Class, Consciousness and Organisation: Indian Political Resistance in Durban, South Africa, 1979-1996 by Kumi Naidoo

Abstract

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Resistance to the apartheid system, led by the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies dominated South Africa's political landscape in the 1980s. This study deals with political resistance amongst South Africans of Indian descent in the city of Durban. The variables of race, class, gender, religion and ethnic cleavages delineated the social fabric and political complexities of the city and shaped the contours of resistance.

The apartheid state attempted to co-opt Indians as part of a larger strategy of reform and control. Despite the failure of the state to co-opt the majority of Indians, the state fostered political indifference and fear among Indians, resulting in limited mass resistance. However, the vast majority of Indians broadly rejected apartheid but did not embrace non-racialism. Notwithstanding the growth of a myriad of progressive Indian organisations during the 1980s, solidarity between Indians and Africans did not extend beyond a relatively small band of progressive leaders.

Various objective factors, such as the structural context of Indians and the influence of the media determined the boundaries of resistance. However, various subjective factors, such as the organisational strategy of the dominant resistance organisations, discourses around ethnicity, the question of political leadership, amongst others, combined to restrict the scope and depth of Indian resistance. This study finds the need for a development of an Afrindian identity, which encourages Indians to indigenise themselves to Africa without necessitating a need to negate their historical heritage.

Introduction

CHAPTER ONE: A Conceptual Overview

CHAPTER TWO: Class, Consiousness and Organisation inthe Political Development of Indian South Africans, 1860 - 1979

CHAPTER THREE: The Emergence Of Grassroots Politics, 1979-1981

CHAPTER FOUR: The Revival Of Alliance Politics, 1982-1984

CHAPTER FIVE: The Politics Of Collaboration: The Campaign for Participation In The Tricameral Parliament

CHAPTER SIX: The Politics Of Non-Collaboration: The Campaign To Boycott The Tricameral Elections

CHAPTER SEVEN: Resistance Politics In Retreat: Cablism, The ANC Underground And Gandhi, 1985-1989

CHAPTER EIGHT: Indian Resistance Politics In Transition, 1990-1996

CONCLUSION

Class, Consciousness and Organisation: Introduction

The period from 1979 to 1996 witnessed profound global political change. This transformation in world politics was characterised by the breakdown of socialist states in Eastern Europe and the concomitant cessation of the Cold War; the re-emergence of ethnicity as a defining feature in politics, accompanied by a de-emphasising of class as a social determinant; the ascendancy of the electronic media as a powerful force shaping political attitudes in most countries; and the partial political settlements of various long-standing stalemates in different parts of the world. All of this impacted significantly on both the internal politics of individual nation-states and on international relations. One remarkable transition is that of South Africa. South Africa has been credited, in part, for developing a model for the resolution of political impasses in various global conflicts. Ironically, by the beginning of the 1990s, South Africa exhibited some exceptions from emergent international trends: for example, there were few voices explicitly espousing racism, and while the Soviet Communist Party was banned, the South African Communist Party was legalised and contributed significantly to the negotiations for a new post-apartheid order. If these current world trends continue, the primacy of ethnicity, race and nationalism may dominate both the political and intellectual discourses of the coming century. Yet the re-emergence of class in political praxis as well as in intellectual life should not be discounted. In the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s some academics in South Africa, began the long overdue examination of the location of ethnicity in resistance, and in political life more generally.[1]

The anti-apartheid movements reluctantly began to engage with questions of ethnicity as it became clear that certain constituencies might reject them at the polls. This dissertation argues that the significance of ethnicity must be affirmed in intellectual and political life because, even though it has long been ignored, it remains an on-going feature of socio-political reality. However, it would be inappropriate, particularly for progressive scholars long associated with supporting the emancipatory project against apartheid and economic exploitation in South Africa, to shift from a "class," mantra to one of "ethnicity". The continuing relevance of class, in more subtle and differentiated formations, and as a critical component of consciousness formation and organisational development, calls for equally subtle and analytical modes of examination.[2]

In predicting how the political elite will try to influence the political consciousness of target constituencies in the twenty-first century, we can look at attempts by the previous anti-apartheid resistance movements and the apartheid state to win acceptance for their agendas. Earlier attempts to disaggregate the resistance movements have tended to be either highly generalised overviews or specific to a single township or sub-region, often examining African resistance, which dominated the anti-apartheid struggles. This thesis, in contrast, seeks to understand the relationship and articulation of race, class, ethnicity and gender amongst South Africans of Indian descent. In particular, it looks at how these different variables contributed to, or hampered, the development of political consciousness and organisation. The point of departure is the fact that four and a half decades of apartheid social engineering succeeded in consolidating the social, cultural and political separation of South Africans. The state, sometimes in collusion with capital, tried to ensure that the goals of inter- and intra-community solidarity, for the purpose of resistance, would be frustrated.[3]

To a large extent, this history delineated the limits and possibilities of inter-racial class solidarity and made it difficult to develop a uniform national opposition to apartheid which would have

encompassed all the disenfranchised groups. Various impediments and constraints were experienced by the liberation movements in securing the support and participation of the majority of Indian South Africans in the political struggle. However, several political ambiguities were also evident. The apartheid planners were themselves engaged in a dual strategy of reform and repression. Thus, attempts were made to gain the co-operation of marginalised but minority groups by incorporating them in the apartheid system, while simultaneously excluding the African majority even further. The entry of KwaZulu-Natal into the urban and industrial age was dominated by the growth of Durban, where the majority of Indians lived. From the outset, Durban was linked to the industrial development of the Witwatersrand as it had the nearest harbour, which grew to be the biggest port in Africa. By 1980 a third of the population of the province was living in greater Durban. The proportion of Natal whites in Durban rose from 55% in 1951 to 57% in 1980, and that of Coloureds from 54% to 61%. During the same period the proportion of Natal Indians in the area increased from 55% to 73% following a minor wave of urbanisation - especially from the North Coast to Durban - which peaked during the 1950s. Most dramatic was the increase in the number of Africans in and around the city. Between 1951 and 1980 the African population increased from 8% to approximately 20% of the KwaZulu-Natal total, mainly during the latter half of the period.[4]

This growth rate continued into the 1980s and 1990s, and Durban earned itself the distinction of being one of the fastest growing cities in the world as a result of this massive African migration from the impoverished rural areas and small towns of the province. The Coloured, Indian and White people of Natal are more than 90% urbanised. Their contributions to the growth of Durban's population can only come from natural increase, which for whites was 1.7%, for Coloureds 2.2%, and for Indians 2.4% in 1980. The national Indian population, today numbering almost one million, is youthful and reflects a rapidly declining population growth rate from an annual average of 3.2% in the 1950s to an average of 2.2% in the 1970s. This suggests a stabilisation and a decline in family size as economic conditions improved and the middle-class expanded.[5]

Durban now boasts the largest Indian population outside India, and more than two-thirds of Indian South Africans are resident in the city. By the 1970s the Durban Metropolitan Region encapsulated different local governments within Natal, stretching into the Kwazulu homeland. The apartheid legacy ensures that even today Durban straddles the developed and developing world both administratively, and in the range of problems it faces. The city and its White suburbs are part of the rich first world, KwaZulu and the other Black areas are part of the impoverished third world. The region suffers from typical problems facing industrial cities of the rich countries (pollution, traffic congestion, urban sprawl) as well as those facing third world cities (high population growth rates among the lower-income groups, mushrooming informal settlements, and a lagging supply of physical services). Demographic, historical, economic and political factors combine to distinguish Durban from other urban centers in the country. Its population, by the 1980s, exceeded two million, with Africans constituting 52%, Indians 25%, whites 18% and Coloureds 3%.[6]

Purpose, aims and objectives

The most important political project of the 1980s for the ANC-led resistance movements was to build a non-racial united front against the apartheid state. Hence, any study of a single segment of the society, particularly if it was a racial or ethnic segment, was seen as playing into the hands of the apartheid ideologues.[7]

A 1980s study of the social and cultural location of Indians noted: Many respected members of the Indian community view a work on just this one social segment inappropriate, as it may only highlight the separateness of the community which thereby could be used perversely to justify the dark ideological underpinnings of apartheid.[8]

This dilemma confronted me in selecting a single racial segment for analysis, particularly since I originated from this segment. However, Marks' and Trapido's 1987 study examining the articulation of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa opened up a new space for studies such as this, and served as a source of encouragement in embarking on the present project.[9]

Of specific import to this thesis were these words: Moreover, the salience of 'national' and 'racial' identity for South African state policies and its deliberate manipulation of group differences to prevent interracial class solidarity have shaped the ethnic consciousness of minority groups such as Coloureds and Indians. These groups have in turn constructed their own sense of community, in part by way of response.[11]

This dissertation seeks to understand the extent to which state policies succeeded, and more particularly how the liberation movement attempted to counteract these policies in prosecuting its resistance strategies. More recent justification for this study comes from Freund, when he reasons that Indians "have a perspective on South African society that is different from that of either whites or Africans".[12]

Studies that try to analyse the cultural, social, economic and political life of this component of South African society should lead us to a better understanding of Indians. Moreover, such a perspective "illuminates our knowledge of the whole" of the society.[13]

The purpose of this study is to provide a clear picture of Indian resistance, but not to describe and document the totality of Indian politics in Durban. In using the concept of resistance, I have limited myself to looking at forms of action which fall outside the legally sanctioned outlets of political expression for Indian South Africans. I have not looked in detail at those who chose to "work within the system", and there are few references to the activities of local government politicians or the inner workings of the tricameral parliament. These activities are considered only when they can be seen as relevant to Indian involvement in the liberation struggle. I have concentrated on resistance which directly confronted local, provincial and national authorities and employers around both economic and political demands. Chronologically, the analysis covers the period from 1979 to the local government elections of June 1996. For the bulk of this period the apartheid state attempted to co-opt Indians as part of a larger strategy of reform and control. Despite these processes being inconclusive, the state succeeded in fostering political indifference resulting in limited resistance. However, many Indians possessed a basic anti-apartheid consciousness and a range of progressive Indian organisations emerged or re-emerged during this period, as in the case of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). The NIC, an ally of the African National Congress (ANC), will constitute a central focus of this study. One of the specific aims is to analyse the efforts of the anti-establishment forces to draw an alliance between Indians and the larger anti-apartheid movement. Both the ANC-led opposition and the state were very creative in the 1980s.

Resistance strategies took some cognisance of the fact that Indians occupied a materially privileged position among the three oppressed groups in South Africa. While sections of the resistance movement attached importance to organising Indian opposition, movements such as the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) believed that Indians should not be regarded as Indians at all, but simply as blacks. Thereby differentiated oppression was simply negated as a factor. The state, on the other hand, recognised that material differentiation could lead to political diversity and thus wanted to use this to its advantage. This analysis is located within a more comprehensive explanatory framework of class formation, consciousness change and organisational dynamics. It sets itself several distinct objectives:

first, to explore the extent to which the political realities of Indians were shaped by structural factors; secondly, to examine the impact of the mass media in constructing political realities and influencing consciousness among Indians in the 1980s; thirdly, to analyse the strategies of the principal resistance organisations, and to compare these with the strategies of the state and of Indian collaborators with apartheid; fourthly, to examine how the heterogeneity of Indians in terms of class (and its articulation with questions of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, residential location and age), shaped the construction of political identities; and finally, the study traces the continuities and discontinuities in the historical development of political organisation and consciousness, looking in particular at the presence of Gandhi and India in the political discourses of Indian South Africans. It must also be stressed that this study does not specifically seek to analyse the location of a minority in politics, although it is certainly relevant that Indians are a minority. Nor does the study attempt to develop a detailed analysis of the South African state. The emerging studies of the Indian Diaspora are also excluded. However, in undertaking this study I have given due attention to collaborationist Indian politics, questions of the place and role of ethnic minorities in political life, the nature of the apartheid state, and the political location of Indians within the Diaspora.[14]

I have concluded that while these intellectual explorations have enriched my understanding of the subject, they do not directly assist the aims and objectives outlined above. My research has been motivated by an overriding concern with the question of Indian identity and political consciousness, and with how this has been shaped by resistance politics and apartheid social engineering. The value of localised studies has been highlighted by authors like Solomos and Back, who argue that: Whether we look at contemporary Europe, the United States or South Africa the role of racism in shaping political life is the subject of research and increasingly volatile public political debate. Yet it is also clear that if we are to understand fully how the construction of racialised politics has come about we need more detailed accounts of the processes that have led to the growing politicisation of debates about race in specific socio-political contexts.[15]

Clearly, there is a need for several in-depth studies focusing on specific variables such as race, religion, class, gender and regional breakdowns if the contemporary history of South Africa is to be properly understood, and if social scientists, particularly political scientists, are to be able to predict the future political and developmental challenges facing the country. As mentioned above, South African encouragement for this approach was also forthcoming when this project commenced formally in 1987. Marks and Trapido argued that the turbulence being experienced in South African society at that time made "a study of its racially divided social order and its national and ethnic heterogeneity an urgent intellectual and political task".[16]

They sought to address the issues of ethnic boundary-making and the construction of nationalist ideologies and political consciousness against South Africa's changing political economy and class composition since the era of the mineral discoveries in the late nineteenth century.[17]

This intellectual undertaking countered the prevailing tendency amongst some social scientists at that time who, in their desire to support the broad thrust of the liberation movements, stressed commonalties, cohesion and unity.[18]

Depicting the resistance forces to the apartheid state as homogeneous was flawed both politically and intellectually. This tendency nonetheless had substantial currency within the major elements of the liberation movement, particularly the ANC. While supportive of emancipatory endeavours, the Marks and Trapido study sought not to negate the unity that had been attained by the oppressed, but critically to examine the disunities and fragmentation that existed along racial and ethnic lines in order to understand more clearly the complex social and political processes which were developing. State segregationist policies, which pre-dated apartheid, were predicated on a divide-and-rule

approach, and such a study was extremely important in order to understand how non-racialism or anti-racism would thrive in the last days of the resistance to apartheid and in a democratic South Africa. However, the work of Marks and Trapido had its limitations, and the authors acknowledged these: Given the complexity of political consciousness and community construction in twentieth-century South Africa, it would be impossible for this [study] to provide anything like comprehensive coverage. Nor is it easy to discuss developments in the economy and the state which affected all groups and at the same time to trace their separate trajectories.[19]

This dissertation attempts to build on the work initiated by Marks and Trapido and subsequently continued by Maria Van Diepen and others.[20]

Significant bodies of opinion either presented the apartheid state as an immutable and invincible entity or exaggerated the strength and power of the resistance movements. While exceptional resistance initiatives were waged, the 1980s were also characterised by visible accommodationist and collaborative tendencies within sections of the oppressed majority. The levels of popular support enjoyed by these collaborators varied across racial, class, ethnic and rural-urban divides. But certainly, collaboration resulted in trickle down patronage which could buy compliance and, if necessary, support. During the 1980s relatively few studies attempted to disaggregate the complexity of what may be called the broad resistance to the apartheid power structure, with the notable exception of investigations into dimensions of ideological cleavage.[21]

Methodology

Stages of the study

Different phases of my political involvement and intellectual development have informed this study and reflect the stages of the study itself. I was born and grew up in Chatsworth, Durban, where, like other black South Africans, I attended single race primary and secondary schools which were poorly resourced. A small community of Islamic descendants of Zanzibari slaves lived in Chatsworth,[22]

and I had the rare privilege of attending school with non-Indians who bore an African appearance and culture, although they constituted a minority stream within the national demographic structure. The second phase, which I describe as the phase of political awakening, ran from 1979 to 1987. After serving as a leader of students boycotting classes in the 1980s, I became involved in two civic organisations, the NIC and the UDF. From 1983 onwards, my activism extended beyond Chatsworth and I worked in the Natal Youth Forum, the Amateur Athletics Association of Natal, and the University of Durban-Westville Student Representative Council. As convenor of the Community Services Unit at UDW, I could link student activism, community-based activism and support for the trade union movement. I also joined the ANC underground movement in 1985. I occupied leadership positions in Chatsworth, at the University of Durban-Westville, in the Youth Forum and in the anti-apartheid sports movement. I worked as a rank-and-file activist of the UDF and NIC, and did not hold any official positions until I fled from South Africa after persistent state harassment relating to both my legal and illegal activities in March 1987. During the third phase (1987-1990) I registered formally as a doctoral student at Oxford and undertook theoretical work, newspaper research and the study of secondary source materials. I also spent time as a visiting scholar at Yale University, using their South Africa library collections. I was unable to return home at this time. I undertook a few clandestine tasks for the ANC while in the UK. While abroad, I received a steady stream of correspondence from activists in Durban which helped me to keep abreast of political developments. During the fourth phase (1990-1994) I returned home to undertake field research. Due to a combination of personal reasons and my election as convenor of the first legal ANC branch in Chatsworth, I suspended my studies.[23]

I resumed my youth and civic work, and two local secondary schools (one of which had expelled me for political activism in 1981) elected me as chair of the Parent-Teacher-Student Associations. In 1992 I relocated to Johannesburg to take up an appointment as the Director for Educational Outreach at the SACHED Trust, but I remained an observer of, and regular visitor to Durban. During the elections I served as the Director of Training of Electoral Staff at the Independent Electoral Commission. In the final phase (1995-1996) I was a visiting researcher at the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations at the University of Warwick where I engaged in full-time research and the writing up of this study. Had this study been completed earlier, as originally intended, it might have contributed to the debates and processes around the role of Indians in the transitional process. However, I hope that the benefit of hindsight and the opportunity to conduct important interviews and further research have enabled me to posit key arguments with greater clarity. Furthermore, the intention is to formulate fresh observations and analyses which would have been difficult to achieve as an exiled student. As I am researching a social process in which I was an active participant, discussion is needed to ascertain what methodological issues and problems arise in the dual role of activist and social scientist. This problem of "insiderism" is not new, but it should not be dismissed without sensitive consideration.[24]

The activist as social scientist

By the early 1960s, a restiveness had emerged amongst scholars regarding research inquiry. There was a sense of inadequacy in the nature and directions of social science practice. A feeling emerged "that despite the growth in technical excellence, scientific study was not coming to grips with the social world."[25]

It was in this context that some sociologists explored participant observation as an important feature of social science research. The concept explains why the "human observer of human beings cannot escape" having to participate at some level in the experience and action of those the researcher observes.[26]

Feminist scholarship also raised the issue of the social value of research and contributed a refined understanding of the role of reflexivity in academic endeavour. Reflexivity, Fonow and Cook point out, is the tendency of feminists to reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process.[27]

By the 1980s some activists in South Africa had attempted to extend their political involvement and engage in research and analysis, often drawing on their first-hand experience. This phenomenon was linked to an international trend of broadening access to higher education, a trend that incorporated some black activists and, as happened in earlier times, progressives from middle-class backgrounds. South Africa also experienced an increase in the number of black activists at universities, where some were moving away from the traditional trajectories of medicine, law and teaching, and turning to the social sciences. Several methodological dilemmas confront a study such as this: access to information, writing as an insider, the issue of distance (time and physical), and the question of how personal experience articulates with the imperatives of academic objectivity. Sociologist and feminist Maria Mies, who has combined activism with academia, acknowledges that mere description of the mostly individual experiences does not yield a scientific treatment of a problem. It might be true that activists can get "mired in the describing of experiences."[28]

However, those that use this approach are not simply intellectually lazy. The reason for this may lie in a "superficial, individualistic, and deterministic concept of experiences", a temptation that I have tried to avoid in this study.29 Experience enables us to take real life as the starting point, its subjective concreteness together with its societal entanglements.[30]

The challenge of dealing with this category of experience, or the subjective factor, can enhance intellectual interventions. Mies, however, goes further and maintains that the intention and method of research should be consistent with the political goals of the relevant movement. Moreover, that research should be fully integrated into social and political action for the emancipation of particular constituencies: Participation in a common struggle may reduce distance between the researcher and the researched, opening up the possibility that "knowledge-from-below" can influence the research process. Such activities force the individual to notice what was previously taken for granted. Methodologically, this implies a search for research techniques which take account of and record everyday processes, and which reduce the isolation between research participants.[31]

Mies's claims about the reduction of distance and the recording of everyday processes is relevant to this study, the thrust of which is to locate Indian resistance in a wider framework of opposition to apartheid.[32]

However, this work cannot claim to be fully integrated into the political project of organising resistance amongst Indians. It is hoped, however, that my intimate knowledge of the struggles amongst mainly working-class people in Chatsworth will enrich the investigation and analysis. On the other hand being aware of the potential limitations will, I hope, compensate for familiarity. It is worth remembering the Indian proverb which says that the "eye of the stranger is bigger".[33]

There are several examples of successful combinations of activism and academia. Louise Simmons, an urban studies specialist and a former Hartford City Council person, saw new challenges in the arenas of labour and neighbourhood organising, electoral work and coalition building in the 1980s. Her doctoral thesis that led to Organising in Hard Times: Labour and Neighbourhoods in Hartford, was a contribution to the disciplines of urban studies, labour studies and social work.[34]

This work also provides a deeper personal reflection on her activism and offers an approach which other activists may find helpful. She claims that her personal activism has enhanced her scholarly contributions: I was fortunate to be a part of many activities and to have access to many key actors and organisations. There are few studies that examine critical economic and social phenomena from the perspective of grassroots organising and internal functioning of unions. These stories need to be told both to more deeply understand social change and to allow the organisers and organisations room to analyse their successes and failures.[35]

I agree with Simmons that active participation in organisations and processes is potentially positive and often leads to easier access to participants. Simmons' work offers a relevant comparison since she and I shared a common participation in community-based activism that deals with the issues of race, ethnicity and class in the political mobilisation of the poor. Given my involvement in the student movement in the 1980s, it is helpful to reflect on the example of an American student activist who later became an academic: Todd Gitlin, now Professor of Sociology at Berkeley, focused his doctorate on the student organisation in which he had served as a leader. The thesis was published as The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left.[36]

With Gitlin, I maintain that my first-hand experience "has been first my ally, then my adversary, and finally, I trust, my plain source, impetus, and correction."[37]

I also share with him the following observation: My own memories served as an indispensable source, then, stretched and tempered by such documentary records as exist. [During] my research I studied, assessed, and at times quoted from personal correspondence from that period. I have also cross-checked and interrogated all my sources, aware of the risks involved in relying on retrospective accounts.[38]

Furthermore, I have had to challenge any tendency on my part to be selective when recalling past and present occurrences. This is a problem that confronts both activist and non-activist scholars alike, as social science is not a neutral enterprise. Unlike Gitlin, at the time of writing I continue to share an affinity with, and commitment to, the project in which I was involved, albeit from a greater distance than in the 1980s. However, the temptation to try to provide solutions was laid to rest in the nascent stages of this study. I am mainly concerned with looking back at, trying to make sense of, and seeing possible new directions for, the range of political activities that have been central to my life. But this is not simply a personal enterprise, since I hope that this scholarship will provide a deeper understanding than has hitherto been available of a complex political mobilisation project during a dynamic and fluid period in South Africa's contemporary history. Furthermore, I hope that the 'subjects' of this dissertation will be able to engage, criticise and perhaps endorse some of its findings. A South African example of an activist-scholar is Devan Pillay, the Director of the Social Policy Programme at UDW, who completed his doctoral thesis entitled Trade Unions and Alliance Politics in Cape Town, 1979-85, at the University of Essex in 1990. The thesis explored the relationship between trade unions and community organisations in terms of its discourses and its practices. It drew extensively on his personal involvement in the UDF as an activist from 1983 to 1985. He found that in the political context of the 1980s his "supervisor and the external examiners saw this as a highly positive thing, and never questioned it".[39]

The ongoing debate regarding the role of intellectuals in the political struggle is worth noting. Craig Charney has observed that many intellectual projects analysing social change have resulted in "more collections whose authors are mainly white South African or British men. Most are connected to South Africa's white English-medium universities, or to Oxford or London, and reflect the traditional intellectual dependency of South African social science".[40]

He suggests that the way authors were chosen for such collections brings to mind Claude Rains' order in the final scene of Casablanca: "Round up the usual suspects!".[41]

Moreover, as Ivan Evans has argued: the subordinate and uninfluential role of black intellectuals...[and the fact] that whites dominate the academic process should be regarded not merely as an effect but also as one of the objective mechanisms which sustain racial domination.[42]

Given the scarcity and underdevelopment of human resources among the Black population, the few emerging Black academics came under pressure to deploy their skills to "help the struggle". While academic enterprise was considered a luxury to be enjoyed by only a tiny Black elite, the relative invisibility of the limited number of Black scholars and other "intellectual activists" was also lamented. In the course of the debate, Harold Wolpe observed that even if one accepts the value of the contributions of journalists and other commentators, surely it is obligatory, in the interests of "objectivity", and political balance, that informed analysis from the point of view of the principal organisations should be included in collections aimed at increasing our comprehension of the present situation and of the possibilities of its transformation.[43]

Wolpe refuted the notion that only objective outsiders can add value to the project of deepening our understanding of social change and political developments: It is plausible to suggest that the explanation [for the absence of "intellectual activists" in many social science commentaries on South Africa in the 1980s] lies in some conception of the privileged position of "expert" commentators...[T]he underlying assumption seems to be that the further removed academic writers are from involvement in South African politics, the better equipped they are to analyse the contemporary situation and to consider how it should develop.[45]

The exclusion of 'intellectual activists' might have been the case in certain instances. Yet this debate is a complex one since many would themselves have prioritised activism directly linked with the liberation movement over academic interventions. Conversely, by the 1980s, even conservative scholars would have welcomed any Black presence since this could have enhanced the legitimacy of their work. This concern for an appropriate space for "intellectual activists," while stronger in the 1980s, has now given way to a greater concern that Black intellectuals should take their place in the academic community. For example, Mahmood Mamdani, in exploring the broader complexities of research in a period of transition, has noted the strong hegemony of white researchers on both sides of the political divide (pro- and anti-apartheid).[46]

The concerns of Wolpe and Evans regarding the "reproduction of racial domination in intellectual production" raise issues that are important but not necessarily central to our discussion. What is significant, though, is the space these and other authors sought to secure for activists who, irrespective of race, wished to pursue intellectual work. Bill Freund, in his study of the Indian working-class in Durban, acknowledges that he needed encouragement to see "that the project was worthwhile and that my outsider's perspective contained advantages".[47]

I believe that Freund's awareness of his location vis-à-vis his subject matter, and his willingness to acknowledge that, enhanced his intellectual intervention. He observes that "Indians were inclined not to see their history in South Africa as very important or interesting compared to that of whites or Africans".[48]

The only exceptions to this were studies that looked at Indian political history, particularly during the Gandhian period in South Africa. Part of the hesitation to examine Indian politics during much of the 1980s related to the political context of that decade as outlined above. Timing can be an important ingredient in political science. In South Africa, attempts to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the resistance movement were seen as a potential threat to the movement since a repressive government could draw on these academic insights. The advantage of completing this project now is that there are no serious concerns around 'security issues'. There is also greater space to engage in a critical discourse about the efforts of the liberation movement and the political debate has broadened to allow for discussions around previous 'no-go areas' like ethnicity. Another concern was the problem of access, as dealt with by Raymond Lee. He shows that gaining access in sensitive situations is a difficult enterprise that requires a range of strategies. He establishes the centrality of trust between the researcher and those who are the subject of research.[49]

Being an insider enabled me to gain fairly easy access to activists even during the repressive 1980s, but even as an insider, there was a discernible difference in the quality of interviews conducted after the legalisation of political organisations and the ushering in of a period of liberalisation by the South African state. I have also had to deal with the issue of distance at two levels of analysis: first, in writing about a period that could be considered as too contemporary; and secondly, in writing about processes in which to some extent I actively participated. However, distance is a double-edged sword. Being too close as an insider or being too distant as an outsider can both afflict intellectual work negatively if the social location of the analyst is not recognised and dealt with honestly and rigorously. I have been mindful of this ever since this study began. My role as activist meant that I was unable to return home to conduct research because of harassment from the security police. However, the distance from the turmoil of South African resistance politics did afford me the space to engage with this study. The transition from activist to social scientist is a difficult one, but it is not necessarily an irreversible act. Cornel West has noticed that "the choice of becoming a black intellectual is an act of self-imposed marginality", and one which ensures a peripheral status in, and to, the black community.[50]

This is a risk that I took quite knowingly. The nature of the political process is such that selective criticism usually marginalises some factions. A thorough and rigorous critique of a political process which does not commit itself to any political agenda will usually offend across the political spectrum. I expect this work will be no exception since, with feminist Barbara Smith, I aim "for good intellectual conscience over expeditious achievement of political goals".[51]

The question of subjectivity versus objectivity still requires some attention. Social science cannot ignore the author's subjective dispositions, and scholars must therefore construct standards of objectivity which recognise at the outset that all social analysis commences with the curiosity of a particular individual and takes shape under the guidance of her/his personal and cultural attributes.[52]

As Appleby, Hunt and Jacob argue in Telling the Truth about History: Since all knowledge originates inside human minds and is conveyed through representations of reality, all knowledge is subject-centred and artificial, the very qualities brought into disrespect by an earlier exaltation of that which was objective and natural. Our version of objectivity concedes the impossibility of any research being neutral (that goes for scientists as well) and accepts the fact that knowledge-seeking involves a lively, contentious struggle among diverse groups of truth-seekers. Neither admission undermines the viability of stable bodies of knowledge that can be communicated, built upon, and subjected to testing. These admissions do require a new understanding of objectivity. I accept this understanding of objectivity and have tried to be as self-critical as possible.[53]

It is also the case that insiderism can lead to an excessively critical analysis. The pressure to be objective might lead one to examine weaknesses in processes of which one has been part, and in so doing may not give adequate weight to the strengths. As Mary Hawkesworth has noted, "the point is not to demonstrate the impossibility of objectivity, but rather to illuminate the complexity of attaining it".[54]

By the late 1960s, the myth of a value-free social science was largely discredited.[55]

New thinking emerged which asserted that it was impossible for a social scientist to do research uncontaminated by personal and political allegiances. Furthermore, some argued that no matter what perspective a social scientist adopts, the intervention must be couched either from the standpoint of subordinates or superiors.[56]

We should also note an allied debate, which we will not enter, around what has been termed the "indigenisation of the social sciences" among third world scholars.[57]

This has become known as a process through which a body of cultural and national-specific knowledge can be developed in a particular country. However, the discussion is seldom empirical nor comparative.[58]

It is in this context that we must recognise that South African social science has developed a distinct vocabulary and tools of analysis coupled with a gargantuan collection of acronyms. Appleby et al. argue that they "have been sensitive to the ways in which claims to objectivity have been used to exclude us from full participation in the nation's public life, a fate shared by others of our sex, working-class people, and minorities". They also question "science's claims for disinterested truth and impartial objectivity", and observe that "there is a new breed of philosopher who thinks that everything is relative to where you happen to be standing...your patch of social space".[59]

This study is also more interested in writing "true history than in preserving the truth of science".[60]

If social science can ensure that social enquiry presents a picture of social reality in which the agents or subjects can recognise themselves and their actions, even if they do not entirely agree with the representation, then this does not undermine intellectual quality. It means that social science should endeavour to employ some of the same types of concepts and explanatory patterns that are utilised in any common-sense understanding of society. It does not have to adopt the same particular interpretations and explanations that 'subjects' themselves embrace. However, the "social construction of social reality" can only be enhanced if social fact is a product of the agents' conceptions and 'meanings'.[61]

Hence, as explained above, I will later use a model of consciousness change drawing on local knowledge and paradigms. What, then, of the practical research challenges that face academic insiderism? By the 1980s some sociologists began 'coming home' to do research, and it became necessary to explore ways in which the task of a 'native social scientist' differed from researchers working outside their own culture.60 Drawing extensively on the work of ethnographers John Stephenson, Sue Greer and William Turner, we can generate the following very practical concerns which go beyond general anxieties about objectivity.[62]

Do native social scientists, directly involved in the lives of the subjects being studied, have any special advantages not enjoyed by outsiders in conducting social science research? Conversely, are there disadvantages for native, politically engaged, social scientists that are less likely to be encountered by researchers working in cultures other than their own and not having any link and involvement with their subjects?[63]

Four distinct, but related, groups of questions arise when researching as an insider, particularly in terms of the task of translating observations into data and data into coherent, meaningful analysis. First, is there a special difficulty for social scientists working in their own cultures in recognising patterns into which they are thoroughly acculturated? Are there problems in selecting what to report among all that is observed? Are native social scientists less likely to give full coverage when much of what they see is already known to them? Or is the native social scientist actually more able to attach cultural meaning to events? Secondly, is the experience of the native social scientist different with respect to identifying, and relating to, informants? Are they more or less likely to seek out as informants those who are most similar or familiar to them? Is the activist social scientist more or less likely to cover the full range of potential sources of information? Thirdly, what are the advantages and disadvantages of knowing the culture and community in advance for establishing entry and rapport? What problems and advantages arise as a consequence of occupying familiar roles in the community? Fourthly, what are the potentials for role conflicts and value conflicts for an investigator studying a familiar community? Is sensitivity to ethical issues in the relationship between investigator and community heightened where the culture is known? A related question is whether in such a situation the social scientist is more likely to feel pressed into a participant role. Finally, are there special problems in relating to the community after the research is completed, when the investigator anticipates a continuing relationship and involvement either as a social scientist, friend or neighbour? I do not intend to provide an answer to each of these methodological challenges.

Suffice to say, I have given attention to all of them in the conduct of this study, and in any event it would be unhelpful to attempt to postulate rigid laws. Instead, I endorse the following broad conclusions advanced by Stephenson and Greer. Firstly, a distinction must be made between membership in or knowledge of a cultural system and membership in a concrete functioning social system. The problems faced by the researcher studying a familiar context are intensified when one enters the system from a pre-existing position in relation to specific persons, organisations and other social structures. Secondly, these 'potential problems' only become problems if there is a failure to

exercise vigilance and caution. These 'problems', if acknowledged and dealt with creatively, can be harnessed to considerable advantage. This has obviously been my intention in this study. The third observation is that many of the difficulties underlining these issues and problems, as well as their advantages, also afflict non-activist scholars. The problems are different not in kind but perhaps more in terms of intensity. Both groups of scholars share the dangers of prior judgement, political bias, oversimplification and the "human inability to separate observation from feeling".[64]

I take the risk of contextual familiarity with due caution in the hope that the appropriate analysis can be made and useful insights can be gained.

Finally, of course, I do not seek to suggest that intellectual work by non-activist scholars is of an inferior quality. Nor do I wish to imply that there are no difficulties and challenges in analysing social change as an insider. However, this study has attempted to maintain a high level of methodological rigour, and seeks to apply the conventions of good social science.

This study is not part of the change process in South Africa. It merely seeks to understand that process. If, in the course of interrogation and analysis, useful insights emerge for political praxis for the future then that will be an unintended, albeit desirable, outcome.

No study of this kind could possibly provide solutions to the myriad of challenges that confront the project of building a non-racial and democratic culture in South Africa. Solutions will emerge not from academic research alone, but from the actual political processes at work in the society. However, I do hope that this work will contribute to a deeper understanding and a clearer reflection of the past and the present, and will help to open a small window on the future.

Note on sources

The primary sources were interviews, newspapers, contemporary documents and trial records. Interviews fall into three broad categories: the interviews of other researchers; open-ended interviews conducted by the writer; and informal interviews and discussions conducted through the various stages of study. The informal interviews, which I have indicated by the term "discussion" in footnote referencing, were of great value since informants were more relaxed and anecdotal, and willing to be more critical in their perceptions. However, even in the open-ended interviews subjects displayed a mainly self-critical disposition. I have provided a description of each interviewee in the bibliography and therefore have not included biographical details in the footnotes. As a researcher, I was regarded primarily as a member of the NIC, UDF and ANC, and I knew some of my interviewees well and had worked with, or under them, during various campaigns.

They trusted me and respected my involvement and commitment to these organisations. For a minority of activists there was a dismissive attitude towards such an academic enterprise, which was conceived to be irrelevant, elitist and self-serving. However, where interviews did occur, the quality of the exchanges was good. The political character of my research and its racial concerns (because I was looking specifically at Indian resistance) were a problem for some interviewees. I had informed everyone that my intention was to write a critical study of ANC-aligned interventions amongst Indians in Durban, and they seemed to respond positively to this approach. This was partly because of a growing realisation that the Congress forces were failing to effectively mobilise Indian resistance. Some of my interviewees felt that I had enough knowledge to be able to rectify any inaccuracies, rationalisations or their self-justifications. With all interviewees I stressed the need to avoid transposing their current consciousness on the historical moments being discussed. There was limited difficulty amongst interviewees in understanding this and most were able to conduct themselves in a reasonably balanced manner. Most of the interviews were conducted during two periods of considerable transformation within the NIC and the ANC. The first of these was between

1987 and 1990, a time of intense self-criticism in both organisations. In this period interviews were held outside South Africa. The second period followed the legalisation of the ANC and covered the years 1990 to 1996. It must also be stressed that I gave considerable thought to whom I should formally interview

. I consciously chose not to interview all the leaders of the NIC or collaborationist leaders whose views were easily traced because of the intensive media coverage they received. I was concerned that the thesis should not be slanted too much in favour of the consciousness of the political elite but should attempt to measure the consciousness of Indians more generally. However, I had informal discussions with several leaders, and on these occasions I shared my views, canvassed their opinions and checked data. I have not recorded this information formally in footnote referencing. My interviewees included NIC executive members, ANC parliamentarians, youth, women, civic and sports activists operating mainly at grassroots level either in leadership roles or as rank-and-file members. I also undertook some informal unstructured interviews with a large number of non-activists.

Notably, little attention has been paid to the political opinions of the bulk of working-class and middle-class Indians.[65]

Therefore I was keen in my interviewing not to focus only on leaders. The voices of the working-class, in particular, have not been reflected forcefully enough in attempts to analyse the political realities of Indians. There has been an over reliance on the views of political leaders and the contents of official documents. Therefore, in researching various newspapers I concentrated on letters to the editors and articles about cultural, religious and sporting affairs which reflect more clearly the political perceptions of ordinary Indians. It is true that there are more middle-class correspondents to most newspapers, but since Indians enjoyed the highest level of literacy by the early 1990s, a significant presence of working-class writers could also be found. Newspapers, particularly those that were read by Indians, were given close attention.

In earlier work I examined youth resistance in a comparative perspective, showing how different structural realities confronted by the disenfranchised groups hindered the goal of building non-racial unity.[66]

Youth resistance, which was fairly vibrant in most of Durban's townships and suburbs, offered a good case-study of the difficulties encountered by the resistance movements in building grassroots solidarity and non-racial unity. In this study, while maintaining a comparative eye, I do not investigate in great detail how Indian resistance compared with African and Coloured resistance.

The examination of the continuation of historical themes, processes and approaches within the current political context being studied here led me to spend considerable time looking at some of the most important historical sources. For example, they included the 1956-1961 treason trial since many questions of consciousness, organisation, class and alliance politics formed the subject of that trial.[67]

Given the contemporary nature of this study, however, I have rarely drawn directly on these sources. The presentation of the analysis adopts a micro-periodisation approach based on resistance trends. I was aware that it is much easier to develop periodisation when a longer time-span and national political trends are being examined. Nevertheless, I opted for the present approach, rather than dealing with broad themes or sectors of resistance (such as youth or women), since I wanted to show how Indian periodisation differed from periods of African resistance. The chapter breakdown therefore reflects this approach.

Chapter breakdown

Given the emphasis placed on tracing the continuities and discontinuities with the past, the study commences with a historical overview examining class, consciousness, and organisation in the political development of Indian South Africans. Against this background, chapter two uses the following periodisation: the early years (1860-1914), the accommodationist years (1915-1944), the defiance years (1945-1960), the post-Sharpeville period (1961-1972) and finally, the dominance of the Black Consciousness (BC) years (1973-1979).

The banning of BC-aligned organisations in 1977, coupled with deteriorating living conditions for the working-class, marked a turning point in the resistance to apartheid. Political activists adopted a strategy that placed greater emphasis on organising around "bread and butter" issues and striving for greater grassroots participation. In chapter three, which covers the period 1979-1981, we see how Durban played a pioneering role in this respect and how some of the strongest civic organisations that emerged in this period were located in Indian areas. The 1980 education boycotts, arguably the most extensive popular mobilisation of Indians ever, are also examined. The chapter also focuses on the housing struggles of that period, the 1981 Indian Council elections and the anti-republic day festival campaign.

The period from 1981 to 1984 saw the revival of non-racial alliance politics, facilitated by the formation of two national coalitions: the multi-class, non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) in August 1983 and a blacks-only National Forum a month earlier. Chapter four examines the role of Indian organisations in the formation of the UDF. It also examines the performance of the UDF in the various campaigns, including the million signature campaign (MSC) which took place in the first half of 1984. In the 1980s the MSC was the first nationally coordinated effort designed to engage grassroots activists in a common campaign. The strengths and weaknesses of the UDF in Durban and the specific role Indian organisations played in the city are also analysed. This is an important question since there were accusations that Indian activists dominated the Natal region of the UDF.

Chapters five and six take an in-depth look at the most significant political campaign to be waged amongst Indians during this period, namely that of the tricameral elections. Chapter five examines the campaign for participation in the tricameral parliament and deals with collaborationist politics. It also attempts to analyse the class base of participationists, their organisational strategy, their ideological orientation, and the extent of their success in influencing public opinion. Chapter six scrutinises the campaign for non-participation and analyses the political discourses and the organisational strategies of the non-participationists. There is a critical assessment of the successes and failures of the campaign to discourage Indians from cooperating with the new constitutional order. It is argued that despite the euphoria that followed the low percentage poll in the 1984 election, progressive activists failed to win overall acceptance for their political agenda.

In chapter seven we examine the period from 1985 to 1990, when Indian resistance politics steadily declined. Three major developments are considered: the 1985 'racial' conflict in Inanda, the impact of the state of emergency, and the fragmentation of the NIC as a result of internal conflicts and disagreements with some of their allies in the UDF. The tenuous Indo-African solidarity is explored, and this illustrates more generally the difficulties experienced in promoting joint, united political action across the racial divide. When examining the De Klerk era, attention is paid to the 1988 defiance campaigns, the 1989 tricameral elections, and the events leading to the legalisation of the ANC and other political organisations. There is also an assessment of the shifts in political space and of how resistance organisations adapted to these changes.

The legalisation of the ANC and other political organisations in February 1990 opened up a new era of politics in South Africa. The NIC was faced with the reality that its own privileged legality was now no longer unique. Legalisation challenged the existing practices, modus operandi and the existing political culture of not only the Indian left but of all political players. The uncertainty surrounding the transitional process meant that organisations such as the NIC and the emergent legal ANC would have to evolve more flexible strategies to cope with the political demands that lay ahead. In examining these developments, chapter eight places emphasis on the electoral outcome in both the national elections in April 1994 and the local government elections in June 1996, and provides an overview of the critical years of political change and transition from 1990 to 1996.

In undertaking this study we need a conceptual overview to assist us to analyse how ethnicity, class, race and gender interrelate during the different phases of the period under review. In addition to a general conceptual overview, chapter one provides some definitions and further guidelines that inform this study. It is to this task that we now turn.

End notes:

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CHAPTER ONE: A Conceptual Overview by Kumi Naidoo

The debate as to whether ethnicity is pre-political or implicitly political can go on forever, without necessarily finding resolution, but there must be a new way of representing difference that does not entail the violence of chauvinism or the poverty of structural abstractions which cannot account for experience. Non-racialism...is merely a gesture, a reactive response, and a rhetoric that needs reconstructing. We need a language of politics and society with which to fashion new identities that goes beyond the rhetoric of the 1950s, in which much of our discourse is still frozen. [1]

Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide a conceptual framework for understanding how class, consciousness and organisation interact with each other and collectively determine political outcomes. In the latter part of the 1980s and early 1990s it became commonplace to undermine the relevance of class and accentuate the variables of gender, ethnicity, race and religion. While endorsing the importance of class, I try to avoid class reductionism and to locate gender, race, ethnicity and religion as critical components of a class analysis of modern South Africa. This chapter seeks to provide an understanding of consciousness, class and ethnicity. In examining the salience of ethnic discourses, questions of race, caste, gender, community and structural context are considered. Black Consciousness (BC), non-racialism, pan-Africanism and 'rainbowism' are examined as they constitute the key discourses during the period under review. A brief discussion of how media manufactures and reinforces political identities is also included. This chapter provides a framework within which an analysis of processes, events, discourses and practices is conducted.

Understanding consciousness

The question of what constitutes political consciousness and how consciousness changes has been a preoccupation of the South African left. In the 1950s it was argued that:

the combined realisation of the badness of the old society and the need to change it and create another is referred to as political consciousness, depending on the extent to which subjective factors are linked with context and above all revolutionary activity on the part of the mass of the people, their political consciousness will be heightened and developed. At this stage political consciousness (which is a subjective factor) itself becomes an objective fact which must be taken into account.[2]

Discussions about the nature and content of political consciousness continued to find currency in the 1980s. There were debates about the appropriateness of the term 'conscientise', and whether there should be a linear process that prioritised the need to conscientise, mobilise and then organise the oppressed.[3]

In these debates it was recognised that consciousness, viewed partly as an attitude of mind, must also be treated as an objective factor.[4]

Some activists recognised that the oppressed were products of historical processes which had resulted in blacks carrying a heavy ideological baggage.

