influence within the ANC to opposing foreign domination of Africa and white supremacy.¹⁸⁰ Building on the earlier tradition of the Youth League's philosophical idealism, the PAC sought to explain its differences with the ANC at the level of fundamental principles and adopted the term "multi-racialism" to describe the ANC's alleged deviation from African nationalism. PAC speakers began to juxtapose "multi-racialism" with "non-racial democracy" and, somewhat later, "non-racialism."¹⁸¹ A.B. Ngcobo explained this position at a Durban meeting several months before the PAC's founding conference: "Multi-racialism is not non-racial democracy. Where we see it practiced as in the CAF [Central African Federation], it means partnership between races as groups.... When imperialist found that it was no longer possible to force people, multi-racialism began. Multi-racialism means equality of groups."¹⁸² The organization's first president, Robert Sobukwe, compared the ANC's policy with the "multi-racial constitution imposed on the African people [of Tanganyika] by imperialist Britain" and argued that it violated "the non-racial democratic principle of 'one man one

¹⁷⁹ Lodge quotes the following statement from by Africanist leader: "The masses do not hate an abstraction like 'oppression' or 'capitalism'.... They make these things concrete and hate the oppressor—in South Africa the White man." See Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 83.

¹⁸⁰ See also Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 313-4.

¹⁸¹ Although I have found a few scattered uses of the term "non-racial" in Congress Alliance speeches before 1958, they were purely descriptive, i.e. they did not refer to a doctrine or outlook. Furthermore, the words "non-racial" and "multi-racial" (with or without the -ism) are absent from the major policy documents of the ANC before the period of exile. The first use of "multi-racialism" that I have found in Lutuli's speeches refers to "an important fact of our situation"—i.e. to the composition of South Africa, not to a doctrine or political policy. See "Freedom in Our Lifetime," presidential address to the 46th annual conference of the African National Congress, Durban, December 12-4, 1958 located at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/speeches/1950s/lutuli58.html> (accessed on 5 July 2009). It appears that "non-racial" nationalism was first opposed to "multi-racialism" in writings of Cape Town intellectuals during debates over the NEUM and Congress Alliance in the late 1950s. The first instance that I have located is in Kenneth Hendrickse, "The Opposition in Congress," *The Citizen*, 4 March 1958 in Allison Drew, *South Africa's Radical Tradition*, vol. 2. However, the opposition between "multi-racialism and "non-racialism" (implying two conflicting doctrines) does not frame the debate over the Congress Alliance's policy until *after* the founding of the PAC. The first use of "non-racialism" that I have located is in an article on the founding of the PAC by Jordan Ngubane, which I will discuss further below. See Jordan K. Ngubane, "Pan-Africanism and the ANC," *Opinion*, 17 April 1959.

¹⁸² Leo Kuper, Report on Meeting Held at Bantu Social Centre on 31st January 1959, Gerharts Papers (A422, Box 3), Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand.

vote.”¹⁸³ The 1959 *Pan-Africanist Manifesto* declared that the African people: “deny the foreigners any right to balkanize or pakistanise their country. To such schemes, programmes or policies, the African people cannot be a party. The African people are neither racists or racialists and they unreservedly condemn all forms of racism, including multi-racialism.”¹⁸⁴ In an interview after the founding conference, Sobukwe told reporters that any person who acknowledged the right of Africans to govern South Africa and showed respect to Africa’s indigenous peoples—in other words, who had assimilated to African society and values—could become citizens in a future South Africa. The PAC would guarantee human rights as individuals, but not “minority rights.”¹⁸⁵

Despite this insistence on the principle of non-racial democracy, the PAC excluded whites and Indians from membership in the new organization.¹⁸⁶ At its founding conference, Sobukwe advocated the inclusion of poor Indians into the PAC based on the class divisions within the Indian population. In his address to the conference, Sobukwe described the Indian minority in the following terms:

Then there is the Indian foreign minority group. This group came to this country not as imperialists or colonialists, but as indentured labourers. In the South African set-up of today, this group is an oppressed minority. But there are some members of the group, the merchant class in particular, who have become tainted with the virus of cultural supremacy and national arrogance. This class identifies itself by and large with the oppressor but, significantly, this is the group which provides the political leadership of the Indian people of South Africa. And all that the politics of this class have meant until now is the preservation and defense of the sectional interests of the merchant class. The down-trodden, poor “stinking coolies” of Natal who, alone, as a result of the pressure of material

¹⁸³ “The State of the Nation,” address by R.M. Sobukwe on National Heroes Day, 2 August 1959 in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 544.

¹⁸⁴ “The 1959 Pan Africanist Manifesto,” in *The Basic Documents of the Pan Africanist Congress* (Lusaka: Secretary, Publicity and Information, Pan Africanist Congress of S.A., 1965), 21-2.

¹⁸⁵ Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 317.