Consciousness, viewed within this debate, indicated people's increasing political understanding and their willingness to participate in political action. Political awareness was understood as political knowledge whereas consciousness indicated the commitment to resist the state with a view to transforming existing political and economic realities. Consciousness, therefore, was not considered

as increasing political awareness in itself but instead viewed as applied awareness. To quantify the consciousness of a heterogeneous grouping such as Indian South Africans is difficult since consciousness tends to be uneven, and generalisations are inappropriate. Furthermore, to evaluate the exact way that a particular event or set of events affects consciousness is an elusive enterprise.

In the 1980s, some Durban activists developed informal criteria for determining progressive consciousness. At a basic level these encompassed an anti-apartheid, majority-rule disposition while at the other end of the spectrum it embraced socialism. Four criteria were employed by resistance leaders to assess how consciousness was changing amongst activists and to ascertain whether those active in political work were becoming more committed to the project of fighting apartheid.[5]

These criteria are listed and explained in the following table.

Criteria	Political Knowledge	Political Vision	Political Strategy	Political Commitment
Explanation of Criteria.	Assessing one's understanding of the apartheid system	Assessing one's understanding of the programmes of anti-apartheid organisations, particularly the capacity to articulate a vision of a new society.	Assessing one's understanding of how change was to come about and how political struggle should be waged.	Assessing the extent of one's willingness to participate in the processes of change.

Given the dangers of state repression, various tests of levels of trustworthiness were developed within the resistance movement. One distinction made was that between a "new activist" and an "old organiser". Khetso Gordhan, NIC/ANC activist, offers an example:

This person knows a lot more about theory and this person knows less, this person knows a lot more about socialism and how it happened in other countries, this person knows more about organisation and strategising, this person is always willing to make a commitment and this person is not. By using these criteria you were soon concluding which of the activists had a higher consciousness.[6]

What I propose to do in this thesis is apply these criteria to Indians to assess shifts in consciousness.

In applying these criteria a number of questions need to be addressed. For the *Political Knowledge Criteria* we would need to ask:

- Were large numbers of people beginning to understand the complexities of the apartheid system and how it was sustained?
- Did people recognise that a conscious "divide and rule" policy was being implemented?
- Did they identify their adversary as apartheid, or capitalism, or both?

For the *Political Vision Criteria* we need to consider:

- Were people identifying solutions based on non-racial unity and the need for African majority rule?
- Were they conceptualising a society free from political and economic exploitation?.

The *Political Strategy Criteria* needs to ask:

- Did people believe that change was possible, or did they believe that the government was invincible?
- Were significant numbers of people beginning to identify methods by which the government might be weakened and resistance strengthened?

Finally, for the *Political Commitment Criteria* we ask:

- What was the extent of attendance at mass meetings?
- What was the conduct of people at these mass meetings?
- Was there participation at political demonstrations?
- Did people offer their homes for anti-government discussions?
- Were people joining progressive organisations?
- Were people willing to openly wear political T-shirts or badges that reflected support for political organisations?

If these criteria are linked to other indicators, the model can be strengthened as a tool. The emergence of radical arts and drama and the politicisation of religious, youth and sporting organisations all deserve consideration. By examining these various criteria we hope to be able to discern shifts in political consciousness.

There are inherent difficulties in adopting this approach since the construction of consciousness is not a linear process. It is characterised by fluidity, contradiction, multiplicity and deviation. Consciousness rarely develops uniformly, and there are clearly limitations when attempting to measure consciousness change. In various campaigns it was not easy to trace indices of consciousness change, and often such changes remained hidden and attempts to do so in the 1980s were often unsatisfactory and marked by triumphalism. Even when there was political activity, the question remained: how much real mass participation was there? What were the unarticulated reasons for participating in political activism or abstaining from it? There are also problems in assessing the participation of different classes and class fractions. For example, many middle-class areas had working-class or lower middle-class people who were tenants. These tenants were often tempted to follow their landlord's politics or, if they differed, they had to be discreet.

Consciousness needs to be recognised as valid and relevant, without being rejected as false or reactionary. Given their intermediate structural location in the South African economic and political system, it would have been unrealistic to expect Indians and Coloureds not to have acquiesced in part to the logic of apartheid. Many Indians embraced neutrality from 1961, when the state recognised Indians as part of the permanent population and confirmed their citizenship, albeit in second-class terms. In this thesis a number of forces influencing consciousness formation, primarily the state's direct propaganda machinery, the discourse and activities of resistance organisations, and the alternative media are also examined. It is maintained that class, race, ethnicity, gender and age are important factors determining political consciousness.

Class and consciousness

There were clear class differences with respect to the four sets of criteria. If we take the Indian working-class, their political knowledge, political strategy and political vision might have been limited. However, when mobilised around issues that directly affected them, such as rents, their children's education or even workplace issues, political commitment was in evidence, although it certainly had several limitations and hardly ever came close to that of the African working-class. Working-class people had little economic and social space in which to be politically committed and had limited access to resources, but had a sufficient stake in the system to be wary of losing their relative economic and political privilege. The bourgeoisie had excellent political knowledge, political vision and had a sense of political strategy, but beyond a cheque book contribution to the struggle they had little political commitment. The middle-class, the most stratified of the three broad class categories, tended to have political knowledge, vision and strategy, and those who embraced a progressive perspective were politically committed. In sociological terms, this group had the space, economically and socially, to engage in the pursuit of resistance. Yet, this category was also the most contradictory, for while there existed a progressive segment, there was also a larger and stronger collaborative strand. In the main, those who abstained from direct political involvement were unsupportive of the collaborative strand and would have been broadly sympathetic with the progressives.

Religion and consciousness

Religion impacts strongly on Indian political consciousness. Among South African Indians there are three major religions: Hinduism, Islam and Christianity (see table 1.1).[7]

In 1980 it was found that all religious groups held a negative assessment of politics and politicians.[8]

Many believed that religion was effective in a psychological sense, giving them peace of mind, alleviating their sorrow and giving them a feeling of security. A large number eschewed political involvement in favour of active religious commitment. However, one study found that there were Indians who felt "that people can do without religion if they are emotionally strong".[9]

Only a few people believed that religion inhibits progress or causes injustice, or that it had lost its relevance in modern times.[10]

A process of homogenisation was identified, and it was predicted that in a highly secularised society this process would gain greater strength. It was expected that religious attitudes would become less provincial and show more understanding of other points of view. There was a willingness to be tolerant despite the evangelistic approaches of some churches.[11]

Differences within various religions had an effect on patterns of relations and attitudes towards society as a whole. Hinduism struggled to retain a unified front in the face of differences between those of north and south Indian descent (see table 1.2).[12]

The darker-skinned south Indians sometimes felt discriminated against by north Indians. These attitudes, though they were not articulated publicly, appear to have been felt amongst Hindus and became obstacles to developing common political approaches[13]

Gender and consciousness

Indian women, like their African, Coloured and white counterparts, have remained largely on the periphery of mainstream resistance. In order to understand political consciousness in its entirety, there is a need to consider how it is gendered. There appear to be two main strands of thought about the place of women in political movements. It is claimed that ethnicity does not have as strong an

appeal for women as it does for men, and that women's ethnic consciousness is primarily the product of "culture brokering" by male ideologues, politicians and intellectuals.[14]

As Cheryl Walker points out, both these arguments overlook women's active engagement with ethnicity, while the second view affirms that women are incapable of more creative roles in the construction of ethnic identity.[15]

Political identity and consciousness draw on cultural practices, and are not neutral in their intersection with gender: "maleness and femaleness are part of one's earliest socialisation within any cultural group".[16]

A child becomes more aware of his or her gender earlier than ethnicity and/or class situation.[17]

In the course of resistance in the 1980s, some women embraced newer ideologies which posed a challenge to their traditional roles. Others defended traditional roles ascribed by "Indian culture" to women and eschewed political involvement, while still others endeavoured to strike a balance between political activism and fulfilling certain traditional expectations.

Structure and consciousness

By the 1980s structural factors were significantly influencing consciousness formation. Like others, I have attempted to marry the insights gained from the new social history and the structural Marxism of the 1970s by looking at both individual agency and social constraints.[18]

Indians comprised the most urbanised of the four major population groups. A large section of the Indian working-class resided a considerable distance from their places of work and spent a large proportion of their time and money travelling. This of course limited the amount of space working-class people had for community activities and political involvement. However, the socio-economic living conditions for the working-class was ripe for civic mobilisation. Township residents could take either options of ownership or rental tenancies in houses or flats. They could also purchase land on which to erect their own dwellings. An important complaint, however, was that only a few could afford to build the houses they desired, and that they were forced into living in monotonous housing schemes.[19]

Low-income groups were faced with the problems of environmental deprivation which led to maladjustments and which had a definite effect on their political and social dispositions. Before 1980 Indian communities had little choice or say in matters that affected them. By ignoring the joint family structure of Indians in the provision of housing, deep-seated and centuries-old aspects of communal well-being were affected.[20]

Understanding class

When this study commenced in 1987, studies of social change and resistance often hinged on the concept of class. However there was little clarity about the definition of class or how it should be conceptualised.[21]

In recent times a strong challenge to class theory has been mounted and comes from three major strands as summarised by Harriet Bradley. First, the fact that class structure has changed so rapidly and significantly means that previous frameworks for conceptualising class have limited relevance. Secondly, theorists of race, ethnicity and gender argue that traditional class theory cannot explain gender and ethnic differentiation. What has emerged is a new orthodoxy arguing that social process is not reducible to class, and that race, class and gender need to be considered both independently and in articulation with each other. Thirdly, the postmodernist perspective derides 'grand narratives' and rejects traditional forms of theory, particularly those of Marx, as invalid. As noted by Bradley,

postmodernism has shifted attention to the diversity of social experience in a way that endorses new forms of pluralism through its focus on the specific positions of different groups. At its most extreme, however, this can undermine all notions of collectivities such as classes, thereby promoting a view of society as made up of atomised, disconnected individuals.[22]

Postmodernism also seeks to 'deconstruct' linguistic categories such as 'class' or 'women'. Deconstructionists consider such collective terms as socially constructed concepts which have no necessary 'real' basis beyond our use of them. It is argued that such conceptual categories impose limits on people who have to accede to polarised identities such as those of 'man' or 'woman'.[23]

Put differently, postmodernist praxis focuses on social meanings and the way they are embodied in cultures rather than focusing on social structures.

Therefore, postmodernists continue to study class, gender and ethnicity, albeit mainly as discourses and social constructs. Postmodern approaches sit uncomfortably with the study of material factors and strongly oppose 'foundationalist' accounts of society (those accounts which identify the underlying structures upon which society is established and which generate specific patterns of social behaviour).[24]

The recognition of diversity and difference which postmodernism establishes does not necessarily negate the possibility or the need for exploring complex commonalties. Global capitalism and its technological and information infrastructure suggest that new commonalties might yet emerge. The information superhighway has evinced even e-mail ethnicities, and this suggests that the construction of identities will be a complex process in the twenty-first century. However, class is critical in seeking to understand the nature and impact of diversity, whether it be race, gender, religion, age or language, and in understanding the basis of commonalties. Karl Marx's classic framework posited the idea of class polarisation, whereas newer approaches stress the multiplication of class groupings and the evolution of new types of class cleavages. Classes are seen as fragmenting rather than polarising.[25]

Furthermore, political sociology, instead of focusing on the single category 'race', now correctly concerns itself with the interconnecting categories of ethnicity, nationality, culture and religion and the way these serve to fragment a country's population.[26]

The location of adults in modern society is now determined more than ever before by economic realities. Most people in employment spend a substantial part of their lives interacting with the economic system as workers, irrespective of other social variables. Common experiences as workers notwithstanding, the differential reward systems for different types of labour have the potential to override, or at the very least complement, other processes of identity formation. Marx failed to predict the complex distinctiveness of the class formation processes. He predicted that the working-class would include everyone except a few remaining capitalists, though he recognized that "other classes would continue to litter the historical stage".[27]

The lower middle-class, particularly shopkeepers, artisans, and peasants, would fight to save their own existence: "They are therefore not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history".[28]

He was also deeply sceptical of the lumpenproletariat, concerned that they might initially be "swept into the movement by a proletarian revolution", but were more likely to become "a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue".[29]

However, notwithstanding the deviations of social change from classical Marxism, it is still a salient fact that class location and class structure affect political consciousness, organisation and

mobilisation in a fundamental way. What Marx and others did not adequately concede is that other social variables have the capacity to override class if creatively mobilised and if the objective basis is present. Clearly, classes are shaped by a combination of changing economic and social circumstances, while class consciousness is further shaped by the dominant ideas of a particular epoch, institutions and patterns of societal interactions.[30]

There is little contestation that ideas and beliefs grow out of and reflect existing society rather than lead an independent life. However, what is important for this thesis is that many Indian people seemingly dedicated their lives to ideas which had very little to do directly with surrounding circumstances, such as egalitarianism, non-racialism, justice and freedom. Furthermore, the Marxist law of increasing misery for the proletariat does break down to some extent with respect to the Indian working-class, which experienced improvements in its social existence during the period under review. Notwithstanding these limitations the problem is not that class and class differentiation are less important than other social determinants. What is of importance is that class is more complex, with greater fragmentation within traditional class bands, while it has also become depoliticised. The international decline of the status of 'communism in practice' has also contributed to this decline of class as a useful tool to understand current social realities.[31]

The Indian working-class experienced a clash between its class interests and ethnic identities and this has important implications for political consciousness. In examining the articulation of race, class and ethnicity, the question of leadership and the relationship between leaders and the masses is of significance. Radical leadership has come from both the middle-class and the working-class. During the period under review a segment of the middle-class responded with sympathy to, or actively supported, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC). The Indian commercial bourgeoisie, in the meantime, mainly collaborated with government structures despite being deliberately hemmed in by white political and economic interests.[32]

The Indian Congresses did not align themselves to a specific class interest. Organising on a race instead of class basis, the NIC and TIC found disfavour and generated anxieties amongst other left groupings, and from within their own support base. Some argued that despite the Group Areas Act fostering racial division, this was insufficient reason to organise ethnically. Indians have competing class interests, and the overwhelming majority are working-class. Critics of the NIC pointed out that there was no vacuum in non-ethnic political activity and regarded the NIC as petty-bourgeois and as actually having those interests at heart. The potential for having a divisive and debilitating effect on class struggle was present since there was no attempt at a class analysis in their public stance. However, the NIC argued for non-class based organising on the grounds that one should not confuse goals and methods. The logic was that the physical separation of oppressed people had imposed limitations, but the NIC was not an ethnic body per se, and would not encourage ethnic separateness. It is true that the NIC did not conjure up images in the public perception of ethnicism. However, the failure to advocate for a distinct class or ethnic politics created the potential for the NIC to become alienated from its intended support base. More Africans than Indians supported the NIC[33]

since the outcomes of a successful liberation struggle would be explicitly in the interests of Africans, whereas the situation of Indians looked less clear. Throughout the 1970s and for most of the 1980s a controversy between radicals and liberals, which started out as a disagreement about whether 'race' or 'class' was the determining factor in South African history, expanded and solidified into a theoretical and methodological question which imposed a functionalist and reductionist perspective on social analysis.[34]

Deborah Posel argued that "the very terms in which the 'race-class' debate was set up precluded a different mode of enquiry, and was oriented by a different question, which did not seek a uniform

ranking of one variable over another, but rather their concrete interrelationships, in the ways in which racial cleavages and practices themselves structure class relations".[35]

The inappropriateness of an attitude of 'either race or class' approach in a narrow prescriptive manner had begun to change by the early 1980s. These academic debates were directly informed by, and also directly informed, the debates within the resistance movement. However, Belinda Bozzoli wrote that reality:

does not fit into the interpretive straitjackets demanded by specific political movements, and one of the purposes of the researcher must be to reflect the ambiguities that reality contains...Thus while the trade unionist might wish 'class' to be the fundamental category within which all explanation should fit, and the nationalist might want 'race' or 'internal colonialism' to prevail as the major category, in truth...the realities of South African history were never clear-cut enough for either of these frameworks to hold true for all situations over the whole of the past.[36]

Class nor the supposed alternatives to it are timeless. As Bozzoli added:

To a historical materialist these, and all similar concepts, are to be understood as historical and social categories rather than reified universals. At some historical moments social groups may well appear to be driven by ideological forces, or cultural ones, which have come to gain a certain relative autonomy; and at others, the crude realities of economic necessity and process seem to prevail. And at all times we need to be alert to the interplay between these dimensions rather than regarding them as polar opposites.[37]

While Bozzoli and others of the radical school were sensitive to the interplay between class, gender and race, little attention was paid to ethnicity. However, it is fair to say that by the late 1980s, many analyses began to reflect an aversion towards rigid forms of social classification. Instead, studies commonly portrayed 'communities' as fluid, emergent, fragile and historically hybrid. Class concepts were used with a consciousness of their ambiguity and the blurred nature of their boundaries.[38]

This subtle and qualified deployment of class analysis ascribed to ideology an important function in shaping and determining historical action and political behaviour.[39]

Understanding ethnicity

The intensification of religious and ethnic identities elsewhere in the world during the 1980s and 1990s had been used to justify giving ethnicity a clear primacy, or at least an appropriate space, in analysing South African society.[40]

Much of this work has been helpful in illuminating the forces at work in various communities. Yet there is a major difference in South Africa compared with, Eastern European, where ethnicity was often actively down-played, while in South Africa, even before apartheid, the institutionalisation of ethnicity and race ran deep. Separate development had two distinct characteristics. One was the very wide and pervasive socio-economic and power inequality between whites and blacks, and within the black section of the population, which it helped to establish and maintain. The second major aspect was the official attempts to promote and develop the greatest degree of political autonomy and integration for whites while seeking to heighten fragmentation with respect to the rest of the population.[41]

After an extensive period of ethnic domination by the white racial oligarchy, the intricate ethnic engineering set the limits and possibilities for non-racial alliances. Thus the question of the

persistence of ethnicity in a period of substantive political change is of considerable interest, given the ascendancy of ethnicity in the international environment at this time.[42]

Paul Gilroy has argued that the ethnic tendency is a serious problem in the ascendant anti-political configuration which dominates much contemporary scholarship. There appears to be no escape from the hermeneutic claims of ethnicity and nationality, "only an argument over the precise ethnic recipe involved in being able to walk that walk and talk that talk".[43]

The appeal of nationality and ethnicity corresponds to actual political choices and to the broader field of political struggle. "Yielding to them", suggests Gilroy, "makes the world a simpler place", though this drive towards simplicity should be distrusted.[44]

The left in South Africa, in its attempt not to concede any space to apartheid logic, largely negated the existence of ethnicity as a factor in progressive politics during the 1980s. In a volte face, however, some sections of the left, following the unbanning of previously illegal political organisations, and in the light of the explosion of ethnic enmities in the former Yugoslavia, sought hastily to embrace ethnicity as a defining feature for the future of South African politics.[45]

A common-sense belief in the existence of 'races' was understandably widespread, even if in some cases this was merely the categorisation of physical differences. More often though it was accepted that these physical differences were linked to cultural and other differences. The notion of race is arrived at by selecting physical features as a means of classification, and selecting from the range of differences in these physical features to signify supposed difference between people. These 'races' are then given distinct cultural characteristics. As Maré points out, when social relations have been structured in such a way to define different social collectivities, racialisation has occurred, and the attribution to these groups of any undesirable characteristics is racism. This idea of 'race', then, is very different from that of ethnicity. Ethnic groups can exist in the racialised category, but although it is probable that all members of an ethnic group will belong to a racialised category, it is not essential.[46]

The left often cast ethnicity as simply part of the policy of 'divide and rule'employed by the apartheid state, as was the case with the colonial powers of the past. Ethnic theories appeared to have taken racial theories and linked these closely to questions of 'nation' and 'nationalism'. The word 'nation' or 'national group', argued AZAPO, was very dangerous since it enforced separatism, preventing the various oppressed groups from organising themselves together to overthrow the oppressive political systems. Racial group ideas, it was held, strengthened the position of the middle-classes and paved the way for separatist struggles in which the idea of a single nation was vital, because it represented the interests of the working-class.[47]

South Africa provides a fascinating example for ethnic studies, given the ethnic engineering undertaken by the apartheid state, and there is an assumption that intense ethnic identity will prevail. It is argued that ethnicity comprises one among a number of important identity-shaping variables which include class, religion, age, residential area, gender and cultural-linguistic associations. Gellner and others have suggested that ethnicity is not a given, but a construct of the state itself.[48]

It is precisely because ethnicity was so integrally interwoven with apartheid that a strong anti-ethnic strain developed both within the resistance movement and in academia in South Africa. Undeniably social distance and structural separation were powerfully enforced by the apartheid state. Bogardus defines social distance as "the degree of sympathetic understanding that exists between a person and a person, a person and a group, or a group and a group."[49]

Given the limited interactions that the Group Areas Act imposed, it is not surprising that the social distance not only between blacks and whites but also between Indians, Africans and Coloureds was significant.

The separation of Indian from African over the decades has encouraged a xenophobic minority syndrome based on some aspects of Indian reality.[50]

The construction of this identity was promoted by the GAA and the broader system of apartheid, so much so that Indian reality was such that ordinary Indians could arise from their Chatsworth home, send their children to an Indian school, travel on a bus owned and driven by Indians, buy a lunch time meal of Indian curry from an Indian owned take-away, consult Indian doctors at the R.K.Khan Hospital, be represented by an Indian attorney, pray, play, shop amongst Indians, be protected by Indian policemen and sleep to the tune of an Indian radio station.[51]

However, Indian ethnocentrism lacked a common territory, language or religion, and Indian ethnic identity was characterised by several strands of thought and practice. For example, as will be illustrated in chapters three to six, the growth of Indian resistance between 1979 and 1984 spawned a distinct activist sub-culture. To counteract this strand, by the early 1980s the state aggressively sponsored 'Indian culture'. Indian languages were offered at schools and pupils were even given a half day off in mourning for Indira Gandhi's death.[52]

Both the state and the resistance movement recognised that youth could play a significant role in shaping political consciousness, particularly in the working-class townships. Youth displayed a relative dominance in resistance across the racial divide, and youth resistance grew rapidly in the 1980s, developing a high degree of organisational and strategic sophistication. The socialisation processes implemented by National Party rule were a powerful determinant of the nature of the youth experience in general and their resistance initiatives in particular. It was claimed that in the social struggles of the 1980s, youth "were both the motor of the rebellion, and its outriders".[53]

The dominant trends in youth activism were characterised by a complex mixture of political maturity, passionate commitment and sometimes misdirected militancy.[54]

The specific location of the younger generation, their active and passive assimilation or rejection of the norms, ideals and values of apartheid society, and their quest to relate to broader social processes that take place around them are important for understanding the process of political socialisation.[55]

A sociologist specialising in youth movements has observed: Although youth is universal as a definite stage in life, its social status has a concrete historical and class nature and depends on the social system, culture, socialisation processes and mechanisms intrinsic to a given society as a whole, and also on the concrete class and stratum to which this or that young person belongs.[56]

Much that has been written about South African youth in the 1980s suggests that they constituted some kind of monolithic block. As a result, inadequate attention has been accorded to the more subtle and complex forces affecting this section of the populace.[57]

In liberal media usage, 'youth' tended to signify anyone who engaged in 'unrest', was younger than thirty, and unemployed.[58]

Failure to disaggregate youth into its various components resulted in unproductive generalisations. In attempting to understand Indian resistance during the period under discussion, I have tried to avoid the homogenisation of both Indian and other South African youth.

The daily life of Indians allowed for minimal contact with African people. The racially divided education system perpetuated isolation. While it was the objective of younger progressive activists,

building non-racial unity was difficult for the older generation who believed that Africans were anti-Indian. Conservative elements capitalised on this perception to destabilise the project of building African-Indian solidarity, a project that was in any case an elusive enterprise:

The endemic poverty of the African people, especially in Natal where the vast majority of Indians live, makes the contrast starker given the relative economic advance of the Indian people over the past two decades. The relationship between Indians and Africans is confined to largely master/domestic servant, boss/worker, supervisor/underling, shopkeeper/consumer. The way many Indians relate to Africans at a personal level helps to fan the hostility.[59]

This was further exacerbated by Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi, periodically brandishing the spectre of the 1949 riots in order to breed fear and dissuade Indians from embracing the Congress movement. Karrim observes that the spontaneous reaction of Indians was to withdraw into their purdah and sleep with the devil they knew, and suggests that Indian ethnocentrism and anti-Indianism are two sides of the same coin since they feed on each other.[60]

Compared to their counterparts in other parts of Africa, South African Indians display distinct differences in their socio-cultural make-up. It is only Mauritius that shares a history of indentured labour. There were fundamental differences in the class structure of other Indians in Africa, who tended to be predominantly from the merchant class. Furthermore, in South Africa a significant number of Indian migrants had come from south India, whereas elsewhere in Africa they were mainly north Indians. As Karrim suggests, strictly speaking it is incorrect to regard their culture as 'Indian' since it has adapted to local conditions and transformed itself substantially. If anything it is a distinctly Indian South African culture.[61]

The caste system that prevailed in India could not be transported to Natal with the indentured Indians. This system relied on various social and economic prescriptions, not least the division of labour.[62]

It is this system that changed radically in the process of migration, whereby many of the migrants sailed to Natal with strangers and became friends on the voyage. These relationships often cut across caste barriers. High caste migrants lost caste simply by crossing the ocean as a result of the practicalities of boat life. On arrival, segregation did not return and caste distinctions served more as social customs.[63]

Work in Natal was largely agricultural and tended to destroy any differentiation since people of different castes did the same jobs, worked in the same gangs and were paid the same rates.[64]

The political system of the estate was further detrimental to the caste system. Decisions made by white managers had to be obeyed by all labourers, and the management were not keen to have a secondary social system which could upset their power structure. Once indenture was completed, the caste system did not return.[65]

By the 1980s, marriages across caste and religious lines (though Muslims were the most unlikely to marry out) became increasingly common with most people having no sense of their caste location. Many marriages were also based on personal choice and romantic love, while caste status gradually made way for class status. However, those of Gujerati merchant class origin were most likely to adhere to caste conventions. The legacy of caste, however, continued to leave its mark with even the leadership of the NIC in the 1980s reflecting a disproportionately high presence of those of upper caste origins. The joint family system had also weakened considerably by the 1980s. Nuclear families were increasing and this process was boosted by economic changes that led to the erosion of the extended family system.[66]

The depiction of Indians as a homogenous community was commonplace amongst the Indian left as well as the right. The apartheid state also constructed Indians as a single community. In so doing it ignored the linguistic, religious, class dimensions and history of regional heterogeneity of South African Indians. Fatima Meer has observed that Indian South Africans' feeling of common identity was to an important extent thrust upon them by their very precarious position as a minority. Surrounding non-Indians saw them as a single political and status entity....Yet, despite their integration into a community, the dependants of the three streams of immigrants from Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, continue to maintain, to some considerable extent, the cultural differences that marked them in India, and are thereby divided into a number of sub-groups, most conspicuously recognisable by language and religion.[67]

The notion of 'community' was thus made synonymous with 'ethnic group' and generally appeared in NIC rhetoric, often as the 'Indian people' or the 'Indian community'. While fighting for non-racialism, the NIC retained the tag 'Indian' in the organisation's name and provoked strong criticism from those who had anxieties about homogenising Indians. The retention of 'Indian' demonstrated that the NIC conceived of the disenfranchised groups of South Africa as being racially segmented, while the presentation of its history expressed the notion of community as being a homogenised whole. "Community" has to be regarded in the context of the specific situation referred to, as in the Indian sense it could denote the ethnic group "Indian" or residential or geographic constituencies, and questions could be asked over its relevance to members. Alternatively, the NIC argued for the ability of the 'community' to conjure up a broader conception of unity that cut across ethnic boundaries, and appeal to 'the community' may well have provided cohesion across racial lines.[68]

The relationship between ethnicity and gender is under-researched and under-theorised. Different roles are attributed to men and women through socialisation, and it is necessary to consider which characteristics are applied to men and women in an ethnic group, whether these characteristics be "warrior", "primary care giver" or "mother of the nation". Ethnic social identities are inscribed with gender roles, and so the mobilisation of an ethnic group in a political struggle is never a gender neutral affair. This matter is further complicated by the fact that male presentation of ethnicity assumes that these gender roles are accepted, and often ethnicity is described entirely from a male perspective. The family is a strong force in ethnic mobilisation, reinforcing not only authority but also gender distinctions. It is an element that binds the ethnic group, and thus a greater understanding of gender is a pressing requirement if one is to understand political mobilisation comprehensively.[69]

Indian women, I will argue, had the potential to enter, and did get involved in, various political, union and civic struggles during this period. However, to a large extent their location within the struggle was mainly as mothers and wives and hardly ever as independent agents in their own right. While there were strong progressive feminists amongst Indians, they were not able to have an impact amongst Indians themselves. The impact was felt more within the non-racial structures of the resistance movement. In any event, the contending ideologies and political discourses of the left were intense and we must therefore give this issue further attention.

Indian identity and political discourses

Black Consciousness

Black Consciousness (BC) succeeded in the 1970s in developing a definition of blackness that included all "non-whites". However, in its application there were many doubts amongst Indians about its efficacy and some Indians feared the black power slogans, considering them as alienating. This was despite the fact that some of the high profile leaders of the BCM were Indians. Generally,

those supporting 'blackness' as an all inclusive rubric of all 'non-white' South Africans were unable to win mass support for the identity and politics they were advocating.

Several tenets of BC philosophy gained acceptance, even within those groups which were avowedly Charterist, and many of their actions can be attributed to a BC orientation. BC leader Saths Cooper argued that the language of BC was used by supporters of UDF-aligned organisations in the 1980s, and drew attention to the use of "system", which connotes the wider repressive and ideological apparatuses of the state; "collaborator", which was effectively used to marginalise and isolate individuals who were deemed to be working for or assisting the state by a whole range of actions. Others included "conscientise", which depicted the process involved in making people aware of the unjust political situation that they were in, and also encouraged them to commit themselves to working towards ending that social condition; a phrase about being either "part of the problem or part of the solution" was used repeatedly in the 1980s to summarise the view that there was no political middle ground in South Africa but that polarisation was inevitable.[70]

The retention of certain slogans and ideas that were prevalent in the BC-era in the 1970s is no surprise given that many of the participants in the UDF and other Charterist organisations either had their schooling in the BCM or were supportive of BCM endeavours during that period. Cooper has argued that the significance of BC in the 1980s must not be measured in terms of the number of BC organisations or their numerical strength but in terms of their ideological influence.[71]

Since Indians were dominant in both the BCM and Congress, why then did most Indians not embrace a black identity?"

Non-racialism

During the 1980s, when demands for the dismantling of apartheid were articulated, the word 'non-racialism' was heard repeatedly.[72]

However, it is wrong to claim that non-racialism constituted an unbroken thread in resistance discourse and practice in South Africa.[73]

Rather it formed part of the vision of a future, free SA and it was used to mobilise people. However, non-racialism did, hold out the hope that a new democratic state would not tolerate race as a public and legal criterion of exclusion.[74]

Non-racialism's dominance as a resistance ideology ensured that it was regarded as a sufficient basis for a politics of identity, without giving recognition to the power of ethnic identities, both popular and legitimate, as well as imposed and illegitimate.[75]

Ethnicity, with all its shortcomings, was clearly not going to disappear with the demise of apartheid. As Chetty noted, "to rely on such a hope is not better than imagining, as modernisation theorists did, that ethnicity and race would become irrelevant with the inexorable march of progress".[76]

Within resistance circles there was no serious introspection as to what non-racialism really meant, what its building blocks were or how it would be built in the future. There was, we might say, an intuition about what non-racialism was, a wisdom conveyed osmotically to new activists, and a statement of rejection of the racism of apartheid. By the early 1990s non-racialism had attracted greater criticism. Kierin O'Malley dismisses it as a "fuzzy notion", while Neville Alexander suggested that it is "the founding myth of the new South African nation."[77]

Shula Marks engaged with the question of whether non-racialism suggests a boundary-less society and concludes that this was not the intention. She notes that there was a recognition, albeit mainly at

leadership level, that the non-racial democratic South Africa "will have to defend people's rights to be the same and their right to be different".[78]

Indians probably embraced non-racialism more easily than BC since it was vague enough for people to interpret its content in a comfortable way. There was the space to create, recreate, imagine and re-imagine different identities. Non-racialism was read by Indians mainly as an anti-apartheid ideology which did not recognise racial discrimination.

Pan-Africanism

During this period the Pan-Africanists insisted that white supremacy had to be destroyed if apartheid was to end. For them, part of this process included destroying the idea that blacks could not govern themselves, and that it was acceptable to have white leadership as long as it was "left" or liberal. While standing on this principle, they recruited Indians and some white militants to join their ranks.[79]

There was significantly less support for Africanist ideals amongst Indians since "African" was constituted both by the state and by various sections of the resistance as an identity of those persons who were historically indigenous to South Africa. For most of the 1980s, not only was Pan-Africanism weak during the overall national resistance discourse, it was even weaker amongst Indians.

However, since the democratic elections in 1994, there has been an ascendancy of Africanist ideals even within the ANC. The first formal sign of the ANC's new approach to South African identity, and specifically the articulation of Africanness, came at the adoption of the new Constitution in June 1996. Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, described no less than 15 South African identities and bound them into a single African identity. His speech was punctuated by the statement "I am an African", and prompted a response from Clarence Makwetu, the PAC President, that he was glad that at last the whole country was embracing Pan-Africanism since all the other party leaders, including the NP's F.W.de Klerk, proclaimed their Africanness. At present South Africa is witnessing the reconstruction of an African identity. The four-nation theory (African, Indian, Coloured and white) embraced by the ANC and its allies is now under considerable strain. This new development poses specific challenges to Indians and begs the question of just how African South Africa's Indians are? While the Coloured component of the population is an "indigenous" creation, and Afrikaners have largely indigenised themselves, what can be said of Indians?

Rainbowism

The political liberalisation process created space for a new construct to emerge, that of the rainbow nation. In 1991 Archbishop Desmond Tutu said to a congregation: "Look at your hands - different colours representing different people, you are the rainbow people of God".[80]

He went on to proclaim that: "They tried to make us one colour; purple.[81]

We say we are the rainbow people! We are the new people of the new South Africa."[82]

This first reference to rainbowism rapidly gained currency amongst many advocates of reconciliation both within and outside of the ANC. There is presently a wide, uncritical, usage of the rainbow nation as a nation building discourse.[83]

Even avowedly progressive movements, such as the National Literacy Co-operation, the umbrella body for voluntary organisations working in adult literacy, endorsed a conference theme in 1995 which asked the question: Can the rainbow nation win if 15 million South Africans cannot read and

write? However, rainbowism has recently been assaulted from both left and right. Ashwin Desai, for example, has contended that the rainbow nation project reinforces ethnicity. He observes that:

the particular form that South Africa's democratisation of its political system has taken has allowed the different racial flowers to blossom. So the image associated with the settlement is not allowing a new identity to be re-imagined. The vast differences in wealth and lifestyle within the Indian community are glossed over as we dig deeper into our invented past for a cultural homogeneity that the Afrikaner, and before them the English, tried to obliterate. Gandhi is trotted out as the traditional leader who represented all Indians, as an example to which we might return.[84]

Conservative Indian politicians such as Amichand Rajbansi suggest that present day South Africa is a 'zebra nation' rather than a rainbow nation, a nation that has space for black (meaning Africans) and white, but not for Indians and Coloureds. Some Indians and Coloureds have stated that under apartheid they were not white enough, but that in the democratised South Africa they are not black enough. Some AZAPO and PAC activists also argue that the Mandela government has prioritised reconciliation too highly and that redress is not given enough credence. They also point out that there is no black in the rainbow.[85]

In the first two and a half years of majority government, non-racism, equality, integration and the rainbow nation have been energetically proclaimed by the ANC. However, the ANC is finding it more difficult than it had imagined to convert all South Africans "to true non-racialism and it has been forced to accept that ethnic identities" are part of the current South African reality, and part of its troubling inheritance.[86]

Rainbowism is an extension of non-racialism and is aimed at those who were not part of the project to build "a non-racial, unitary and democratic South Africa", but who want to be part of (or whom the state would like to accommodate and include in), the post-apartheid social arrangements. Like non-racialism, however, rainbowism evades definition. Unlike Desai, notwithstanding the apparent fuzziness of rainbowism, a project that seeks to transcend the ethnic and racial divisions institutionalised by apartheid should not be dismissed too easily. Rainbowism and non-racialism both need to be given content, and can potentially be cast as conceptual categories that promote new identities and encourage non-ethnic alliances and interaction. Within the discourse of non-racialism and rainbowism there is a potential space for a new class and gender politics to emerge.

The mass media and the construction of compliance

By the 1980s, the overwhelming influence which the mass media exerted on political systems was clearly evident. In the western democracies a tiny business elite had used the media to sell its values and perspectives to the bulk of society. As with any successful propaganda programme, the selling of sectional interests was never overt.[87]

The mass media, as a system for communicating messages, symbols and images seeks to inculcate values, beliefs and codes of behaviour that are intended to integrate citizens into the institutional structures of society. As the gap between rich and poor widens on a global scale, and conflicts of class interest fester, to fulfil the goal of "integration" requires a coherent political approach and a systematic propaganda system to back it.[88]

In apartheid South Africa racial oligarchic interests became synonymous with national interests, freedom of the individual and private enterprise. The power of the media has been well documented in various studies.[89]

Chomsky and Herman have shown that the image that the media is cantankerous, obstinate and ubiquitous in its pursuit of truth is a fallacy.[90]

In reality, an underlying elite consensus tends to structure all facets of information dissemination.

We need to refute the neutrality of the media even when direct controls are not evident. As Herman and Chomsky observe:

the powerful are able to fix the premises of discourse, to decide what the general populace is allowed to see, hear, and think about, and to "manage" public opinion by regular propaganda campaigns, the standard view of how the system works is at serious odds with reality.[91]

Walter Lippmann, writing in the 1920s, pointed to the critical importance of propaganda in the "manufacture of consent" and claimed that propaganda had become "a regular organ of popular government," and was increasing in sophistication and significance.[92]

While some still argue the democratic notion that the media is independent and committed to reporting the truth, this was clearly not applicable in South Africa, particularly during the apartheid era. Not only did the state control the powerful electronic media via the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), it also constrained the commercial print media. While there is substantial evidence of self-censorship, there were clear attempts by the state to constrain the parameters of reporting by the print media with regard to resistance activities. Under various state of emergencies declared in the 1980s, draconian media restrictions were deployed to prohibit the reporting of atrocities by the state apparatus. There is little doubt that the state had prioritised the ideological war via the media and in fact intensified its usage and deployment in the 1980s as its reform intervention intensified.[93]

While the control of the SABC by the state security council was well known, the state also had a strategy of placing journalists in commercial newspapers under cover to spike stories of a sensitive nature.[94]

The mass media in South Africa under apartheid was an effective and powerful ideological institution that carried out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalised assumptions, self-censorship, and with some overt coercion. This propaganda system had become even more efficient during the 1980s and 1990s with the expansion of television and the range of restrictive legislation and direct intervention by the South African state. During the period of transition the ANC attempted to level the present playing field but could not guarantee for itself the same extent of media control and influence that the NP enjoyed. The consequences of decades of state propaganda form part of the situation that this thesis seeks to assess. However, the system was never an immutable and fully coherent monolith. A small independent press that struggled against many odds to survive was part of the response, as were weak and largely ineffective attempts to penetrate the English language print media.

Conclusion

This study asserts that class has been, is and will continue to be, an important and sometimes central factor in developing political consciousness and political organisation. Furthermore, it will be suggested that identities are not conveniently constructed by the ruling class alone but by a range of articulating agencies. The world we live in today is complex, fluid and multifarious, and a multiplicity of factors evoke various identities at different moments in history. However, these identities do not automatically lead to political action or inaction.

In using class as a key analytical category to understand Indian resistance politics, we consider the variables of ethnicity, gender, race, age, religion, socio-linguistic identity and residential location. Analysis will be informed by the above conceptual overview throughout this dissertation. However, this chapter is not intended to rein in and restrict discussion of the events and processes that

constitute this study. Instead, it is intended to provide a broad sense of the key conceptual understandings that underpin the analysis. Definitions and identities are fluid during the period under review and what follows will reflect that fact.

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CHAPTER TWO: Class, Consiousness and Organisation inthe Political Development of Indian South Africans, 1860 - 1979

The tragedy of the Indians' fight for freedom in South Africa lies in the fact that the leadership has always been in the hands of those who represented the merchants and traders, while the poor Indians, workers and peasants, though they have always suffered most in the struggle, have never been able to achieve leadership. The bourgeois leaders of the Indian community have been prepared to call in the assistance of the Indian workers and peasants. But in the end they have always compromised with the white imperialists. They have failed to take up the fight for the demands of the workers and peasants. In particular they have prevented the oppressed Indian masses of poor people from making common cause with the Zulus and other oppressed native people in South Africa.

Black Man's History Series, Umsebenzi, 3/8/1939.

Introduction

The complex and diverse history of Indians in South Africa is covered in detail elsewhere.[1]

This chapter seeks to provide a broad historical sketch of the political development of Indian South Africans from their arrival in Natal in 1860 to 1979, with a primary focus on the resistance initiatives of Indians in Durban. In so doing, it assesses the role of class, consciousness and organisational form in the political development of a particular segment of South Africa's black population. Since its inception, organised Indian politics has been characterised by a complex mixture of accommodation with, and resistance to, the political status quo.[2]

Most of the existing literature suggests that historically the Indians made a significant contribution to the struggle against white minority rule in South Africa. Evidence to support this claim is often seen in terms of the passive resistance (PR) campaigns of 1907, 1913, and 1946, and Indian involvement in the Defiance campaign and the Congress of the People. However, this overview attempts to clarify some of the weaknesses and difficulties experienced during the various resistance initiatives leading up to the 1980s. In setting the scene for the rest of the study, the chapter is divided into two broad sections, covering firstly political organisation from 1860 to 1960, and secondly the post-Sharpeville years from 1961 to 1979.

Early political organisation 1860-1960

The early years, 1860-1944

Indians were introduced into the body politic and the economy of Natal as indentured labourers between 1860 and 1911, and were differentially incorporated into a subordinate socio-economic position as dependent bonded labour. Marks and Trapido record that:

The majority of Indians were Hindu from South India who worked on the sugar plantations and coal mines in Natal. This migration was paralleled by a smaller number of largely Gujerati Muslim merchants and traders, who initially attempted to achieve political acceptance at the expense of poorer Indians. Their identity as a community was forged in the face of bitter discrimination and the constantly reiterated demand from white politicians that they be repatriated to India.[3]

Following the end of their five-year indenture contracts, over 52 per cent of these labour migrants opted to remain in Natal.[4]

Indians were differentiated along lines of class, religion, kinship and language from the time they first arrived as "passenger" Indians. The class composition became more complex as indentured labourers acquired the status of "free" Indians. Mainly through trade and enterprise, a small number of Indians established themselves as an urban middle-class. As Thiara notes, both occupational and economic activities and the residential settlement of Indians were determined by the macro infrastructure and the nature of their mode of entry into South African society. While indentured Indians generally became rural labourers and independent farmers, passenger Indians made up the commercial middle-class.[5]

Large numbers were also employed in the hotel trade and in work for the Durban municipality. Indians in Natal occupied an intermediary position between white settlers and the majority African population, which was manipulated by the colonial establishment from the inception of migration and settlement.[6]

The economic success of Indians as well as their numerical growth aroused fears of "swamping", which manifested itself in white anti-Indianism and led to a number of discriminatory measures being passed by the Natal government.

The internal makeup of Indians as well as their structural location and positioning in relation to other groups, were crucial in determining early organised political responses. Swan illustrates how between 1893 and 1914 Indian politics were "crucially shaped by the social and economic stratification of the Indian population".[7]

However, as has been argued by many, the heterogeneity among Indians was generally not reflected in national political organisation during this time. Most political studies, with a few exceptions focus exclusively on Gandhi and include little reference either to the inherent differences, other leaders or the masses of the people.[8]

In this way Indians, constructed as a homogeneous group, have been depicted as the "done to rather than the doers".[9]

Indeed, action by indentured workers on the estates, albeit spontaneous and individualistic, preceded organised political action but has attracted little academic attention. The fact that indentured workers lacked the resources needed to initiate organisation, whereas traders were able to invest money and energy in political organisation, played a key role in shaping the contours and emphasis of Indian political organisation.[10]

Differing interests and the various divisions among Indian workers and traders, and between traders themselves, have been highlighted by Ginwala.[11]

The "diversity of Indian politics", which were far from general, unified, or homogenous, has also been emphasised by Pahad.[12]

Essentially the Indian political community comprised only the highest strata of the population: merchants, petty traders and western-educated white collar workers. Moreover, the political community was predominantly male, and to date little attention has been given to the historic role of Indian women in political struggles. Inevitably, the ideological basis of their politics was consistent with maintaining a relatively privileged position in the economic hierarchy, and at no time did Indian politics during the earlier period seek a radical transformation of the social order. They emphasised their difference and a belonging to India, and, while stressing the need to present a united front,

Indian organisations remained exclusive, seeing the struggle of African and Coloured people as essentially separate. While there is a need to critically examine the form and content of Indian politics during this time, it is also important to be vigilant against the danger of "presentism", that is of measuring something that happened over a century ago with a yardstick of the present.[13]

As argued by some, it is important to contextualise Indian political activity historically and locate it within the wider South African context, particularly in relation to what was happening among other organisations, such as the African National Congress (ANC), which were also facing similar issues of philosophy and leadership.[14]

Organised Indian political expression in Natal did not owe its origins to Gandhi: it pre-dated his arrival in South Africa by several years. Gandhi was inducted into merchant politics as a hired representative at a time when there was an urgent need for a full-time organiser. His legal training, fluency in Gujerati and English, and ideological compatibility with the merchants rendered him particularly suitable for the task.[15]

The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and later the Transvaal British Indian Association (TBIA), formed in 1894 after Gandhi's arrival, were the direct descendants of the pre-Gandhian Indian Committee set up to campaign against discriminatory measures. Both the NIC and TBIA sought to protect established Indian commercial interests by means of polite constitutional protest. The only discernible new element in Indian politics between 1893 and 1906 was the more careful planning which derived from the use of a full-time organiser.[16]

The membership of the NIC consisted exclusively of trader Indians, since the majority of Indians could not afford the annual subscription fee of three pounds, and at the same time, meetings of the organisation were conducted in Gujerati, a language spoken by the minority trader class. While other organisations were established during this period, such as the Natal Indian Educational Association (which aimed at English-speaking free Indians), and the Natal Indian Patriotic Union (which sought to identify with the workers), they were generally "elite-based" and failed to undermine the hegemony of the NIC.[17]

Seven years after the formation of the NIC, Gandhi established the Indian Opinion, the first Indian newspaper in South Africa. This signalled a significant development for the NIC as the paper effectively became an organ for the party and sought to inform both the national and international community of events in South Africa. Although influential, given the levels of literacy at that time, the impact of the newspaper on the indentured community was bound to be limited. Nevertheless, it is likely, given the novelty of the newspaper and the desire of people to acquire news of both India and the conditions of Indians in Natal, that stories covered were spread by word of mouth.

While the first PR campaign organised by Gandhi was restricted to the Transvaal and focused on trader concerns, there was a subsequent widening of issues in the second campaign which concluded in 1913. The emergence of an upwardly mobile strata drawn from the indentured community, accompanied by a shift in Gandhi's outlook and fading support from the traders, resulted in the three pound tax - one of the most profound grievances of Natal Indian workers - being pushed high on the agenda in 1913. Historian Jay Naidoo offers a likely reason why this took place: The three pound tax had no place in the struggle before 1913 because the problems of indentured labourers, the ex-indentured labourers and the tax, were, as far as principle was concerned, peripheral to India's relations with Britain. To Gandhi…, the tax was not an empire issue...He appealed to the Indian miners of Newcastle to come out on strike not because they had been abused and exploited...but because India's honour had been put at stake.[18]

The 1913 strike, regarded as a watershed in the history of resistance by Indian workers, involved thousands of workers across the country. The three pound tax, which drove ex-indentured workers into further indenture contracts, and extreme labour conditions led many to participate in the strike. As a result workers had to endure increased brutality from the state and from sugar barons, resulting in the injury and death of many, including women and children. Women participated generally in Gandhi's early experiments in non-violent resistance, and they played a prominent role in 1913 as they travelled from the Transvaal to Natal, going from mine to mine appealing to Indians to cease work. The campaign achieved two of its objectives: the abolition of the three pound tax and the recognition of traditional Indian marriages. The historic Smuts-Gandhi Agreement and passage of the Indian Relief Act in 1914 were further outcomes, the latter being vigorously opposed by groups of Indians who argued that Gandhi had accepted the principle of repatriation.[19]

At the time of Gandhi's departure, Indians continued to be deeply divided, and their political organisation was influenced by identification with India, class and religious affiliation as well as racially separate community spaces. However, despite these differences, Indians were "drawn together" as a result of racist exclusionary measures. Despite provincial differences, in 1920 the South African Indian Congress was formed to represent a single voice of the Indians in national and international forums.[20]

During this time the South African Indian question was also moved to the Imperial Conference, and in 1927 the appointment of an Indian Agent in South Africa who mediated all dialogue with the government further reinforced the separation of the Indian question from wider black concerns.

Like the provincial organisations, the South African Indian Congress was dominated by a trading elite, and the concerns of this section of the community were reflected in the organisational ideology, based on "methods of gaining and maintaining the goodwill of those in power. Characterised by negotiations, deputations, petitions, conferences and discussions, the underlying strategy was one of gradualism, bargaining and compromise".[21]

Despite attempts to present a united voice and project a collective "Indianness", disunity and differences were highlighted, especially over the 1927 Cape Town Agreement and the 1932 Colonising Scheme. The South African Indian Congress was accused of representing only wealthy interests and marginalising issues that affected the poorer working-class Indians. From the early 1930s, a period of intense anti-Indian legislation, Indian political activity was energised by the formation of organisations which sought to challenge the hegemony of the Congresses resulting in the fragmentation of Indian political organisation. While an organisation such as the Colonial Born and Settlers Indian Association (CBSIA), formed in 1933, attempted to voice the interests of South African-born Indians of indentured origin, it proved ultimately to be no more effective than its predecessor in terms of strategy and tactics.

India played a critical role in uniting Indian political organisation during this period of contestation of the NIC. The Government of India, which continued to support the Congresses, effected a merger of the CBSIA and the NIC by exerting pressure through its Agent General, resulting in the formation of the Natal Indian Association (NIA) in 1939. A small group of moderates who resisted the merger continued to operate under the banner of the NIC.[22]

Throughout this period, Indian political organisation remained separate and autonomous from that of other oppressed groups. However, while Indians adopted a posture of racial superiority over Africans, it is also important to take cognisance of developments within African mobilisation at a time when African people themselves were struggling to reinstate themselves in a restructured and industrialising society. It was not until the 1940s, when a new generation of educated radicals began

to stress class and racial unity as a goal, that the contours of Indian political organisation began to change.

The defiance years, 1945-1960

The urban experience spawned a working-class which embraced strike action to improve its position as well as a younger and more radical professional leadership, with a wider outlook, which contested the narrow notion of community. This led to the rise of radicalism which, however, was to prove difficult to sustain while race and ethnicity remained the paramount identities.[23]

Increased industrialisation and urbanisation in the post-war period created both opportunities and the structural context which allowed Indian trade unionism and political organisation to grow and become radicalised. The employment of Indians changed drastically between 1939 and 1946, and of the total Indian population, 72.8% lived in urban areas by 1946.[24]

Since the 1930s trade unionists and younger political leaders, many of whom had working-class origins and were members of the Communist Party, had sought to challenge the moderate NIC leadership. The emergence of a new leadership coincided with a heightened consciousness among workers, who embraced trade unions as a means of seeking redress at a time of adverse economic conditions. As pointed out by Vahed, the organisation of workers in a range of employment sectors, including railways, mines and sugar, was widespread, so that between 1934 and 1945 a total of 43 unions with Indian membership were registered in Durban and 16,617 Indians were registered members by 1943.[25]

Moreover, Indian workers were involved in 46 strikes in Durban between 1937 and 1942, the most famous among them being at the Durban Falkirk factory.[26]

While strike action involved both African and Indian workers, the practice by white employers of replacing Indian workers with Africans served to alienate Indians from union activity. According to Vahed, Whereas prior to the 1930s they were engaged primarily against white racism, the African presence after this time added a new dimension as Indians were sandwiched between white racism and the attempts of Africans to carve a niche in the racialised urban economy. Indian monopoly was threatened in areas that they had once dominated. They became disenchanted with unions, were averse to strike action and sought to protect particular industries for their employment...Radicalism declined as workers became conservative and passive. The failure of non-racial unionism resulted in many of the radical leaders turning to nationalist politics which, in turn, promoted a racial and ethnic resistance identity.[27]

At a national level, the emergent "radical" Indian leaders, who drew largely on the support of Indian trade unions, presented a challenge to the older moderate leadership of Indian political organisations, as agitation over Indian "penetration" into white areas led to plans for further restrictive measures. Differences over strategy finally caused fragmentation, with radicals finally gaining ascendancy in 1945 and calling for both a PR campaign and closer co-operation with 'non-white' political organisations. It was by retaining links with India and greatly heeding the advice of Gandhi that, during the war years, radicals made the greatest impact on Indian politics, especially with their anti-war policy and a boycott of a government Commission set up to investigate Indian "penetration".[28]

While the strategy of PR provided continuity between earlier and post-war Indian politics, in the latter period it held the potential for more militant forms of struggle. The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill (Ghetto Act) of 1945 provoked the first major post-war PR campaign since the departure of Gandhi. During the two years of the campaign, a total of 2,000 resisters were imprisoned.[29]

While the campaign was seen as a "symbolic struggle to awaken all the oppressed people of South Africa and bring about a situation of togetherness", issues affecting African people were hardly raised.[30]

However, the campaign resulted in raising the membership of Indian political organisations so that in June 1947 the NIC had 34 branches with a total membership of 34,875.[31]

These developments coincided with Indian independence; indeed Indian nationalism had a strong ideological influence on the radical Indian leadership who had more contact with India than Africans. The level of organisation reflected by the frequency of propaganda production - in the form of the news-sheet Flash - is noteworthy. The participation of women, especially in their humiliation at the hands of "white thugs", was given great prominence.[32]

Although there was a clear shift in the consciousness of both leaders and workers accompanied by an attempt to develop cross-racial unity, race and ethnicity remained strong organising principles for Indian political organisation. The following statement, appearing in Flash, is one example of the way "Indianness" was evoked during the campaign:

It is for us as true sons and daughters of Mother India to follow in their footsteps and vindicate the honour of our community and our motherland. As a true Indian, you must become a passive resistance volunteer in order to protect the honour and dignity of our people.[33]

Despite attempts to solidify African-Indian unity through the Dadoo-Xuma-Naicker Pact of 1947, this goal remained unfulfilled, especially as the events of the 1949 Durban riots further exacerbated the separation between African and Indian people. While the riots will not be discussed in detail, it is important to record that they constitute one of the most powerful social events in the history of Indian South Africans, and their legacy still endures to the present.[34]

The late 1940s and early 1950s, a time of increased discrimination and the entrenchment of racial separation, were also marked by the heightened political resistance of inter-racial alliances of the oppressed groups. In 1948 the NP declared its commitment to the policy of separation between white and non-white racial groups. The NIC understood the NP policy as follows:

The Party holds the view that Indians are a foreign and out-landish element which is unassimilable. They can never become part of the country and they must therefore be treated as an immigrant community. The Nationalists accept as a basis of their policy the repatriation of as many Indians as possible. There needs to be a separation between Europeans and Indians in every sphere, as well as between Indians and other indigenous non-European groups.[35]

The early years of Nationalist rule were marked by a heightened experience of racial oppression by all black groups. The Group Areas Act (GAA) of 1950, which sought to systematise segregation and which became the cornerstone of apartheid, had a particularly vicious impact on Indians. Under the GAA, the government had absolute power to reallocate land according to race, and any group residing in an otherwise declared area was resettled. Since Indians, prevented from inter-provincial movement, were largely concentrated in Natal, where they had substantial property holdings, they were the group most severely and disproportionately affected by the Act.[36]

Plans announced by the Durban City Council in 1952 involved the displacement of a total of 3,100 whites, 55,000 Indians and 80,000 Africans.[37]

The GAA thus physically symbolised racial separation and inequality as well as the fragmentation of blacks into separate and mutually exclusive communities.

The apartheid plan was unfolded in a period when political co-operation between Indians and Africans came to fruition. The Indian Congresses, together with the ANC, were at the forefront of these struggles, which were waged through a mixture of strikes, school and consumer boycotts and PR campaigns. However, as ANC leader Z.K. Matthews observed, the attempts at unity had "not run a smooth course".[38]

He was also at pains to illustrate that the adoption of PR techniques, while inspired by Gandhi, did not mean that "Indians...are teaching Africans."[39]

Matthews, like other ANC leaders, was concerned that unity would be "frustrated by the dangling of faint hopes [that would include] better support of Indian and Coloured education".[40]

Also, Chief Albert Luthuli, in his presidential address in October 1953 to the Natal ANC raised concerns regarding perceptions of Indians amongst Africans:

I have deliberately referred to the need for a multi-racial democratic front because there is much confusion on this subject in Natal, especially as regards our co-operation with Indians. Some in Natal are being misguided by the Indian bogey. This is being fanned by Nationalist propaganda. Africans must get it into their heads that the stumbling block to their progress are the many discriminatory laws made by a white parliament...why hate the recipient and not blame the giver for not giving Africans those rights and privileges. Even numerically the Indian can never be a danger to South Africa. It is only white propaganda that makes the Indian appear a mortal danger.[41]

When the Defiance Campaign was launched in 1952, resulting in 8,557 arrests by 1954, the membership of the ANC was greatly boosted and the formation of the Congress Alliance, in the face of planned separation measures, was a major symbolic breakthrough for opposition movements.[42]

Indian participation, particularly in the aftermath of the 1949 riots, was largely limited. These nascent attempts at non-racial unity were met with severe state repression and the arrest of 156 leaders whose trial continued until 1961, when they were finally freed.[43]

Following the formation of Umkhonto We Sizwe in 1961, mass arrests, detentions and bannings forced the ANC into exile, and the entire executive of the Indian Congresses was banned, rendering these organisations non-existent, posing new dilemmas for Indian political organisation.

The Post-Sharpeville years 1961-1979

From Sharpeville to Durban, 1961-1972

The banning of the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) following the Sharpeville uprising decimated resistance and led to a political vacuum. 1961 also signalled a decisive shift in the NP government's view of Indians in South Africa, since they were finally accepted as permanent citizens of the Republic. The Minister of the Interior made a statement in Parliament on 16 May 1961 introducing a new policy regarding Indian South Africans - a policy which was implemented during the 1960s and which put an end to the insecurity that had marked the first century of Indian settlement in the country.[44]

Following the position of outright antagonism, as witnessed in the political statements of NP politicians during the 1948 election, the seeds of incorporation began to be sewn in a systematic way when the NP set in motion plans to bring Indians and Coloureds into its fold and finally end the discourse of repatriation. The failure of the South African Indian Congress to mobilise effectively against the establishment of the Department of Indian Affairs in 1961 paved the way for the government to progress its plans for developing separate structures for Indians, particularly the National Indian Council, later to become the South African Indian Council (SAIC), as well as for the

entry of more conservative Indians into the public space. These structures included only nominated members and had purely consultative and advisory powers until 1974, when the SAIC became a partly elected body. They were part of the plan to ensure that Indian demands were channelled through the government and were to be used for the implementation of a separate development policy.[45]

As pointed out by Desai, the majority of participants in the South African Indian Congress were drawn from the Indian commercial class and, as in earlier periods of Indian political history, they focused primarily on Indian trader concerns.[46]

While on the one hand, developments in this period guaranteed Indians a place in the country, they also created a high level of insecurity, leaving little space for the articulation of political opposition and concerns. In addition, the GAA displaced thousands of Durban Indians, initially to Chatsworth, which was established in 1964. Later Indians were relocated to Phoenix when it was established in 1976. In addition to the material suffering wrought by the GAA, the consequences for the social and community life of Indians were most pronounced. Increased transport and housing costs brought financial hardship to many; the fragmentation of extended family networks further eroded the support structures and exposed greater class differences.[47]

Moreover, it can be argued that the GAA made Indians conservative and introverted as it reduced the level of cross-racial interaction. These developments took place during a period when radical Indian politics had been effectively stifled, thus creating a space for the rise of Indian conservatism, fully aided by the state apparatus. In addition to the acknowledgement of Indians as citizens, the state also began a development programme aimed at upgrading the standard of life of Indians. This resulted from changes in the economy which required more skilled people, and from the fact that Indians, as a minority, did not constitute a threat to white power, thus making it more strategic to invest resources into Indian education.

Between 1962 and 1972 Indian resistance politics entered a vacuum which resonated with developments among African and Coloured communities as well as the white left. During this period, several people were sent to Robben Island and their trials were frequently reported in the Durban media, resulting in a contradictory impact on Indian consciousness. This evoked support and sympathy for Indian activists who were imprisoned, and generated anger against the government. It also acted as a strong deterrent for people to be involved in politics, since it created great fear. Little work has been done on the location of Indian resistance politics from 1962 to the present, with the exception of one recent study.[48]

However, for my purposes it is necessary to point to some significant developments during this period. The first of these relates to the ANC in exile, which at its Morogoro conference of 1969 recognised Indians and Coloureds as integral parts of its political constituency. A commitment was made by the ANC to promote the organisation of Indians, Coloureds and democratic whites. This occurred at a time when the NIC had become moribund. Internally, resistance energies began to regroup in the late 1960s around the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) within which several Indian activists, especially in Durban, were prominent. BCM members were at first divided over the establishment of an exclusively black organisation. Some were concerned with being labelled racist, while others feared that the BCM would become an "amorphous collection" of Africans, Indians and Coloureds. Some students in fact favoured an exclusively African organisation.

Many high profile BC activists, including Steve Biko, Barney Pityana and Saths Cooper, resided in Durban, making the city a key national centre of resistance activity by 1972. Biko was a medical student at the University of Natal, at that time the only place in South Africa where Indians, Africans

and Coloureds were housed together. It was there that Biko had seen the beneficial effects of working alongside all black students.[49]

A BC student publication, reflecting Biko's views, urged blacks to seek common ground: By all means be proud of your Indian heritage, of your African culture, but make sure that in looking around for somebody to kick at, choose the fellow who is sitting on your neck.[50]

While BC was trying to develop a common approach involving all blacks, the SAIC created a platform for those Indian politicians who largely accepted the idea of separate development. However, it also articulated some criticism of government policy.

Against the wider backdrop of heightened trade union activity and radical student organisation, there were attempts to revive political activity through the formation of the Committee of Clemency which called for the release of political prisoners, and a bread boycott by the Labour Party which involved Indians.[51]

Following the relative success of these campaigns, there were moves to re-launch the NIC. On 25 June 1971 Mewa Ramgobin stressed the NIC's Gandhian roots at a meeting called to secure a mandate for the revival of the NIC. No mention was made either of the Freedom Charter, the Congress Alliance or the period of the 1940s and 1950s.[52]

Subsequently, several branches of the NIC were established leading to its re-launch in October 1971. This was immediately shrouded in political and ideological controversy.

The ANC, it would appear, were not fully unanimous about the revival of the NIC, nor did they seek to provide a political line on the issue. They recognised that there were tendencies towards both unity and diversity. Unity in response to the fundamental fact of South African life, white supremacy; diversity because of the differential techniques of domination and exploitation of each group...The different levels of national consciousness, the historical legacy of separate national movements, and even some inter-black prejudices (always encouraged by government), could not be made to disappear simply by ignoring them or by ideological appeals only.[53]

Younger activists, influenced by the BCM, demanded that the NIC abandon its narrow ethnic appeal and incorporate all black people into its membership and end the legacy of separate organisation. They also rejected an alliance with whites and stated that the "ideals of Gandhi were no longer historically appropriate for the current times".[54]

The BC grouping found themselves in a minority and the NIC rejected any ideology which propagated black exclusiveness. As will be shown in later chapters, this debate and tension continued into the 1990s. In 1972 the NIC finally decided to retain its Indian character with a vote on the matter (32 votes versus 30).[55]

Those activists favouring a BC approach abandoned attempts to try and transform the NIC and later participated in the formation of the Black People's Convention (BPC).[56]

The NIC failed to provide a response to the criticisms that BC adherents directed at the revival of an ethnically- based body.[57]

However, involving mainly students, the BCM constituted a political elite as far as most Indians were concerned and did not develop a significant following in Indian areas. The debate over NIC membership was overshadowed by the question of whether to participate within government-created structures. While a vote decided against participation, this debate continued throughout the 1970s.

During this time, A.M. Rajab, the chair of the SAIC, accused the NIC of extreme militancy. An NIC spokesperson responded that "the NIC will always make its plea for Indian political advancement in a responsible manner without resorting to violence of any kind".[58]

The Chair of the NIC, George Sewpersadh, added:

Why is non-violence essential to our struggle?

Because non-violence is the path of dignity. It is the way of all rational men. It is that which differentiates man from animals. It is that essential which constitutes the culture of a nation. It is a moral weapon and it is morally justifiable...we do not need to unleash a similar violence since we know clearly the immorality of it all. We cannot counter an anarchy with an equal anarchy. There is enough for all of us in the struggle by non-violent means.[59]

This tendency to stress pacifism ran into conflict with the rising militancy, including support for the armed struggle within African political organisation and contradicted the trend of NIC activists who had embraced Umkhonto We Sizwe at its formation. Given the repressive context, it would have been virtually impossible for the NIC to publicly embrace armed struggle. Some in the NIC might have argued that the emphasis on non-violence, as an inviolable principle, was simply a strategic ploy. However, the frequency with which it was mentioned, the potency of the language used and the utilisation of Gandhi as a peg, all contributed to making it difficult for Indians to gravitate towards the ANC and other BC organisations that were becoming more militant in their articulation and practice. Furthermore, NIC discourse and practice during the early 1970s, and later, did not exhibit an explicitly progressive approach to the participation of women as equals in resistance activity. The NIC also failed to develop a specific appeal among the Indian working-class, which constituted 70% of the total Indian population. During the mid-1970s the form of the liberation alliance was not fixed. As noted by Slovo, "It shifts and develops to suit not only changing objective conditions but also ideological changes amongst the masses who are constantly re-educated by political activity".[60]

With regard to underground structures, Slovo was emphatic that it was "both impractical and inefficient to encourage a number of parallel underground organisations of African, Coloured, Indian and the few white revolutionaries, each with its own leadership".[61]

Nonetheless, the ANC by the mid-1970s was committed to recruiting "those revolutionaries from the minority groups" who were "unconditionally devoted to the liberation struggle and who [were] ready to participate in underground work".[62]

The Durban strikes, Soweto uprising and beyond, 1973-1979

By the early 1970s, while opportunities for Indian workers opened up in the textile and clothing industries, some parts of the Durban economy were not as open to employing Indian labour.[63]

Competition between African and Indian workers over scarce employment opportunities increased during this period. It is estimated that over two million African workers were engaged in work in the non-agricultural sectors by 1970.[64]

African trade unions had been in existence since the first world war, and despite fluctuations, by 1945 African trade union membership stood at 150, 000. Although strikes by Africans were illegal, they were a regular occurrence.[65]

As detailed earlier, Indian unions were also numerous in the 1930s and strikes were common, though union action waned by the late 1940s. The 1973 Durban strikes, consisting of a series of spontaneous actions by workers, were seen as a highly significant event in South African social history, and represented a departure from earlier worker action.[66]

Tensions between Indian and African workers after the 1949 Durban riots were tangible, while dissension also existed among Indian workers themselves. However, though the strikes have been referred to as African strikes, and an assumption has been made that a conflict of interest existed between the two labour providers, it is apparent from the available literature that Indian and Coloured workers played a significant role in the strikes. There is inconclusive speculation, however, about whether participation was driven by genuine support for the grievances or by a fear of non-participation. Sipho Buthelezi has argued that official statistics underestimated the size of the strike because they generally ignored Indian solidarity strikes.[67]

He suggests further that the massive involvement of Indians indicated a degree of non-racial working-class solidarity previously unseen in South Africa.[68]

Media reports quoting employers indicated fear on the part of Indians. However, Indian workers were also reported to have approached strike leaders and expressed concern about reprisals from their employers. One African strike leader stated that: "The Indians want to join us but they are scared of the employers. They want us to chase them out of the factory so that they will have an excuse".[69]

Saths Cooper also recalls an absence of animosity, despite media reports to the contrary, when he and other BC activists investigated such allegations.[70]

Trade union leader Jay Naidoo, when reflecting on the strikes in 1985, stated that:

Africans of Durban realised full well that their real enemy was not the Indian but certain social and political conditions...one of the most optimistic signs is to witness how Indian and African workers expressed their solidarity during the Durban strikes in 1973.[71]

An investigation of the strikes reveals the absence of overt conflict between Indian and African workers and instances where Indians actually encouraged African workers to strike. Undoubtedly Indians participated in many of the strikes and gave various reasons for doing so, including demands for higher wages and fear of African workers, but it is likely that "about half of those who gave reasons for striking were striking together with the Africans, rather than out of fear of them".[72]

A survey conducted by the Institute of Industrial Education showed that Indians expressed a high degree of solidarity with African workers. Slovo echoed this observation, arguing that the attempts by the government to secure Indian acceptance of relatively powerless institutions had essentially failed and that Indian workers in Natal "showed an impressive degree of solidarity with the striking Africans".[73]

By 1975, while there existed a considerable gap between rich and poor Indians, it was asserted by the government that there was an absence of an established Indian middle-class.[74]

It is likely that these claims were made in order to discourage Indian agitation for greater political representation. However, the government claimed that this was being addressed by a rapidly expanding body of Indians entering various professions, including those who held senior positions as lecturers, teachers and public servants, as well as those who had taken up skilled employment in industry or managerial positions in the financial sector.[75]

Slovo suggested during this time that: Class differences and antagonisms within the oppressed groups have a significant bearing in the struggle for social change, and of respective roles in relation to the imperative of linking the national with social revolution.[76]

However, the ANC recognised that the overwhelming number of Indians were working-class, and that the emergent "commercial bourgeoisie...[were] barred from using its economic resources to break into the top layer of the capitalist structures." [77]

There was an optimism that Indians "form a natural ally of the African masses even though the ruling class often attempts to use the [Indians] slightly more favourable position to divert them from full involvement in the struggle for all-round radical change."[78]

Durban did not feature prominently in the 1976 student rebellion even though there were both university and high school boycotts in some African communities. There were attempts in some Coloured high schools to join the protest but they did not come to fruition.[79]

The Indian schools in Durban were virtually untouched by the events of the period. Among tertiary students, Kogila Moodley observed that in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising well over half of the black students arrested in Durban by the police for distributing pamphlets were Indians.[80]

Moreover, while youth nationally shunned Mangosuthu Buthelezi's calls for calm and normality, Durban's youth were generally unwilling to risk generational conflict since many African parents discouraged their children from participating in the boycotts.[81]

In the wake of African hesitation towards the student rebellion, Indian involvement was also limited.

It is evident that during this time the BC philosophy gained ground among Indian university students, and that those who moved into NIC politics by the late 1970s had been politicised through the BCM. By the end of the 1970s and after the banning of the BCM, a grouping of younger NIC activists emerged and stressed the need to work within civic organisations in Indian working-class areas, pointing out that the BCM had only succeeded in reaching university students. This created further tension within the NIC, as we shall see in the next chapter, as debates about participation in the SAIC elections were re-opened. While AZAPO, formed in 1978 after the banning of the BCM in October 1977, continued the BC tradition, it had a limited impact amongst Indians.[82]

Cultural differences also influenced the relationship amongst black people. However, by the late 1970s, Kogila Moodley noted that: "In the educational sphere, the increasing direct identification of Indian and African students, in spite of separate education, has been noticeable."[83]

She further suggested that:

Although officially the Black Peoples [Convention] could not show significant numbers of Indians as members, due to fear of political repercussions, the idioms and essential message of this movement have penetrated the minds of a significant number of university students and, to an even greater extent, high school students.[84]

Nevertheless, the mass of Indians were untouched by the resistance activities in the 1970s. The pro-Frelimo rally at the Curries Fountain Stadium in 1974, the death of Steve Biko in detention in 1977, and the trials of several Durban BC activists, including some Indians, all received prominent media coverage. Indeed, television, introduced in 1976, became a powerful shaper of political opinion and cultural production among Indian people, along with Indian radio programmes, especially in the face of growing press restrictions.[85]

A government source observed in 1975 that:

As a minority group [Indians] are, of course, constantly exposed to radio, press, and cinema media that have their roots in a Western Civilisation. Hence the Indians in South Africa cannot be called

Orientals in the true sense. Nevertheless they are in the process of evolving a cultural pattern that is unique.[86]

It is against this background of political, cultural and economic transition that the events of the coming decade and a half will need to be analysed.

Conclusion

The history of Indian politics in South Africa is a complex mixture of accommodation and resistance. By providing an overview of the key trends and developments during the period 1860 to 1979, it has been established that class was a key determinant in shaping political strategies and choices. In the earlier period, class served primarily to differentiate indentured and merchant class Indians. This divide was reflected in Indian political organisation through which the NIC disproportionately reflected the agenda of the Indian trader class, with the exception of the 1913 strikes. 1913 represented a departure from earlier trends and created a space not only for the greater participation of Indian women but also for the mass participation of Indian workers. A common ethnic identity did not exist during this period, so much so that Gandhi referred to "the different Indian races inhabiting South Africa".[87]

One of the projects of the NIC was to weld together persons of different caste, language, religion and region into a common "Indianness".

In so doing, the NIC turned to India for inspiration and guidance, thus reinforcing the distance between themselves and other oppressed groups. The insertion of radical political elements into the NIC opened up a space for worker participation within the Congress. More importantly, the 1930s and 1940s were marked by the growth of trade unionism and Communist Party politics. While there were specific Indian worker agendas during this period, the seeds for a non-racial class unity were sown for the first time. This created the basis for political alliances between Indians and Africans, resulting in their joint participation in the Defiance Campaigns. However, it is important to recognise that these campaigns often involved only the leadership and active membership of the Indian Congresses. It is of little surprise then that the 1949 riots had such devastating effects, with both the Indian and African leaderships being unable to intervene and secure solidarity, thus frustrating potential class and racial alliances while serving to reinforce a collective Indian identity.

The riots left an enduring legacy which continues to influence popular consciousness to the present. However, the political campaigns of the 1950s, the co-operation between Indian and African workers during the Durban Strikes of 1973, and the visibility of Indians in the BCM all contributed to the possibility of non-racial political discourse and practice. The shift in state policy to co-opt Indians and abandon the goal of repatriation set the basis for changes in the structural context of Indian existence. These developments, particularly with regard to educational upliftment, had a powerful impact on consciousness. Apartheid policy thereafter sought to strengthen Indian ethnic identity and dissuade alliances with other oppressed groups either on the basis of race or class. The growth in media technology, the greater desire by the state to control the electronic media and constrain the print media served further to reinforce political introversion. The repressive instruments of the state complemented the ideological interventions of the government, especially after the 1977 bannings. In any event, as in the earlier periods, during the 1970s Indians exhibited high levels of heterogeneity which was now also affected by residential location. The new Group Areas of Chatsworth and Phoenix were communities in the making and included residents with diverse histories and backgrounds. Yet one of the most powerful implications of the implementation of the GAA was the construction of "pure" Indian spaces which made non-racial solidarities harder to achieve. Nevertheless, the two major working-class constructs of Chatsworth and Phoenix threw up several

issues of struggle and frustration which set the basis for political agitation within these townships, and potentially, with residents of other townships who shared these feelings of marginality and exclusion from the white power structure. It is to these incipient struggles that we now turn in the next chapter.

End notes:

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CHAPTER THREE: The Emergence Of Grassroots Politics, 1979-1981

My mind went over many things...the call by politicians to me to declare myself a black. Here I am gobbling curry and rice, speaking English as my first language, dressing like a westerner, looking to India as the land of my forefathers and delving into the religion of my ancestors - and searching for a cultural identity, a political identity and a few other identities. I suppose I can console myself with the fact that for political purposes I am black and that for some other purposes I may be non-white, or an Indian, or an Indian South African, or a South African Indian.

Talk of the Bazaar, The Leader, 13/3/1981.

Introduction

Indian identity, one hundred and twenty years after the arrival of Indians in South Africa, was complex, differentiated and multiple. The high levels of heterogeneity resulted in diverse and disparate political attitudes. For organisations working to undermine apartheid, mobilising the support of any group on a racial basis was fraught with dilemmas, though organisations like the NIC argued that segregation, division and apartheid were part of the consciousness of all South Africans. By 1978, thirty years of apartheid social engineering had entrenched racial segregation into all aspects of South African life: material, physical, institutional and ideological. The state dealt differently with the various racial and ethnic groups, and this meant that mass mobilisation at community (residential) level was bound to be influenced by race. The key question is whether, in seeking to deal with the realities of apartheid socialisation, organisations also undermined the basis of apartheid ideology. For example, in their mobilisational strategies, were they successful in extending the experience of their constituents along race, class, gender, age and other non-ethnic lines?

This chapter looks at the impact of the 1980 school boycotts and traces the rise of civic organisations in response to the rent boycotts and the housing struggles of 1980 and 1981. It also explores the anti-Republic Day festival and anti-SAIC election campaigns in 1981. In so doing, it will chart the expansion of political organisation and consciousness over this period. By building on the analysis presented in chapter one, it will be shown that Indians continued to exhibit multiple identities with varying class, gender, and age interests and histories, and that these distinctions were central to determining their political response to apartheid.

Prelude to the 1980s

The banning of newspapers and nineteen Black Consciousness-aligned organisations on 19 October 1977 and the repression that followed left internal resistance in disarray. Grassroots structures had virtually ceased to exist, and pockets of progressive leadership lacked the means to communicate effectively with their communities. A re-evaluation of resistance strategies and tactics was necessary if the anti-apartheid forces were to rebuild their combative capacity. It was recognised that greater emphasis should be placed on grassroots participation and communities organising around "bread-and-butter" issues. The public crushing of the BC-movement instilled fear into both activists and non-activists. Thus, in thinking through new organisational interventions, repression was a key consideration. The resistance movement came to realise that unless it could harness substantial mass support, it would easily be crushed by the state.

The government's ideological influence was even stronger than its coercive control. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), which started television broadcasting in 1976, and Radio Lotus, which broadcasted to Indians, were powerful propaganda tools. The then Prime Minister, P. W. Botha, declared that the SABC would be directed not to give prominence to "revolutionary activities". Since the SABC was financed by the state, he would ensure that it followed this policy. According to the official opposition, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), the bias of the SABC had left whites in complacent ignorance of the tensions building up in the country. This description could be extended to the majority of Indians. Following a decision by church leaders not to participate in SABC broadcasts because they were vehicles for racist propaganda, Bishop Stephen Naidoo and others withdrew from the religious programme, Epilogue. Foreign Minister Pik Botha pressurised the Transkei authorities about broadcasts on Capital Radio, which was located in the homeland, and noted that "despite promises, the situation has not improved. It is being considered to buy out the radio station in order to bring the situation under control." Capital Radio was the only non-state owned electronic media source with a presence and influence in Durban.

As already noted in chapter two, Durban Indians were affected most by the Group Areas Act (GAA). By 1970 about 37,653 Indian families had been moved, representing over 300,000 out of a total Indian population of about 624,000. The forced relocation was mostly into Chatsworth, which absorbed almost a quarter of a million people in the space of fifteen years. These persons experienced accelerated social and cultural changes. For example, an increase in crime in the area suggested that social and psychological breakdown had contributed to the spread of unrest and dissatisfaction. Levels of social interaction, together with practicalities like the transport networks, had all been adversely affected. Furthermore, there was little stability and contentment since residents were not actively involved in problem identification and decision-making. By the early 1980s, 8% of houses and 0.5% of flats in Chatsworth were shared by two or more households. Overcrowding was most serious in rented outbuildings, some of which averaged 11 persons per building. There was an average of 4.4 persons per single family occupying outbuildings, and Indians had an overall average of 3.1 individuals per room in greater Durban. Lack of space became one of the most pressing social problems.

During the 1970s, Chatsworth and Phoenix became established working-class townships and accommodated over 50% of the national Indian population; however, there were also several middle-class enclaves. The older Chatsworth township had an established Local Affairs Committee (LAC) system which Phoenix lacked. In both townships, overall levels of economic stratification were extreme, and for any political organisation trying to draw Indians into resistance, it was essential to consider the economic and political realities of these townships. The vast economic and infrastructural differences that existed between African and Indian townships suggested that on balance, the Indian working-class held an advantage. The physical infrastructure of the townships had several shortcomings and appeared extremely poor when compared to the white working-class living conditions of Durban. In 1980, Chatsworth had one swimming pool, two public libraries and several mediocre sports fields to serve more than 300,000 people and was thus able to boast a better level of development than African townships.

By 1980 several programmes of co-option and control of blacks by the establishment had generally succeeded. For example, the number of Coloureds, Africans and Indians in the South African Defence Force (SADF) had risen to 5,250, constituting 15% of the army's and one-third of the navy's permanent force. In the police force, blacks were promoted more readily and given greater responsibility for work in their own areas. By the end of 1980 there were 21 Indian, 43 Coloured and 85 African commissioned officers in the police force, while nearly 50 police stations were under "non-white" command. Fear of political reprisals for opposing the state was intense and political

frustration found other outlets. By the late 1970s there was a definite disaffection with white minority rule. However, at the same time it was generally recognised that there was no single political party that could claim to represent Indians. The NIC had already called for a boycott of the SAIC elections and was an important voice of the left in Indian politics. On the conservative front, the Indian Reform Party (RP), which dominated the existing nominated SAIC, joined ranks with Inkatha and the Coloured Labour Party to form the South African Black Alliance (SABA) in 1978. Most Indians viewed the SAIC as government puppets. Dr. Yunus Moolla, chairman of the SAIC, confirmed these perceptions by his frequent comments which reiterated the government's point of view. The SAIC projected themselves as responsible citizens who needed to support the apartheid establishment's policy on all major issues. Conflict was mainly restricted to issues of tactics and detail without opposing apartheid per se. Much of their concerns centred around the greatest gain for the emergent Indian bourgeoisie. Their sensitivity to developing a popular profile appeared to be largely incoherent despite the substantial backing of the state's ideological apparatus and the extensive physical and human resources at the SAIC's disposal.

By the late 1970s the NIC could correctly be described as being "for all practical purposes a body in name only." There was criticism from both the left (mainly AZAPO) and the right (mainly SAIC) of the NIC's "strictly non-racial but wholly Indian" nature. This view was confirmed, for example, by the failure of the NIC to support the strike by about 160 bus operators which affected several Indian commuters. There was a suggestion in some quarters that if the NIC ceased to be an "Indian organisation they would lose even the few supporters they at present have". Others maintained that even though "it is an Indian ethnic body", it still "has a useful role to fulfil." A growing distance between the male, middle-class leadership of both the NIC and the SAIC and the working-class was evident. It was asserted that if the NIC called for a one-day strike by Indian workers, and "even if it had six months to campaign for such a strike, it would not get more than a handful to stay away from work." This was because it simply had "no support worth the name" amongst the working-class, and tended to issue pious statements instead of doing anything of a practical nature.

Those Indians involved in politics, or seen as a political constituency, were predominantly middle-class. Major concerns focused primarily around the GAA and the limitations placed on Indian immigration. The Leader suggested that "what the Indian people are far more interested in at the moment is to be left alone with regard to their properties. What they want is power to repeal the [GAA]." The possible removal of 30,000 Africans from Groutville evoked concern amongst Indian farmers in the area because they were unable to find such cheap and willing labour elsewhere. The proposed eviction of 9,000 mainly working-class Indians from Motala farm, just outside Chatsworth, again illustrated the marginalisation of the Indian working-class.

NIC general secretary, Farouk Meer, recalls that the NIC's understanding of its task and its constituency was as follows:

The NIC recognised class, cultural and religious differences. Indians were not a homogeneous grouping. We did not engage in any specific strategies aimed at any particular group. We were mindful that we were having difficulty reaching the working-class, we did not have trade union people...[Indian] trade unionism was never strong in the 1980s and that was one of the difficulties of reaching out to the workers. While we were conscious and aware of these factors we did not develop any specific strategies for any particular interest group within the Indian community. We went along and treated the Indian community as one entity. To try to discern the different interests for the different sectors of the community and to link those specific interests for the Indian community and to try and link them with the needs of the majority and thereby promote non-racialism and unity. That was the strategy we adopted.

This strategic choice not to disaggregate Indians and speak to their concerns beyond a generalised notion of "Indian" will receive greater scrutiny later. However, for now it must be noted that the imperative to respond to the concerns of Indians should not have been expressed in the failure to speak to youth, women, and different religious and cultural clusters amongst Indians - a failure which helps to explain the low level of solidarity across the racial divide.

The Botha government's vague constitutional proposals suggested that Indians and Coloureds would enjoy a greater say in their own affairs. This earned the derision of the NIC and other liberal voices who maintained that it seemed as though "the government wants to create the illusion that Indian people, and other blacks are represented on decision making bodies and are responsible for decisions which affect them." There was consternation when the Reform Party met Botha and when the Natal Association of Local Affairs Committees supported the new proposals. Despite these criticisms, 150 people applied for four SAIC vacancies when they became available. These were mainly middle-class, professional people, but there were also two trade union-related applicants: the secretary of the Durban Leather Workers Union, who had been involved in pension fund fraud, and another from the Garment Workers Union. Both these unions were associated with the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) to which the majority of unionised Indian workers belonged.

During 1979 there appeared evidence of Indians being recognised as "The Best Hated Racial Group". As one observer put it: "Numbering 788,000 in a population of 27.4 million the Indians are a distinctive minority, yet the majority of that minority are poor enough to be despised, and of the others a number rich enough to provoke the envy of other race groups." Besides the fear that Indians as a minority might have felt, the memory of the 1949 riots was exploited by right-wing politicians to herd Indians into the apartheid laager. "As a minority group the Indian community must therefore adopt the role of diplomacy and tactfulness," said a SAIC leader. Pat Poovalingam, one of the first black appointees onto the President's Council (PC), made a veiled reference to the riots. He suggested that it was "a small wonder that a shudder of fear goes through Indians every time there is a riot anywhere in South Africa, [they are] all too aware that [they offer] a ready and defenceless target for the anger of a majority." These comments sought to position Indians not as partners in the resistance but as targets of the protests. In any event, this collaborative segment in Indian politics sometimes (and with some timidity) included Africans in their pleas for equity.

Throughout 1979 there was restlessness about various civic issues. Civic organisations, sometimes outside the ambit of influence of the NIC, used these issues to mobilise popular participation. For example, the Phoenix Working Committee (PWC) was active in addressing the need for transport for schoolchildren in Phoenix; the Motala Farm Ratepayers Association campaigned for support against their threatened removal; and the Shallcross Residents and Ratepayers Association struggled to get formal recognition from the Town Council. The NIC was also indirectly involved when Indian and African lawyers launched the Democratic Lawyers Association in May 1979. In Phoenix, the audience walked out in protest at the launch of the National Indian Labour Party - a group that was still-born. The organisers were jeered for suggesting that they should be grateful for government-provided housing, and that Indian people should not consider the problems facing Africans until they had "filled their own plates". Around that time, there was also a furore over the exclusion of an African woman from the UDW residence on the grounds that Indians would not like her presence. The mainly Indian student body were incensed by this comment and later by the continued refusal of the rector to admit the student to the residence. Subsequently a petition campaign was launched in support of the student. This collective restlessness at grassroots level helped draw the NIC into civic work.

Before these developments the NIC had been relatively stagnant, in a largely reactive mode, and mainly issued press statements. There was a lack of grassroots mobilisation, and progressive political consciousness amongst Indians was low and largely confined to a small activist core influenced by Marxist revolutionary ideas. Various reasons were advanced for the lack of mobilisation: the fact that Indians belonged to conservative unions (a number of union organisers became members of the SAIC); the "inward-looking" nature of Indians, which was due in part to religious influences; the sensitive relationship between Africans and Indians; and finally, the fact that Durban had been relatively untouched by the events of 1976. A group of young intellectuals in the NIC offered their analysis, arguing that to stimulate grassroots activity, some form of public political intervention was necessary. This turning to the masses also invited some ridicule and the criticism that the NIC was not engaged in "real politics" since civic work at this stage, which was small and locally contained, was not regarded as politically significant. Therefore, before 1980 most people held the view that the SAIC was ineffectual because of its origins and its performance to date. The NIC was believed to have greater credibility and potential, but it needed to engage in practical work instead of indulging in idealistic political rhetoric. The NIC appeared to heed this criticism and publicly repositioned itself in 1980. The first thrust of its interventions was to support the creation of several housing action committees that co-ordinated municipal tenants' protests and their campaign for the lowering of rentals in Indian and Coloured areas.