¹⁸⁶ Although most Africanists cadres had long insisted that Coloureds were “Africans,” the PAC excluded them as well until a former Central Committee member of the Communist Party, John Gomas, petitioned for membership. According to Pogund, Sobukwe struggled with the rest of the PAC leadership to accept him and it then took considerable effort to convince the branches. See Pogund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 197.

conditions, can identify themselves with the indigenous African majority in the struggle to overthrow White supremacy, have not yet produced their leadership. We hope they will soon.¹⁸⁷

Sobukwe's appeal failed to convince the assembled delegates.¹⁸⁸ In the conference's aftermath, the ANC renewed its earlier charges that the PAC represented "narrow nationalism" and even "black fascism." Outsiders sympathetic to the new organization, like journalists Benjamin Pogrund and Jordan Ngubane, soon queried the contradiction between the PAC's declared ideological stance and its organization practices.

In an article on the PAC's founding conference, Ngubane observed that there were two schools of thought within the party on the question of minorities: racialists and "non-racialists." Although Ngubane argued that the racialists constituted a minority, he clearly believed they posed a significant danger to the PAC and even the whole of South Africa: "They want no contact between Black and White and reject reason in favour of an emotionalism that will lead to civil war. There is no point in mincing words. Some of the attitudes expressed by the Africanists are bound to produce civil war."¹⁸⁹ Ngubane argued that the majority of the PAC, represented foremost by Robert Sobukwe, believed in non-racial democracy based on the rights of the individual and the elimination of race in political or economic matters. "But they will be hypocritical," he warned, "if they do not face squarely the problem of what to do with the European or Indian who subscribes fully and sincerely to Pan-Africanism and is willing to identify himself with the African." Unless it changed its policy, Ngubane concluded, the PAC risked proving its critics justified in the charge of racialism. Although Pogrund claims that Sobukwe began reconsidering this question shortly afterwards, the PAC's membership policy remained the same up until its banning in 1960 and only changed after its members went into exile.¹⁹⁰ Outside of its leadership, deep currents of anti-

¹⁸⁷ "Inaugural Convention of the PAC, 4-6 April 1959: Opening Address by R. M. Sobukwe," in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 515.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Robert Sobukwe by Gail M. Gerhart, 8-9 August 1970, Gerhart Papers, PAC Interviews, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

¹⁸⁹ Jordan K. Ngubane, "Pan-Africanism and the ANC," *Opinion*, 17 April 1959.

¹⁹⁰ Pogrund, *How Can Man Die Better*, 107. In 1966, Barney Desai and Cardiff Marney released a document in London announcing the dissolution of the Coloured People's Congress that called on "South African Coloureds and Indians numbering two and a half million enslaved People to follow our example by becoming members of the

white and anti-Indian racism continued to exist within the organization.¹⁹¹ Nevertheless, the birth of the PAC and the concept of “non-racialism” had permanently transformed the intellectual terrain of African politics.

Conclusion

Publicly, the ANC derided the significance of the new organization. Rather than engage with the substance of the Africanist faction’s arguments, the ANC had attempted to brand the faction as “racialists” and “anti-Congress” office seekers whose actions (wittingly or not) strengthened the Nationalist regime by dividing the forces of the liberation struggle. The ANC leadership largely pursued the same line of attack following the secession and claimed that a hostile white press exaggerated the strength of the breakaway party. In retrospect, some ANC leaders claimed that the dispute over “multi-racialism” was confused and entirely semantic: the real difference between the ANC and PAC revolved around an “inclusive” versus “exclusive” ideal of nationalism.¹⁹² PAC leaders countered that the Congress Alliance consisted of racially exclusive organizations and the Freedom Charter defended the continued existence of racial divisions within a future South African society.

The PAC split had a far more dramatic impact on the ANC than most accounts suggest. The ANC clarified its position on minority rights immediately following the

dynamic PAC, and for all time bury racial tags.” According to the authors, they had petitioned to join the ANC in 1962, but had been rebuked. See “Statement of the Dissolution of the Coloured People’s Congress,” by Barney Desai and Cardiff Marney, London, March 1966 (abridged) in Tom Karis and Gail Gerhart, eds., *From Protest to Challenge: Nadir and Resurgence, 1964-1979*, vol. 5, *A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882 - 1990* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press), 370-2. According to Dr. Ismail Nagdee, there was a cell of PAC-aligned Indian medical students from South Africa in Karachi, Pakistan, during the 1960s. Several of these doctors returned to South Africa after their studies and consciously worked in the African townships, providing medical aid to the African poor and using their practices to help African activists, particularly in the years following the 1976 Soweto Township uprising. The most well-known of these physicians was Dr. Abubaker “Hurly” Asvat, who was assassinated in his Soweto surgery in 1989. Interview with Dr. Ismail Nagdee, 4 April 2006, Johannesburg.