The housing struggles and the rise of a civic movement

As early as 1977, civic organisations in Coloured areas, Chatsworth and Phoenix were active in housing-related struggles. However, until 1980 each community fought its own battles, making no serious attempts to join other organisations and communities to work out joint programmes of action. By 1980 agitation from the NIC and the Anti-SAIC committees had resulted in a fairly clear political identity for the civic associations. The difference between the Croftdene Residents Association in Chatsworth and the LACs, according to one resident, was that "civic bodies are organisations created by the people for the people." This rise in civic agitation was also reflected in the support given to the boycott of a bus service in the Natal North Coast, with residents and students resolutely trudging the three kilometres to Stanger each day for three months. The NIC was clearly becoming an integral part of community struggles, as were the Democratic Lawyers Association, the Anti-SAIC Committee and, to a lesser extent, AZAPO. UDW students were also becoming more involved in community issues, and at a meeting of approximately 1,500, they elected to support the civic housing struggle. On 29 March 1980 the NIC, together with representatives of approximately 50 organisations, formed the Durban Housing Action Committee (DHAC) to co-ordinate the work of various civic groups. For the first time, an attempt was made to link the housing struggles of Indians and Coloureds to the broader struggle against apartheid.

Women played an active role in the rent campaigns. Their actions were related to their identities as mothers, with comments like "The spectre of hungry mouths to feed, to any mother, particularly, would certainly not provide any frivolity". Women's actions were also some of the most confrontational, and their voices often reflected militancy and frustration. "They are killing our children. Why don't they come with bombs and do it quicker", one woman cried at a meeting to discuss rents. In both Phoenix and Chatsworth, although in a minority, some women emerged as senior civic leaders. The photographs of elderly Indian women giving the clenched fist salute at mass rallies appeared in several publications.

Coupled with the rent struggles, there was a campaign to prevent the Department of Community Development and the Durban City Council from selling houses to tenants for more than the original cost of the building. In July 1980 the government gave in to these demands by changing the interest

rate structure. However, there remained an unresolved debate about whether it was in residents' interests to remain tenants or to purchase homes. Despite a DHAC workshop to try and reach consensus on this, the debate continued well into 1981. Early in the year there were discussions on changing strategy in favour of small house meetings to improve communication between the leadership and the grassroots. However, open mass meetings provided militancy and power in negotiations and these were too valuable to forego permanently. The increase in rates drew the attention of civic leaders and the anger and concern of homeowners. There was increased political consciousness as some civic bodies, which had previously concentrated only on local issues, now adopted political demands. Thus, the Asherville Housing Action Committee (ASHAC) asserted that "no matter what they give us - even if it is free housing schemes - so long as we have no representation in the city councils, provincial councils and parliament, we are slaves."

In April a candlelight vigil was held to show solidarity with tenants whose electricity was disconnected for withholding rentals. There was 100% support in Sydenham Heights, nearly 100% in Newlands East and 70% in Phoenix. This also helped to bolster support for the rent boycott at a time when support was waning. Eventually DHAC was forced to abandon the boycott in the face of "the evident intransigence and insensitivity of the council to the plight of the people." However, DHAC claimed that it "had served its apprenticeship in the civic struggle and could claim to be a grassroots political body representing a greater group of people than any other body has ever achieved in Durban." This claim was made despite the fact that DHAC had developed no constituency amongst Africans in the city. It would also be fallacious to assume that militant articulations at well attended meetings were an adequate assessment of the general attitude of Indians. It would appear that those who shifted towards an anti-government stance were those who felt particularly and directly aggrieved with the local government. The NIC made the most of the militancy, and infiltration of popular bodies, such as welfare and sports organisations, became a conscious strategy. However, the real extent of their support at this time was debatable, with only 100 people attending the annual commemoration of Gandhi's birthday organised by the NIC. It was apparent that people responded to political mobilisation by the NIC and its allies on the basis of their self-interest rather than in support of the NIC's political vision.

In the furore over the repressive action taken against boycotting children, DHAC maintained that as a civic body it was concerned not only with housing, but also with the inter-related problems of education and employment. Moves to consolidate the gains achieved in the community were evident with the revival of the Southern Durban Civic Federation and the merger of the Committee of Ten and the Central Parents Support Committee. The development of inter-racial unity was evident when a historic protest meeting of about 2,000 Indian, African and Coloured residents, which included worker unions, religious organisations and sporting bodies, voted to continue to withhold rent. However, the housing struggles had limited mobilisational potential. The issues directly affected only a small proportion of municipal tenants and did not engage the youth. This was to change in April 1980 when Durban students joined their national counterparts in protests against apartheid education.

The 1980 education boycott

The credibility of Inkatha had declined since 1976, when the organisation played an important role in stemming the militancy of its student population. By 1980, on the eve of the boycotts, the political climate in Natal allowed student activity to flourish. Coloured students in the Western Cape, aggrieved by text book shortages, precipitated what was to become a national protest against the discriminatory nature of black education. These events coincided with the achievement of liberation from white minority rule in Zimbabwe. Although the boycotts in Natal began at Coloured high schools, they found immediate support among Indian and African students. At UDW and at the

University of Natal Medical School, where 700 students met and resolved to re-educate fellow students and to sensitise themselves to the conditions of blacks in South Africa specifically and in Africa generally, there was almost total support for the boycott. Students at UDW elected to form a Students Representative Council based on a constitution drawn up by the students. The education protest was not aimed at short-term benefits; instead student leaders and their supporters saw it as an opportunity to gather support for the ongoing struggle against apartheid. The authorities responded with repression, and there were daily reports of children being chased by police dogs, beaten with batons, and having tear gas thrown at them.

For the first time ever substantial numbers of Indian school students participated across the country in protest against apartheid education. The solidarity with Coloured and African school children was unprecedented. A new youth politics was born as a result of these spontaneous boycotts which led to, in certain cases, violent confrontation with the state. The conflict was clearly children versus the state; something which the state was ill-prepared for. In response to the targeting of their children, several parent committees were formed in Indian areas throughout Durban. The large turnout at mass meetings (sometimes up to 1,500 children and parents) was indicative of the militancy of the various affected communities. Despite the fact that the NIC made much capital out of these independent student actions, many of the slogans reflected a sympathy with BC: "One Azania One Nation"; "Black Power White Bums"; "Sell Outs Will Never See Azania". The popularity of the British pop group Pink Floyd's song "Another Brick in the Wall", which included the line "we don't need no thought control", became so popular that it was promptly banned by the NP government.

After about 10,000 pupils were suspended by broederbonder Gabriel Krog, the Director of Indian Education, parental support for the boycotting children faltered. Many working-class parents expressed fear, scepticism and confusion about the goals and purposes of the education boycott. One survey showed that only 26% of white collar workers were completely supportive. In discussing the sympathy between youth and parents, one observer pointed out that:

What is crucial is that their thinking does bear some relationship to the thinking and discussions which take place in their parents' drawing rooms. The parents are however inhibited from action because they are government servants, or employees in big firms.

Central to the parents' concern was the morality of action which harmed children - newspaper headlines proclaimed "Don't Touch Our Children - Parents Warn", highlighting the crisis. The then cautious Durban Indian Child and Family Welfare Society condemned the arrests of schoolchildren. Members of the Teachers Association of South Africa (TASA) called for meetings with the education authorities to discuss the suspension and expulsion of children and 400 threatened to strike if no action was taken. A later poll showed that over a third of teachers were prepared to strike for an improvement in education. This constituted significant support since teachers were hitherto one of the most solidly co-opted fractions of the Indian middle-class. The suspensions of some students disunited students and resulted in the ending of the boycotts without coherence and lacking the unity that marked their commencement.

Fraser studied the attitudes and motivations of students six weeks after the boycotts ended. Contrasting her study with that of Schlemmer's, which was conducted in 1977 among similar constituents, she identified a definite increase in political consciousness. In 1977, with a sample drawn from M.L. Sultan Technikon and Springfield College of Education and carried out in the wake of the 1976 uprising, it was found that only 11% of the sample accepted the term "Black" to describe themselves. In 1980 17% of Indian office workers, and an equal percentage of the M.L. Sultan Technikon students, found the term acceptable, with 22% of the UDW students classifying themselves as such. A more salient political perspective becomes apparent when the 1980 sample

was divided according to commitment to the boycott. While both those fully committed to the boycott and those with reservations about it or who disagreed totally with it found the term "South African" equally acceptable, 83% of the students committed to the boycott found the term "Black" acceptable, while only 17% of those not supporting the boycott accepted the term. In 1977 the term most favoured was "Asian" (18%) but this had only 5% support in 1980. In addition, the term "Brown" received 13% support in the 1977 study and 0% support in 1980. However, this probably indicated the effect of Black Consciousness (BC) on the student body rather than political radicalism brought about by the boycotts. Of the percentage referring to themselves as "Black", 78% favoured majority rule (a significant increase from the 39% of those favouring "Black" who supported majority rule in 1977). The finding that of the 72% who accepted the term "South African", 71% favoured majority rule showed that the students were generally politicised.

The study also found there to be little differentiation between the ideology of BC and that of Congress. This suggested a high degree of rhetorical mobilisation with little input to ensure that the militancy was channelled into sustainable political organisation. An equal percentage (40%) of the group who accepted the term "South African" supported the NIC and AZAPO. A slightly higher degree of politicisation was evident in the group referring to themselves as "Black", although they too did not distinguish between NIC and AZAPO, with 51% supporting the NIC, and 51% supporting AZAPO. Clearly, while militancy and mobilisation may have been high, political education and ideology were largely neglected. The boycott, whilst widespread, was without a great deal of co-ordination, and attempts at forming Pupil Representative Councils (PRCs) at high schools were restrained by fear of the repression which would have almost certainly followed the election of leaders. Later, when the boycott began to develop clearer strategic aims, the demand for PRCs became the prime concern.

UDW students were also aware of the problems they would have in sustaining student unity and action. The SRC had only recently been formed and was particularly sensitive to state repression as student activists were detained in a police crackdown in June 1980. The students' strategy was to form residential area committees to co-ordinate their actions off-campus as more educational institutions closed and student leaders continued to be detained. Community work included a "Keep Chatsworth Clean Campaign". However, about 100 UDW students (along with their brooms and buckets) were arrested. Students also made an effort to apply themselves to other concerns; for example, they raised money for fired strikers from Frame Textile Mills. In October 1980 UDW students launched a fund-raising drive to aid the boycotting tenants. Together with DHAC, the Community Services Unit - a body set up to involve students in community activism and labour issues - ran a workshop on housing which drew 300 students. Another concern which emerged was that some student leaders were from wealthy homes and so could afford to boycott government schools: "Many students were cynically dishonest about their boycott. They led their schools in boycott from the hours 8am to 3pm, and then rushed off to their private tuition. They did not lose anything." Fraser's study shows some support for this suggestion, with 63% of the university students from upper socio-economic backgrounds supporting the boycott as opposed to 50% of those from middle-class backgrounds and 51% of those from working-class backgrounds. Many working-class parents also criticised those NIC leaders who advocated a boycott but had their children in private white schools. My father, for example, said that while he supported the boycott, it would appear that the boycott leaders could easily send their children overseas or to private schools if they got expelled. "Chatsworth and Phoenix parents would just not have been able to afford that."

The Release Mandela Campaign (RMC), launched before the boycotts commenced, was boosted by the national climate of resistance. In Natal there was sensitivity about how to deal with Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who had only offered lukewarm support for the RMC, a factor which contributed to the

ANC severing links with him in June 1980. The Inkatha leader had also sought to prevent African participation in student boycotts and worker strikes. His support for federalist options also manifested itself in June 1980, when he appointed the Buthelezi Commission to explore the development of a "multiracial entity" in KwaZulu and Natal. This cautious approach was also taken by the largest trade union in Natal, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), when Buthelezi was invited to address important trade union gatherings. For example, at the launch of the shopstewards' council in Northern Natal, Buthelezi asserted that "Inkatha is the only black organisation in Natal which can possibly take up the major political issues on your behalf."

When ANC-aligned Soweto leader Dr. Nthato Motlana was invited to speak at a Free Mandela rally there were behind-the-scenes attempts to ensure that he did not attack Buthelezi. The rally was a resounding success with about 5,000 calling for the release of Mandela. Numbers were also high at other meetings addressed by NIC leaders at the height of the education and housing protests. More than 3,000 gave NIC vice-president, M.J. Naidoo, a standing ovation at a meeting convened by the Merewent Parents' Action Committee; 4,000 attended a meeting to protest against the detention of NIC and student leaders; and Indian shopkeepers in Durban closed their shops, displaying notices saying "We are closed in protest against the detention of our leaders: Attend mass meeting at Orient Hall." There was a discernible drop in attendance at mass meetings after these periods of high mobilisation. In December 1980 only 300 attended a function to commemorate India's awarding of the Nehru Peace Prize to Mandela, and only 100 people attended the annual Gandhi birthday commemoration. Earlier only 300 people were at the airport to greet NIC leaders returning from prison, and 700 people turned out to welcome home student leaders from detention. Nevertheless, the NIC had made massive strides in visibility and profile since the start of 1979, and entered 1981 with substantially greater confidence, clout and potential, having succeeded in establishing itself as an indispensable component of political praxis amongst Indians and blacks more generally.

In Chatsworth and Phoenix neither the NIC nor its pre-boycott activists actively sponsored the development of youth organisations. Only a few newly-emergent student leaders, largely on their own initiative, turned to this task. For example, Helping Hands in Chatsworth focused on youth concerns and the need to support charity work amongst Indians, Coloureds and Africans. There was little opportunity for youth to develop the distinctive life style they might have desired. Because of the dearth of facilities, lack of resources and poor standard of education they readily supported the education boycott. Active religious denominations and pop culture, however, also provided some sense of direction and had substantially more currency than political activism. It must also be appreciated that Indian youth constituted a fractured entity and displayed great heterogeneity. With regard to religion, one study found that Muslim youth - who were very active, especially after 1976 - had a higher regard than Hindus and Christians for the notion of youth activism. Less openness to the ideas of youth was detected amongst Hindus and Christians, with Christians generally tending to be a little more conservative than Hindus. Nevertheless, Indian youth were increasingly likely to react against paternalism and authoritarianism.

The anti-Republic festival campaign (ARFC)

Another issue of great importance during this time was that of the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the declaration of the Republic of South Africa, when the government scheduled a month of festivities to culminate on May 31, 1981. The advance notice of the festivities was seen by some as "a critical blunder" by the state, since it gave the ANC and its internal allies time to organise a counter campaign. More than 50 organisations, including churches, universities, political and student organisations, committed themselves to boycotting the celebrations. In armed struggle terms, the campaign was judged by Howard Barrell as the ANC's most successful year inside South Africa

since the Rivonia setback in 1963. Government agents attacked Motala in Mozambique on 31 January 1981. Among the casualties was Krishna Rabilal of Merebank. There was no public outpouring of anger by Indians. The commemoration of his death took place three years later, by which time levels of politicisation had grown. Of the 55 attacks carried out by Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK) in 1981, ten were in Durban. The ANC's Mac Maharaj suggested that the success of the anti-republic campaign lay in how:

by sheer accident, despite the [ANC] military's wishes, for the first time, military work was a complement to political work. Visibly through the media, the matter became presented as a unified thing: that military action was complementing political action, and political action facilitating military action.

It was in this context of emerging alliance politics that the first call for a United Front was made by Popo Molefe in May 1981 in an address to the South African Council of Churches (SACC). Most of the criticisms of participation in the celebrations were either along the line of "last time (in 1971 during the 10th Republic Day anniversary) we participated and got nothing out of it", or along the NIC line that Indians and blacks generally had nothing to celebrate, not having been given any socio-economic and political freedoms to mould their existence. Supporters of the celebrations included the likes of The Leader columnist Fakir, who was very proud that his grandfather had arrived as a common "coolie" labourer, and that he himself was now a doctor. Attempts were made by the education authorities to get Indian children to participate without their knowing exactly what they were doing. As agitation around the issue spread, pupils from several schools withdrew despite being trained for various events. Festival workers were called on to resign, and a blacklist of athletes who participated in the celebrations was drawn up by sports groups. Despite threats of state repression, the NIC convened an anti-Republic festival celebrations conference involving 190 delegates from a broad range of organisations. By the week before the festival, interest escalated with more than 200 Chatsworth scholars, including the writer, and 315 from Merebank being expelled for boycotting classes in protest against the celebrations. Prior to the outbreak of the boycotts, the education authorities sent threatening letters to parents warning that their children would be expelled if they joined the boycott.

A student-parent meeting called to address the expulsions drew 1,500 people, and some parent leaders pleaded: "Don't force your children to go back in a manner detrimental to the community in the future." UDW students responded by adding a demand for the reinstatement of expelled pupils to their own demands for cancellation of examinations to be held on June 16. This resulted in another boycott of classes. Meanwhile, more than 50% of the suspended scholars signed forms promising not to boycott again so that they would be allowed to return. However, of the 547 "apologies" which were given by the children involved in the boycotts, only 180 were accepted, leaving some 367 scholars with no schooling. The expelled students were re-instated in 1982 only after winning a court battle. They were allowed to write the end-of-year examinations at schools other than their own to prevent them from further "agitation". There were two outcomes: some of the expelled students became dedicated activists and were later involved in a range of other organisations, including the ANC underground, while many others, mainly under parental pressure, eschewed politics.

UDW students demanded the removal of riot police from their campus, the removal of weapons carried by internal security personnel, the lifting of a ban on meetings and the re-admission of suspended students, pending the outcome of disciplinary hearings against them. The UDW administration adopted a hard line, believing that the concessions they made in 1980 had contributed to the confidence of the 1981 protests. The intransigence of the authorities led to an escalation of activity. Parents protested by marching on the department of Indian education and demanding a

meeting with director Gabriel Krog. Nearly half of the UDW student population (about 3,000 students) opted to boycott examinations when the authorities refused to re-schedule examinations set for June 16, Soweto Day. About 500 students also de-registered in protest.

In Reiger Park, Transvaal, there had been four days of sporadic rioting when residents of the predominantly Coloured township protested against an Indian shopkeeper who had tried to erect a shop on ground marked for residential development. There was a shortage of houses and residents were opposed to the land being used for commercial purposes. Two teenagers were shot dead, and nearly 40 cars, three shops, a garage, and a home were destroyed by arsonists. While this was an attack on the merchant class and a reflection of historical antagonism between merchants and residents, the media portrayed it to Durban residents as a racial incident. The Leader, taking a different perspective, observed that: "The Reiger Park tragedy is not the result of racial conflict but is one of the direct effects of the [Group Areas Act]." It was against this background of resistance and uncertainty that the SAIC election campaign was waged.

Anti-SAIC elections campaign

Until 1981 the SAIC, set up under the SA Indian Council Act of 1968, had no directly elected members. They were appointed by the government or indirectly elected by members of local government structures which had little or no support from Indian voters. The election date had been postponed several times since 1977 due to opposition from voters who ignored the requirement to register. Why the state persisted in proceeding with these elections remains unclear; instead it displayed confusion and incoherence when faced with opposition from blacks across class lines. It has been suggested that although it planned to abolish the SAIC, the state was still keen to legitimise it. The government was also hopeful that the NIC would fragment in disunity over debates on whether or not to contest the elections. However 80% of voters had registered by election day on 4 November after threatened reprisals by the state.

Several independent candidates announced their intention to contest the 40 elected seats. A new political party, the Democratic Party, was established to fight the elections. Eventually, 81 candidates contested 34 seats and 6 seats were uncontested. The government's relationship with the outgoing nominated SAIC was strained, and this meant that there were no substantial pre-election incentives for the SAIC to offer the electorate. The SAIC Executive Committee held the view that the holding of the elections would "be an exercise in futility". However, this did not prevent many from making themselves available for election.

Three provincial anti-SAIC committees were created to co-ordinate opposition to the elections. This was another attempt early in the decade to form a political alliance comprising a range of organisations around a single issue. However, this process was preceded by debate within the NIC on the pros and cons of participating in the SAIC elections. Some members of the NIC - particularly a small, younger intellectual group - initially advocated participation in the elections. This group had several meetings with small groups of activists to discuss the issue. Discussion revolved around three propositions:

(1) That participation in state institutions need not necessarily imply acceptance of that institution and its functions. Participation in these bodies could be used for tactical gain. To support this argument, examples were given of the participation of the Social Democratic Party under the leadership of Lenin in the 'toothless' Duma parliaments after the failure of the 1905 revolution.

(2) That political boycotts should be used as a strategic weapon and should only be utilised when the popular classes could gain from it. At each stage of the struggle, the situation should be reassessed and action should be changed accordingly. A boycott cannot be an inflexible matter of principle.

(3) The effectiveness of the boycott strategy of the NIC had led to a growing alienation between the progressive leadership and its support base. Contesting the SAIC elections could facilitate extensive support and participation. The campaign itself would allow for public political discussion and the spreading of ideas which are otherwise difficult, given the repressive nature of the state in South Africa...an anti-election campaign could be effectively crushed by the state and participation in the SAIC could lend a certain amount of protection from that repression.

This debate generated frustration and confusion among NIC supporters. It also provided ammunition for NIC-detractors who charged that:

The truth of the matter is that if the NIC had played a more meaningful role in the struggle for democracy; if it had reached out to the people and won their confidence and if it had effectively organised the people there would have been no chaos today.

Conflicts emerged amongst former allies. NIC leaders Pravin Gordhan and Yunus Mahomed were asked to leave the Phoenix Working Committee because they supported participation in the elections. The PWC was then criticised as it was a civic organisation and not a political body, and therefore had no mandate to support or condemn SAIC elections. However, there was limited grassroots support for participation in the election and there were no similar calls for other civics to adhere solely to civic issues. This conflict suggests that while these emergent civic bodies were within the realm of influence of NIC leaders and activists, a degree of independence was maintained and there was a willingness to defy their political counsel. This was particularly significant as Gordhan and Mahomed were among the more hardworking and visible NIC leaders involved in civic issues in Phoenix.

Gordhan, Mahomed and Jerry Coovadia (interestingly all of Gujerati, merchant class backgrounds) were also part of a highly-regarded ANC unit. They defined "rejectionist participation" as taking part in the elections in order to take over the SAIC and destroy it from within. It has now emerged that this position was adopted by the ANC NEC in relation to the SAIC in August 1979. Given that the pro- and anti- factions were at loggerheads, the ANC's Mac Maharaj intervened with the backing of Dr Yusuf Dadoo, who was still held in high esteem by progressive Indians. The antagonistic groups met Maharaj in 1979 in London, where he told them that there were two basic considerations in deciding tactics for the anti-SAIC campaign: ensuring "the involvement of the masses" and "maximum unity" among them. This meant that what was "done on one front in one community" had to "dovetail with the rest", and that rejectionist participation would not concur with the dominant tactics in African areas, where progressive forces favoured boycotts of all elections for state-created institutions. According to Barrell, Maharaj dissuaded the Gordhan unit from "rejectionist participation", since he knew that this highly disciplined unit was more capable than its opponents of accepting compromise. The unit was pacified by a letter signed by Dadoo and Maharaj and given to them to take back to South Africa. It recommended a total boycott of SAIC elections but added that the final decision had to be taken by internal activists. The eventual decision favoured a complete boycott of elections. The pro-participation group subsequently threw their weight behind the boycott effort, and in a show of unity Gordhan and Mahomed were co-opted onto the NIC Executive.

The anti-SAIC lobby gained ground in many Indian neighbourhoods, extending its original goal of 20,000 signatures against the elections to 40,000 after the tremendous response in the first week of the campaign. But this soon fizzled out. A wide-scale campaign was planned and sub-committees were established in areas around Durban. Mass meetings attracting up to 800 people were held. "Peoples' Unity", the Natal Anti-SAIC Committee newsletter, was published in September 1981 and was widely distributed. Unions had also assumed a higher profile with the formation of the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA), the boycott of Wilson Rowntree products called by

the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), and the formation of a health workers body. There was, however, renewed concern about the fragility of nascent non-racialism with the threatened removal of 1,300 African households from St. Wendolin's near Chatsworth to make way for Indian and Coloured settlements. A solidarity front, comprising 29 community, sports, trade union, religious and cultural organisations, banded together at a conference convened by DHAC to protest the proposed removals. This successful campaign would have won DHAC more support amongst African residents than Indian and Coloured residents who were desperate to acquire housing.

The ANC had declared 1980 as the year of the Freedom Charter (FC) (as it was the 25th anniversary of the document) and the 1980s as the "decade of freedom". Consequently, at the launch of the Transvaal Anti-SAIC elections committee, the Freedom Charter was resurrected as the basis for their constitution. The Charter featured again when the NIC condemned the banning of its president, George Sewpersad: "The only solution to the problems of South Africa is a society based on the principles of the Freedom Charter." The ANC's thrust was to popularise the FC, campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, and oppose the SAIC. In this way, both the NIC and the ANC allowed for a large number of organisations across racial lines to be drawn into the campaign."

The SAIC elections were given extensive publicity through a planned public debate on participation between the NIC and President's Councillor Mahmoud Rajab. Rajab did not appear at the meeting, but he initiated a debate in the media concerning the NIC's communist links. The NIC was challenged to say whether it supported or opposed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and whether it supported "the Polish People's right to decide their own future without threats and intimidation from the Soviet Union?" The anti-Communist theme underpinned the conservatives' attack on the NIC and other pro-ANC Indians throughout the decade and into the 1990s. It should be remembered that at this time the ANC and SACP were banned, and open identification would have courted conviction for furthering the aims and objectives of banned organisations. The decision to display an ANC flag at an NIC rally in Chatsworth during the campaign caused controversy and resulted in security police interrogating and detaining activists. The conservatives and the state persisted in linking the NIC to the banned organisations in the hope that fear would deter people from attending NIC gatherings.

Through the Gordhan Unit and other individual links to the NIC and allied organisations, the ANC was able to significantly influence this campaign. An anti-SAIC activist, Ismail Momoniat, who was not a member of the formal ANC underground structures, recalls the form of contact with the ANC external mission during the campaign:

Our attitude was that we didn't need to have formal contact in the sense where you would be a member. But clearly there were links with the movement. And one knew that; and we would get feedback. So we would have a grouping of a few people, we would meet, we would discuss things. If we felt there was a need to, we would send things out...we would then decide to approach one or two individuals...I think it was a very slow form of contact; it wasn't very reliable. Now and again we would get answers...and I must say, to the credit of the ANC...we never got the advice: "Do one, two, three". Rather…they would leave it to us to decide...Maybe offer their own advice and so on, but ask us to decide finally.

The leadership of the Transvaal anti-SAIC committee elected in 1980 was entirely ANC-orientated. In Natal, the anti-SAIC campaign was dominated by the NIC, in whose leadership a number of ANC underground members served at the time of the anti-SAIC campaign. A handful of MK attacks in the run-up to the SAIC elections, which included the bombing of the Durban offices of the Department of Indian Affairs on November 3, suggested the link between political and military forms of struggle

which the ANC wished to convey. During the anti-SAIC campaign it became clear that in Durban ANC-aligned popular organisations among Africans remained weak.

The NIC and its allies drew extensively on Gandhi's legacy as a campaign focus with such comments as "our campaign has shown the spirit ignited by Mahatma Gandhi and continued by the Naickers, Dadoos, Luthulis and Mandelas, lives on." They also published a statement from Sushila Gandhi, the daughter-in-law of Gandhi who lived in Durban. She claimed that if he were alive, he would advocate a boycott of the elections, and stressed that the "Mahatma's last message to the Indian people was that we should work hand in hand with the African people." Pro and anti-election protagonists, with the exception of AZAPO, harked back to Indian culture and India for legitimation in the eyes of the Indian populace. The NIC reiterated its links with Gandhi, provoking the comment that "perhaps the NIC should be honest with itself. To discard 'Indian' means that it cannot honestly use the by-line 'Established by Mahatma Gandhi' anymore." On the other hand, the Reform Party, while employing similar tactics to combat the NIC rejection of the SAIC elections, proclaimed that although the RP was "in its infant stages", its tactics were "no different from those used in the struggle in India."

Women's participation in the anti-SAIC campaign was substantially less than during the housing and student struggles. The same can be said of youth. However, the foot-soldiers of the campaign were largely young people who engaged in the largest pamphleteering exercise ever undertaken by the NIC. Limited support for the boycott of the elections came from a few religious groups, mainly Muslim and Christian, who rejected the SAIC and called on their adherents not to vote. Sporting institutions were also not vigorously involved in opposition. Former SASO and NIC activists had filtered into the ranks of the Natal Council on Sport (NACOS), the regional wing of the anti-apartheid South African Council of Sport (SACOS). However, this trend of politicising sport was not reflected in the grassroots structures. For example, prior to the education boycotts, on 10 February 1980, three SAIC members were elected as patrons of the Chatsworth Football Association. Although there was vehement dissatisfaction with poor facilities, the deliberations of the association were in accommodationist rather than resistance terms. However, earlier in the year, in deference to Sharpeville Day, the Federation of Professional Soccer Leagues cancelled their official kick-off, and the South African Cricket Board cancelled weekend games.

The small but critical Indian press also contributed to the politicisation that occurred during the campaign. The Leader added its support by "urging [people] not to go to the polls on November 4 to indicate rejection of the Indian Council," and were "certain the Indian community [was] far sighted enough to respond in a manner which will not give credibility to a body that cannot serve the best interests of all the peoples of this country". A preponderance of letters to the editors of local newspapers condemned the elections and indicated a growth in political awareness. Some letters were critical of the reformist and reactionary nature of the SAIC; others pointed to "the ethnicity, undemocratic nature and failure of these bodies to represent the real wishes of the people"; and yet others played on the acronym SAIC stating that "this institution's purpose and achievement will be to Sell All Indians Cheaply".

Both the NIC and SAIC candidates seemed to have preferred house visits to mass meetings. For the NIC this was merely a variation in a campaign that had begun with mass meetings. In general their visits were received enthusiastically. They concentrated on small house meetings and advertisements placed in newspapers to discourage voting. The SAIC candidates' strategy was described by The Leader as "Candidates shy away from public meetings", the insinuation being that these candidates feared public hostility. The Reform Party asserted that the future of Indians "lies in a common goal to the white man." The SAIC candidate for Western Cape was forced to resign from the progressive

Western Cape Trader's Association (WCTA) which had the slogan "No Taxation with Representation".

A national anti-SAIC conference to seek alternatives for a democratic SA was convened by the Natal Anti-SAIC Committee (NASC) as a focal point of opposition to the elections. The October 1981 conference was attended by 109 organisations from throughout the country. A declaration which re-adopted clauses of the Freedom Charter, called for freedom and democracy in the long term, and in the medium term advocated the pursuit of Freedom Charter goals. NASC prioritised this national conference which furthered links between organisations rather than the high profile mobilising of potential voters. However, the anti-SAIC crusade did evolve new methods of visible public protest, and fears about state repression were reduced through the creation of a carnival atmosphere during the campaign. For example, protest motorcades drew a great deal of attention. "Smiles, nods of agreement with the sentiments expressed on the cars [posters], the odd clenched fist and a few hoots greeted the occupants of the cars at every turn." Even before the NIC campaign, the SAIC had little support and it was evident that it would not take much for the elections to fail. Yunus Moolla, a SAIC supporter, admitted that he abandoned his call for a referendum on the elections because the SAIC would be rejected by Indians. The outcome of the poll was as expected with an average turnout of 10.5%, although this included spoilt papers. In some places the turnout was less than 5% of the registered voters. Only one constituency other than the "elite" Reservoir Hills had more than a 20% turnout. Almost all turnouts were under 15% and many were under 10%. What mobilisational successes the anti-SAIC election campaign achieved were dependent to a large extent on the youth, because of their important activist role. Nevertheless, organisational gains did not fulfill expectations, and the following reasons were advanced as an explanation: First, high school students were demoralized following expulsions after the Anti-Republic Festival Campaign boycotts and university students were engaged in annual examinations. Secondly, the level of organisation in inland towns in Natal was weaker. Thirdly, there was an absence of progressive trade unions with Indian membership. Fourthly, community organisations had experienced difficulties in sustaining both mobilisation and organisation. Fifthly, the presence of Inkatha hindered attempts to build non-racial unity. Finally, the fact that the NIC was a top-heavy organisation without proper branch structures ensured weak mobilisation. Nevertheless, during the anti-SAIC campaign the ANC began to develop a scale of visibility and influence in domestic politics which it had lacked since the 1950s.

The low poll represented a reversal for the NP and an advance for the ANC and the NIC. The NP's endeavours to draw sections of the Indian population into alignment with government policy lay in tatters. For the ANC and the NIC the coalition-building approach of the ARFC had been advanced. Moreover, public projections of the Freedom Charter, a major goal of the campaign, put the ANC's programme on the internal political map. The anti-SAIC conference had declared its sympathy with the Freedom Charter and its intention to boycott any institution and constitutional arrangement which did not arise out of national negotiations involving all interested parties (by implication, including the ANC). Opposition to the SAIC elections, however, did not imply unity of ideology or even direct sympathy with the NIC by the majority of Indians.

Conclusion

The political agitation during the education boycotts and the civic struggles of Indians transformed political consciousness, organisation and understanding about mobilisation amongst large numbers of people across divisions of class, gender and age. These events created the political space for the re-emerging political formations after the 1977 bannings. Beginning with a relatively moribund, shadowy and obscure organisation, the NIC was able to assume a public profile beyond that achieved since its revival in 1971. While the NIC could take substantial credit for instigating, planning and

guiding the civic struggles, the education boycotts were more spontaneous in nature, with the NIC lagging behind the students. One of the key developments during this period was an agreement and understanding that struggles around short-term goals ultimately advance the broader democratic struggle and should not be dismissed as reformist interventions. The NIC and its allies recognised that organising people around their immediate grievances, especially when they are informed and conscious of the longer-term objectives, builds consciousness and organisational skills.

The NIC succeeded in advancing non-racialism and united action in the civic arena with the welding together of Indian and Coloured struggles. The failure to make connections with African communities would later prove to be a major weakness. Non-racialism, as an integral part of a developed political consciousness, is difficult to evaluate and measure. However the growth, albeit limited, in support of the NIC can at least be said to be indicative of heightened political awareness. Interaction across the racial divide in the education boycotts was also limited. Inkatha's role in stemming the enthusiasm of the school students was a significant factor. Mainstream media portrayals, while often damaging, could not dent the power and message of the boycotts, since they were supported by thousands of people and not just a small band of NIC or AZAPO activists.

It would appear that the rapid politicisation of youth via the education boycotts far outstripped the broader political gains of the housing struggles. First, the student demands, though mainly educational, were national and had a more political focus. The housing struggles were aimed at local government and did not have the political importance or visibility of the student protests. Furthermore, while the student uprisings ran deep into almost every high school constituency, the housing struggles were limited to affected residents. These struggles clearly raised questions of identity, alliance and allegiance. A shift from neutrality to active opposition to the state was clearly discernible, as was the eroding of the already dented image of the SAIC and the Indian collaborationist component.

The education boycotts suggested that independent student action was valid and could contribute to the broader struggles of the working-class and the cause of national liberation. However, students needed to directly involve themselves in other organisations and types of resistance and to appreciate the capacity of systematic organisation to mobilise and educate people who did not occupy the same position in society. Different sections of the disenfranchised have different problems, different levels of consciousness and different potentials for organisation and resistance. The gravitation of students towards civic work and towards the support of worker campaigns and struggles required different tactics and strategies plus methodical, persuasive and sustainable grassroots organisation. The biggest weakness of the struggles in 1980 was the failure to generate a presence of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), or even an equivalent, in Indian areas. This would have contributed substantially to the building of non-racial praxis at least at a student level. The NIC did not apply its mind to this development. Even the formation of progressive youth organisations was driven largely by youth activists working independently of NIC support.

There were clearly signs of the inappropriateness of the wholly male, middle-class composition of the NIC executive. The boycotts and civic struggles had thrown up a whole army of activists most of whom the NIC failed to incorporate within its organisational structures. While this new brand of activists was encouraged to play a local leadership role, there was no attempt to consciously make space for leaders from the working-class conurbations of Chatsworth and Phoenix to emerge as provincial leaders. This neglect persisted throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s and would count as one of the biggest failings of the NIC.

The seeds for the adoption of a new type of alliance politics and new strategies and forms of organisation were sown during the period under discussion. Of particular note were the national anti-

SAIC conference and the ARFC. The joint efforts to support the SAAWU-sponsored Wilson Rowntree boycotts strike also contributed. Women and youth also emerged as two powerful sectors in the resistance. However, the NIC failed to facilitate the coherent emergence of youth, student or women's organisations. It had the opportunity to broaden its own internal structures by attempting to set up branches but failed to do so. While the detentions did disorganise the leadership, it was precisely these detentions which gave them a sense of moral appeal on which they could have capitalised. In the absence of a planned push from the NIC as an organisation, the newly-discovered energies of women and youth activists manifested themselves in a few independent women and youth organisations, but most withdrew from active political involvement. There were two main reasons for this: First, the NIC's level of unpreparedness for this high level of political activism ensured that it was not able to respond appropriately. Secondly, the NIC was unable to influence activities in Chatsworth and Phoenix on a day-to-day level, since the leadership tended to operate largely by "remote control" from the city centre and the middle-class Indian suburbs around Durban.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Revival Of Alliance Politics, 1982-1984

Introduction

In the early 1980s there was a revival of inter-racial alliance politics that culminated in the formation of the multi-class, non-racial United Democratic Front (UDF) on August 20, 1983. A few months before, the Black Consciousness (BC)--orientated National Forum (NF) had been established on the basis of an overt identification with the black working-class. Both these resistance coalitions reflected the need to weld together previously uncoordinated organisations around political issues. The growing politicisation of the black population was evident during this period, and unlike the situation in 1976, Indians were now more in step with resistance against the state. This mobilisation was precipitated by the government's new constitutional proposals, and built on the increasing visibility of civics, the growing politicisation of Indian students and the successful anti-SAIC election campaign. Also, the NIC had started to identify more with the ANC, was popularising the Freedom Charter and had worked with the Release Mandela Campaign. However, conflicts between the NIC and the BC-aligned AZAPO flourished as the two organisations disagreed on the interpretations of, and ideological orientation to, ethnicity, nationalism, class and overall strategy. Meanwhile, Indian conservatives continued to harness state patronage, although their popularity was on the decline during this period.

This chapter examines the formation of the UDF and looks at the role of sporting and religious organisations in the resistance to apartheid. The Million Signature Campaign (MSC), which was the first effort in the 1980s to engage people at grassroots level in a national campaign, is also analysed. We will also evaluate the UDF's strengths and weaknesses in Durban, and look at the domination of the UDF by some NIC leaders. This was said to have contributed to the inefficacy of the organisation in Natal. Lastly, drawing on some of my earlier work, we will examine youth resistance during this period in comparative perspective.

Ideology and the broadening of resistance politics

As both BC and non-racial organisations grew in stature and profile, there was fierce competition over the re-emergent space for anti-apartheid agitation. As the previous chapter illustrated, many activists had limited awareness of ideological differences in the period from 1977 to 1981. However, they now had to choose between Congress and BC, with the latter enjoying a rejuvenation following the release from Robben Island of luminaries like Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley. The conflict between AZAPO and the NIC was so intense that they were unable to unite even around Soweto Day commemorations. AZAPO, who refused to recognise white organisations in the liberation struggle, criticised the leadership of the NIC, saying:

In housing they have established housing action committees with leadership in the hands of the proprietal[sic] and entrepreneurial class. The transport action committees comprise many who have never used public transport in their entire sheltered lives.

The negotiation strategy of the civics was at odds with the non-collaborationist BC bodies. Civic organisations and the issues they addressed were nevertheless important vehicles of expression for the emerging political awareness of many people.

In Bayview, Chatsworth an association was formed to tackle problems like high rents, overcrowding and poor facilities. The NIC's Mewa Ramgobin was guest speaker at the launch, which was attended

by about 500 residents, and a motion condemning the SAIC was passed. However, not all members of the steering committee, which had spent months organising for the launch, supported the choice of a high profile political figure as guest. The majority of Bayview Residents Association (BRA) members later withdrew from the organisation as they felt that it had become too political. Despite these conflicts, civics provided an important avenue through which support was mobilised, and most Indian civics were keen to build links with similar bodies across racial boundaries.

The civics, which were often under the influence of NIC-aligned individuals, waged campaigns against the City Council and mobilised support around specific issues. In 1983 there was a sustained protest against fines that had been imposed on municipal tenants in low-cost housing projects in Chatsworth and Phoenix. These tenants, who were mostly pensioners, had allegedly exceeded a 400 litre-a-day quota while there were restrictions on the use of water in the province. Both the Phoenix Working Committee and the Chatsworth Housing Action Committee organised successful marches of affected residents to protest against the high fines. Civic activists organising in dwellings serviced by communal water meters were able to challenge the municipality as it was unable to accurately record water usage but persisted in handing out fines. When residents did not pay the fines, the Council installed tricklers, devices attached to taps that prevented the free flow of water. This campaign, like many others, made an impact only on a section of affected residents, and therefore there was no widespread mobilisation in the Indian townships. However, while various civic campaigns contributed to the growth and strengthening of civic bodies, Congress activists faced the challenge of linking these local struggles to the broader goal of winning political support.

When trying to shift the attention of residents from civic to political issues, activists encountered difficulty as residents feared repression and were concerned about the Communist links of the NIC. Moderates and conservatives further propagated these fears. The Graphic newspaper claimed that "some of the left leaning types within the NIC either knowingly or unwittingly play the Communist game", and argued that if they did so "intentionally they were the enemies of our people." This concern was echoed by BC bodies, for whom Communism was a foreign, white, and non-African ideology which had to be distrusted. AZAPO, while anti-Communist, made conscious efforts to appeal to workers. They criticised the NIC for the absence of a clear political thrust on the basis of either race or class. AZAPO, however, did not engage in any significant mass mobilisation in Durban and attracted mainly middle-class professionals and students.

A central feature of the civics between 1982 to 1984 was that they were becoming tightly-organised oligarchic structures. The focus had shifted from their operating as mass-based, local civics in 1980 and 1981 to leaders representing their organisations at the umbrella bodies to which they were affiliated. The civic movement, though, had established grassroots strength in several areas and was in a position to negotiate with local government structures. As BC activists were non-collaborationist, they found virtually no expression in the civic movement. Through working with DHAC, Indian and Coloured civics became sensitive to the problems experienced by Africans around housing and forced removals. However, as Ian Mkhize of the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC) recalls, there was a failure "of gigantic proportions" to consolidate a working partnership between DHAC and the African civics under JORAC.

Not all civics were sympathetic to progressive politics. At a meeting of the Newark Civic Association, the NIC's Paul David shared a platform with an Inkatha leader despite the fact that Inkatha disallowed organisations not affiliated to it from operating in KwaZulu. At the meeting the Inkatha leader said: "The first thing was to get people organised whether it was a political party, a trade union, a welfare organisation or a civic association. It will play an important role in our struggle for liberation." It would appear that while some local civic activists were unaware of the difference

between NIC and Inkatha, others opted to remain non-aligned. Meanwhile, the Phoenix Child and Family Welfare Society became more politicised as a result of the assistance they gave to students during their boycott of classes and to residents involved in protests against the municipality. They set up clinics and collected socio-economic data so as to be able to challenge the authorities into providing cheaper rents and better facilities.

NIC support grew during this period and there was a satisfactory attendance at mass meetings, co-operation with African civics, and the reconstruction of ANC history and symbols. The NIC claimed that the "Freedom Charter still reflects the ideals of the kind of country we want." Although it was selective in the campaigns it got involved in, the NIC took a stand on high profile issues: it condemned Israeli attacks on Palestinians, protested at the death in detention of trade unionist Neil Aggett (although only a few Indian workers responded), and spoke out against state harassment. A broad range of organisations co-operated in these campaigns, which laid the foundation for a more consolidated alliance to be formed later. Even though new relationships were forged and new partnerships were explored, the NIC remained dependent on the civics for community involvement.

In 1982 there was a substantial increase in the price of bread. A committee formed to co-ordinate protests against this increase included representatives from the NIC and CHAC. But while the anti-bread price campaign had the potential to win support and move people to action across the race divide, the NIC failed to capitalise on the issue. The NIC took it up only after a group of Chatsworth activists sent a memorandum to its executive, pleading for their involvement. The NIC's slow and unenthusiastic response lost it an opportunity to put to the test its desire for non-racial political co-operation. It was therefore not surprising that letters in the press described the NIC as "ivory tower intellectuals" and raised the question of when they would really get to know their own people, not by condescending speeches from platforms but going to their homes and associating with them in the bars…or was that too grassroots a philosophy for...the NIC?

The debacle over the bread price campaign led to questions from activists on the appropriateness of the NIC leadership and its class and physical distance from the masses they professed to lead. These activists' contention was that the middle-class leadership was unable to see the potential in campaigns that could harness working-class support and participation.

Pronouncements by religious leaders also reflected an incremental rise in political consciousness. Swami Navaler of the Saiva Sithantha Sungum spoke of the need for a "multi-racial community", while the Islamic Council of South Africa stated:

all thinking people and leaders...[should] abandon their double standards and their nationalistic objectives and...consider the human race as one single unit and plan and act in the interests of the human race. Religious organisations were a powerful determinant in the construction of social identities and needed to be won over if a progressive political message was to take root amongst Indians. However, the attempts by the NIC leadership to build relationships with the religious sector were weak, haphazard and ad-hoc. Perhaps one of the most serious organisational blunders of the Indian left was that they largely ignored religion as a social and ideological force.

This neglect was not uniform and some grassroots activists were mindful of the need to build alliances with religious structures. For example, in Chatsworth youth organisations such as Helping Hands were able to develop an alliance with local religious bodies by linking resistance discourse to religious teachings. In developing their strategies for politicisation, activists in some youth organisations were acutely aware of the general apathy towards politics. Therefore many seemingly non-political activities were undertaken in grassroots organisations headed by ANC-aligned activists. One Chatsworth youth leader asserted that: Our attempts to position ourselves closely with religious

organisations wherever this was possible did not happen by accident. It was a conscious strategy based on our reading of popular consciousness. This resulted in sporting events, welfare projects, educational programmes, and helping out at weddings and funerals. Senior activists from within and outside Chatsworth criticised us for undertaking reformist activities that aimed at alleviating the effects of apartheid rather than eradicating it. However, the logic of developing programmes and activities that recognised peoples' consciousness levels eventually began to win currency.

Ironically, this recognition of ethnic consciousness amongst Indians, particularly those of the working-class, did not lead these youth activists, many of whom saw themselves as NIC activists, towards a stronger NIC commitment. Rather they felt that youth organisations should identify directly with the emerging non-racial national youth bodies that would bring Indian youth into contact with their counterparts across the racial-divide. This is how "confidence about non-racialism could be built", activists argued. Furthermore, the strongly middle-class image of the leadership of the NIC did not find favour with youth from working-class backgrounds.

Despite the repression there was growing politicisation among Indians. Some of this was reflected in an editorial in the Leader which said that "the lives of black people were all politics, from the cradle to the grave"; while for whites "party politics was an academic exercise". "For the underprivileged it was the means to privilege". For Indians, sports probably provided the greatest politicisation. At a South African Council of Sport (SACOS) workshop aimed at building organisational coherence, various political concerns were discussed. A resolution was taken to penalise parents who enrolled their children at predominantly white schools as the law required that black children first obtain government permission to study at these institutions. The resolution also affected NIC leaders who had children attending elite institutions. SACOS maintained that their "role in sport must be seen in the context of the social, economic, and political problems confronting the disenfranchised people". In their pronouncements and policy statements, SACOS displayed a principled militancy that belied its status as a sporting organisation. It also played an important role in politicising Indian and Coloured sportspersons. Non-racial sport, as espoused by SACOS affiliates, was enthusiastically embraced by many Indians as they were denied the privilege and opportunities that white sportspersons enjoyed. Students worked closely with the growing sports movement. The UDW-SRC put out joint publications with SACOS, and a meeting to protest against a rebel tour by the British cricket team was attended by about 1000 students.

Despite its solid organisation among Indians and Coloureds, SACOS failed to attract African sportspersons into its fold. It was also unable successfully to translate its political vision to its grassroots Indian sports administrators and sports people. A notable achievement, however, was the merger of the SACOS-affiliated Swimming Federation and the Soweto-based Swimming Association, which resulted in more Africans in SACOS ranks. The merger of the mainly African KwaZulu Football League and the Southern Natal Soccer Board, which had mostly Indian and Coloured members was an opportunity to put into practice its professed non-racialism. Difficulties arose as some Indian players were afraid to go into African townships. The KwaZulu side urged: "Come in your numbers and prove your sincerity and we will accept you." However, some football fixtures did not work out and some African townships were inactive as there was discontent at travelling long distances to play soccer on poor quality fields.

SACOS favoured the politics of AZAPO and the Unity Movement, but when it was under pressure to formalise a relationship with AZAPO, its president said that "SACOS was a sporting organisation and not a political organisation." However, the sports movement maintained the following principles: "non-collaboration, isolation of liberals, recognition of working-class leadership and no ethnic tags." The political distance of the SACOS leadership from the Congress leadership which was

predominant in many African townships resulted in the Indian-led SACOS being viewed with suspicion by many African organisations. This was despite the fact that many Congress activists were involved in the anti-apartheid sports movement in the 1980s.

In keeping with national trends, cultural work in Durban also reflected greater political awareness. A new theatre group's first play was a criticism of repressive establishments. The SAIC elections were the subject of a farce staged at UDW; and another work, Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist, focused on deaths in detention. Off Side, a comedy which attracted full-house attendances, criticised those supporting the constitutional proposals and raised consciousness about the government's agenda. A cultural festival at UDW was held under the theme of redefining culture as "a means of contributing towards meaningful change in South African society" The festival was held despite the Rector's banning of political activity on campus. Such defiance by the organisers reflected the growing resistance sweeping the country and the fact that significant numbers of Indians were being politicised.

Responses to the constitutional proposals

Constitutional developments clearly underlined the dominance of ethnic thinking in the apartheid state, and the complexity of its ethnic order. The proposed constitution had a tricameral, racially divided parliament which sought to win the collaboration of Indians and Coloureds. This reform strategy was regarded by many as a radical departure by the NP from previous political prescriptions. Long before white South Africans sanctioned tricameralism in a referendum on 2 November 1983, the wheels were set in motion for a long and intense campaign for the hearts and minds of Indians and Coloureds. The government hoped to expand its political base by co-opting Coloureds and Indians by giving them limited political rights, while ensuring that political power remained securely in the hands of whites. After two years of intense deliberation, the Presidents Council presented its proposals for constitutional restructuring. The Republic of South Africa Constitution Act of 1983 was rushed through parliament and adopted.

The SAIC was involved in debates about the constitutional reforms. Rajbansi argued that having Indian or Coloured deputy ministers would be pointless, while restrictions still remained on the free movement of Indians in the Free State. Some SAIC members recognised that any reform without African participation was doomed to failure, and said that the removal of discriminatory legislation should be one of the prerequisites for change in South Africa. However, the SAIC was not representative of the Indian community and, with its less than 10% election poll, it lacked credibility. A SAIC by-election to fill the seat of a member who resigned attracted a paltry 1.2% turnout. Meanwhile Indian local government representatives were also under pressure. In Marianhill, for example, an Action Committee successfully campaigned for the resignation of two Pinetown LAC members. There were death threats against some LAC members and in some instances, anger at the "illegitimate" government structures turned to violence.

The SAIC attempted to earn credibility by offering support to Africans threatened with eviction at St. Wendolins just outside Chatsworth, but this offer was rejected. There were suggestions that the SAIC attempts to identify with Africans were based on fear. Indo-African relations, which were not good, were a central concern of many Indians, and were used for various political objectives. In Inanda, authorities threatened to remove approximately 180,000 Africans from land reserved for Indians under the GAA. Indians who owned land were forced to evict African tenants or face prosecution. This exacerbated existing tensions, as we shall see in chapter seven, when Indo-African conflict exploded, causing deep divisions. This fear and tension formed the bedrock of political consciousness amongst Indians and would have far reaching consequences later.

The constitutional proposals created dissent in the NIC, as there was disagreement on whether or not to call for an Indian referendum. By the end of 1983 the NIC remained ambivalent despite support for a referendum by the Natal delegation at a UDF conference in October 1993. However, the government did not entertain the idea of a referendum for Indians and Coloureds, and voters were told that they could express their views in the elections. The NIC recognised that class differences would play a crucial role in determining its strategy around the election:

The groups most vulnerable to co-option are those who are most privileged and therefore who have the most to lose. This new and expanded middle-class may be enticed into sacrificing the long term future for ill-defined immediate benefits. It is our task to expose the apartheid lie and remind Indian and Coloured South Africans that their security and destiny is in national liberation and not ethnic expediency. The NIC's message and the anti-election campaign filtered down to various civil society organisations and contributed to the growing politicisation of Indians.

While the religious sector did not form an overt alliance with the Congress movement, its pronouncements on the constitutional proposals reflected some influence of the anti-election campaign. The Muslim Youth Movement, for example, called for a boycott of any referendum and the election. Later they expelled an Islamic Council member who stood for elections. Even the previously apolitical Hindu movement became involved in the election issue. A senior member of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha resigned when the body refused to take a stand against the election. The Hindu Students Association opposed the constitutional proposals because they said the system it would create would be discriminatory and was therefore contradictory to the Hindu religion. There was a growing consciousness around the constitutional proposals which provided fertile ground for new alliances which would include a wide range of religious, sporting, worker, youth and women's organisations.

The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF)

The call for the formation of a united front was made at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Committee (TASC) conference held in January 1983. Many activists believed that the decision to form a united front was "not a conscious decision taken by the ANC outside or inside" South Africa. Rather it was a result of the "broad talk that was going on" about the need for unity. A delegate at the conference recalled that there was no input from the ANC in exile about forming a front. People merely followed a call made by Reverend Allan Boesak for a united rejection of the constitutional proposals. However, on 8 January 1983 ANC President Tambo stated:

We must organise the people into strong mass democratic organisations; we must organise all revolutionaries into the underground formation of the ANC; we must organise all combatants into units of Umkhonto we Sizwe; we must organise all democratic forces into one front for national liberation.

Soon after the UDF was formed, a debate arose about the compatibility of the front's non-racial principles with ethnically orientated political organisations, like the recently resuscitated TIC and the NIC. Terror Lekota explained that this was a realistic response to apartheid's separation, and was an attempt to bring people into non-racial unity through joint activity. Lekota argued that "you cannot just declare non-racialism, you must build it".

Members of the NIC played leading roles in the UDF's formation. At the TASC conference, Paul David of the NIC motivated for the Front, stating that the NIC and TASC felt a need for broad consultation with all groups, especially after the Labour Party's decision to participate in tricameral elections. Initially Archie Gumede, Jerry Coovadia (NIC) and Virgil Bonhomme from Natal, were elected onto the national steering committee of the UDF, but this committee was slow to get off the

ground. Subsequently, other activists were recruited to revive the initiative in March 1983, and Natal was represented by Zac Yacoob, Yunus Mahomed and Jerry Coovadia, all of the NIC. The UDF's launch in Natal in May 1983 elected the following onto its executive: Archie Gumede as President, Jerry Coovadia (NIC) as Chairperson, Virgil Bonhomme as Vice-Chairperson, Rabbi Bugwandeen (NIC) and Victoria Mxenge as treasurers, Yunus Mahomed (NIC) as secretary. Of the 14 additional members three were DHAC activists, and two others were NIC activists (Paul David and Zac Yacoob). NIC executive members Pravin Gordhan, Mewa Ramgobin, M.J. Naidoo, George Sewpersadh and A.S.Chetty, were banned at the time and could not be elected to the executive, but were involved behind the scenes. However, when Ramgobin's banning was lifted he was elected national treasurer of the UDF. None of these NIC people, all of whom were professionals, were from the major Indian townships of Chatsworth or Phoenix. It is important to examine the circumstances surrounding the formation of the UDF to understand the disunities that later emerged. Jeremy Seekings has questioned why no one from the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), a prominent Charterist union, was elected to the regional executive committee:

I have the impression that there was already some tension between two groups: the first comprised activists mostly from African areas loosely grouped in SAAWU and some youth organisations. The second based in the NIC and DHAC. The first group seems to have been marginal to the formation of the regional UDF. The second group or at least the core of it was later to be criticised of 'cabalism'.

Non-Charterist unions were not affiliated to the regional UDF and no serious attempt was made to encourage their participation. The non-involvement of FOSATU, a major trade union federation, was due to hostility, resulting from the anti-Charterist position taken by its President Joe Foster. The non-involvement of FOSATU limited the UDF's presence in African townships in Durban, where the union federation was well represented. AZAPO rejected invitations to join the UDF, and while rivalry between supporters sometimes led to violence, they occasionally shared platforms and picket lines in the campaign against the elections. Competition for political space in the African areas in the province led to violent clashes between the UDF and Inkatha.

Although Indians were prominent on the regional executive of the UDF, reaction from ordinary Indians was minimal. But after a series of small meetings and workshops, the UDF was launched publicly at a meeting at the Orient Hall in Durban. More than 4000 people attended this joint UDF/NIC meeting to discuss the constitutional proposals. The meeting was given impetus by the arrest earlier that day of prominent NIC leaders. They were protesting outside a meeting at Durban's City Hall addressed by P.W. Botha. A letter writer in a local newspaper praised the 44 demonstrators and commented that "it was interesting to note that the majority of those arrested were all professional men and women well respected by our people". Supporters from Chatsworth and other areas made up a significant proportion of the meeting. The large turnout of mostly Africans and Indians augured well for the development of non-racial actions in Natal. At this stage, the NIC had developed a network of influence that extended beyond the small coterie of Executive members and were therefore able to play a decisive role in the formation of the UDF. As, the connection between the ANC and NIC was becoming clearer, the press used it as evidence that the NIC was not the mouthpiece of the Indian community but a front for the illegal-ANC. One columnist claimed that the Freedom Charter was the bedrock of both the ANC and the NIC and that it was a communist document.

In this period the UDF began a mass media intervention on a scale not seen in the past. It bought advertising space in the commercial press and in regional papers, published its own newspaper (UDF News), used posters, stickers, banners, T-shirts, caps and other paraphernalia. It also began to develop its own capacity to produce media. Alternate, anti-apartheid media began to emerge,

especially from the student sector and this gave the UDF favourable coverage. While these developments were significant, the UDF still could not compete with the state and commercial media in trying to reach black communities. Nevertheless, many of the new youth and civic organisations embraced the UDF. SACOS on the other hand chose to slate "popular fronts that were prepared to work and be led by white liberals". The revival of the TIC, however, was met with unease and many youths saw this as a retrograde step in conflict with non-racialism. This development strained relations further with BC organisations. Significantly, BC groupings did experience a growth in support at UDW, which was seen by some as the unchallenged support base of the NIC. This growth was short lived as the advent of the UDF signalled the decline of BC organisations in the province.

While the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) was a key affiliate of the UDF, the role of women in politics, however, remained stereotypical, even in certain progressive quarters. Ela Ramgobin, a NOW/NIC Executive member, played on the stereotype when she called on mothers, wives and sisters to protest against the new constitution because it would lead to the conscription of their men. Another statement from Congress-aligned women said:

Apartheid has brought nothing but heartache. High rents, increased GST, no houses, forced removals, inadequate and inferior education. These plague us constantly...we have to show our opposition to this...we have to unite as mothers, sisters, wives and friends. We are the backbone and strength of our community.

The image promoted was that of mothers, sisters and wives with a concern for civic issues. When SACOS refused to admit a squash body that did not permit women members, all the male Muslim members of their squash squad walked out in protest. SACOS later relented and admitted the club. Gender inequality reigned supreme notwithstanding the growing politicisation of Indians during this period. The NIC was attacked for its ambivalence and perceived double standards by the Graphic newspaper whose proprietor, Pat Poovalingum, was an election candidate. Adverse comments included the claim that community leaders who had previously worked closely with the NIC were now wary of them, because of their deviation from their stand of non-participation. Letters were published from parents expressing anger at the NIC's role in the 1980 school boycotts, while their own children attended private schools. The Graphic published the views of NIC stalwarts in an attempt to sway the undecided anti-apartheid proponents: The NIC no longer speaks for the masses...because there was an indication that people everywhere would be going to the polls, they were trying to bolster their sagging campaigns with youth elements trying to frighten candidates and voters with shows of force.

While the NIC made sound arguments against voting, it did repeatedly warn about alienating African people. One letter pointed out that it "was clear even to the ignoramus, that the new constitution was nothing else but a recipe for violence and chaos. This was quite evident when 20 million Africans were left out". Part of the NIC's campaign could have been perceived as scare tactics and may have contributed to heightened fears.

Ela Ramgobin warned that the new constitution would conscript their Indian sons to fight against Africans on the border. This would lead to the perception that Indians were the oppressors along with whites. The new constitution provided for conscription of Coloured and Indian youth. The Minister of Internal Affairs said that voting rights must lead to an increase in responsibilities, "which means they will have to defend these rights". Gandhi continued to be a rallying point for the NIC, much to the anger of BC and some activists within its own ranks. In anti-election propaganda, the NIC repeatedly stated that Gandhi would have opposed the elections, and thus implied that all other Indians should follow suit. The NIC placed a full page advertisement asking, "Mahatma Gandhi,

would he have voted? No!". For the NIC, achieving a balance between building non-racialism and responding to fear of Africans appeared to be difficult.

Million signature campaign

In early 1984 the UDF launched its most ambitious project - the Million Signature Campaign (MSC). This campaign, - probably inspired by the UDF's public claim that it had a million members - was the first national effort of the Front. It hoped that the campaign would have organisational and mobilisational benefits. Non-racial teams of activists visited people in their homes, explained the UDF and asked for a signature of support. Curnick Ndlovu, released from Robben Island the year before, was the organiser of the campaign in Natal, assisted by former fellow prisoner, Billy Nair (NIC), Khetso Gordhan (NIC) and Lechesa Tsenoli. The campaign enlisted volunteers from civic, youth and student organisations including NUSAS and AZASO. These volunteers were trained on the arguments of the anti-election campaign, how to conduct house visits, and how to deal with hostility.

In Indian areas, activists had information tables at shopping areas, where they asked shoppers to sign the pledge and a limited number of house visits were also done. New activists, coming mostly from the university student population, were drawn into the UDF by involvement in this work. The high profile nature of this campaign introduced the UDF into Indian areas and helped to allay some of the fears that people had about political involvement. It also allayed the fears of new activists when engaging in political debate with the public. In spite of these small organisational gains, the campaign in Indian areas failed to meet its targets. The prominence of Indian UDF leadership appeared to make no impact on the community at large. At this stage, these leaders began to be more involved in national political work within the UDF and moved away from direct involvement in Indian areas. Visits into African townships were organised, but very few Indian activists joined in this activity. In Durban, a large non-racial group of activists was arrested under the Litter Act during the Campaign and this received sympathy from the public.

Despite the initial excitement generated by the campaign, it never really took off. Seekings reports that only 30 000 signatures (out of the targeted 300 000) were collected in Natal after the first 4 months. Nationally, only 300 000 signatures were collected out of the targeted 1 million. However, organisers of the campaign believed that it helped to strengthen the UDF even though "criticisms were voiced of the alleged domination of the campaign by certain Indian activists". In Indian areas the campaign did not make a significant impact on the UDF's popularity. The one gain was that it provided space for the growing number of youth activists to become involved in a direct political campaign.

Comparing youth resistance

Structural conditions, youth resistance and the boundaries of realistic expectation By the 1980s the conditions in urban areas led to the development of strong sectoral organisations and sites of struggles. Youth and students, for example were actively involved in struggles for better education, while industrial workers were engaged in battles for recognition of their trade unions. These sectors reflected distinguishable sites of struggle, organisational formations and areas of differentiation and discord.

The majority of youth were primary and secondary school students. The age differences between these groups meant different possibilities for co-option by the state, and conversely, conscientisation by the resistance movement. The primary school students generally took longer to grasp political issues and the need for organisation. Their ability to comprehend more complex political questions, such as ideological differences between student movements, was also limited. Racial and other

stratification within the education system ensured primary and secondary school students had an inequitable educational terrain.

Unequal budgetary allocations on a racial basis, a myriad of education departments, racially specific curricula and a lack of non-racial school sporting leagues ensured that there was virtually no interaction by primary and high school students across the racial divide.

Control of Indian and Coloured education was transferred from centrally run educational authorities to the Indian and Coloured houses of the newly established tricameral parliament. African education in the city was divided even further. Townships such as Umlazi and KwaMashu, that were part of KwaZulu, had their schools administered by the bantustan authorities in Ulundi. In the Port Natal Administration Board, African education was administered by the Department of Education and Training, which catered for Africans in "white" or "non-homeland" areas. Education was not compulsory for African children, except at those primary schools "where the school committees requested it". But education was compulsory for Indian and Coloured children up to age sixteen.

The ideological agenda of the state varied under the different departments. The hegemonic actors in the Indian and Coloured school system were preoccupied with maintaining stability. They therefore wished to legitimise participation politics and politicians, and saw the schools as important mechanisms of control. In KwaZulu students were required to take a course, euphemistically entitled "Good Citizenship", which propagated the programme of Inkatha and attacked the efforts of the liberation movement. The education system attempted to indoctrinate children in apartheid values and to legitimise the status quo. Pro-government politicians were invited to school functions; the navy band performed at schools; the South African flag was raised on "historically significant" days; the official national anthem (Die Stem), was taught to students; Afrikaans was a compulsory subject; and so on. Whilst the state's general strategy prevailed in most communities, the ways in which it was applied varied, as did its effects upon students. It was probably least effective amongst African youth, and most effective amongst Indians and Coloureds. This was partly due to the greater militancy in African areas. This also presented a major difficulty in forging non-racial student unity.:

The division of the education system ensured that the struggles amongst black students were also divided. Coloured and Indian resistance lagged behind that of their African counterparts. The president of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS), Lulu Johnson, noted:

Now we are confronted with a situation in which our counterparts in the "Coloured" and "Indian" communities will be expected to show their contribution. Therefore...we must not allow "Coloured" and "Indian" education systems to be treated as separate entities of our struggles.

Nevertheless, Coloured and Indian education remained separate and was noted for its stability. COSAS failed to make significant inroads into both Indian and Coloured areas.

There was growing unemployment in the region among youth, who had the potential of becoming a vital force of resistance or a destructive anti-social force. By 1982 there was acknowledgement by youth leaders that it was necessary to organise unemployed youth. Despite this, African youth focused on educational struggle, since it offered greater mobilisational and organisational possibilities. Furthermore, unemployed youth were very difficult to organise and given their daily struggle for survival, many were not prepared to join youth organisations. However, in numerous situations, the "lumpen youth" were the major force in mini-insurrectionary activity, provoking government accusations that such protests were the work of "out of school thugs" rather than legitimate political protest.

The conditions of unemployed youth also differed across the racial divide. Indian and Coloured youth were more likely to be supported by family incomes than were their African counterparts. There were also fewer and less complicated administrative procedures for Indian and Coloured youth to acquire the meagre unemployment benefits offered by the state. Many African youth who had newly arrived from rural areas, and were in the Durban region without valid documents, generally avoided high-profile political activity lest they be deported back to the homeland areas.

During this period ever-growing material dissatisfaction determined the terrain of resistance. As Mark Swilling wrote:

The new generation of African youth was the product of...a system of education that was designed to train them for wage labour; an economy that could no longer provide them with sufficient job opportunities; and a culture of political quiescence that they had begun to reject.

State strategy was running into several problems, as the contradiction highlighted in the above quotation suggests. The sanctions-hit economy was unable to absorb the large pool of wage labour trainees that were being churned out by the flawed education system. Social indicators in the 1980s also pointed to an increase in youth suicides, alcoholism, drug addiction and gang violence. These social problems were not the preserve of unemployed youth - they prevailed in the society as a whole.

School students and unemployed youth experienced virtually no interaction across the racial divide. However, the gradual relaxation of rigid, racially-based admissions at tertiary institutions and residential segregation offered student activists the possibility of translating their non-racial rhetoric into non-racial action. Tertiary students, the smallest youth constituency, were a significant political force. Intense political activity on campuses led to increasing political awareness and commitment. Colin Bundy suggested that

The political education of school or college students is often spectacularly rapid. Initial involvement over local issues translates into activism that links up with broader, non-educational movements. However, the differentiated socialisation processes experienced by African, Indian and Coloured youth influenced their political perspectives and activities at tertiary institutions. Most African students found Coloured and especially Indian students lacking in militancy, while Indian and Coloured students found African militancy frightening and overbearing.

The political impact of young workers increased steadily after the historic 1973 Durban workers' strikes. In some areas workers served as a vital link between the community-based youth organisations and the trade unions. Some analyses suggested that there were two "poles" to township resistance: youth and the workers. In the 1970s, African workers began joining the militant anti-apartheid trade unions in large numbers. Consequently, some Indian and Coloured workers joined one of the two major socialist-inclined federations, the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

While different strata of youth responded to their specific daily realities, the commonalities that existed across the racial divide, such as unemployment, disenfranchisement, oppressive and restrictive education curricula, and poor life opportunities, offered more than a tenuous possibility for united campaigns among blacks. At the same time, the specific manifestation of these problems ensured that youth solidarity, fought for despite an onslaught of repression, was elusive. Nevertheless, activists in the 1980s had the benefit of being able to draw on a history of resistance and earlier youth activism in Durban.

The formation of the Youth Forum: An attempt at regional co-ordination

In 1982 the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) called on school-leavers to create community-based organisations. After the ANC declared 1981 the "Year of the Youth", a concerted effort was put into building ideological support for young people. Previously some activists had complained that they were regarded merely as a workforce to do the menial tasks of anti-apartheid organising at the expense of organising independent programmes. Natal had the least developed youth organisations. This was a major decline from the 1970s, when Natal was the first region to form a regional youth co-ordinating structure. The destabilising activities of Inkatha, combined with a range of subjective weaknesses within the organisations and their leadership were the main reasons for this decline.

Early in 1983 the Black Development Programme (BDP) of Diakonia, a Christian church agency in Durban, convened a meeting of a wide range of youth organisations. The assembly was called following numerous approaches by individual youth organisations to the co-ordinator of the BDP. He explained that the appeals for help usually revolved around requests for resources and "youth leadership training workshops". This initial meeting attracted about 30 delegates from a broad range of youth organisations. COSAS, though not a youth group as such, also participated in the discussions. Many of the participants came from nascent youth structures or even youth structures that were yet to be created. The ideological and social basis of the different participants was diverse. Some of the groups were church-based, others were social clubs with no political programme nor intention to have one, and the majority were political youth groups which were mostly Charterist-aligned. Before the meeting there had been little emphasis on inter-youth club activity.

The gathering resolved to unite youth groups, and a steering committee was set up to organise a youth leadership training workshop as an initial step in that direction. One of the objectives of the workshop was to break down racial barriers. It was the first time that most of the youth present had spent five consecutive days with contemporaries from other cultural backgrounds. The workshop emphasised that breaking down the structural divisions imposed by apartheid would be a difficult task. The gathering of youth leaders was a novelty, indicating that the substantial exchanges between the rank-and-file members of youth organisations would not be attained easily. For youth who had not yet been recruited into organisations, the problem appeared even graver.

Although broadly sympathetic to the UDF, the Youth Forum (YF) opted not to affiliate to the Front when it was formed in 1983. The YF argued that affiliating the relatively few and new youth organisations would not benefit the UDF. Nor would it be helpful to the formation of a Natal Youth Congress, which was its ultimate goal. A further consideration was the low level of politicisation of the rank-and-file members in these newly formed youth organisations. This indicated that many, especially Indian and Coloured, youth were not ready for affiliation to the UDF. There was a clear difference in the political awareness of leadership and ordinary membership in youth organisations in the Indian and Coloured areas. However, individual youth groups did affiliate to the UDF directly or, in some cases, to both the YF and the UDF. This created a tension between those who had affiliated to the UDF and those who had not. YF and Umkhonto we Sizwe activist, David Madurai, noted:

This was unfortunate since this decision was not based on an antagonism to the UDF; rather, it was predicated on an assessment that certain youth organisations had memberships which were not ready for an overt political profile.

These young activists were beginning to ask questions about ideology, about their history and about strategies for political struggle. The YF attempted to encourage this but also supported the campaigns led by the UDF. The majority of its members were associated with UDF affiliates. The YF's constituency was highly differentiated. There were stark differences in the material conditions confronting the different groups: access to jobs, resources to advance organisation, intensities of

repression, political histories, poverty levels, education systems, recreational facilities, cultural imperatives and so on. In Lamontville, for example, the level of militancy was high and many youths had left to join the ANC in exile. In Umlazi the local Youth League was constrained by Inkatha's attempt to regain the ground it had lost since 1980. The Chatsworth youth structures were operating in less repressive circumstances but lacked a history of progressive mass organisations. Organising in Chatsworth was affected by the greater complacency and political indifference. This was influenced by the fear of involvement in political activity and a lower level of material dissatisfaction as compared to their African counterparts. In the Coloured township of Wentworth, the situation was similar to that in Chatsworth, with probably less fear of repression. However, organisation was constrained by a range of local factors resulting from intensive gang warfare that

divided the youth and cast a shadow of violence and fear over the township.

In January 1984 COSAS convened a national gathering of youth organisations. The YF represented Natal youth. The assembly was one of the first attempts to form a national youth organisation since the banning of the BC-aligned National Youth Organisation (NAYO) in 1977. The conference set in motion the long process towards the formation of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) in March 1987. Some delegates believed that the national body should be formed at that conference. It was decided that this would be a premature move since most of the regions were still weak on the ground. One delegate argued against having organisations with grand national names but with shaky infrastructure at the local level. Durban delegates, including representatives from Indian youth organisations, supported this sentiment enthusiastically.

In 1984 organising youth was neglected in favour of full-scale participation in campaigns against the tricameral parliament and the Koornhof Bills. At local level, day-to-day activities diminished to make space for various tasks around these campaigns and youth co-ordination was badly affected. However, some groups reiterated the importance of sustaining organisation and keeping it on course. In these cases the nurturing of the less politicised youth continued despite the pressing tasks of the anti-election campaign. YF activists argued that mobilisational and organisational imperatives should be balanced, and that it was foolhardy to allow painstakingly-built structures to become enervated through neglect. Organisations that achieved this balance emerged strengthened after the August elections.

In the aftermath of the elections the YF decided to embark on a process of decentralisation to strengthen grassroots structures and encourage sub-regional interaction. These sub-regional experiments offered possibilities for non-racial praxis amongst the various youth groups around Durban which was divided into three sub-regions. The YF promoted democratic practices, accountable and shared leadership, decentralisation of tasks and a greater level of sharing of skills acquired in the process of struggle. Youth leaders saw these organisations as training grounds for developing effective, skilled, well-trained and disciplined youth activists for present and future resistance. The achievement of non-racial youth co-ordination was hindered not only by economic, political and socio-cultural differences among its membership, but also by the deliberate exacerbation of these cleavages by the state. The organisation was further constrained by the commitment of the leadership to creating a participatory approach which would incorporate a large number of youth in the region.

Youth, gender and language

Gender issues were also significant in determining the nature of youth resistance. Young women, historically less involved in overt oppositional activities, increasingly asserted themselves in an urban environment where traditional values and practices were being eroded. Young women were visible in many organisational activities. However, the gender breakdown of youth organisations showed a

disproportionate number of males, although some of the most important and articulate leaders were women.

In certain townships there were near violent confrontations between "comrades" (of both sexes, but especially men) and young women, amid charges that there had been "girls who had been sleeping with [SADF] soldiers". A Durban women's collective wrote:

While women's positions as mothers and mediators in the community brought them into the forefront of struggle, the same cannot be said for young girls. Socialisation and their greater responsibility for household labour militate against girls playing a leading role. One informant said: "With the youth, boys dominate events...The girls do not participate as much as the boys because they have to cook and do housework, and cannot attend meetings late at night because parents worry and think they will get pregnant."

It was suggested that while mothers were creating space for themselves, they may have been limiting it for their daughters. Some Indian women activists found it easier to get parental permission to go to the movies or discos rather than to political meetings. Furthermore, young women were often regarded as impressionable and unreliable. They sometimes became caught in the crossfire, as for example in Chesterville, where girls were accused of spying for the "A-Team" (a vigilante group) and the police. Young girls, marginalised from positions of influence at home and in organisations often stayed aloof from politics, and this made them easy prey for accusations such as those made above. One informant suggested that soldiers were sometimes deliberately spreading such rumours in order to sow conflict and division. However, he conceded that there were also probably cases of young women sleeping with soldiers. This issue would not have affected Indian areas since there was never full scale army occupation. In their rhetoric COSAS and the other youth organisations supported an anti-sexist position. They proclaimed four points to guide them in taking decisions. These were non-racialism, democracy, unity, and non-sexism. In practice this was difficult to implement. Nevertheless, the statement of intent was seen as a positive sign that the emancipation of women would be taken more seriously by resistance organisations. Although racist and sexist notions had permeated the minds of youth, there was hope that in future these limitations would be overcome.

Language barriers formed a major impediment to inter-racial contact. Most of Durban's Indian and Coloured youth were unable to speak Zulu although African activists, at leadership level, were often able to speak English. Several African activists stated that they were not comfortable with speaking English even though they could comprehend. Translation from English into Zulu, and vice versa, was therefore necessary resulting in very long meetings. This became a problem because youth lived in far out areas badly served by public transport. Meetings therefore had to be held over weekends taking leaders away from their constituencies where they had to carry out important grassroots organising. Language as a dividing issue and language as an organisational impediment have not been given sufficient attention in other studies. A deeper understanding of the impact of multi-lingualism on building joint non-racial campaigns and programmes will help us to understand the past and deal with the present.

Conclusion

This period witnessed a shift to the left of many Indian civil society formations. The radicalisation of these organisations created the basis for the emergence of an alliance like the UDF. Some of these shifts were sponsored directly by AZAPO and the NIC, while a fair amount of organisation building was driven by independent local effort. The NIC's profile during this period increased and its stature was boosted. This was aided by the opening up of political space for resistance activity which was

brought about by the constitutional restructuring processes. Some NIC leaders graduated from being provincial leaders to becoming national figures within the resistance movement, particularly within the UDF.

The broad programme of the UDF gave localised youth and civic struggles a broader canvas of resistance. The popularisation of the ANC continued to gain ground with the ascendancy of the ANC's political programme, the Freedom Charter. However, no activists from the Indian townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix were drawn, at any significant level, into the broader leadership of the UDF in the region. The result was that township activists were thus relegated to solely first-level interventions and did not develop broader political skills as a result of exposure to the macro political environment of Natal. The NIC involvement in the UDF already began to cause tensions with African activists who felt marginalised by the dominance of the NIC.

Class divisions amongst Indians shaped different responses to the formation of the UDF and NF. Few Indians gravitated towards these organisations and tended to be mainly middle-class and students. The absence of strong trade unions with Indian membership was a contributory factor. Overall, the failure to draw in the input and support of the trade unions resulted in the limited participation of worker leaders and workers in the UDF leadership in Natal. Furthermore, while organisation might have been strengthened in Indian areas, mobilisation appeared to have dropped during this period with fewer rallies, and less public participation in resistance activity.

The building of non-racialism in practice proved an elusive goal. While the avenues of sport and youth resistance represented the best possibilities for non-racial programmes, in practice the task was confronted by many objective and subjective challenges. The NIC did not engage with either sport or youth organisations in a creative manner, even though these sectors offered the greatest mass involvement. It would appear that the NIC did not wish to invest its energies in organisational processes that it did not directly control. As I will argue later, this approach contributed to the organisational decline of the NIC. During the same period, the state embarked on a vigorous agenda to co-opt Indians. This was reflected at a macro-level with the constitutional restructuring process, and also by an intensification of the state's media strategy. While the UDF and its allies made a gallant effort to counteract the hegemony of the state media, they were unable to stem the ideological impact that the electronic media had. However, the UDF had by now come of age and was ready to confront the anti-tricameral election campaign which I examine later. Before this we must pause to look at the campaign for participation in the elections waged by Indian conservatives, which is examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Politics Of Collaboration: The Campaign for Participation In The Tricameral Parliament

Introduction

The first elections to the Indian House of Delegates (HoD) in the racially segregated tricameral parliament took place on 28 August 1984. The United Nations Security Council dismissed the elections as "null and void". The ANC president, Oliver Tambo, claimed that by supporting the new dispensation Indians would "be selling [their] birthright for a mess of pottage". The crucial feature of the elections, however, was not that of policy differences between the participating parties, but rather the opposing strategies of boycott or participation. Success was assessed not by which party triumphed, but by how many Indians voted.

As Ebrahim Patel explained:

The higher the level of participation in the elections, the more the ruling order is able to claim support for its new deal. A successful and large-scale boycott of the elections reduces that ability and discredits its claim of popular legitimacy.

Gerald Pillay echoed this view, arguing that the absence of a referendum for Indians ensured that the constitution was a fait accompli, since the Indian voter was offered only the option "to take it or leave it". Consequently, the elections were in effect "a debate on the acceptance or rejection of the new constitution and not, as was intended, a communal selection process of the best candidates the community could offer".

This chapter focuses on the activities of those Indians who supported the government's constitutional restructuring programme. It attempts to define who the participationists were and what policies and organisational strategies they employed, and assesses the impact of their activities on consciousness and organisation amongst Indians.

Context

Delimitation commissions, referendum debates, the million signature campaign (MSC) and a general upsurge in political activity at national level characterised the months preceding the elections. While there was significant interest in the elections, there were many who distrusted the intentions of the government. The economic crisis that gripped South Africa weakened the government's credibility. Increased sales tax, rising food costs, housing shortages and growing unemployment created significant material dissatisfaction among the lower middle-class and working-class Indians. For example, in 1984 some 20,000 Durban families were registered on housing waiting lists. Eighty per cent of those applying for houses earned less than R250 a month, but houses were sold to the highest bidders. The total amount allocated by the state for housing had decreased by R57,680,200 in 1983. Consequently, many working-class Indians had spent several years on the City Council's housing waiting lists, and housing was certainly the most important concern amongst the working-class during this period. Unemployment was equally an index of the crisis. One survey found that apartheid practices (28.8%), the economic situation (26.5%) and housing (11.6%) were considered the most pressing problems. Between 1975 and 1981 the number of jobs for Indians in non-agricultural sectors had declined by 43,891 and 23,926 jobs were lost in the trade and accommodation services sector alone. Moreover, between June 1982 and June 1983, recession bit

deeper into the manufacturing industry, which employed almost 40% of working Indians, and 563 Indian workers were retrenched. Subsequently, there was a discernible rise in Indian worker militancy: the average number of workers on strike per year grew from 180 between 1975 and 1980 to almost 2,000 in 1981 and 1,170 in 1982.

The majority of Indians displayed indifference and neutrality towards the macro-political restructuring that was being implemented. As noted in chapter two, it was only in the late 1960s that Indians were accepted as second class citizens. Prior to that, while sharing with all blacks the anxieties of urbanisation, forced removals and other vagaries of apartheid policy, Indians also lived with the constant threat that they could be repatriated. Preceding the formal application of apartheid in 1948, Indians in Durban had to contend with the "wilful ambiguity of the English in Natal". It was therefore expected that many of the elderly who had lived through the socio-political upheavals of the past might view the new constitution as a progressive step.

Class distinction was an important political determinant. Working-class Indians were deeply concerned about their security, but there was also a stronger level of participation and desire to understand the complexities of the political process by large numbers of working-class people than has been suggested by Pillay and others. The argument that the "hothouse of political opinion" was the rapidly growing middle-class, however, does hold true in terms of leadership of the political organisations. By 1984 the Indian middle-class extended substantially beyond the trader component and encapsulated a growing sector of university-trained professionals. It was this class of persons who were in the forefront of debates on the appropriate approach towards the constitution and the elections. Indian academics, in the main, remained politically aloof.

Available political data provided an inadequate guide to how the elections might proceed. Local elections and elections for the government-created South African Indian Council (SAIC) in November 1981 had seen a rejection of participatory politics. A survey conducted by the state-sponsored Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in September 1983 found that a substantial majority of Indians favoured participation, but that many were anxious about the exclusion of Africans. These findings were disputed by the NIC and others "as the surveys were conducted at a time when the complex proposals and their implications were not fully understood by the respondents". A March 1984 HSRC national survey of 1,406 Indians found that 48.3% were satisfied with the course of events in South Africa and 45.8% believed that the general political situation had improved in recent years. Almost 45% of Indian respondents believed that their own attitude towards whites had changed positively.

Almost 50% felt that the Prime Minister had fared relatively well or excellently during 1983 and expressed support for him as South Africa's political leader. Botha received more support (41.5%) than all the other candidates combined. When asked to restrict their choice to an Indian leader, Rajbansi received the strongest support (14.4%) followed by J.N.Reddy (11.3%), Pat Poovalingum (3.3%), George Sewpersadh (3.1%) and B. Dookie (3.0%), while 9.5% of the respondents chose various other Indian leaders (the highest level of support being 1.1%). Almost 24% were uncertain or did not know, while 19.1% claimed that there was no Indian person whom they could name as leader. 10.7% did not answer the question and 2.5% indicated that no Indian was acceptable as leader. The survey also found that Indians considered poverty and unemployment (31.7%), the government's race policy (19.6%) and "Black nationalism of the Black Power type" (18.0%) as the three greatest threats. 30% of the respondents felt that Africans should not participate in the same government with whites, Coloureds and Indians, 56% were opposed to this view, while 13.5% were either uncertain or did not know. On the question of the new constitution, 16.7% accepted it completely, 40.4% accepted it partly, 14.8% rejected it completely, and 28% were undecided. The HSRC concluded that

57% of the Indian respondents accepted the new constitution at least in part, and that 30% felt that there was growing support for it. With regard to group name preference, almost two-thirds indicated that they preferred to be known as South Africans and only 19% considered themselves Indian.

These findings were dismissed by the Indian left as government propaganda. While there was probably some manipulation of the data accompanied by problems with interviewing in the first instance, these findings were probably closer to reality than was originally thought. For example, the survey indicated that there was little evidence of any large-scale support for a particular political party/group: 7.3% supported the SAIC, 4.3% the UDF, 3.9% the NIC, 3.2% Solidarity, 1.9% the National Peoples Party, while 3.5% supported other Indian parties including the TIC, 14.2% the NP, 5.7% the PFP, 0.6% the ANC, 0.7% the CP, and 0.6% the NRP. 34.9%, 11.6% and 7.5% of the respondents respectively indicated that they did not support any party, were uncertain, or did not answer the question.

A poll by The Star newspaper in 1981 found that 50% of Indians were undecided and 24% would vote for the anti-participationist NIC if they could vote for a democratic parliament. Another commentator suggested that the vast majority fell between the right-wing SAIC and the left-wing NIC, and that there are "perhaps half-a-million or more people - whose views on the constitution are not known". Understandably, the specificity of the "first election to parliament" for Indians, with its concomitant dangers, suggested extreme uncertainty.

Bhadra Ranchod, a government supporter, noted that the tricameral proposals predictably had not received "the blessing of radicals" like the NIC, as "nothing short of one man, one vote (irrespective of race or sex) in a unitary state would satisfy them." He noted that opinion polls had indicated that this group was a minority, but acknowledged that:

The majority [of Indians]...displayed little enthusiasm for the plan. What worries moderates is that the Group Areas Act and race classification...form the cornerstones of the new dispensation. A positive response could...be interpreted as...support for racial discrimination.

Such observations imbued the NIC with political optimism in its capacity as the major anti-election protagonist and it was confident that the majority of Indians would shun participation. Participationists, however, displayed an equal confidence that a majority would vote.

The proposed Indian chamber was to contain 45 seats, with 5 being nominated by the victorious political parties. (See Table 5.1) Chapter three showed how the SAIC election in 1981 encouraged the growth of only a few parties. Party politics had been relatively unfamiliar to conservative Indians since the take-over of the NIC in the 1940s by a radical leadership who rejected political accommodation with the government. Lawrence Schlemmer noted that the "parties had not yet colonised political territory". During the run-up to the tricameral elections, a rash of parties emerged, and a flood of candidates switched parties to secure nomination as election candidates. The parties were small in size and influence, displayed few concrete policy differences, were sometimes only regionally based, and some appeared to be little more than a 'one-man show'. (See Table 5.2)

Karl Magyar remained unconvinced of the higher quality of candidates put up by the various parties (a reference to an improvement from the SAIC candidates in terms of educational qualifications, public standing, public service, and general political acumen). He commented that: "After six months of elite recruitment by Indian parties the dearth of articulate spokesmen for a wide spectrum of ideological positions has become evident".

Few candidates believed that participation, as a political strategy, was the most constructive path for Indians. Candidates' manifestos, their statements to newspapers and their activities in religious,

cultural, sporting and other organisations all demonstrated ambivalence. This was verified in discussions with candidates and their campaigners. In some 2,000 houses I visited (advocating non-participation) during the period under review, Indians across class, socio-linguistic and religious lines repeatedly stated that candidates were intent upon "feathering their own nests". Yunus Carrim concurred with this view: A desire to serve the community is by no means a strong motivation for most of those taking part in the HoD. Many...suddenly surfaced on the eve of the August 1984 election. They were not known to have served the many welfare and voluntary organisations in the community. So the suspicion deepened that they were in the system to serve their own interests.

Carrim conceded, however, that:

There were those...who believed they could use the HoD to meet the community's needs...draw in Africans, and create a single non-racial parliament. Many of the candidates had some claim to community service or group leadership. Some had held office in religious, sporting and welfare organisations while others had been associated with conservative civic organisations that supported participation in Local Affairs Committees (LACs). However, all appeared to have an accommodationist approach in their dealings with the white power structure. Many had previously worked within government departments and had associations with the discredited SAIC and LACs. Five parties contested the 1984 HoD election: the two main ones being Solidarity and the National People's Party (NPP) (See Table 5.3). Of the five, only the tiny National Federal Party (NFP) had fought an election before. All these parties actively sought to recruit uncommitted social luminaries ascribing high eligibility to academics, professionals, "businessmen", representatives of various religious denominations and those of previously excluded socio-linguistic groups.

"National People's Party or National Party's People?"