¹⁹¹PAC leader Peter Molotsi describes the racial attitudes within the PAC in the following terms: “You know at the PAC Convention, and at PAC meetings, you always had this problem. The people from Natal they hated Indians more than whites.... The people from the Cape hated Coloureds, you , the people from the Western Cape, this part. They hated the Coloured people more than they hated the whites. Transvaal-Free State, these didn’t mind. They liked the Coloureds, they liked the Indians, but they had no dealing with the whites, Transvaal-Orange Free State.” Regarding the Natal PAC’s attitude towards Indians, he summarized: “If they do not see themselves as Africans, we shall go out of our way to provide free transport to their port of origin... They will have to become African or quit the fatherland. Quit.” See Peter Molotsi interviewed by Gail Gerhart, 15 and 17 August 1969, Gerhart Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

¹⁹² Karis and Gerhart attribute this position to Joe Mathews and its seems to have been widely shared in the early 1960s. In his autobiography, Lutuli suggests that the difference between the PAC and ANC might be primarily a matter of means rather than their overall vision of a future South Africa (suggesting that he adopted the language of non-racialism in hopes of an eventual political reconciliation). See Lutuli, *Let My People Go*, 187.

PAC's founding conference and, by 1961, adopted the terminology of "non-racialism." In a wide-ranging critique of Sobukwe's address to the PAC's founding conference, Joe Mathews argued that the guarantee of linguistic and cultural freedom was "fundamental in any democratic society," but then sharply differentiated this position from the defense of privileged status as, for example, demanded by minorities in Kenya.¹⁹³ Soon, other ANC leaders would go further. In his 1961 Nobel acceptance speech, Lutuli established a new narrative of ANC history by projecting the language of "non-racial" democracy back to the founding of the organization: "Our vision has always been that of a non-racial democratic South Africa."¹⁹⁴ The following year, he voiced his opposition to group rights in terms identical to Sobukwe: "The question of reserving rights for minorities in a non-racial democracy should not arise. It will be sufficient if human rights are entrenched in the constitution."¹⁹⁵ Mandela also began to use the term "non-racial" during the early 1960s.¹⁹⁶

At the same time, the emergence of the PAC inspired the revival of an African nationalist rhetoric that the Congress Alliance leadership had consciously downplayed throughout most of the 1950s. Pressure to assert a more robust Africanism also came from abroad. The PAC's critiques influenced political leaders throughout the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, who then sharply questioned the prominence of Indians and white in the Congress Alliance. Following his travel to a number of African countries in 1962, Mandela developed a searing reevaluation of the ANC's image and began to argue that the ANC needed to assert a clearer leading position within the alliance, strengthen the participation of Africans at a mass level, and represent itself as "the vanguard of the Pan African movement in South Africa."¹⁹⁷ Although Mandela emphasized that he was not rejecting the correctness of the ANC's overall policy, his new emphasis on African leadership resulted in painful exchanges with Dadoo in London and Lutuli in Natal.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ "Africanism under the Microscope," article by Joe Mathews in *Liberation*, July 1959 in Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, vol. 3, 539.

¹⁹⁴ Albert Lutuli, "Africa and Freedom," in *The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross* (London: The Publicity and Information Bureau, African National Congress, N.D.), 66

¹⁹⁵ "What I Would Do if I were Prime Minister," reprinted from *Ebony*, February 1962 in *The Road to Freedom is Via the Cross*, 77.

¹⁹⁶ "I Am Prepared to Die," excerpt from Courtroom Statement, Rivonia Trial, 20 April 1964 in *Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress*, 119

¹⁹⁷ Lodge, *Mandela*, 100-1; Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*.

¹⁹⁸ Sampson, *Mandela: The Authorized Biography*, 167-8 and 170.

The main elements of Mandela's argument later appeared in the exiled ANC's 1969 *Forward to Freedom*, which heavily stressed the central role of the African masses and advocated national pride, confidence, and assertiveness.¹⁹⁹ In the ensuing decades, the relationship between African nationalism and non-racialism would become a major issue of debate within the liberation struggle—and it remains a widely discussed question in the post-apartheid period.

The events of the year 1960 marked the end of an era: the March 21st massacre of PAC-led demonstrators at Sharpeville, the banning of the ANC and PAC, and the ANC's decision to initiate armed struggle against the South African state. By the mid 1960s, the security police had infiltrated and dismantled the underground organizations of the ANC and PAC and the leadership of both organizations was either in prison or abroad. The state had effectively crushed mass political dissent. As an effort to bring down the Nationalist government or overturn apartheid legislation, the Congress Alliance had decisively failed. It would take a decade of mass struggle and near civil war, accompanied by protracted capital flight, before a section of the Nationalist Party would seriously consider basic democratic reforms at the end of the 1980s. The ANC leadership had vastly overestimated the willingness of a substantial section of the white population to abandon the existing racial order. It had also failed to anticipate—despite abundant warning signs—the way that resentment over the structure of the Congress Alliance would coalesce with growing impatience for radical social transformation among a younger, increasingly bitter generation of Africans. If the PAC's instigation of a direct challenge to the state's authority was both premature and fatally romantic, it was also a direct consequence of the Congress Alliance's failure to produce any significant changes in the political situation governing the lives of Africans.

¹⁹⁹ ANC, *Forward to Freedom: Strategy, Tactics and Programme of the African National Congress, South Africa* (1969).