The NPP was formed by Amichand Rajbansi, chair of the previously nominated SAIC, after the SAIC election in November 1981, when he drew together a number of independents and two members of the National Federal Party. Thereafter the NPP controlled the SAIC, thus having access to a range of state resources and privileges. Several critics suggested that this take-over had enabled the NPP to immerse itself in the politics of patronage. There were allegations that the party was serving the interests of the National Party government rather than those of the Indian constituency to which it claimed allegiance. Several defectors from the NPP suggested that Rajbansi's authoritarianism made the party unattractive and prevented it from becoming truly democratic with grassroots participation. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Alleged Irregularities in the House of Delegates (the James Commission) vindicated these claims, describing Rajbansi as an "exorbitantly ambitious man" and further recommended that he should not be allowed to hold public office.

Both the NPP and the SAIC lacked credibility amongst Indians across the class divide and criticism of the SAIC's take-over and handling of education and social welfare was simmering. In particular, the SAIC had severely antagonised many in 1983 when it assumed control of Indian education from the central government. The middle-class teaching fraternity strongly attacked this development. The Indian teachers' union, the Teachers Association of South Africa (TASA), had instituted a petition campaign against Rajbansi's "interference" in Indian education. In addition, the SAIC's ambiguous pronouncements about the possibility of a referendum to test Indian opinion on the constitution did little for the image of the NPP. As the majority party in the SAIC, the NPP was viewed by its critics as the prime collaborator with the government. Faced with the depth and intensity of public opposition, however, it refused to endorse the proposals and publicly commit itself to participation. The head of the ANC research department in London, Frene Ginwala, noted that:

Initially, [the NPP] suggested that participation should be conditional on the removal of discriminatory legislation and restrictions on the free movement of Indians within South Africa. Throughout 1983, it failed to make an unequivocal commitment. The Pretoria regime, aware of Indian sentiments, back-tracked on the initial suggestion that following the white referendum, Coloureds and Indians would be allowed a similar opportunity to express their views.

After much stalling, the NPP made an unconvincing and unsuccessful call in favour of a referendum for Indians. This move further served to alienate moderate sections of the middle-class. During 1984, the NPP maintained that while they did not support the constitution, they could exploit the inherent structural weaknesses and impact on government policy and thinking. Rajbansi claimed that he wanted to see which State President "who wants to win international support, [will] overrule 157 MPs. He may do it once or twice, but not ten times in a row." At his party's few election rallies, Rajbansi also attempted to reassure audiences that the HoD would oppose all discriminatory legislation. However, he admitted that the all-white House of Assembly could "regularly outvote us, and deadlocked issues, matters and bills that we reject can be adjudicated by the President's Council where we will be outnumbered." He suggested that the majority party in the HoD should "not regard itself as the governing party but as the opposition...the whole House of Delegates must be the opposition".

Despite these constitutional defects, the NPP justified its continued participation by pointing to the failure of protest or boycott politics, insisting that with "prevailing conditions militating against such tactics, we are duty bound to utilise as many of the legal platforms or rostrums as possible". Rajbansi vigorously rejected the accusation that he was "selling out" by supporting Botha's plans. He argued that "it is better to fight through the ballot than through the bullet". Dismissing the NIC and its supporters as "slogan chanters", he argued that "the proof of the pudding was in the eating", and that the new constitution must be tried out. This metaphor was contested at NIC rallies. One NIC supporter stated that "if you saw the pudding being baked, as people were able to see the new constitution developing, then it is unnecessary to insist upon trying it if you know the ingredients are going to cause constipation". The exchanges intensified as the elections approached. In the last week Rajbansi called on the NIC to urge their supporters to spoil their ballot papers rather than boycott the elections. The NIC dismissed his call as absurd, claiming that it would have involved weeks of explanation and canvassing. It is unlikely that the NIC would have seriously considered this suggestion even if it had been made earlier. One survey did show that if the NIC participated it was likely to emerge as the majority party, but with less than a fifth of the votes. Had its candidates stood on the basis that if elected they would not take up their seats, the NIC vote would have doubled, but a larger percentage would still have abstained. These opinions might have been different if the NIC had reversed its stance and campaigned differently.

Anthony Lemon suggests that despite its shortcomings, the NPP entered the election campaign with the highest level of grassroots organisation, claiming that some NPP members had fought previous elections and thus probably had better organisation on the ground (though not necessarily more support) than did Solidarity or other new and virtually unknown parties. However, it was patronage politics which gave Rajbansi and other NPP candidates the edge over other participationist parties. Candidates across the party spectrum promised people houses, business licenses and other favours in return for their support. Canvassers were also promised jobs in the expanded bureaucracy to be created soon after the elections. Some canvassers claimed that the NIC could offer them nothing while the NPP and Solidarity could offer them jobs or "at least access to jobs". These assertions were later validated by the James Commission's findings. Consequently people who supported the elections were more likely to do so as a result of identifying with a particular candidate rather than with any discernible political ideology.

The NIC drew thousands of people to "Stop Rajbansi Now" meetings in 1983. The angry participation of people, including NIC supporters, ensured that Rajbansi would not attend. While the NIC urged Rajbansi to "face the people", their meetings were conducted in a manner which made him afraid to do so. The meetings drew attention to corruption in the SAIC and to their unpopular involvement in education and social welfare. It was against this background that the NPP's main rival, Solidarity, entered the political arena.

"Solidarity"?

Formed in February 1984, the Solidarity Party attracted a sprinkling of intellectuals and community figures with greater credibility than NPP members. Ginwala observed:

Not entirely coincidentally, whilst the [South African Indian] Council members were hesitating and expressing...a notional concern for the views of the community, a new party was launched rejecting the need for a referendum and...committed to fighting the elections and joining the House of Delegates...its founders claimed they would offer 'clean government' in contrast to the shenanigans of the old Councillors. Solidarity members included several previous participants in government-created structures. While many regarded this as proof of collaboration, some within the middle-classes viewed it as leadership with experience. Solidarity leader Dr. J.N. Reddy, a successful businessman, was chair of the SAIC until Rajbansi manoeuvred him from power. The national chair of Solidarity, Pat Poovalingum, a lawyer, publicly expressed his pride in the white soldiers who were fighting Namibians, claiming them as "my boys". He earlier accepted nomination to the President's Council on the basis that he believed Africans would be included, and resigned when they were not, but still advocated participation in the constitutional process that formalised the exclusion of Africans. Solidarity also enlisted the campaign assistance of experienced political strategist, Rowley Arenstein, former Communist Party member and adviser to Inkatha.

Solidarity's launch excited some interest and support, primarily from the small Indian bourgeoisie and from individuals who were part of the upper and lower strata of the middle-class. The Solidarity Party was overwhelmingly middle-class in composition, and its programme reflected a preoccupation with the virtues of capitalism. It appeared to have powerful financial backing, resulting in accusations that it was being funded and aided by the state. Solidarity denied this claiming that the campaign was funded solely by personal contributions. Its wealth was evident in the lavish nature of some of its propaganda, the quality of which was superior to and more expensive than that of the NPP. Solidarity's message had appeal among both the bourgeoisie and sections of the working-class. The party promised "prosperity and more jobs"; "a better education"; "improved social welfare services"; and "houses at reasonable prices". Solidarity's Eight Point Programme declared its total opposition to apartheid, to conscription of Indian youth, and to political interference in the administration of professional matters such as education and social welfare, as well as support for economic growth through foreign investment, the removal of "all racial constraints in the free enterprise system", improvement of the quality of life for all, and a clean and honest administration.

The anti-conscription stance was significant given that Pik Botha, a senior cabinet minister, had earlier confirmed that "if this constitution is accepted, the same provisions with regard to military service will apply to Coloureds and Indians as it does to whites." The NIC had already prioritised this as a key issue that would turn Indians away from the constitution, declaring that the elections would bring "fake votes" but "real bullets". NIC fieldworkers assessed that the full page anti-conscription adverts taken in the major Sunday newspapers on 12 August 1983 had a powerful effect. The NIC asked Indians "will you baton charge, teargas and sjambok our people?" and "Will you point guns against fellow Indians, Coloureds and Africans, when we struggle against inferior education, high rents, removals, low wages, pass laws, security laws, etc.?" The NIC consistently pointed out that the

"Reddys, Rajbansis and Hendrickses are saying that they will stop conscription until there's total participation by all," but in reality "Indians and Coloureds will be powerless to stop invasions into sovereign neighbouring states" and "will be powerless to stop compulsory border duty for our youth." Rajbansi accused the NIC of misleading Indians by suggesting that they would be conscripted if they supported the elections. He maintained that conscription would be supported only after equality was extended to all people. The NIC, observing that both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan, had said that with votes comes border duty, retorted that the NPP leader was "either politically dishonest or incredibly naive". However, some candidates from both major parties supported conscription because, amongst other reasons, it would enhance the prospects of jobs for Indians in the armed services.

Like the NPP, Solidarity was committed to working within the new constitution, but it claimed that this would not prevent it from putting forward demands for more fundamental democratic change. It further professed that the constitution was a move towards dialogue and reconciliation, arguing that the proposals reflected an increasing awareness within South Africa of the need to share power and divide responsibilities more broadly. Once the process of change had been initiated, they predicted it would be irreversible. At the same time, like the NPP, Solidarity stressed the inadequacy of the new constitution which, according to the party secretary, Mahmoud Rajab, was "structured on a racial and unequal basis and because it makes no provision for black representation". Instead, Solidarity advocated the alternative of "a single standard of decency, in the preservation and protection of dignity and human rights," and committed itself to working for the fundamental freedoms of all individuals. Solidarity, aware of the NIC's relatively popular support amongst Indians, attempted to maintain a close proximity to NIC philosophy, pointing out that "the political cultures in the Indian community differ more in their strategies of opposition to white racial domination than in their main political ideals". According to Solidarity, this is what distinguishes "critical participation with rejection [from] active boycott." Solidarity was competing to attract the same groups and individuals who supported the NIC, while the NPP placed emphasis on consolidating their support among the patronage clients of its various candidates and establishing new patronage relationships. Nonetheless, in formulating its discourse, each party took as its point of reference the anti-constitution campaign in general and the NIC in particular.

Like the NPP, Solidarity made hyperbolic comparisons and unrealistic claims about what could be achieved under the new constitution. Rajab summarised the party's arguments as follows:

Acceptance of office under the new constitution does not imply the abandonment of our basic aim, which is the attainment of a fully democratic South Africa, but with safeguards for minorities. Second, participation will lead to the development of a strong organisation of the Indian people...by using the real powers given to it under "own affairs", Solidarity will...bring real benefits to its people in the spheres of education, housing, social welfare, culture and local government. Solidarity will oppose all reactionary legislation and will use the chamber as a platform for an integrated, democratic South Africa. Solidarity claimed that the boycott strategy had achieved little or no structural change in the lives of Indians. "White power", it argued, "is well organised and determined; and civil disobedience and boycott have no prospects of success."

Solidarity, like the NPP, deliberately misled their electorate by suggesting that the constitution contained significant loopholes which could be exploited. In contrast, NIC spokesperson Dr. Farouk Meer later noted that the HoD "has inherent structural limitations. It is a constitutional trap…and even if there were forty-five Einsteins participating in it, they will not be able to overcome these limitations". Solidarity denied that its involvement in parliamentary politics was an endorsement of Indians sharing responsibility with whites and Coloureds for the oppression of Africans. The party

chair gave the example of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP), arguing that although it had been in parliament for many years, it had always opposed laws affecting Africans. Participation was characterised as the pursuit of peaceful change, and boycott was condemned as "intransigence which will not hasten peace, rather it will hasten violence". This gave ammunition to the state in its repressive assaults against the UDF and the NIC, and was particularly significant since Durban became the frequent target of ANC bomb attacks in 1984.

Unlike the NPP, Solidarity attempted to take seriously the need for internal party democracy. It portrayed Rajbansi as a villain and dictator and Reddy as a respected and dignified leader. NIC activists dismissed Reddy's attempt to distance himself from Rajbansi's politics:

Rajbansi and Reddy are the fruits of the same tree of collaboration. The only difference is that Rajbansi is in the advanced stages of rotting, while Reddy is steadily decomposing. It's only a matter of time before he reaches the same stage of corruption.

Nonetheless, many people believed that Solidarity was likely to perform better because it could claim a higher calibre of candidates. Despite the similarities in political programmes and propaganda, Solidarity believed that it could challenge the NIC as the major political force amongst Indians, a belief based on the fact that the NIC's presumed support was untested, hardly visible and not organised in formal party structures. Furthermore, while Solidarity could anticipate a positive media profile, the NIC could expect the opposite, particularly from the state-controlled electronic media. The state propaganda news-sheet, Phoenix, targeted at Indians and distributed freely to Durban homes, dedicated various issues in 1984 to not only supporting participation but lambasting the NIC as communist puppets who could not even follow the lead of President Machel in opting for negotiations and thereby signing the Nkomati Accord.

Solidarity leaders dismissed the anti-election boycott as a "futile dream of grandeur". They also attacked NIC/UDF support for economic sanctions, arguing that such actions "would hit Indians and other black workers harder through increased unemployment". Solidarity attempted to make unemployment a major campaign issue. As Reddy remarked: "With increasing computerisation the good days when white-collar jobs for Indians were abundant were fast disappearing". He stressed that unless Indian leaders accepted the challenge facing them and found ways of creating jobs the situation would become desperate. Rejecting sanctions, as advocated by the NIC and its allies, Solidarity believed that foreign investors "should enter into partnerships with Indian, Coloured and black businessmen".

The government favoured Solidarity, allowed them more television time, and followed their counsel in not holding referendums for Indians and Coloureds. It was evident that the government felt that Solidarity had a better chance of projecting a credible image and thus undermining NIC's political ascendancy. At an NPP meeting, an undercover special branch agent, condemned the detention of UDF leaders and criticised the NPP for collaborating with the government. This was simply a ploy by a new agent to gain acceptance among the resistance organisations. However, it seems unlikely that the state strategists would have condoned a similar intervention had it been a Solidarity meeting. The government was intent on working with Solidarity and its leader Reddy, who was already serving the Prime Minister as an economic advisor, and thus gently undermining Rajbansi and aggressively tarnishing the NIC. Pillay lamented that it was unfortunate that the "propaganda machinery of the government" failed to hear the opposition of the non-participationists. They simply dismissed them as "radicals", "destabilisers of the country", "underminers of law and order" and "supporters of violence".

The Independents

The Independents held few meetings and were an almost invisible sector of participants in the election process. Of the 167 candidates nominated for the HoD, 76 were Independents and thus became a potentially important element in the campaign. Because a substantial number of the votes cast were those of relatives, friends and "clients" of candidates, rather than grassroots supporters, the larger number of candidates meant an incrementally higher percentage poll. Observations at various polling booths by NIC activists suggested that at least 50% of the votes cast fell in this "family and friends" category. Many of the Independents were formerly members of the SAIC, and while their policies were not noticeably different from those of Rajbansi, they preferred to distance themselves from him since his corrupt business and political dealings had proved to be an embarrassment. For example, his monopoly over the granting of butcher shop licenses was ridiculed in cartoons, slogans and songs.

Some candidates chose to stand as Independents only after failing to be nominated by the registered parties. Others were wholly new to politics, and of these many did little or no campaigning. Predictably, 39 candidates lost their nomination deposits in the elections, causing the state to earn R15 600 in forfeited fees. One Independent, A.H. Seedat, made electoral history in South Africa by polling only one vote. Election opponents later cited these facts as evidence that the election had degenerated into a farce: "Independents were never consistent, never Independent". The Independents were primarily middle-class, but included a sprinkling of lower middle-class, retired and unemployed people. With few exceptions, their campaigns were unsophisticated and did not promote any long-term political views or initiate any constituency organisation. They lacked a vision of how to influence people's consciousness; their organisational strategy centred around family and personal contacts. In most cases, lack of campaign resources severely hampered their attempts to recruit support.

Nine Indian members of the predominantly Coloured Labour Party stood as Independents, but only one came from Durban. This annoyed the government since it contravened the Prohibition of Political Interference Act, which banned racially mixed political parties. Apart from these nine exceptions, there was little interaction between the Coloured and Indian participationists. The failure of Coloured and Indian Independents and parties to have any serious joint strategy meetings reflected badly on the participationists. It was a confirmation of isolationist ethnic politics in practice and did not augur well for smooth alliances in the new tricameral parliament.

Overall strategy of the participationists

Conservative Indians began preparation for a possible election before the white referendum of 2 November 1983. Nevertheless, their electoral inexperience and lack of popular support ensured that their campaigning would be arduous. In a Pietermaritzburg survey on Indian attitudes to the new constitution, conducted six weeks prior to election day, 87.5% of the registered voters stated their intention to abstain from voting. Of these, 57% said that the elections would "make no difference", 15.8% said they were "boycotting" the elections, and 12.8% said they were "too busy" to vote. While no equivalent study exists for Durban, observations made at that time suggest that attitudes were similar to those in Pietermaritzburg.

As suggested above, many of the candidates did not feel a strong commitment to their parties, often defecting to other parties in search of a more secure nomination or a more hopeful seat. For example, Ronnie Bandulalla, a NPP stalwart whose nomination was not guaranteed, defected as soon as he secured a nomination from Solidarity. Lemon suggests that such defections might be indicative of a "village politics" mentality pervasive amongst Indians, or evidence that attractive parliamentary salaries were the prime motivation for many candidates. Carrim believes that financial rewards were indeed the major factor: The salaries, perks and power that go with...positions in the HoD constitutes

potential for corruption. This is so for [those] whose qualifications and skills would not have secured for them jobs of equivalent reward and power in the wider society. They simply do not have the breeding and panache to make MPs. But there is a sense in which they feel that they have a right to these rewards as a recompense for their unpopularity and vulnerability in the community.

Many a participant would say, "well if it's not us it will be somebody else" or that "there will always be someone willing to do it and it should rather be me because I can do it the best", as justification for participation.

The NPP and Solidarity each spent approximately R1million on their campaigns. Each candidate spent about R10 000. Some candidates spent as much as R500 on a one-hour aeroplane display which carried self-serving, predictable banners such as: "Vote for Kassie Ramduth on Tuesday". Little emphasis was placed on participation as a strategy other than in the few Solidarity and NPP newspaper advertisements. However, the combined endeavours of the candidates and the boycott lobby ensured an unprecedented level of political campaigning amongst Durban's Indians. "Never before has this community been inundated", observed Pillay, "with such a barrage of political views from both protagonists and antagonists of the new constitution". The two months preceding the campaign saw "incessant propaganda", mainly in the Indian press, and "this had led to a political conscientising of a hitherto mainly apolitical community".

Despite the similarity in their party platforms, the NPP and Solidarity differed in their organisation and mobilisation strategies. Solidarity was marginally more open than the NPP in its campaign strategy, and held more public meetings, although many were restricted to specially invited guests. The candidates' meetings were often confined strictly to local constituents, and were generally closed to NIC members, although NIC sympathisers (usually low-profile) in most of these areas guaranteed that NIC supporters were able to attend and challenge the speakers. Solidarity and the NPP displayed great skill in manipulating public functions. For example, they would set up questions from the floor so that invited speakers could make expanded speeches, tactics which suggested a lack of confidence in their chosen political direction, and their own ability to defend that position in public.

In the first days of Solidarity's existence, as it set up its branches, the party elected people whom they did not know personally as office bearers. As a result, NIC activists easily infiltrated Solidarity, although this was not an official or widely utilised NIC strategy. For example, the Chairperson and Secretary of Solidarity's Bayview branch were initially NIC members. When Solidarity discovered this, the branch re-organised and used the defunct, conservative Bayview Civic Association (BCA) as a base. The BCA had not held a public meeting in almost a year but it held a clandestine meeting with about thirty people crammed into a small back room of a local pub. The civic meeting was abruptly adjourned and was transformed into the re-launch of the local Solidarity party branch. Most of those present did not know they were attending a Solidarity meeting. The NIC activists present were cognisant of Solidarity's intentions because they had an intelligence source from within Solidarity. As on other occasions, questions posed by NIC members led to the disruption of the meeting.

Infiltration of meetings was part of the NIC's strategy, and it was left to local branches and supportive local organisations to undertake such action. The anti-participationists decided that it was important to conduct themselves in an unthreatening, persuasive manner at meetings. For example, in response to the targeting of the middle-class by participationists, NIC activists - whose normal attire was mainly jeans, takkies (trainers) and t-shirts - frequently dressed formally when attending candidates' meetings and used language trimmed of radical rhetoric. These efforts were not intended to disrupt meetings, but rather to get an inside track on the parties' campaigns. More importantly, meetings were used as a forum to raise well argued criticisms and questions which would sow doubt

in the minds of those present, and so win over those who were wavering. It was recognised that vigorous or unruly agitation at such meetings could have lost, rather than won, allies. There were, however, many cases when members of the public who were not committed to local NIC party discipline would raise issues in an emotional and aggressive manner. A few NIC members were also guilty of this conduct. Sometimes such attacks were of a personal nature since many of the candidates had blemished records in their public life.

The attendance of NIC supporters as well as many sympathetic outsiders led to Solidarity and NPP meetings being restricted to those with invitations, thereby ensuring that the participationists' campaigns were closed to democratic involvement. In contrast, the NIC and the UDF maintained an open door policy, and even invited HoD candidates to present their cases at public rallies. A few Independent candidates took up the gauntlet, and whilst they were treated with courtesy by the NIC organisers, they were usually ridiculed by the audience at these gatherings. Solidarity and the NPP chose not to attend Congress meetings even when invited. However, in one instance Solidarity's Dr. Reddy agreed to debate with NIC executive member Billy Nair, who had recently been released after twenty years' imprisonment on Robben Island. This debate, at the predominantly white University of Natal, had little impact on Indian consciousness. Of greater importance was a television debate which involved Solidarity's Poovalingum and the NIC's Dr. Farouk Meer. Poovalingum's major line of attack was to try to link the NIC with the ANC and therefore with the armed struggle. This line of argument served to frighten people from becoming actively involved in NIC structures, but did not result in a concomitant identification with the "non-violent" participationists.

The participants in the elections attempted to portray the boycott lobby as supporters of violence, thus playing on the widespread, erroneous romantic belief that Indians have a cultural propensity for pacifism. State officials invited to speak at gatherings of conservative Indian organisations frequently referred to this propensity. The history of Mahatma Gandhi, who formulated his philosophy of Sathyagraha (passive resistance/soul force) in South Africa, reinforced this myth. The participationists believed they could turn public opinion against the anti-election lobby by portraying it as violent, an image that was consistently supported by the media. Clearly, the view that non-violence is intrinsic to Indians is fallacious and is based on racist stereotypes which have gained some currency among Indians themselves. The notion of the non-violent Indian would deter recruits to the ANC's military wing, especially since by 1984 over 500 Indians were involved in ANC operations directly or indirectly inside and outside the country. Although Gandhi played a considerable part in constructing an Indian political philosophy, there was no reason to believe that Indians would remain non-violent in all possible circumstances. In any event, Gandhism had failed to prevent violence in the independence campaign in India. The history of India's own political development, including the recent rise of a militant Hindu fundamentalism, is laden with violence. In reality, the pressures of urban existence ensured that Indians were (and are) as peaceful or as violent as any other people living under similar material and political conditions.

As was commonplace in South Africa during this period, support for the armed struggle or "violence" was equated with support for communism. NIC supporters and activists were often labelled "communist agitators" by the state, election candidates and their supporters. The public identification between the NIC and the ANC, apart from its historical linkages, was primarily via the NIC's association with the UDF and its propagation of the Freedom Charter. The NIC, mainly for security reasons, did not openly propagate its support for the ANC and the armed struggle. Some NIC strategists claimed that it was for this reason that the Congress needed to elevate the profile of Gandhi during the campaign, so as to counteract the claims of support for violence and adherence to communism. The NIC also read out at public meetings a message of support from Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, supporting their stance.

It is not surprising that this line of attack failed. In fact, both NPP and Solidarity used known "gangsters" in the elections at different levels, and especially as bodyguards, campaigners and intimidators. There were several close-to-violent clashes at a few candidates' meetings as a result of this. Reddy, for example, was pressed on the issue of why known thugs were being used to support the candidature of one of his members. He denied this, but when evidence was placed in front of him he lost his temper and struck out against the NIC supporter who then laid charges against him. Reddy and the candidate in question laid counter charges against two NIC activists. One of Chatsworth's notorious gangsters, "Kariah", approached the writer with posters and pamphlets from candidate George Thaver who had promised him "protection from the law" if he canvassed for him.

In the week prior to the elections, both parties held major meetings in the constituencies of their party leaders. The candidates hired professional security firms and only admitted people with invitations. At the NPP meeting, Rajbansi and his wife stood at the door scrutinising people and personally checking their credentials. Both meetings resulted in scuffles between pro-and anti-participationists. The NPP and more frequently Solidarity paid some of their campaign workers, promised them jobs if elected, and hinted at their future enhanced status within their specific residential communities. Those who supported their campaigns without being paid to do so or expecting some material advantage were largely relatives, family friends and sometimes neighbourhood associates, and rarely had organisational support. Most canvassers saw their role as "doing the candidate a personal favour" rather than as supporting a political cause. Some unashamedly stated that they were participating in the election process as a result of knowing the candidate for a long time or being indebted to him for some favour. They often admitted to not being interested in politics and not understanding the significance of the constitution.

Many pro-participation canvassers were derided, screamed at, had their cars attacked, and had doors slammed in their faces. Some candidates who falsely used the name of prominent community figures in their manifestos were attacked in the press as liars. At least ten candidates withdrew from the elections at the last moment, partly as a result of popular expressions of anger. Canvassers were unable to explain why participation was a suitable political option and were often perplexed by arguments put forward by potential voters. NIC members reported that they often did not need to intervene in such street debates since members of the public were able to do so effectively. Since the main concern of candidates' canvassers was to get a specific candidate elected, they were only acquainted with the "virtues" of their particular candidates. While the NIC emphasised education and politicisation, the candidates focused more on getting votes. The participationists were vote-orientated rather than consciousness-orientated, and exhibited little interest in building long-term organisation.

The sheer number of candidates ensured that the turnout would exceed the abysmal 8% poll of the 1981 SAIC elections. For example, in the constituency of Phoenix, the second largest Indian township in the country, there were nine candidates, and in Springfield, seven. The national results of the Indian elections were inconclusive, as far as the participating parties were concerned (See Tables 5.4 and 5.5). The official percentage poll was set at 20%. Of the potential 514,946 voters only 83,613 voted. The UDF calculated the percentage of people voting, counting as eligible all people over 18 (as recorded in the 1980 census), and came up with a poll of 15.5%. The Natal Mercury concluded that only 16 out of every 100 potential voters went to the polls. The NPP, which won 18 seats, took control of the HoD with a narrow majority of one over Solidarity. The UDF had been under attack from various forces, mainly Inkatha and the State, since its creation in Natal. Despite the Indian and Coloured elections, it had the lowest polls of all provinces.

Conclusion

The ephemeral nature of the parties contesting the elections and the methods of developing patronage regimes exhibit similarities with the pre-institutionalisation of voting systems internationally. For example, in the US large scale white male voting emerged before the institutionalisation of either a party system or a bureaucratic civil service state. All that parties could offer were rather particular benefits including, in some cases, turkey at thanksgiving. Ties were personal and based on ethnicity, often unlike anything that one would recognise as social movements or political parties. Since the system to offer policies was not in place, parties had no reason or capacity to offer any programmatic policies. In the Durban context we can replace the turkey with chicken biryani and add the complications of apartheid, but the lack of an institutionalised voting system and culture must count as an important reason for the dismal showing of the participationists.

The state had invested significant political import in the outcome of the elections. However, it was clear that irrespective of the result or turnout it would not alter the trajectory or timing of the reform process. Personalities, not policies, were the deciding factor in the outcome of the HoD elections. The electorate recognised the lack of ideological differences amongst the participating parties, and these perceptions would be borne out by the performance of the elected candidates in the HoD. As Carrim observed later,

What [provided] grist to the corruption mill [was] the lack of ideological divisions between the different parties. This [made] it easy for an MP to slip from one party into another - depending on who [offered] the best deal. So...Rajbansi can speak of "dangling carrots" to get his way. This explains why it [was]...not possible for any one party to establish a...stable majority.

The day the tricameral parliament was convened there were still doubts about how many seats the NPP had won, how long it would remain the majority party, and which MP belonged to which party, and for how long. MPs sought the best deal for themselves without regard to which party offered it to them, often altering allegiances for greater personal advancement. They switched allegiances after they had been elected on a party (or independent) ticket and did not consider it necessary to re-contest the elections. Instead, they "offered rationalisations which were devoid of any substance". The candidates' lack of concern at the low poll reflected their lack of social accountability. This was clear from the fact that no candidate regarded the low poll as reason to withdraw from the HoD. The success of the anti-election campaign, however, placed a burden on the state to provide concessions to the newly-elected MPs in order to enhance their low credibility. Accordingly, Indian conscription, a highly emotive issue in the campaign, was shelved.

There were four major reasons for the candidates' failure to encourage participation. First, they underestimated the Indian record of resistance and the fact that any constitutional dispensation excluding Africans was not likely to receive wide support among Indians. Secondly, the deteriorating material position of the lower middle-class and the working-class inspired their cynicism towards government initiatives, especially those of Indian collaborators. Thirdly, the mobilising efforts of the anti-election lobby were persuasive and successful. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the high levels of disillusionment and scepticism about politics and politicians were based on their observation of the performance of LACs and the SAIC. The failure by the state to consult Indian political opinion via a referendum added further to this marginalisation.

The candidates lacked a coherent and consistent discourse that spoke to people's concerns and aspirations. The elections spurred on the growth of a myriad of small political parties and groups to support candidates: none of them possessing the political confidence or leadership to engage the "electorate" in a sustained, creative or dynamic manner. The parties said very little about the technicalities of opposition within the new parliamentary structure, which would later be the real test of democratic legitimation. Consequently, participation as a political strategy did not become a

component of people's consciousness. Rather, the questionable promises, the methods of canvassing, and the general conduct of the candidates and campaigners served to alienate people, irrespective of their class position, from the participationists and the very concept of participation.

The participationists were motivated mainly by the lucrative rewards that would accrue to them rather than by a deep commitment to the strategy of participation. Neither were they able to dispel the scepticism about their ability, once elected, to mount an effective opposition in parliament and by so doing "help to dismantle apartheid from within". The participationists were also not able to present themselves as potentially effective public representatives, despite the assistance of the state's ideological apparatus. Furthermore, they had very little contact with the electorate in sharp contrast to their anti-election opponents', whose efforts we now analyse.

CHAPTER SIX: The Politics Of Non-Collaboration: The Campaign To Boycott The Tricameral Elections

Introduction

The resistance against the government's constitutional restructuring was one of the most important campaigns waged by South Africa's liberation movements in the 1980s. For Indian and "Coloured" people, the low turn-out on election day was an important indication of political sentiments towards the government's "reform strategy". But the activities in the Indian townships and suburbs of Durban in the run-up to the elections were perhaps even more instructive. Ebrahim Patel asserted that it was a mistake to see the elections as the litmus test of community response to the new dispensation. The election results...represent only a frozen moment in a dynamic historical process. And it will reflect only one form of political activity during that moment (i.e. voting or boycotting). A more comprehensive view needs to take into account...the varied non-electoral responses (strikes, school boycotts, marches, demonstrations, mass rallies, etc.) of a community to the continuing process of change in South Africa.

An examination of these non-electoral responses thus allows a clearer picture of the period to emerge with a better understanding of organisational developments and the implications for consciousness formation.

The previous chapter focused on the participationists' campaign to encourage Indians to embrace the new constitutional framework. This chapter seeks to examine the anti-election activities from the period from April 1984 until the elections were held on 28 August 1984 - perhaps the most politically charged period in the history of Indian South Africans.

Background to the anti-election campaign

The space for political resistance in Indian areas had changed between October 1977, when Black Consciousness-aligned (BC) organisations were banned, and 1984. The limited but significant recommendations concerning trade union and urban residency rights for Africans put forward by the Riekert and Wiehahn Commissions in 1979 created greater possibilities for civic and trade union organisation. As we saw in chapters three and four, during this period, civic organisations in Indian areas were being initiated. The government also lifted banning orders on prominent NIC leaders in 1983 in an attempt to secure broader acceptance of the tricameral parliament. The state calculated that these unbannings might encourage the NIC itself to participate in the elections, or that at least it might be divided by the issue. Furthermore, the constitutional restructuring, as an integral part of the government's "Total Strategy", made it imperative for the government to allow extra-parliamentary opposition, albeit limited.

Before the anti-tricameral campaign, a key impediment to Indian political resistance to apartheid was fear. Political repression was widespread, and most Indians preferred to avoid government reprisals by not engaging in political opposition. The tricameral elections opened up significant possibilities for the political organisation and mobilisation of the left in Indian politics. Anti-election supporters visited people's homes to encourage them to reject the government's reform strategy. Posters and other political ephemera proliferated. The government reluctantly tolerated a short-lived peace as the boycott lobby began to organise itself. These factors resulted in demystifying the political arena and

making opposition less threatening to Indian people. In fact, the election campaign had an almost carnival atmosphere, and people felt more at ease to express their feelings. There were numerous street debates between the public and campaigners for both participation and non-participation. People lacking formal education were able to challenge and confound seasoned politicians of both camps with penetrating questions. The tricameral elections assisted the resistance movement by providing it with an immediate and appealing political issue around which to organise and mobilise popular opposition.

The anti-election forces spanned the ideological divides that existed in extra-parliamentary resistance politics. AZAPO, an affiliate of the National Forum, was active mainly at tertiary educational institutions. In Durban, eight AZAPO members were charged for displaying anti-election posters and distributing anti-election leaflets. Skilled media liaison enabled AZAPO to increase its profile around this campaign, especially in the print media. The African People's Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA), an affiliate of the New Unity Movement, also emerged at this time consisting of about thirty members, all of whom were Indian. They were almost all professionals, including many university intellectuals. They placed great emphasis on the theoretical clarity of their cadres. APDUSA, like AZAPO, adhered to non-collaboration with state institutions at all levels as a key principle. However, the main anti-election protagonist was the NIC.

The NIC: "From activist organisation to people's organisation"?

The NIC advocated non-participation on tactical grounds. This had become entrenched as the favoured strategy since the imposition of the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act (Ghetto Act) in 1946. Though the NIC was the main protagonist of the anti-election campaign, it also had the backing of the UDF and its affiliates. This chapter focuses on the NIC campaign across Natal and the popularisation of its anti-election message. We begin with an examination of the NIC's organisational structures, which demonstrates that the NIC experienced unprecedented growth during this campaign.

Before the anti-election campaign the NIC consisted of an executive committee and loose, informal, area committees which met irregularly. They would convene around substantive issues, such as the formation of the UDF or the referendum debates. Most Indian activists involved in progressive youth and civic organisations in different parts of Natal regarded themselves as NIC members. As Ranchod confirmed:

While [the NIC's] formal membership does not appear to be large, it does enjoy the support of activists in community-based organisations in the housing, social and educational spheres. The clear rejection of apartheid...has enabled the congress movement to attract youth and a significant number of professionals.

In response to the anti-tricameral campaign, the NIC established an organising committee (OC) in April 1984. The OC was mandated by the executive to handle the day-to-day publicity for the campaign, and to arrange activist forums where ideas were exchanged between OC members and locally-based activists. It was here that the four-phase campaign of the NIC was adopted, constantly monitored and evaluated. Hence, the seven-member OC operated as the nerve centre of the campaign. It met at least once every day, and its members always made themselves available for campaign work. The NIC office oversaw the implementation of tactics formulated at often extended OC meetings whose decisions were ratified by the executive committee.

In mobilising resistance to the elections, the NIC gained a new lease of life. Regional structures created early in 1984 were given substance as the campaign progressed, and it was clear that they

would be retained after the elections if they proved effective in achieving the NIC's two main goals: to advance the anti-election campaign, and to bring as many people as possible into the NIC fold. The NIC hoped to consolidate the regional committees into local branches, which were officially sanctioned by their constitution. Gradually, people set up numerous grassroots structures, appropriate to the particular local realities which came to overshadow the dormant branch structures of the NIC. Local NIC members recognised that they could not rely on broad political pronouncements alone. They needed to develop a well-grounded organisational presence.

The NIC executive committee consisted of about fifteen members, most of whom were male, middle-class professionals with high profiles amongst Indians. However, only one member came from one of the two major working-class townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix: Roy Padayachee, the director of a local NGO in early childhood education, and one of the most "low profile" of all the executive members. At the height of the campaign, the executive met weekly to check progress, receive reports from the OC and to deal with matters beyond the scope of the OC. It continued to run the affairs of the organisation outside the campaign. The burgeoning NIC structures represented a concerted effort among ANC-aligned Indians to beat the government at its own game.

The NIC's four-phase campaign

The NIC devised a strategy which was to be implemented in four phases to ensure the broadest possible impact and involvement of Indians in the anti-election campaign. (See Table 6.1) The first phase, known as the "reach and teach" phase, extended from April to June 1984, when the NIC undertook some 100,000 "house visits" in Natal. Khetso Gordhan, NIC executive member, full-time UDF organiser and OC member, describes the house visits:

The purpose of the house visits was to discuss with and inform people about the nitty-gritty of the constitution and to counteract government propaganda. The pamphlet we took with us informed people about the 4:2:1 ratio in the tricameral parliament and the NIC's reasons for rejecting the new constitution. The idea was not to tell people to reject it, but to give them enough information to decide what they thought of the option. We discussed where the country was going to with non-racial unity, and broader political policy issues. People often wanted to talk about local issues. This informed us what we should be doing. We realised that we needed to form local organisations to take up day-to-day problems where such bodies do not exist, or to refer people to existing organisations like civics.

The NIC did not hold mass meetings during the "reach and teach" phase, but candidates continued to call meetings at which NIC members and sympathisers made their opinions felt. Public confrontation became a successful part of the NIC's campaign and intensified as the campaign progressed. The NIC, the state and the election candidates collectively determined the parameters of the campaign. The NIC attempted to meet with various community organisations, and even in more far-flung local structures, NIC activists were encouraged to build contacts with organisations and to work with sympathisers.

Activists had to learn (or re-learn) many lessons about their constituencies. For example, they learned that house visits in working-class and lower middle-class areas were less fruitful at weekends, when large numbers of people were under the influence of alcohol. House visits were also ruled out on Tuesday nights, when "Dallas", the highly popular American soap, was screened on television. Apart from the more obvious forms of SABC propaganda, activists began to realise that the nature of

television programming was orientated towards developing a docile, inactive, captive television audience that would withdraw from politics and other civic interests.

The strategy of NIC activists varied according to the class base, political awareness and material resources of different areas. For example, venues were secured with greater ease in certain middle-class areas so that public meetings, at a logistical level, could be more effectively organised. Activists also had to modify their language level and idiom according to the class composition of a particular area. Middle-class Indians tended to have a greater knowledge about the complexities of the new constitution than did their working-class counterparts. Consequently, activists spent more time explaining the constitution in working-class areas. These realities reflected the fact that there were competing interests and identities amongst Indians. On the one hand, people defined themselves as part of an Indian minority group, while on the other, distinct class cleavages amongst Indians meant that there was a level of inter-class hostility. Yet other Indians chose to identify instead with similar ideological and class fractions in other racial groups.

The second part of the campaign, the "agitational phase", ran from 1 to 21 July. This phase relied on shorter, more focused house visits. This approach was intended to be a much more agitational one...you were not simply going to inform people but you were going to say to them this is why we need to reject these candidates....this is our position and this is why we think it is important. The propaganda distributed by the NIC became more urgent in tone during this phase and attacked both government policy and candidates' opportunism. The NIC held its first set of public rallies, attracting crowds of between 300 to 600 people.

The third phase, the "confrontational phase", lasted from 22 July to 18 August. Mass meetings challenging candidates to "Face the People" became a common feature. The NIC also released a list of "counter-candidates" who would spearhead the boycott campaign. They were all veteran NIC members, who, it was claimed, had a record of community service outstripping any of the other candidates. The aim was to show the electorate that the NIC had a higher calibre of people who "were not willing to sell their souls for thirty pieces of silver". However, the NIC did not pursue the counter-candidate strategy consistently or aggressively and most of the "counter-candidates" were high-profile leaders of the NIC who lived in elite Indian suburbs and were not resident in the townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix. This strategy, therefore, failed to popularise local NIC leadership in these major townships.

Mass mobilisation was the key goal of the NIC's work in this period, and it peaked at the first UDF anniversary meeting on 20 August 1984 and the NIC ninetieth anniversary rally a week later. Both events drew crowds of about 9,000 people and represented the largest gatherings held in Durban since the 1970s. The third phase saw an extraordinary level of activity and concerted energy as the NIC attempted to reach the maximum number of people with a massive distribution of pamphlets and other propaganda. There were numerous verbal confrontations on the streets between participationists and boycott advocates, and many were acrimonious and bitter. It was at these clashes that the participationists revealed their racist prejudices and dubious political integrity, some accusing NIC activists of "simply wanting their sisters to sleep with Africans" and of giving priority to African aspirations at the expense of Indian interests.

The state tried to hinder the efforts of the anti-election campaigners when it began to look as if the candidates were in disarray and the anti-election lobby was becoming more sophisticated. For example, the South African Transport Services (SATS), which administered railway property, arranged for NIC billboards (hired from an advertising agency) on their property to be painted over. W. J. Mitchell, the SATS Natal chief, claimed that as a government agency, SATS did not want to

"be accused of taking sides in political issues". Responding to NIC claims that during the white constitutional referendum the NP was allowed to advertise on railway property, Mitchell said: "The referendum issue was a non-political matter!" At first the Durban City Council also considered banning the posters of the NIC from being displayed on council property but later reversed its stance under pressure from the NIC. For the first time during the 1980s, NIC members could now openly put up posters in public places without fearing legal infringements and repressive reprisals. However, the proliferation of election materials from both pro and anti-election campaigners saw the rivals remove each other's posters in the struggle for limited wall and pole space.

The third phase demonstrated that the UDF/NIC alliance attracted larger mass gatherings than did their opponents. This contributed to a sense of triumph amongst the NIC. An elderly woman, emerging from one mass meeting said: "all the things we have been bottling up inside us for so long came out today". When election candidates invited to "face the people" at these meetings rarely arrived, the gatherings were still used productively. NIC executive members addressed the meetings, with substantial time being allocated for audience participation. Often people raised critical questions, ranging from the need for a clearer alternative to the government's proposals, to the fear of "African domination" in a future democratic society. Some people expressed disappointment with the NIC for not participating in the elections and for "letting the stooges get in". The extent of this view, also encountered by NIC activists in the field, is not easily quantifiable. One study conducted in Pietermaritzburg found that if the NIC had participated, 62.2% of registered voters would still not have voted, while 17.6% would have voted for the NIC, and 16.8% were undecided. Only 3.4% would have voted for some other candidate. Voters often challenged NIC viewpoints in the field. Although violent responses and verbal onslaughts did occur, these isolated incidents were usually perpetrated by candidates and their canvassers.

Perhaps the most important question posed by people during the campaign was: What alternative did the progressive movement offer to the government's new constitution and election process? The participating parties and the state stressed that the alternative could only be violence. Rajbansi's "ballot or the bullet" formulation further invoked the supposed threat of violence emanating from strategies of the NIC and its allies.
Solidarity was taking part in an insidious campaign by the state and its functionaries to show the NIC and the United Democratic Front as proponents of violence. The Solidarity campaign...fitted in with the consistent pattern of attacks on [the NIC] by the state in which it was suggested that the NIC and UDF were agents of the ANC and Moscow, and took instructions from the KGB.
The NIC offered the Freedom Charter as an alternative to the government's "reform package" and declared:

Only a highly organised people, united in struggle and equipped with an...understanding of...our struggle, led by an experienced leadership, can guarantee the success of our struggle. This is what we will contribute towards, outside of this Government's plans...This does not mean that we will ignore the day-to-day problems of our people. We are committed to participating in every possible way in the daily struggles of our community for lower rents, bus fares, higher wages, better living and working conditions. We work for the establishment of strong, democratic, community-based organisations, as well as workers', women's, students' and youth organisations. These organisations...are best equipped to lead our people, articulate their demands and improve their lives.

The issue of political alternatives was debated spiritedly at NIC public meetings. Many people did not see the Freedom Charter of 1955 as an adequate alternative. Some of the views expressed noted

that "the Charter represented a vision for a democratic society without explaining how exactly we would get there", or that the Charter was "little more than a collection of well-intentioned slogans lacking a sense of strategy". The practical concerns about how a democratic government would ensure that "there shall be housing, shelter and comfort for all" were not clear to many.
During this third phase, the NIC aimed to consolidate mass mobilisation into an increase in its membership. At NIC meetings people signed up and joined the campaign. They did this openly, despite the danger stemming from the likelihood that the organisation was infiltrated by informers. As part of its attempt to facilitate recruitment, the NIC conducted a survey of attitudes towards the elections. The NIC regarded such fieldwork as one of its most important activities because it helped the NIC to understand the changing attitudes of its base and to foster greater contact at that level. The strategy worked and produced a significant increase in NIC membership as well as an almost haphazard creation of various local structures claiming to be allies.

The fourth phase of the campaign extended from about 18 to 28 August, election day itself. The government's attacks on the UDF reached new heights, with allegations linking the UDF to the ANC increasing at an alarming rate. On 21 August, the eve of the "Coloured" elections, security police raided the homes of leading UDF members in Natal and the Transvaal. The government detained about twenty UDF leaders, including the NIC's president and vice-president, invoking Section 28 of the Internal Security Act that allowed for indefinite "preventive detention". The NIC effectively used the detentions to argue the justness of its cause and the anti-democratic character of the "reform" being offered by the government. After the detentions, the NIC capitalised on the fact that many traders in the Durban central business district were Indian. They called on business people to close their shops at a specified time to show their support for the NIC. Both the NPP and Solidarity condemned the detentions, and the latter also tried to profit from the NIC call to traders by supporting it. The NIC responded by sending another letter to the traders asking them not to close their shops. The traders, no doubt happy to secure a day's taking, kept their shops open. Solidarity called for the shops to be closed on the day of the elections in order to encourage voters to turn up at the poll. The traders ignored the request.

A further occurrence during this phase was the "special votes" debacle. The "special votes" mechanism was aimed at people who were seriously ill, the elderly, those more than fifty kilometres away from the polling booth, or in similar disadvantaged situations. Several reports of irregularities were received by NIC activists in the field, and candidates accused each other of abusing the special votes provisions. The state, hoping for a high poll, allowed the participating parties to abuse this provision. NIC activists were ignored by the Indian officials when alerting them to the irregularities.

The NIC hastily developed three approaches in response to the abuse of special votes. First, they employed a preventive strategy. NIC activists explained to people what their legal rights were, and the NIC took out advertisements in newspapers and wrote articles in UDF publications alerting people to the special votes fraud. Activists assured people that they did not have to vote and that they could not be forced to do so. The second strategy was to apply pressure directly "at the point of contact", which involved acquiring a list of people who had already cast special votes to check whether these were legitimate. The third approach involved collecting information about fraudulent behaviour and pursuing legal action. This needed the co-operation of people who were coerced into casting special votes. However, this strategy was unsuccessful since it would have resulted in perjury convictions for those who had cast special votes, even if this was under duress. Ultimately, there were 24,740 special votes, constituting an astonishing 30% of all votes cast.

The third and fourth phases saw a sharp increase in the number of newspaper advertisements advocating non-participation. These played a crucial role in the campaign. Both NIC and participationist campaigners attested that on house visits people often referred to the full-page newspaper advertisements in regional and national newspapers. The NIC took out more full-page newspaper advertisements than did all their adversaries combined. This can be seen as an indication of their commitment to heightening the political consciousness of the general population instead of exclusively targeting registered voters.

The NIC campaign, during the third and fourth phases, also involved a concerted strategy to move into the Durban city centre. It was illegal to distribute leaflets in the city since this was a violation of a by-law related to littering. Instead, the NIC distributed stickers which people displayed on their clothing. The open display of pro-NIC sentiments further eroded the prevalent fear of opposing the government. Public response to the stickers was favourable. Some of the stickers read "I support Congress", "Rajbansi Does not Speak for Me", and "Don't Vote". On Saturdays leading up to the election, the stickers, together with anti-election motorcades, created a carnival atmosphere in the black section of the city centre.

A repetition of the NIC message was a further focus of the fourth phase of the campaign; for the last time about 50,000 "Don't Vote" pamphlets were distributed. They simply stated: "Congress Says Don't Vote". The message had developed a much sharper focus and the "Don't Vote" campaign reached its peak. By the last week of the campaign, the NIC's political message had become a dominant factor in popular deliberations about the elections.

The NIC's political message

The NIC, despite its confident approach throughout the campaign, cannot claim to have determined the terms of the political discourse, nor the pace or the course of events. It often found that it had to immerse itself in the prevailing popular discussions of the period. Ratnamala Singh and Shahid Vawda question the way in which NIC political messages were crafted, particularly because of the ethnic identities they reinforced:
There are frequent indications in the NIC discourse that political mobilisation occurs within the terms of apartheid reality rather than as destabilising of that reality. A more complex view of resistance to apartheid and transformation towards a non-racial society is to act on the basis that certain types of changes can be effected where they are identified as being necessary within the space of apartheid hegemony.
Unlike the NIC, AZAPO, APDUSA, the National Forum and some of the trade unions did not locate their statements "within the terms of apartheid reality". An analysis of the political pronouncements of these organisations shows that they simply negated altogether the notion of any ethnic consciousness or special concerns inherent amongst Indians. Singh and Vawda further argue that:
The language of mobilisation for the campaigns mounted and the issues chosen around which to organise are therefore crucial if the intended political effect is simultaneously to subvert the ethnic constitution of subjects on the one hand and foster a non-racial consciousness on the other. Discourses which jumble together intra-community concerns and trans-community commitments may produce the effect that the "Indian" as an ethnically constituted political subject remains intact.

Sections of the NIC were mindful of this complexity. However, they had to consider the racial exclusivity of the political mobilisation of the collaborating parties, and had to respond to fears that Indian youth would be sent to the army and to claims that Indians would benefit under the new

dispensation. They had to deal, for example, with a candidate's manifesto which declared that: "Indians not only wallow in racism but are clannish, sectional and class-conscious. We are equal oppressors of the black man".

In the context of such articulations, the NIC's Indian-tag was regarded as important. The NIC felt that the notion of an Indian ethnicity should be exploited sensitively for the purposes of drawing on, and redefining, Indian people's conception of themselves. The NIC attempted to ensure that its political language corresponded to the consciousness prevalent among its constituents. It accepted that most people saw themselves as Indians and had yet to develop a broader sense of non-racialism. The need to acknowledge Indianness was especially important, since the participating parties implicitly concerned themselves exclusively with Indian political and economic advancement. The NIC had to address this directly, and also had to deal with the state portraying them as ANC functionaries who did not really have the interests of the Indian people at heart. This angle of attack was replicated by the participationists, who sometimes explicitly linked the NIC to the ANC in their pronouncements. Although Singh and Vawda's criticisms of the NIC language of mobilisation are valid, the NIC believed it needed to convince its constituency of its commitment to the interests of Indians as well as its "trans-community" commitments. While the NIC's rhetoric did indeed build on ethnic identity, its strategy was not always uniform and took account, for example, of class differences. Also, it did promote the Freedom Charter as a non-racial vision of a democratic South Africa. However, balancing the imperatives of "Indian concerns" and a "non-racial vision" was a task that was laden with difficulties and contradictions. There was support from non-Indian resistance organisations such as the Joint Rent Action Committee, Black Sash and the Wentworth Improvement Project, with people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Denis Hurley speaking at public meetings.

Another issue at the level of political language and symbols was the evocation of Mahatma Gandhi. The NIC made extensive symbolic use of its founder, arguing that he would have rejected the elections. This claim was contested by the participating parties. Participationists argued that Gandhi's acceptance of the 1936 "slave constitution" of India indicated a preference for co-operation rather than abstentionist politics. In any event, even within the ranks of the NIC there was some displeasure at the use of Gandhi as a symbol. In the words of one activist:
It was good for the older generation, but the Indian youth is more aggressive than that. I had problems with the overuse of Gandhi in the advertisements. It also served to enforce Indian ethnic identity rather than erode it and promote a non-racial consciousness.

This re-insertion of Gandhi into the political space of Indian politics in South Africa in the 1980s, and the accompanying battles over who could legitimately claim his mantle, was to endure into the 1990s. Gandhi as historic figure has featured prominently in Indian left politics in South Africa (but not in India itself). Furthermore, as we will see in the next chapter, present-day India adopted an interventionist stance regarding Indian politics in South Africa.

Notwithstanding some of the weaknesses in its political pronouncements, the NIC had to evolve the organisational and financial muscle to spread its views. The NIC campaign, excluding most of the expenses associated with public meetings, cost R200 000. Most of the money was raised from Indian supporters, and a substantial amount came from NIC executive members themselves. The greatest proportion came from Pietermaritzburg, Northern Natal and the South Coast, where there were wealthier business interests and farmers. There was no financial offering from the UDF or any other structure. The accumulated debt lasted for a year and a half after the campaign. Anti-election efforts

for the "Coloured" House incurred similar costs. None of the NIC workers were paid for their work. Participationist parties, on the other hand, had set up offices with salaried public relations functionaries and full-time organisers. Neither did financial considerations inhibit the political activity of the KwaZulu homeland-linked Inkatha movement.

The Inkatha factor

During the campaign Inkatha leader, Mangosuthu Buthelezi, made many explicit threats against Indian participation in the elections. He firmly rejected the elections, and succeeded in influencing the small Reform Party not to take part, though many of its members defected to participating parties. Buthelezi and Inkatha had campaigned for a "no vote" in the white referendum. He stated that while the PFP was dragged into the new constitution kicking and screaming protests, some of our Indian and Coloured brothers and sisters ran after the new constitution with their tongues hanging out in anticipation of what privileged benefits they could get by participating.
Buthelezi was, in effect, assailing the Indian equivalent of the political position he himself occupied within the African political spectrum. Ironically, Buthelezi articulated a view broadly similar to that of the NIC on this issue, although there had been many harsh verbal exchanges between Inkatha and the NIC in the past.

Days before the election, Buthelezi told a gathering at the Durban City Hall that he was under great pressure from certain sections of Inkatha to call for a boycott of all Indian businesses. He advised Indians and Coloureds on the eve of the elections to think seriously of their future, as a time might come when the numerically dominant Africans would be called on to display their magnanimity by securing the civil liberties of minorities. Rajbansi insisted that he did not desire to "cross swords" with Buthelezi, and instead expressed his intention "to discuss the matter privately" with him. Candidates, however, argued in street confrontations and occasionally at their meetings that if people like Buthelezi, bantustan leaders and other African state functionaries did not have qualms about participating in government-created structures, why should they? Buthelezi's opposition to the elections appeared to have had some influence on the Indian bourgeoisie and the upper middle-class since he had threatened a consumer boycott. However, had the threat been widely felt - and there is no evidence of this - there is little likelihood that people would have been intimidated from participating if they had a deep desire to do so.

The state media gave limited coverage to Buthelezi's pronouncements since they contradicted government views. Accordingly, his verbal barrages did not penetrate the Indian "electorate". The SABC were steadfast in giving only limited media coverage to the boycott lobby, even refusing a Solidarity request for a live debate with the NIC. The English language print media, being less supportive of the state constitutional agenda, adopted the same position. AZAPO charged that the "imperialist media" was once again showing its colours by touting for participation and by glossing over the role of the Black Consciousness Movement in the anti-election effort. This tendency, they argued, underlined the fact that whites could never articulate black interests or even begin to properly understand the black experience. The NIC, though, could count on the support of other influential organisations that helped to counterbalance the sophisticated submissions of the ideological state apparatus.

An analysis of other anti-election forces

The University of Durban-Westville (UDW), where the Students Representative Council (SRC) had been banned a year earlier, was a site of much electoral mobilisation. Many students interpreted the SRC ban as a joint offensive by the Broederbond-controlled university administration and the state to prevent students from making a contribution to the anti-election effort. However, boycotts protesting against the elections led to a closure of the campus. The pro-participation Graphic newspaper noted in an editorial:

Professor Greyling, by closing down the University, let loose 6 000 free and unpaid volunteers for the boycott brigade. These youngsters, some in search of excitement, others having been brain-washed by the [NIC] and yet others really believing that they were changing the world, rampaged the streets and roamed the residential areas sowing psychological terror.

Although these assertions were dramatic in the extreme, there is no doubt that the closure of the campus significantly increased the person power of the "boycott brigade".

In high schools, by contrast, there were weak attempts to organise boycotts. Students from more than fifty schools and higher educational institutions participated in protests in the days before the elections. The Director of Indian Education recorded isolated incidents in NIC strongholds. On election day itself, there was a large stayaway of high school students. Estimates ranged from 50% to 90%. Most of the activists in the anti-election campaign were students. This was partly reflected in the aftermath of the elections, when many NIC structures were enervated as a result of students returning to their classes and examinations. The state had erred badly by scheduling the elections in a non-examination period, unwittingly facilitating the participation of students in the anti-election activity.

Organisations such as the Natal Council on Sport (NACOS), the National Medical and Dental Association (NAMDA) and the Democratic Lawyers Association (DLA) supported the anti-election campaign by issuing press statements, and some of their affiliates sent letters to their members, and advertised in the press, urging a boycott. The Teachers Association of South Africa (TASA) was not as energetic in its opposition as it was when it spearheaded protests of various organisations in 1983 as the SAIC took control of Indian education.

Various religious groups devoted much effort to deciding what the appropriate response would be to the state's attempts to co-opt them. The South African Hindu Maha Sabha, an organisation claiming to represent the bulk of the country's Hindus, was involved in the elections in an unofficial way: both its president and secretary stood as candidates. Ibrahim Bawa, the director of the Islamic Council of South Africa, declared that his organisation supported a boycott on "moral, ethical and religious grounds". Weeks before the elections a mass meeting of more than 600 Muslims in Durban urged a stayaway. Meanwhile, the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians proposed that ABRESCA members who voted in the elections should have communion withheld from them. Another group of Indian Christian pastors and leaders came together to explain the biblical and ethical grounds on which they could not take part in the elections. Diakonia, the Durban-based ecumenical agency, also called for an abstention from the polls:
Coloureds and Indians who participate will alienate their communities from Africans...[They] will become jointly responsible for the laws which perpetuate and reinforce racial discrimination and economic exploitation. We have no hesitation in saying that this constitution and participation in it poses a grave threat to South Africans of all races.

A similar call by Durban Archbishop Denis Hurley was condemned by the conservative NP-aligned South African Catholic Defence League. However, the influence of the progressive churches would have extended to only about 20% of Indians who were Christian.

The official position adopted by national religious bodies was less significant than the activities of small, grassroots religious formations. Individual candidates accessed the support of particular temple, mosque and church networks. NIC and its allies fared inadequately in this terrain. With a few exceptions they were unable to engage these local religious networks. There was evidence of religious and ethnic allegiances in the unofficial articulations of certain candidates. While no definite pattern existed, the street discussions sometimes included religious and ethnic slurs. There were also linguistic cleavages (although language competency was minimal), between the "roti ous" (persons of Hindi-speaking descent) and the "porridge ous" (persons of Tamil-speaking descent). However, the effect of this was minor and was felt primarily among some of the older generation.

All the major black trade unions called for a stayaway from the polls, but stopped short of calling a work stoppage to protest against the elections. Progressive trade unions did not become involved in the mechanics of the campaign, but issued propaganda explaining why the constitutional changes were farcical. The majority of Indian workers were members of the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA) whose white-dominated leadership supported the "new deal" and therefore the election. Some candidates hoped to boost their performance at the polls by enlisting the support of the local Indian leadership of TUCSA unions. TUCSA affiliates in Durban were often little more than an amalgam of a "glorified social club and a welfare benefit society". There sometimes existed a fraternal relationship between factory owners and the union functionaries. Where these factories were owned or run by the Indian bourgeoisie, owners attempted to exercise influence over their workers to vote in the elections. There were rumours that some TUCSA officials were considering negotiating for half a day's holiday on election day so that workers could vote.

The tension-ridden relationship between the UDF and the NIC, on the one hand, and the progressive unions, particularly FOSATU, on the other, resulted in the absence of any meaningful co-operation around this campaign. A complex and sensitive relationship persisted between the union federation and Inkatha. Buthelezi and his associates still addressed meetings of FOSATU. FOSATU, the UDF and Inkatha were united in their call for non-participation in the elections, and this did open up potential possibilities for structured alliances. Ultimately though, all these initiatives remained separate enterprises. The elections represented a missed opportunity for progressive unions to make headway in organising Indian workers. Shamim Marie notes that the anti-election campaign was nevertheless a positive, politicising influence on Indian workers:

The revival of the NIC in the 1970s ... played a role in bringing politics back into the lives of the Indian people, particularly through anti-election campaigns. Indian workers responded to these campaigns by not going to the polls and so showed their rejection of the new deal the government was offering them.

However, Marie states that "these struggles have been separate struggles involving Indian workers only", and that Indian workers' unions remained largely unaffected.

The contradictory demands of mobilisation and organisation created difficulties during the campaign. The imperatives of a high-profile national political campaign destabilised the agendas of grassroots civic and youth organisations, who were often allies or creations of the NIC. However, the campaign also had a positive impact on community-based organisational endeavours. In some areas the impetus generated a climate for the emergence of youth organisations. In Chatsworth and Phoenix, for example, first-time activists formed youth organisations soon after the elections. The same could be

said of civic organisations. In general, the campaign heightened the political awareness and consciousness of activists and gave greater political content to grassroots organisations. The high level of mobilisation facilitated historic non-racial rallies, such as those held to commemorate the UDF's first anniversary and the NIC's ninetieth. The disproportionate influence of the NIC within the UDF in Natal was reflected in the anniversary rally advertisement, which featured five non-African UDF leaders and supporters. The campaign illustrated the failure of the NIC to integrate its activities with developments in the African townships.

Non-racialising a separate campaign

Many NIC members were aware of the need to "non-racialise" the campaign. The mass rallies did represent an advance in united action and growing black unity. Nevertheless, attendance at these gatherings accounted for just a minute fraction of the people in the region. NIC propaganda displayed photographs of Archie Gumede, Natal-based president of the UDF, and Virgil Bonhomme, a prominent Coloured leader in Natal, who was vice-president of the UDF. Yet, following the detention of UDF (including NIC) leaders, Congress, in a widely-distributed pamphlet proclaiming that "Our Leaders are in Jail", mentioned Archie Gumede but attached more prominence to four other NIC leaders. For most readers, the "our" would have been read as Indian leaders in an exclusive sense rather than as black leaders in an inclusive sense. Here we have an example of what Singh and Vawda referred to earlier as the confusion between intra-community mobilisation and trans-community commitments.

The most important measure of an increasing consciousness among Indian people was their willingness to identify with the Coloured, and especially the African, communities and to choose united action when possibilities were presented. Pravin Gordhan, regarded by many as the key architect of the NIC election strategy, gave an optimistic account of attempts to build non-racialism: In the course of our...work we [attempted] to develop non-racialism in practice and this was reflected during the anti-election campaign where Indian, African, Coloured and white activists went door-to-door in...areas where elections were due to take place, asking people not to vote. The NIC [worked] closely with the United Committee of Concern, which [represented] the coloured areas in Durban, and with our comrades from the African areas. The co-operation is not simply at the leadership level...we are co-operating in the field. But it is a limited process.

However, not as much non-racial united action occurred during the campaign as the above comments might suggest. Joint door-to-door work between African and Indian activists did take place, but only on four occasions at regional "blitzes". There was also some non-racial activism on the day of the elections. In Chatsworth, African students from the medical school spent the day doing house-visits and driving in motorcades. White students gave legal assistance. Coloured activists, fresh from their success a week earlier, easily slotted into the NIC election day machinery.

The structural constraints engendered by the GAA created "concrete divisions" that exacerbated the task of fostering non-racial unity. Besides distances between townships, lack of transport, work obligations, language barriers and lack of time and resources, UDF activists in African townships in Durban had to cope with constant battles with Inkatha, and were struggling to consolidate their own community-based civic and youth structures. There were, nonetheless, several discussions about incorporating a non-racial praxis into the campaign. As one activist stated:

We talked about this all the time and we did a bit of mixed activist work, but this was a bit superficial. There were so many other organisational imperatives that this important issue became neglected in the process.

There remained a definite pessimism about the extent to which the growth of non-racialism was being advanced by the campaign:

Not enough was done in terms of linking up the Koornhof bills with the anti-election campaign...but the mixing of activists in the field was the one area where a lot more could have been done. This meant bringing activists from African areas into Indian areas. Not so much the other way round. Not because it is not necessary but the important thing to do was to radicalise Indians.

In doing so, however, the NIC would have opened itself to attack from the right. Participationists and the state were certain to claim that the UDF and NIC were recruiting African activists in order to intimidate potential voters.

Some felt that this should not have deterred the NIC and the UDF:

This would have been the opportunity to raise the issue and defend our non-racial position. If an Indian and African activist teamed up and visited almost every house, look at the impact of that. No amount of media shit would have affected the person's experience of talking to this young African guy who would not be provocative, or intimidating, and talking to them in a mature way about the future of our country. That would have created an impression much greater than any newspaper.

Clearly, the structural constraints referred to above militated against the attempts at mass non-racial work even though there could have been more activities. The power of the media to miscommunicate (from the NIC's perspective) attempts at forging non-racialism were ever present in the thinking of many activists.

An interview with Gumede by the SABC's Cliff Saunders was deliberately orchestrated to sow division between Indian and African people early in 1984. The interview highlighted a single sentence in which Gumede attacked "a small minority within the Indian community which is actively collaborating with the apartheid regime". Saunders, Rajbansi and others attacked Gumede for being a racist. Having burnt their fingers with the Gumede interview, the UDF took a decision not to grant interviews to SABC-TV. At the same time fake pamphlets were mysteriously distributed in Indian areas by unknown persons seeking to spread racism, disunity and confusion. The NIC underestimated the impact of the Gumede interview on Indian political consciousness. It seemed that not only Buthelezi, but also the UDF leader, were adopting an anti-Indian stance. The attempts by the UDF to rebut this portrayal in the media were not given the kind of coverage that initiated the media manipulation in the first place.

Perhaps the greatest advance for non-racialism was the close working relationship that developed between Indian and Coloured activists. The state had miscalculated by scheduling the elections on different days, thereby unwittingly facilitating this process. It meant that Indian activists could work in the Coloured areas up to the House of Representatives (HoR) election day. After the HoR elections, Coloured activists could operate in Indian areas. Joint activism had been fostered by the attendance of both Indians and Coloureds at activist forums.

Election day and beyond

A day before the elections, on 27 August 1984, executive members of the NIC met with the Port Natal Divisional Commissioner of police in order to "seek assurances that members of the police force would not hinder or prevent NIC representatives from presenting their views to the electorate to dissuade them from voting on election day". The NIC stressed their right to monitor developments on voting day and to persuade people not to vote. In a letter to the chief electoral officer they stated: "This activity is not only lawful but represents an exercise of our democratic rights. If you disagree we would like to know your precise legal basis so that we can determine the nature of the legal proceedings to be adopted". Planned activities for voting day included "the wearing of Don't Vote T-shirts, house to house visiting, and the use of motorcars bearing posters and stickers". Police representatives pointed out that handing out leaflets was a contravention of a by-law and that monitoring voting at polling booths was illegal. The NIC campaign, according to executive member Professor Jerry Coovadia, was to be conducted with due regard to the two provisions. As a result, Durban experienced few serious confrontations between police and campaigners on election day. By contrast, in Lenasia, the largest Indian township in the Transvaal, violent clashes occurred between anti-election protesters and police.

The Coloured elections served as a dress rehearsal that helped prepare Indians for election day logistics. They helped Indian anti-election organisers to anticipate the candidates' tactics and the degree of state repression. As Khetso Gordhan explains:

The main theme was to be as close as possible to people and to protect them from intimidation. For every 500 or 1000 houses...a group of people...monitored the situation and reported back to a central office for that particular township. They would then report to a central office for the whole region. The monitoring of streets began as early as 4.30am in some areas where the stream to work began at dawn, and continued in all areas until the polls finally closed. The public generally reacted favourably to these "protectors" on the streets. The monitors comprised working NIC members who took the day off and hundreds of pupils and students. The candidates claimed that Congress activists were "manning street corners, and when our cars go to fetch voters to the polls, they are warned not to get into the cars". They and the state described "the mere presence of anti-election campaigners...as intimidatory". The overwhelming presence of anti-election campaigners ensured that on election day the extent of the intimidation from candidates was limited. However, NIC activists accused both the candidates and the state of widespread intimidation. NIC pamphlets sought to assure people that they "will not be breaking the law" if they did not vote and that they "cannot be charged".

The NIC called on the participating parties to undertake joint monitoring of the polling booths with them to prevent any intimidation. The parties refused. The following statement captures the NIC viewpoint on the issue:
The strong-arm tactics used by the candidates in the campaign...bluffing people about pensions, losing their homes, getting rent increases...continued on election day. We did not physically stop people from voting...we didn't believe that was appropriate political behaviour. If people were going to vote in their thousands then it meant that our campaign was a failure, that we didn't understand the Indian community's consciousness and we didn't know what was in their best interests.
The NIC was confident that the Indian people were politicised enough by the campaign to be able to make an informed decision about voting. Even government apologists like Ranchod acknowledged that intimidation by anti-participationists was rare, and could not have deterred people if there was a genuine will to participate. Pillay concurred, stating that "the claim that the mass stayaway from the polls was the result of intimidation is a gross distortion".

While anti-election activists did not intimidate voters they sometimes employed scare tactics against candidates and their active supporters. For example, a bus owner who displayed pro-election posters on one of his buses had anti-election slogans sprayed on them. Many candidates' houses were sprayed with anti-election slogans. Candidates also claimed that they had received death threats. Aggressive verbal attacks at public meetings were often regarded by participationists as unfair activity.

Contrary to state propaganda, the major intimidators were not the NIC activists but the candidates themselves. For genuine intimidation to occur, the intimidators must have some power or must give the impression that they possess power. The NIC did not enjoy the same status that popular grassroots organisations in the African townships did, although it claimed to be the best supported political body amongst Indians. Nor did it have the power to force compliance if people were adamant about voting. The candidates, on the other hand, notwithstanding their relatively low status amongst the Indian populace, were perceived as "government men", or at the very least people who were rich and had contacts in high places. This provided the basis for abuse by the participationists.

The government had prepared propaganda in anticipation of a low turnout. The Minister of Constitutional Development stated that low percentage polls were characteristic of "developing communities" and a "lack of democratic traditions". The other reasons given by the government for the low turnout were ignorance, apathy, lack of party strength and intimidation by the anti-constitution lobby. Similar claims were made by the participationists, who argued that a "very carefully structured psychological warfare was conducted, in the preparation of which both psychologists and lawyers were obviously involved".

More credible defences point to the immaturity of the parties, candidates' lack of understanding of campaigning procedure, the fact that the voters' roll was ready only a month before the election, the candidates' lack of time and experience to conduct effective house-visits, the relatively small number of canvassers, and the fact that Indian workers tended to work later and so had limited time for evening canvassing. Candidates pointed out that the poll of registered voters rose from 13.4% in the 1981 SAIC elections, to 20.3% in 1984, and the number of actual votes cast rose by 115%. It has been noted that "in general, the vote could have been a lot worse for the government. They could just about live with it. The turnout had been low, certainly, but not farcically so". In the assessment of Essop Pahad, senior ANC and SACP member, proof of the victory lay in the low poll that was recorded during the elections. This was admitted to by the racist regime itself. But the victory had broader consequences. Because the poll was so low, none of the candidates were therefore confident that they could speak on behalf of the Indian people. The participationists were humiliated and the state's new parliament got off to a shaky start. Anti-election activists felt that they had cause to celebrate.

Conclusion

Voting behaviour is a complex social-psychological phenomenon and several factors can combine to influence people to abstain, including the absence of an electoral tradition, organisational and logistical shortcomings, apathy, lack of interest, ignorance, intimidation, disaffection with the legitimacy of the elections and the numerous other problems generally facing new electorates the world over. NIC activists attributed the success of the anti-election campaign to antagonism towards the candidates, the popular opinion that they were "out to feather their own nests", opposition to the proposed constitutional structure, the threat of Indian conscription, support for the NIC call, and the

financial costs of the new parliamentary chamber. Many factors other than emphatic rejection of the state's co-option strategy accounted for the low poll. The government also undermined the legitimacy of the election by not holding a referendum for Indians, in contrast to procedures for whites and despite earlier promises and expectations. In addition, the arrests of UDF and NIC leaders on unsubstantiated charges of treason undermined the limited legitimacy of the contentious elections beyond repair, forcing some ambivalent bystanders into solidarity with the UDF. Political apathy was only a minor factor.

The rejection of African exclusion was not equivalent to a desire for genuine non-racialism and fully-fledged majority rule, although the cause of non-racialism was advanced slightly. At the same time, Africans and Indians supportive of the UDF succeeded in familiarising their constituency with the Freedom Charter, which partly served to illustrate the differences between the UDF, APDUSA, AZAPO and Inkatha agendas.

While the NIC often addressed the Indian people as if they were a homogeneous entity, in its organisational and mobilisational thrust it sometimes reflected a knowledge and sensitivity, albeit to an inadequate extent, of class cleavages. For example, the class base of an area often determined the dress of activists, the language employed and the issues raised. Working-class Indians rejected the constitution because those who were participating were wealthy and corrupt and, in their capacities as members of the SAIC, had not previously offered them any substantial assistance. Furthermore, it did not appear that the working-class would gain anything in material terms. Rather, many believed that they would have to bear the costs of the Indian chamber and that this would exacerbate their declining living standards.

Middle-class, educated Indians were more likely to support the new tricameral set-up and to understand its complexities. As one Conservative Party MP, pointed out: "If a bus should run over the Minister of Constitutional Development, there will be nobody who understands the new constitution". Middle-class Indians rejected the new constitution because they were embarrassed by the "clowns" who were making a "laughing stock of the community" and who were acting in their self-interest. They tended to be more politically aware and were sensitive to the exclusion of Africans from parliament. This was so although there were indications, albeit weak ones, of potential upward mobility for middle-class fractions under the new political arrangements. The small Indian bourgeoisie, adopted a sympathetic attitude towards the new system primarily because they thought it would open economic opportunities for their advancement.

The space to organise politically, though not legally, was facilitated by the general political climate generated by the whole election process. The work of the NIC, aided by this climate which it helped to create, did affect people's decisions about whether to participate in the elections. The NIC did not employ an exclusively task-oriented approach. That is, they did not campaign simply to ensure that people did not vote. Their focus was more long-term and concerned with developing progressive consciousness and building popular organisation. Undoubtedly the NIC underwent significant organisational growth, but at the same time the campaign exhibited certain important weaknesses. While it generated significant political activity, not enough was done to consolidate organisationally. This failure was due to a lack of time, task-oriented pressures and an inadequate vision of the goal towards which the leadership and its members intended to carry the organisation. After the campaign, the NIC lost activists as peoples interest waned. The organisation was down to 25-30% of its peak level in terms of members, resources and activities. One of the most critical tasks facing the democratic movement was to consolidate some of the gains achieved organisationally during the 1984 anti-election campaign:

Perhaps one of the problems that the mass democratic movement was not able to resolve then, was how to sustain the high level of political involvement and commitment of the community. Nevertheless the campaign made it possible for hundreds of activists to come into the political struggle itself.

The evidence does not suggest that Inkatha and Buthelezi played a crucial role in determining the outcome of the Indian tricameral elections but the threats made by Buthelezi, as we shall see later, lingered on into the future and contributed powerfully to the construction of consciousness. Adam and Moodley noted, however, that:
In the Indian case, the so-called Zulu factor is often mentioned as crucial. However, this cannot explain the even lower poll among Indians in the Transvaal, where Buthelezi's warnings to Indians not to allow themselves to be co-opted hardly carried weight.

However, there was a sensitivity amongst most Indians regarding African exclusion, and how their participation in the elections would be regarded.
The increased political consciousness generated by the campaign was reflected in larger mass meetings, the larger numbers of people engaged in political activity and the liveliness of debates and the willingness of people to take sides over the elections. Such levels of political participation had not been seen since the 1950s. People attended public meetings out of personal interest and a curiosity to see how their lives would be affected by the major political upheaval that the constitutional restructuring signified. Unlike in previous years, progressives now had a concrete issue that was compelling and had great mobilisational and organisational potency. The campaign gave the opportunity for the progressive Indian organisations to mobilise Indians on a very immediate political issue. However, the majority of peoples exposure to the campaign was through house-visits by both participationists and the advocates of boycott.

There was a massive propaganda campaign on both sides. The NIC's was the most widespread and successful. However, some activists overestimated the extent of their success. They argued that because people did not vote, they were therefore rejecting the constitution and that this signalled a concomitant increase in progressive political consciousness. The enormity of this mistake would be learnt painfully a year later, when Indian-African relations soured in Durban, reversing the hard-won gains for which the NIC and other anti-participation organisations had worked for so painstakingly. These developments will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Resistance Politics In Retreat: Cablism, The ANC Underground And Gandhi, 1985-1989

As a general rule there is not much we can do to change or alter the objective conditions that militate against larger-scale radicalisation of the Indian masses. But we must guard against a view that calls for the abandonment of this sector as a crucial component of the liberation alliance. We cannot and should not "write-off" the Indian sector - that would be a fatal political blunder.

The progressive forces in the Indian sector are acutely conscious of the tasks and challenges facing us. We are concerned as others in the democratic movement about the political retreat of the Indian sector. But we remain firmly committed towards intensifying our efforts, building our forces and consolidating the active unity of the oppressed and welding the liberation alliance into a powerful instrument capable of effecting radical social transformation.

Introduction

Indian opposition to apartheid restructuring peaked with the successful undermining of the tricameral elections. However, the majority of Indians then retreated from resistance politics and reversed the trend established between 1980 and 1984. As resistance shifted into a "higher phase" amongst Africans, a concomitant "lower phase" of Indian resistance emerged. This actuality placed a strain on the liberation alliance and raised again the question of the limits and possibilities of Indian resistance at a time when African leadership was emerging forcefully. The NIC maintained that most Indians possessed a basic anti-apartheid consciousness which could continue to serve as a foundation for political mobilisation. However, they conceded that Indians had not come to terms with the inevitability of African majority rule and had not embraced a revolutionary outlook. This chapter seeks to understand the retreat from resistance politics, and argues that the reverse was hardly uniform and exhibited several contradictory features. In discussing the growth of ANC activity, it is necessary to consider why many Indian activists turned away from working amongst Indians and gravitated to either ANC politics or other sectoral interventions.

The emergence of debates (and the praxis itself) around internal democracy and cabalism consumed the strategic and institutional energies of the NIC, UDF and its allied organisations. These developments fostered a fractious organisational milieu that contributed to the weakening of resistance; yet the withdrawal of many from NIC work did itself contribute to this decline in democracy and organisational efficiency. Heightening repression also prescribed the limits and possibilities of activism and encouraged the political withdrawal of many Indians. The ideological control sought by the information censorship measures under the state of emergency also contributed to the weakening of political consciousness. In this context of insecurity and political instability, powerfully evoked by the Inanda incident, we examine the ongoing symbolic presence of Gandhi and the insertion of the Indian nation-state as a component of the political discourses and practices of South African Indians. It is therefore necessary to assess the implications of the NIC's attempts to mobilise Indian ethnicity, especially since this strategy came from an organisation that was desperately on the defensive from the very constituency it sought to organise and deliver to the national democratic struggle.

The Inanda incident

While African resistance was intensifying nationally, provoking the state to impose a partial State of Emergency in 1985, Inkatha was determined to contain protests in Natal. The assassination of UDF leader Victoria Mxenge ignited demonstrations in many African townships in Durban in the early days of August 1985. The students soon shifted the arena of their resistance from the townships into the city centre with a 4000-strong demonstration which attracted students from black and white higher education institutions and from African high schools. By Durban standards, this was combat politics at its height and signalled a departure from the tactic of operating within the boundaries of legal protest. The police, initially constrained by the presence of white lunch-time shoppers, attacked the students and arrested twenty-one of them. Over half the demonstrators and those arrested were Indians. Significantly though, unlike the high levels of Indian participation in the 1980 school boycotts in Natal, there were negligible protests following the Mxenge assassination. Only one Indian High school protested against the State of Emergency, and even this action was relatively short-lived.

Days later, in the settlement of Inanda, what started as an anti-state protest, directly linked to the Mxenge killing, developed into ethnic strife. One commentator observed that two disturbed streams merged into an uncontained torrent. The first was of local origin, the cumulative strife, deprivation and uncertainty of the unorganised poor; the second, the highly politicised revolt of the youth. What can be described as "lumpen" youth from Inanda took up and led where the students had left off.

The youth attacked what they perceived to be symbols of power, and some looted Indian and African shops. This violence spilled over into attacks against Indian homes in the area. Generally, attempts were made by Indians of all political opinions to prevent a rise in hysteria amongst Indians. When panic spread to Phoenix, leading to the formation of vigilante groups, residents realised that this would only worsen the situation if Africans were killed.

The violence in Inanda can be traced to consistent Inkatha attacks on UDF supporters. One study suggests that Inkatha meetings conducted before the violence included discussions on "How to get the Indian out of Inanda" in order to enable incorporation into KwaZulu. This study found that no animosity between Africans and Indians was evident, a view which was supported by the fact that certain Indian properties were salvaged by some African neighbours before the mobs could loot. A few rioters alleged coercion: "I was frightened and concerned about my life and was forced to go with the mob...we have lived with the Indians for many years and had no problems. It is the tsotsis (thugs) that are causing the problems." Another woman maintained that Indians "called us every evening to watch television. We also ate together...I saw the Africans take away some of the furniture, we could not do anything".

While many of the Indian victims experienced feelings of betrayal and loss of trust, there were others who felt differently. One resident who lost his house "honestly believe[d] that the unrest was not racial friction". Inanda cannot be considered as a repeat of the 1949 riots. The scale and the context were clearly different. The main resemblance was the passive role played by police in the face of widespread looting, arson and stone throwing. The events were triggered by political action which was hijacked by criminal elements, but they also found some resonance with Inkatha's earlier anti-Indian agitation. Fatima Meer suggests that the Indian residents were caught in the cross-fire of general uprisings all over the country, and proposes that an aggravating factor was that Indians left their homes before being attacked, thus leaving them free to be occupied by criminal fringe elements. Even the pro-Inkatha YS Chinsamy, commented that there was no "racial conflict, only political issues which gave vent to anger".

There were different racial responses to these events. One survey showed that Africans became more radicalised, while Indians and Coloureds became more conservative. In African areas, support for Inkatha dropped and UDF support rose, whereas in Indian areas UDF support dropped from 15% to 14%. The UDF was probably hardest hit by the change in the attitudes of Indians, particularly with regard to their perceptions of violence. Only 1.8% of Africans blamed the UDF as compared to 8% of Indians. Most Indians were unable to make a distinction between Inkatha and the UDF. The political world in which these organisations existed was far too distant from their own realities, particularly since the UDF had not succeeded in weaving itself into the social fabric of Indian working-class existence. While 41.4% of Africans believed Inkatha had fanned the trouble once it began, only 2.5% of Indians blamed Inkatha. Conservative political forces gained from the events, with Rajbansi and the HoD displaying high visibility with the assistance of police protection during the disturbances. This conservative turn was reflected in the fact that 53% of Indians proclaimed support for P.W Botha. Africans saw the targets of the unrest as the government (46%) and informers (28%). Coloureds saw the targets as businesses (39%) and Indians (27%); and Indians saw themselves (45%) and businesses (26%) as the primary targets. These differing views may be attributed in part to government propaganda aimed at evoking fear and a retreat away from solidarity with Africans into the white laager. Inkatha was also constructed as a moderating and controlling force in the unrest. Some believed that these riots stemmed from a small proportion of Indians embracing tricameralism.

The history and consciousness of Indians prior to the riots allowed a racial myth to be created out of an occurrence which was not racially-orientated. The comparison of the losses inflicted are important: Africans experienced 70 deaths and the looting of 200 African businesses, whereas 4 Indians died and 44 Indian businesses were affected. However, across the class divide fear had found a home - a fear that would persist for the next decade at least. One indication of this fear (and self-interest) was the submission of a memorandum by Indian farmers calling for their incorporation into KwaZulu rather than the loss of their properties in Inanda.

Inkatha, clearly aided by the state's ideological and coercive apparatus, attempted to win the support of Indians through calling Indian-African solidarity meetings with Rajbansi. This conservative alliance also condemned the UDF and NIC for fomenting the violence. The media gave prominent coverage to these articulations and confirmed for many the UDF's complicity in the violence. The NIC accused the government of attempting to blame them for instigating the Phoenix-Inanda disturbances and the ensuing violence. NIC leaders rigorously asserted that they had not been involved in promoting unrest or in any activity that was unlawful. These denials were ignored by the electronic media and received limited press coverage. The HoD and Inkatha, however, contended that they consistently eschewed violence as a political weapon, unlike the implicit support the UDF offered to the ANC's armed struggle. Thus, with the weight of the conservative media it was relatively easy to exonerate Inkatha and attribute blame to the UDF.

During the Inanda uprisings residents felt deserted by political leaders. Rajbansi's promises of leading the affected residents to Inanda to acquire their remaining belongings was never realised. Meanwhile, the UDF and the NIC were unable to present any alternative support to the affected residents. Columnist Ameen Akhalwaya enquired why AZAPO and the UDF, "which claim to have large followings, do not hold any public meetings with residents to diffuse the situation and help organise protection?" Substantial criticism centred around the failure of the NIC to provide aid, and several letters to newspapers accused the NIC of doing nothing for the Inanda victims. However, UDW students and various youth organisations did collect food and clothing for the victims and

attempted to present an alternative view of what had transpired in Inanda. Nevertheless, Rajbansi accused the students of "fanning the flames of unrest". The UDW-SRC president responded by accusing Rajbansi and his colleagues of doing the same by supporting tricameralism. The NIC was also unable to prevent the subsequent eviction of the Inanda victims by the Durban City Council for failure to pay rents, despite a previous agreement with the Council for a period of leniency in recognition of the residents plight. It was against this background of organisational ineffectiveness that the NIC was forced into a sharp retreat.

The Inanda riots and other township violence underlined the failure of the tricameral system. A leading business figure, Chris Saunders of Tongaat Hulett, admitted he was wrong to support the tricameral parliament since it had in fact created more problems and solved none, with unrest spreading...in Natal to areas such as Lamontville, Chesterville and Inanda where peace had in the past prevailed. The first step in the process of moving to a common and shared society is to release Nelson Mandela and his colleagues, unban political organisations and create the necessary psychological conditions for meaningful dialogue with the true representatives of the people.

While the Inanda violence looms large in the consciousness of many Indians (but less so than the events of 1949) and attracted the interest of some academic observation, it is a mere footnote in the overall chapter of the violence in KwaZulu-Natal that has its beginnings in 1980. Magyar suggested that the Inanda conflagration revealed Indians to be a political minority entrapped between the deteriorating relations of the dominant white and African communities. He predicted that the outcome of "this inter-nationalist struggle will affect Indian people directly", yet at the constitutional level, Indians still exercised virtually no initiative. Inanda showed that participation in the new parliament had not engendered greater national security for the Indian voting constituency as an ethnic minority.

The Inanda riots also exposed the serious organisational weaknesses of the NIC. Its leadership was distant from the people affected by the riots, and it had no influence or grassroots presence in the area that could calm anxieties. However, its relatively small activist base in Phoenix worked strenuously to provide relief for the residents who fled from Inanda, albeit under the banner of the local civic and child and family welfare society. The absence of the NIC leadership, with few exceptions, was an indication of the ineffectiveness of the NIC and its inability to protect and defend Indians. The class dimensions of the conflict were complex. Much of the land was owned by well-off Indians, but the vast majority who resided there were in the same position as the African tenants. Inanda was one of the few areas (and the largest) in South Africa where Africans and Indians lived side by side, albeit reflecting different class structures. However, poor Indians also lived in shacks. Adam observed that the riots confirmed the state's success in alienating the divided segments from each other through separate institutions and different incorporations.

While it was mostly the Indian working-class (and some traders and farmers) who were affected, it would be accurate to say that the Inanda incident reverberated across the class divide. However, the middle-class remained quite secure and distant from the Inanda events because of their geographical distance. Even working-class Indians in Chatsworth were unaffected since the township was largely Indian with very few African residents living in immediate proximity. Nevertheless, rumours circulated for days of an impending attack from the neighbouring African township of Umlazi. Consequently, the impact of this event on political consciousness was devastating. It aroused memories of the 1949 riots, and bred fear, anxiety and confusion, causing many to question their

opposition to apartheid. The refrain "better the devil you know than the devil you do not know" began to find currency.

The spontaneous nature of these events found the democratic movement unable to offer constructive direction. The movement learnt that "spontaneity" was capable of infinite power if it harnessed mass social discontent and the tendency towards mass action that could prevail in certain situations. Equally, spontaneity could be open to misdirection and even to manipulation by the state and forces such as Inkatha. These events showed that Indian resistance organisations lost contact with their constituencies by "running ahead"; that is, they went faster and further than people seemed to want, and advocated a course correct in itself but for which their constituency was not adequately prepared. Meanwhile, the African leadership appeared to "lag behind"; that is, they failed to go as far as the people were prepared to go. It was expected that the sound leadership of organisations would steer a middle course and endeavour to obviate both errors. Nevertheless, the absence of common objective conditions in oppressed communities greatly exacerbated the problem.
I have argued elsewhere that, youth organisation leaders in the African communities sometimes "lagged behind" youth in their constituencies whereas Indian and Coloured youth leaders tended to "run ahead" of their constituencies driven by their desire to emulate what they saw as the more desirable political practice that prevailed among African youth. This phenomenon was facilitated by increased contact between youth leadership in the different racial groups. The reverse occurred too, as African leaders became aware of the limitations of united action across the racial divide. This realisation tempered their own analyses and militancy, and sometimes led them to "lag behind" their constituencies. These questions also confronted the ANC as it forged ahead with the development of its internal infrastructure.

The rise of the ANC and the shift to the underground

By the late 1970s many Indian activists saw themselves as part of an informal ANC underground. Some only formally joined the ANC in the mid-1980s or later but often saw themselves as ANC rather than NIC operatives. For many, the NIC was simply a convenient front. As one activist put it: "For us, it was more important to do [ANC] work." Many Indian middle-class activists were supportive of the ANC's military vanguard approach and felt that there was a need for concerted armed propaganda campaigns, given the ideological hegemony of the state. Others also believed that an armed seizure of power was a real possibility. During this period the ANC argued that the build-up phase was approaching its climax and that insurrection was now properly on the agenda. Several thousand copies of such ANC statements were distributed in Natal by the underground propaganda unit led by Abba Omar a former UDW student leader.

One of the challenges facing the ANC was to articulate its political and military interventions in an appropriate manner. In late 1985, ANC operational units attempted to develop an integrated political-military underground command structure in the greater Durban area. The implementation of the plan, code-named Operation Butterfly, was overseen by Ivan Pillay and supported by a network of pamphleteers in Durban; among them were students Mo Shaik and Abba Omar. Shaik also maintained contact with exiled Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, who came back into the country illicitly to solicit recommendations from the underground for the 1985 Kabwe Conference. The ANC underground in Durban thus included the network around Pravin Gordhan as well as other formal political units. One of the MK machineries in Durban falling within the Swaziland operation was headed by Dr. Vijay Ramlakan. The military machinery in which Ramlakan was involved comprised more or less half African and half Indian members and covered much of Greater Durban. It was

larger than the Omar-Shaik propaganda unit, which numbered only 13. Many of these underground agents were members of the NIC and distributed ANC literature employing a similar NIC pamphlet distribution network.

In the late 1970s the ANC recruited mainly those from middle-class backgrounds, with disproportionately Gujerati merchant-class roots (and mostly Muslim). There was no specific discriminatory intention behind this demographic picture, which was facilitated by Indian social structure and kinship/trust ties. While caste was largely irrelevant in popular discourses, the legacy of caste privilege now manifested itself in class terms. There were at least two earlier attempts to set up ANC political underground structures in Chatsworth in the early 1980s. Sydney Moodley of neighbouring Merebank was deployed in Chatsworth where he operated until he fled in 1981. Merebank had a rich history of ANC involvement with several local activists having fled into exile. However, Ramlakan, whose own roots were in Chatsworth, pioneered the formation of ANC MK units. The well-known Lenny Naidu unit came into existence in the latter part of 1984 and trained within the country. All its members were high profile local youth and civic activists who were frustrated with the slow progress of Indian mobilisation, who felt that Indians must also be willing to sacrifice their lives to the ANC military effort, and who were largely uninspired by the leadership and programme of the NIC. Historically all these activists were of indentured roots and contemporaneously they were from working-class backgrounds. However, these units and those providing infrastructural support were smashed by the security apparatus after operating for between six months and almost two years within the country. Lenny Naidu and four others, including the writer, fled the country in early 1987 after spending several months underground. Another unit member turned state witness, and Derek Naidoo, Jude Francis and Ramlakan would later join several African comrades in trials that led to sentences on Robben Island. Ramlakan's trial presented an important picture of Indian involvement in the ANC at a military level. The fact that Ramlakan, a person of humble working-class roots who had qualified as a medical doctor, added further poignancy to the trial. While these events may have contributed minimally to radicalising Indians, they showed Africans that Indians too were prepared to make sacrifices.

In later years activists from Chatsworth and several other working-class areas joined the ANC underground structures as repression increased and mass mobilisation became less viable. During this period, some NIC-linked underground operatives dedicated their efforts to ANC work or moved into other sectors, mainly trade unionism. These withdrawals, which included people who fled the country, had a debilitating effect on the NIC. In 1988, when Lenny Naidu was murdered together with other African youths in a hit-squad assassination near the Swaziland border, police restrictions deprived Chatsworth activists of the opportunity to use his funeral as a means to promote the ANC. Only 200 persons were allowed to attend both the funeral service and the burial. Notwithstanding these restrictions, prominent newspaper articles about Lenny Naidu's assassination evoked some sympathy for the activist, his family and the movement. However, fear reigned supreme and there was no outward expression of these feelings. Non-racialism briefly triumphed as there were joint services for those who had been killed in the ambush. Only a few Indians attended these joint commemorations, but nevertheless the Ramlakan trial and Lenny Naidu's assassination both inserted the ANC into the political consciousness of Indians, evoking a multiplicity of responses.

The operational relationship between the ANC and the NIC was important. While at a formal level there was only an historical link, there was great overlap between ANC and NIC activists. Ashwin Desai observes that:

The 'dual role' of underground and NIC activism...created problems within the NIC. The NIC membership was a motley crew. Hindus and Muslims, capitalists and workers, young and old all found a home in the NIC. It was broad-based with a broad appeal. Often ANC operatives tried to run the NIC as if it were a Leninist party. There was to be strict party discipline and decisions were to be made along the lines of 'democratic centralism'. It was probably this kind of mentality that led to the marginalisation of many older NIC figures and to the subsequent charges of cabalism which were levelled by them.

Inevitably, the contradictions in 'exile politics' manifested themselves in the NIC since different cells reported to different ANC leaders: Mac Maharaj was based in Lusaka, Ismail Ebrahim and later Ivan Pillay operated out of Swaziland, and the Pahad brothers worked from London. Desai suggests that the absence of co-ordination amongst these three groupings was probably a result of geography as well as the power dynamics of exile politics. Different cells battled around the strategic orientation of the NIC, with each grouping believing "they were the authentic voice of the exiled ANC". The combination of these conflicts and a range of other criticisms from the rank-and-file NIC activists around issues of strategy and internal democracy took a heavy toll on the organisation. Activists in the early 1980s spoke quietly about the existence of a cabal, because they did not want to expose divisions in the organisation publically. As problems intensified the word cabal became one of the best-known within the national resistance lexicon.

Cabalism and the decay of resistance politics

Several conflicts characterised NIC and UDF politics, including the relationship with the tricameral parliament, the question of whether there should be a reconsideration of the boycott position, the issue of appropriate responses to the detentions of leaders, the moves for unity between AZAPO and UDF, and the attempts to increase worker participation in the UDF. At a local level, these tensions manifested themselves differently. For example, some Chatsworth activists adopted an antagonistic position towards the potential of "control by the town grouping" led by Pravin Gordhan; and there were concerns about the absence of working-class leadership and the fact that youth and women were not sufficiently recognised as independent sectors of struggle. (See Table 7.1) It was in the youth sector that criticism reached its peak; these processes have been analysed in my earlier work.

Conflicts such as these confused and alienated several new activists who were being told that while unity was the greatest weapon, in reality disunity prevailed. The full scope of this disunity of the Indian left is worth examining. First, there was the division between ANC-aligned Indians and non-ANC aligned Indians. Secondly, the non-ANC aligned Indians were divided into PAC, AZAPO and APDUSA/NUM. Thirdly, there were those Indians who held an independent worker position. This group, dismissed as anti-ANC by the hegemonic grouping within the NIC, began to gain ANC acceptance after the formation of COSATU in 1985. Fourthly, the divisions within the ANC/NIC supporters were intense and related to organisational strategy, personality clashes, methods of accountability, internal democracy and ideological positions.

The ideological splits within the Indian left, often had more to do with semantics than substance, much like the splits which plagued the white left, particularly in Johannesburg during the mid-1980s. The main conflict was disagreement over the choice between a one-or two-phased struggle. Those who subscribed to the view that the struggle in South Africa was one continuous struggle for socialism were opposed by those who believed that the first phase should concentrate on the struggle for national liberation, while still supporting socialism. These antagonisms were not neatly compartmentalised. They had several overlaps and the political allegiances of many activists were disparate, diffuse and multiple. For example, many saw themselves as NIC and ANC activists from

1980, but by 1983 they also became supporters of the emerging trade union movement which was viewed as not being in opposition to other left organisations. There were several debates within various informal circles about what it meant to be anti-AZAPO. This was accentuated in 1982 with the release of prominent BC activists from Robben Island. However, it can be argued that none of these left political debates affected the life of the majority of Indians, and that they were self-indulgent preoccupations of disconnected activists. It was the conflicts within the NIC that had the greatest relevance for Indians.

In October 1987, a unique workshop of Chatsworth activists examined a range of criticisms pertaining to the NIC. These deliberations are valuable as an indication of the contradictions between activists working and living amongst Chatsworth's working-class (though some activists were becoming middle-class) and the leadership of the NIC, who resided mainly in middle-class suburbia. The organisation was criticised for failing to transform itself into a mass-based organisation despite having had several opportunities since the 1980s. It lacked day-to-day grassroots contact and "functioned in alienation of the people". It was based primarily on the participation of student activists or middle-class elements and professionals. The area committees (ACs) were weak, ineffectual and almost non-functional, while the absence of proper branches made it difficult for ordinary people to participate.

Activists argued that if proper branches existed through which people in Chatsworth and Phoenix could feel part of the organisation and to whom the organisation would be accountable, then activists would be in a better position to defend the organisation and themselves during the state of emergency. The organisation enjoyed an element of protection which would derive from its mass character. Being essentially an activist organisation, it had become easy for the state to isolate and neutralise its influence among the people. Furthermore, representation within the Executive and Organising Committee (OC) was not based on elections by the areas. Individuals were chosen or co-opted onto these structures willy-nilly and this was considered to be undemocratic and no longer tolerable. It was noted that the Activists Forum (AF) and the Area Committees were used for consultations with activists. However, the AF was criticised since no prior knowledge existed of the issues to be discussed at these meetings. Consequently, no real discussions took place in ACs and this led to individual viewpoints being put forward without proper democratic discussion in the areas. In any event, the ACs expressed views that were routinely disregarded by the Executive.

The political practice of the organisation was also criticised, and it was alleged that the NIC lacked a proper programme and was too issue-orientated. Cliqueism and infighting were seen as hampering progress. In particular, an observation was made that the organisation's practice was dominated by a "Chemist Grouping" (Pravin Gordhan was a chemist), and a few people who met regularly at his pharmacy were believed to unduly influence the organisation. Certain activists, because of personal loyalties, built centralised control around this group. They had privileged access to information and resources, and this tended to elevate their position in the various areas without necessarily cultivating the popular support of the local activists.

The workshop also expressed grave concerns about the decision-making process of the organisation. Activists argued that the AF and ACs were used for rubber stamping decisions that had already been taken by the Executive and Organising Committee. Branches were requested to implement activities without first investigating the feasibility of such proposals. Appointments of certain persons to the OC and Executive were made without consultation. Those who participated in the Executive and the OC did so on an individual basis and did not carry the mandate of their areas. There were also

concerns about the accountability of these personnel who seemed to serve permanently on both the Executive and the OC. There was no process of recalling people from these structures, nor were there adequate forums for criticising these individuals when necessary. There was no mechanism through which the NIC was accountable to the (Indian) "community", and in general people were unable to question the functioning of the organisation. The Executive and the OC were also not accountable to activists.

The workshop also applied itself to the relationship to other sectors and found that the NIC seemed to be "dominating the comrades from the African sector". Activists felt that some African comrades were "becoming Indianised". There was little contact between the NIC and African comrades with the resulting alienation of Indian activists. The UDF had little or no support among Indian people, and in Chatsworth it was seen as an African organisation. This was in part a result of the kind of consciousness that some Indian activists held. It was also felt that there was a lack of contact between the activists and the leadership, resulting in poor co-ordination of work at local level. There existed no established way in which the "centre" dealt with the "periphery", and because of the preferential treatment that certain activists enjoyed, their loyalty was to certain leadership figures rather than to the organisation as a whole. Many activists felt that they were "mere pamphlet fodder" since they did not learn much else besides how to distribute pamphlets. Those activists who were theoretically advanced did not adequately share their knowledge with others.

It was also noted that individuals who raised criticisms of the organisation were ostracised and labelled as being reactionary, members of the Marxist Workers Tendency, BC, petty bourgeois, individualists, CIA agents, ultra-leftists and so on. This reality prevented activists from voicing even the most valid of criticisms. It was suggested that since the OC itself was being criticised for being undemocratic, it was therefore ill-equipped to deal with the proposals and recommendations that activists were making. There were also criticisms that the organisation catered mainly for middle-class people such as doctors and lawyers. The criteria used for the appointment of individuals onto the Executive were questioned since, following the 1984 elections, a system of co-option had been used. Neither the ACs nor the AF were consulted on these measures. It was felt that within the Chatsworth AC there also existed cliques and this caused divisions which were often related to a power struggle between the "town" and "township" groups. There was rivalry and disagreement over strategy and organising. After the tricameral elections, some township activists aligned themselves with the chemist/town grouping.

Specific criticisms were made against Shoots Naidoo, a member of the Executive from Chatsworth. The questions centred around activists' security during the emergency. A high code of discipline was expected from the leadership, and they were asked to clear out their homes of any sensitive material. Activists questioned how security police had got hold of CHAC files which had been in Naidoo's custody. Those in detention around June/July 1986 were shown these files, which included the names of several activists, and this resulted in the detainees being undermined when they attempted to conceal information. Furthermore, no one was appraised of the confiscation of these documents. Naidoo denied that any minutes were taken, but detainees maintained that the minutes were written on graph paper used only by him. The issue was left unresolved with a face-saving suggestion that it would be addressed when further details emerged.

The workshop recommended that the NIC needed a completely new structure. It was suggested that the OC and the Executive needed to be re-elected and made accountable to activists and the community. Branches must be formed to enable ordinary people to participate in the affairs of the

organisation. The AF was to be used primarily for education and consultation. It was also considered to be important for the NIC to organise in other sectors, for example among high school students. In the wake of allegations of NIC ineffectiveness and disorganisation, internal elections were planned for December 1987 to stem the growing dissent within NIC ranks. The thrust for the conference came from younger activists who had been actively involved since the 1980 school boycotts and especially after the 1984 tricameral election boycotts. There was disagreement, though, about whether the NIC revival could rely on the new activists, since many of them were students and lacked stability and the necessary "economic base" to maintain an effective political organisation.

The chemist/town grouping acquired the name "cabal" because of their immense control of and influence over the organisation. A joke at one factory suggested that NIC policy under Dr Monty Naicker was "just what the doctor ordered", but under George Sewpersad, a lawyer, NIC policy was "just what the chemist (in reference to Pravin Gordhan) ordered!" There were claims that some senior NIC executives were being marginalised and that this threatened to split the organisation. These executives claimed that they were excluded from activities, seldom notified of meetings, and were not consulted on key issues. On the eve of the conference, these officials resigned because the meeting was to be held clandestinely. They claimed, furthermore, that the election of office bearers had been predetermined by the "cabal". Farouk Meer refuted this, stating that branches had made nominations for officials, and that this should not be considered undemocratic. He threatened legal action if the accusations continued. The conference then degenerated into an exercise in bad public relations.

The secrecy of the conference was aimed at accommodating "underground" activists. Delegates were picked up and taken to the venue, and while there, they were restricted to the hall and not allowed to make phone calls. The way the Conference Organising Committee operated invited several criticisms: it was claimed that they "went along their task in secrecy and the effects will only be felt when the rulers of the cabal tear down the entire membership in their grand design to keep the country under their feet". The priority given to the participation of a few, albeit influential, activists on the run from the Security Branch in preference over the benefits of a much needed public AGM was a miscalculation which would hinder the NIC's resuscitation, especially since the NIC recognised that they had not always functioned democratically. Certain individuals banding together have exercised undue influence on its activities. The leadership has been disunited. Personality conflicts have been rife. The lack of internal democracy has contributed to its paralysis. Overall, there was clearly a need for greater unity, a broadening of the NIC-support base, and the need to review strategy in the light of changed conditions after the Inanda riots and racial incidents on the beach-front, as well as the state of emergency.

The fracas surrounding the NIC conference and the cabal, dominated the local press in the first half of 1988, while the second half of the year was dominated by the LAC elections held in October. There was considerable displeasure at the ousting of M.J Naidoo, and a letter from a worker delegate to the NIC conference stated that the NIC:
is no longer entitled to be one of the custodians of the Freedom Charter. This viewpoint is being expressed in my factory...My fellow workers are saying that what the state failed to do with M.J. Naidoo, a top congress leader, the NIC cabal has succeeded in doing by isolating him from the NIC.

Questions were also raised about the central role of Hassan Mall and Hassim Seedat (who was elected treasurer), since some viewed them as collaborators for their role in HoD-controlled institutions. Although communal or sectional thinking hardly found a space in the NIC vocabulary

during this period, questions around MJ Naidoo's ousting were inevitably in the minds of many working-class Indians. Naidoo, a south Indian Tamil-speaking Hindu of indentured roots, was marginalised and believed that preferential treatment was given to Seedat and Mall, who were of north Indian, Muslim and merchant class roots.

The NIC's stature continued to plummet with popular assertions that the government had not banned the NIC because the cabal had already stripped it of all its vitality. One letter-writer asked why the NIC had stopped public meetings in Phoenix and Chatsworth, and why they had said nothing about the recent bannings, rent increases or the rising unemployment. Another letter alleged that the NIC, as a result of the cabal allegations, had lost all credibility:

From the time of the conference and to date they have lost credibility and remain a poor runner, trailing behind community organisations trying to regain that lost credibility.

A further embarrassment was inflicted on the NIC by one of its high-profile supporters who opted to contest the LAC elections partly because of the snub he had received from the NIC. In any event, there was speculation about whether the NIC would participate in the LAC election itself. For the state and its allies, it was essential that the coming LAC elections were successful. This became clear when they passed legislation allowing special votes to be cast in the last two weeks leading up to the election. Organisations were also prevented by emergency regulations from calling for boycotts.

The influence of the cabal extended further than the NIC. Archie Gumede suggested that in the UDF some activists were using coercive tactics, alleging that democratic decisions could not be taken until Mandela was released. It was suggested that the cabal's technique of achieving consensus was based on the idea of "coercion now, internal democracy later". Some believed that just as M.J. Naidoo was "liquidated", so too action against Gumede would be set in motion because of his exposure of coercion by activists. The Inkatha-aligned, Ilanga newspaper sought to portray the UDF as anti-Zulu and Indian-controlled, and claimed that it had evidence of a cabal within the NIC that controlled the UDF and the MDM. Sewpersadh's refutations sounded less than convincing: "There is no foundation to the allegation that the NIC or a cabal controls the MDM. This is a gross travesty of truth."

A magnanimous analysis of the cabal phenomenon would proceed as follows. There was a shift in political space from the bannings of BC organisations in 1977 through to 1985 and a tightening up of legal space again until 1989. First of all, those in the leadership were unable to make these shifts as creatively and astutely as was necessary. Secondly, the imperatives of executing important, urgent tasks called for the best skills that were readily available. Often these belonged to middle-class activists who were known and trusted by the dominant grouping within the NIC leadership. No conscious attempt was made to exclude activists from Indian working-class areas or indeed African leadership more generally.

A less generous analysis might suggest that there was a propensity to control both the underground and legal resistance in Durban (and the province) and the resources that came with that control. While the possibility of severe state repression was omnipresent, the anticipated change in political fortunes also meant that those seeking a long-term political career might risk repression in order to position themselves strategically for the longer term. While we might speculate that perhaps a combination of both sets of reasons enabled the emergence of the cabal, it is important to assert that those who came to be associated with the cabal were deeply committed both to the NIC and the ANC, and had served the movement for several years. However, what they failed to recognise was that the struggles of the 1980s had also generated a large number of activists, including those from working-class neighbourhoods, who shared an equal if not greater commitment to the Congress

movement. Most importantly they were unable to make space for the effective incorporation of these newer activists into the NIC. A greater weakness was the failure of this leadership to encourage Indians actively to engage in the various non-racial sectoral organisations and to link civic organisation to the broader political struggles of the moment.(See Table 7.2)

We should pause here to comment on the apparent preponderance, disproportionate presence and hence influence of Indians in prominent positions in various leftist organisations, even though the vast majority of Indians did not share these attitudes. One reason is that of non-racialism itself. Indian activists saw themselves as black and as South African, and believed that they should participate in the struggle not as Indians but as blacks. So, for example, when Jayendra Naidoo moved from participating in civic work in Indian areas to working in trade unions, which meant working primarily with African workers, he saw no contradiction. The high visibility of Indians in leadership (not withstanding their small numbers) must also be attributed to their greater access to education compared with that of Africans. (See Table 7.3)
Women and resistance

The NIC conference also failed to promote leadership by women. The conference convenors were criticised for using constitutional reasons to disallow the appointment of an additional woman to the executive, especially since an "instant" amendment to the constitution was allowed to enable Coovadia to become the fourth vice-president without necessitating a vote. A letter by a NIC woman activist attacked the NIC's male chauvinist approach and asserted that under its bachelor president George Sewpersad, and dominated by the cabal [they have] given women only a token representation on its executive where Ela Ramgobin sits. On behalf of the youthful NIC women activists I want publicly to record our feminine protest. Gandhi and Monty Naicker gave women the respect due to them, but not the cabal which is totally male. [They] ignore the Valliamahs of today and reject Gandhi as irrelevant in an age of violence.

While the criticism of the NIC's failure to respond specifically to issues affecting Indian women, particularly working-class women, was valid, the observation that Gandhi was considered irrelevant was fallacious, as we shall see later. Furthermore, it is hardly accurate to say that Monty Naicker and Gandhi were expressly committed to leadership by women. The constant referral to history to justify contemporary positions, irrespective of factual inaccuracies, enjoyed much currency in NIC politics. AZAPO, meanwhile, fared relatively better in the promotion of women leaders. Even though its support base was small amongst Indians, the fact that it was committed to developing an accountable branch structure saw several women assume leadership positions. Where NIC branch structures existed, women were again represented disproportionately. It was amongst youth organisations that the most concerted efforts were made to promote women leaders. For example, by 1986 the leadership of a Chatsworth youth organisation, Helping Hands, included more women than men, and later saw the Presidency being held mainly by young women. More importantly, it was youth and civic organisations rather than the NIC that incorporated gender issues into their programme of work. At the UDF launch in 1983, the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW) argued that women's triple oppression marginalised women in South Africa. NOW called on all women to bring their organisations into the UDF and fight together with the men against oppression, exploitation and sexual discrimination. They also argued that it was only through organisation that women could find ways to challenge and change their oppression. These positions were eventually embraced as UDF policy. A key project was thus to "develop women's leadership in the UDF" since, even though women were active in the rank and file of most organisations, there was a marked absence of women leaders. Women tended to defer to men and men often did not listen to women's views. Women

lacked "both the confidence and skills to articulate their positions in large forums". The UDF Women's Congress resolved to work within the UDF to ensure that all activities and campaigns of the Front were organised to facilitate the maximum participation of women, to eradicate sexism from their ranks, and to promote a vision of a non-sexist future amongst progressive organisations.

Three prominent Indian activists were in NOW's leadership, but they did not succeed in developing branches in Indian areas. This was partly as a result of the unsupportive NIC Executive who had a strained relationship with NOW, even though both organisations sat on the UDF Natal Regional Executive. Forging solidarity with women across the racial divide was also a difficult process. In many ways it was easiest for Indian and Coloured women to make common cause, since their structural locations were broadly similar. The primary interaction of many Indian women with African women was as domestic workers. So when Congress supported a stayaway it urged Indian women to give domestic workers a paid public holiday. While the progressives failed to engage Indian women, the Durban City Council sponsored the development of welfarist, social club-type women's organisations in Chatsworth and Phoenix. These developed into an extensive network of organisations, with 17 being affiliated to the United Women's Association in Phoenix alone. A similar umbrella body in Chatsworth aligned itself with a progressive initiative called the Chatsworth Co-ordinating Council for Health, Housing and Welfare (see table 7.4). These organisations maintained a relatively apolitical and neutral position. However, subjective factors and human agency favoured the orientation of these organisations since the leader of the women's body in Chatsworth had a son who was a Congress activist. CHAC set up a women's committee which, amongst other activities, attempted to work closely with these organisations and thus subject them to a progressive influence. However, these women's organisations did not affiliate to the UDF, nor did they overtly support any UDF campaigns.

The impact of NOW was largely limited to urban areas, and it was by no means a mass women's movement. Its presence in Indian areas was even weaker. While NOW was not simply interested in ushering women into the struggle, it was also committed to dealing with gender issues, though some of its allies did not always make this explicit. For example, UDF President, Albertina Sisulu, speaking at a NOW conference stated: "You can be in the kitchen and in the struggle because your children are there and you have to be with them". In any event, working-class women exhibited a willingness to offer resistance around issues that directly affected their lives. Thus, when Cato Manor residents discovered that rentals for their new homes would consume between 40% and 50% of their salaries, it was mainly women who protested at the House of Delegates offices. It was only in 1988 that feeble calls emanated from within NIC ranks for women to organise as a sector. The ANC Youth League also called for youth to consolidate the presence of working youth by strengthening links with the other sectors of the mass democratic movement including with womens' organisations. Indian women in the main, while eschewing political involvement, were visible in the leadership and in the programmes of religious, cultural and sporting organisations. It is worth noting however, that several Indian women occupied important positions both within the underground and in the legal resistance. For example, Veena Naidoo of Chatsworth fled to work with Umkhonto we Sizwe in exile, while Pregaluxmi Govender, played a leading role in the trade union movement and later became the national manager of the Women's National Coalition. Three other Chatsworth women also played a key role in strengthening the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU) during this period. Here again we see the visibility of Indians in resistance, but their limited mass support base from amongst Indians. However, SACTWU did succeed in unionising many Indian women and there was a discernible rise in their political consciousness.

India, Gandhi and "Indian Culture"

Kay Moonsamy, a senior ANC figure in exile, correctly argued that when the majority of Indians joined resistance organisations, they did not do so as Indians but as South Africans since they considered themselves "part and parcel of the South African society". The majority of Indians did not look towards India but "of course there is a special affinity because our forefathers hailed from India". The plundering of the Gandhi settlement during the Inanda riots undermined this logic to some extent. The settlement was pioneered by Gandhi but neglected by Africans and Indians alike. The rioters, however, returned a priceless lamp taken from the settlement when its historical significance was explained. Only a small fraction of the Indian middle-class were affected by the devastation, as these words testify:

The settlement, had it been vital to the functioning of the community around it, would not have been touched...Yet the sorry truth is that the settlement was a forgotten shrine attended only by a faithful handful.

In the aftermath of Inanda some middle-class opinion called for the sensitive rebuilding of the project to entrench itself in the life of both Indians and Africans and dedicate itself to the upliftment of the area as a whole. The Inanda incident was seen in India as anti-Indian, and was partly responsible for prompting India to take a greater interest in the affairs of South African Indians.

Historical reflection continues to play an important part in contemporary discourse. One letter writer, stressing unity between Indians and Africans, reminds readers that when Indira Gandhi visited South Africa before becoming President, she berated wealthy Indians for not doing anything to help either the Indian or African nationalist movement. Mahatma Gandhi's refusal to include African liberation in the resolutions at the All-Indian Congress because it was not a specifically Indian matter, was also recalled.

What Gandhi had not realised was that freedom for South African Indians would be empty and would taste like ash in their mouths unless there was freedom for all. We cannot distinguish between degrees of repression, especially when the degree is dependent on one's race.

The debate on whether or not Gandhi was racist, and on his continued relevance, attracted several letters. The NIC, meanwhile, continued to emphasise "Indianness". For example, when the USA consulate was occupied by UDF detainees, the NIC pronounced: "your act is in keeping with the Gandhian tradition of non-violent resistance to tyranny".

The NIC secured an agreement to forbid the entry of collaborators with apartheid into India. A prominent NIC advertisement proclaimed the collaborators as political pariahs who would not be able to visit the land of their ancestors, and it listed by name those who served on government structures. The NIC also fancied itself as a partial cultural gatekeeper and regulator of traffic to and from India. For example, the support of the NIC was requested in an application to the Governments of India and Nepal to permit a missionary to take up the position of head priest of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. Sewpersadh, wrote back confirming NIC support. However, many organisations were able to secure religious and cultural linkages without NIC support.

The NIC strategy caused widespread alienation of the Hindu majority. Former Presidents' Councillor, Pat Poovalingam, accused the NIC of being anti-Hindu as India was their holy shrine (whereas the Muslims went to Arab countries) and of trying to prevent Indians who did not follow the ANC line from paying homage. Krish Gokool, a Hindu leader, noted that generally Hindus tried to avoid talk of the Hindu/Muslim religious conflicts in India since that would only further antagonise the Muslims who had been quite aggressive in advancing their faith with moral as well as financial support from some Arab countries. He conceded that Muslim Indians had generally been

more prosperous than the Hindus. After the birth of Pakistan, many Muslim Indians began to identify with Pakistan as well as India. HoD personalities criticised the Indian government for severing relations with South African Indians, since the lack of contact had alienated the younger generation of Hindus from their cultural moorings and was thus largely responsible for their easy conversion in large numbers to Christianity and Islam. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, by contrast, had been supporting and funding the Muslim Indians in their proselytising campaign, while the Christians had official South African government support. The cultural boycott's application to India, strongly advocated by the ANC, thus met with substantial disfavour among those Indians who desired cultural links. One observer remarked that this "cultural alienation was unfortunate and cruel".

Many Indians were clearly not at ease about their future in South Africa. After the Inanda riots, the state consciously contributed to frightening Indians into submission and fear. Prime Minister PW Botha remarked that Indians would be the first to pay the price if things went wrong in South Africa, playing on this fear to coerce people into supporting his policies. The ANC was beginning to accept that some attention must be given to the consciousness prevalent amongst the majority of Indians. Winnie Mandela observed that Even the most progressive members in the Indian and Coloured communities pose questions such as 'Can we really trust these blacks?' We need to assure them that there will never be another 1949 in the history of South Africa.

It was in this context that the Indian government sponsored in October 1988 a delegation of 52 Indians to meet the ANC in Zambia as part of a plan to allay Indian fears. While the widely different backgrounds of delegates were commended (they were not only from the leadership of the NIC and TIC), there were criticisms that by sending only Indians the NIC entrenched their position as an ethnic organisation. Mr Sitram Singh, representing the Indian government declared that "India treats the struggle in South Africa as an extension of its own freedom struggle".

Farouk Meer claimed that the specific purpose of the Lusaka visit was to get Indians to be more sympathetic to the ANC. We wanted them to be introduced to the ANC and make them realise that these are not ogres. These are human beings. They've certain values and these values were in keeping with the ideas that pervade the Indian community with Gandhian philosophy and there was compatibility. There were certain sectors that became very vocal after the visit to the ANC. The Aryan Benevolent Home became very supportive of the NIC/ANC brand of politics. Prior to that they were veering closer towards the system politics or remaining completely neutral.

Meanwhile the PAC's Zeph Mothopeng maintained that they believed in non-racial democratic rule of the African people in Azania...there are no Indian people here, but only people of Eastern origin provided they have become Africans.

While the PAC had limited support amongst Indians, it is worth noting in retrospect that their position appears to have held greater conceptual clarity than was previously thought to be the case. The references to India, Indian tradition and culture, and Gandhi combined to construct feelings of fear and foreigness in terms of both external perceptions and self-perceptions. The reconstruction of Africanness will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter.

The NIC-TIC-COSATU delegation to India in 1989 signalled the complete re-insertion of India into the political discourses of South African Indians. Although the delegation was cast as a MDM delegation, its primary composition was Indian. The Indian Congresses, concerned by perceptions of Indian ethnocentrism, told the Indian government that affirmative action was necessary with regard to Black education and requested India to provide bursaries for African students to enable them to study in India." They also suggested that the selection of students should be entrusted to the UDF affiliates working in close consultation with the ANC. There was also some sensitivity with regard to

Pakistan's exclusion from the itinerary, especially since the delegation was given red-carpet treatment in India and had a high-profile meeting with Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Overall the NIC mobilised ethnicity inappropriately and failed to speak on contemporary concerns, especially those of the Indian working-class. While some middle-class Indians may have warmed to the historical claims concerning Gandhi, these certainly did not bring the majority of Indians closer to the ANC, even though the strong relationship between the ANC and the Indian government was highlighted. At a time when the ANC was intensifying its armed struggle, it appeared incongruous to many that the NIC could support the ANC but still used Gandhi as a rallying symbol. This constituted a confused message to their intended constituency. The casting of India as protector was again inappropriate and did little for people with fears about their contemporary location in South Africa. India was a distant place with great poverty and a cultural context that South African Indians did not understand.

It is worth noting the generational conflict with regard to how Indian culture was understood amongst the ANC-aligned Indian left. When, in 1987, the UDW SRC delegation (comprised exclusively of Indians) met an ANC delegation in Zimbabwe, they stressed that they were responding to the reality that within the current political climate the ANC is playing a major role - even the government recognises the importance of the ANC by singling out the ANC for special attack in the newspapers, radio and TV.

They stressed however, that contrary to press reports, they did not go as an Indian delegation seeking assurances for Indians:

We went with no prescription and sought no assurances. However, it is true that during the course of discussions questions pertaining to Indians did arise, as did questions pertaining to Afrikaners and Africans. It is true that during discussions we looked at these communities separately because it is the reality that the level of participation in the various communities is different and we had to look at the reasons for the different levels of participation. This is a part of the South African reality.

The students charged that presumably the ethnic base of certain newspapers in need of boosting circulation prompted "such a slanted fashion" of reporting.

The UDW students also complained that while ten people were tried for terrorism, the Indian newspapers focused on one prominent Indian, Dr. Ramlackan, who had stated that he was a South African patriot before he was an Indian. The students maintained that: "When we entered the sphere of struggle we entered not as Indians playing a supportive role, but as patriots playing an integral role in the struggle for a free and democratic South Africa". This generational conflict also exacerbated tensions between many youth and student activists and the NIC leadership during this period.

Conclusion

The events analysed in this chapter occurred during a period of closing political space and increasing repression. Therefore, criticisms of the NIC's organisational inefficiency and lack of internal democracy need to be seen against that background. On the other hand, the NIC itself did not pose a direct threat to the state during this period, and the government turned its attention to the significantly more militant opposition of various predominantly African resistance formations. Nevertheless, the state of emergency saw several Indian activists withdraw from political involvement altogether. Some went underground, some fled into exile, and others were urged to turn their attention towards ANC work.

This period saw the ascending role of the electronic and print media in shaping political consciousness. The alternative resistance propaganda paled into insignificance in the light of a powerful and hostile media further constrained by various forms of media censorship under the state

of emergency. Therefore, notwithstanding attempts by the resistance to fight back, there was little chance that the resistance could undermine the state's ideological thrust. Of course, this was not helped by the organisational paralysis of the NIC. In effect the NIC, after being the victor in the 1984 tricameral elections, entered a period of unending decline as resistance amongst Africans was on the ascendancy.

By the late 1980s committed Indian activists took their political energies into the ANC, as well as various sectoral organisations and in doing so they unwittingly put a huge distance between themselves and the Indian constituency. For most there was no serious return towards developing an Indian political base. So the irony is that while Indians occupied disproportionately high profiles in the resistance movement nationally, this was not matched in popular Indian consciousness. Basically, the strengthening of African resistance spawned new symbols, images and slogans which the NIC was not able to influence and link to Indian working-class experience. This thus confirmed the alienation of the vast majority.

The insertion of India, Gandhi and Indianness was in fact a recognition that Indians were not responding to the call for unity with Africans and more effective participation in the struggle. As we have seen, the manner in which this strategy was executed fuelled feelings of foreignness, fostered greater internal divisions and did nothing to alleviate the problem of fear and insecurity. Following Inanda, it might have been possible to promote the commonality between Indians and Africans through greater contact and improved understanding between the different communities. Instead, fear was dealt with by referral to a reconstructed, glorified and exaggerated history, and the attempted link between Gandhism and the ANC. This was clearly difficult given the intensifying militancy that characterised the ANC during this period.

The internal conflicts within the NIC and the UDF in Natal had broader implications nationally. Cabal became a word that prevailed in political debates throughout the country. However, these debates rarely went beyond acrimonious accusations and counter-accusations, and they failed to provide a new way of dealing with organisational conflict and decision-making in a context of repression. These tensions would render the NIC a weak and ineffectual organisation incapable of influencing the politics of Durban, Natal or the country in the coming decade. It is to the 1990s and the politics of transition away from apartheid that we now turn.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Indian Resistance Politics In Transition, 1990-1996

I am convinced...that if we give [Indians] the choice, you'll be able to lead this country and no other community will be able to obscure you.
N.Mandela, 26/06/96.

The more I see [Rajbansi] and listen to him, the more he looks and sounds like South Africa's new Indian Andries Treurnicht (late leader of the Conservative Party). Somebody please go and wake [him] up...and tell him this is the new South Africa. We are one nation and [he] must stop playing the ethnic guitar. All Indians are South Africans like me, there is no place for ethnic politics.
FW de Klerk, 29/6/96.

We were the first to expose the fact that affirmative action is hurting Indians, Coloureds and whites...vote [for] the real home for all minorities...vote the Minority Front.
A.Rajbansi, 29/6/96.
We are pleased to single out [Indians] because our president Mr Mangosuthu Buthelezi has had a long association with Indians. Now is the time to cement and deepen that relationship. We are not being opportunistic and this is not propaganda to catch votes. We believe that Zulus and Indians are not only the dominant cultural groups in KwaZulu, but we also have a lot in common. In both communities we take our work, religion and culture seriously.

Z.Jiyane, 6/4/1996

Introduction

The unbanning ofresistance organisations in February 1990 opened up a new era in South African politics. The reform process forced upon the state by a combination of internal and external pressures changed the face of resistance politics and found most anti-apartheid organisations ill-prepared to deal with its implications. The new context challenged existing political cultures across the ideological spectrum. The NIC, which had been a legal component of the Congress Alliance since the 1960s, and had acted as an ANC voice, no longer occupied a unique position. The uncertainty of the transition meant that organisations such as AZAPO, NIC, UDF and the legal ANC would have to evolve flexible strategies to cope with the political changes. The National Party (NP) might have been pressurised into fundamental reform but it was able to set the initial broad terms and pace of the transition, and develop strategies to undermine its political opponents. It was also largely able to decide the timing of crucial political and constitutional events. While the liberation movements began the project of transforming themselves into political parties, the NP held on to state power, and financial, ideological, institutional and material resources. The context was set for political fluidity, as exiles returned, prisoners were released and new organisational challenges presented themselves.

The period under examination represents an important intellectual moment in progressive scholarship in South Africa. Previously political activists and academics were reluctant to discuss ethnicity as it was seen as legitimising and giving credence to apartheid. However, by the late 1980s this position was strongly challenged. As discussed in chapter one, a concerted effort was made to understand the

implications of South Africa's ethnic heterogeneity and its relation to political resistance. This thesis and my earlier work have already documented attempts by some activists to prosecute resistance during the 1980s with sensitivity to class, ethnic, gender and religious differentiation. However, the NIC's interventions had failed to creatively deal with ethnicity and class, despite its focus on mobilising Indians. It therefore entered the 1990s with little support among working-class Indians and without an effective organisational structure.

The results of the April 1994 national elections and the June 1996 local government elections in Durban constitute an important part of this chapter. The elections provided a measurement of Indian identification with the ANC. This chapter confirms that the gradual but strengthening shift in the structural context during this period deterred popular alignment with the ANC and its allies. The task of winning Indian support for the non-racial project of the ANC was in conflict with the structural location of the majority of Indians who in 1994 were still politically introverted, inactive and ambivalent. The disintegrating apartheid state exercised considerable power during the transition, and it is within this context that I critique the organisational effectiveness of the ANC and NIC. In addition, the establishment of ANC branches in Indian areas and the performance of the ANC in government is analysed.

Durban in the 1990s

Indians across the class divide, when compared to other South Africans, were more anxious about the uncertainties of transition. Despite the reduction in repression, Indians continued to shy away from politics as those Indians in public life had a bad image. Chapter seven detailed the conflict within and between the NIC and the UDF. In addition, the HoD attracted constant ridicule. Contempt for the HoD was evident in community theatre, informal public discussions at social occasions, and in placards displayed during demonstrations.

The NP's strategy to alienate Indians from the rest of the oppressed had largely succeeded. As a journalist from India noted:

An air of confusion grips many Indian South Africans who believe that life under a black majority government will be no better or far worse than under the present racist regime. A lot of the uncertainty within the Indian community appears to have been contrived by the white minority regime and its allies in an attempt to continue to hang on to power in a post-apartheid society.

Earlier chapters show that the NP had failed to win Indian support for its reforms. However, the party's survival now depended on securing support from Indians in KwaZulu-Natal and Coloureds in the Western Cape. The NP, like other ANC opponents, emphasised concerns around security, which were shared by Indians across the class-divide.

Fears of racial conflict were reinforced by a series of incidents early in 1990. At the busiest commuter interchange used by blacks in central Durban, several Indian women's traditional wedding necklaces were ripped off and two Indian men were stabbed to death in what was interpreted to be racial attacks. Tensions were fuelled by an anonymous pamphlet accusing Indians of taking over jobs from Africans. The ANC-alliance accused government agents of stirring these conflicts. However, one UDF official conceded that in addition to the complicity by the state, "political ignorance among some elements within our comrades should be held responsible for the carnage." SouthScan observed

that the involvement of avowed COSATU members in these conflicts reflected long-standing tensions between Africans and Indians in the workplace.

ANC claims of government instigation were accepted by sections of the Indian middle-class. The impact on popular consciousness was devastating: "In the buses, trains, shopping centres, and temples, it was stated that Mandela's release has given African people confidence and therefore they were doing this." This was so, even though the ANC, COSATU and their allies patrolled the affected area and the incidents soon stopped. However, the ANC-alliance was often unable to react in this proactive and immediate manner as its organisational strength was weak and the gap between activists and their constituency was vast. These events easily evoked flashbacks to the 1949 and Inanda riots which remained present in the popular psyche, of most Indians. The fact that violence had escalated nationally soon after Mandela's release and had mainly affected African people, was ignored.

In his first KwaZulu-Natal address, Mandela made peace and unity his central themes. He drew out four strands of Natal resistance history: Zulu and Indian resistance, white opposition to apartheid, and worker struggles. Keen to stress the need for greater societal and organisational coherence among ANC supporters, he glossed over structural and subjective contradictions and declared that: Our struggle has won the participation of every language and colour, every stripe and hue in this country. These four strands of resistance and organisation have inspired all South Africans, and provide the foundations of our struggle today.

Mandela told the mainly African crowd at the rally of the "long and proud tradition of co-operation between Africans and Indians against racial discrimination"; and how the "common nature of Indian and African oppression" made united resistance necessary from 1947. He said the ANC was "extremely disturbed by recent acts of violence against our Indian compatriots. The perpetrators of these acts are enemies of the liberation movement." Most Indians did not hear his reference to them, nor the concerns he articulated and the assurance he was trying to provide. A few Indian newspapers reported this but the message did not penetrate the Indian populace.

The NP readily linked the escalating political violence to Mandela's release. The euphoria that accompanied the legalisation of the ANC declined to a subdued confusion, and the fear of violence became the dominant concern of most South Africans. Media coverage of violence in Black areas increased substantially from February 1990. The SABC, which remained firmly under government control until late 1993, either stated directly, or implied that the ANC was responsible. Evidence has now emerged to show that elements close to the NP government used violence as part of an overall political strategy to undermine the ANC. Amidst allegations of the existence of a state-sponsored "third force", the following observation was made:

A reign of terror was unleashed by the government and its Inkatha supporters, leaving more than a thousand dead, displacing thousands more and seriously affecting the morale and confidence of most people in the Indian community...a large percentage of Indians are better off than their African counterparts and as a distinct and highly visible minority, many...Indians have a real fear of violence. They believe that...in [a] post-apartheid South Africa they will be the first targets of uneducated and deprived mobs...acts of violence by blacks against the Indian community have sown seeds of fear among many Indians about the future under a black majority government.

A significant section of Indians began to see themselves as victims of the transitional process rather than as active participants and beneficiaries. Freund observed at the time that:

Indians remain frightened by Africans, who are poorer and have claims on resources that might threaten and endanger their own gains. To what extent an ideology of "non-racialism" will bring people to redefine their identity in other than racial terms, the future...of ethnicity in a "new South Africa", is quite uncertain.

In the period after the legalisation of political organisations, there was widespread speculation, backed by a range of opinion polls, that fear would lead substantial numbers of Indians and Coloureds to vote for the NP.

In the run up to the election, urban legends recounting fantastic tales of plots by maids and gardeners to take over their employers' homes once "freedom" was attained were indiscriminately related. The ANC was unable to counteract these rumours, especially since in Cato Manor months before the election, African squatters "invaded" new houses earmarked for Indians who had been on the council's waiting list for years. Nobody claimed responsibility for organising the protest, but nor was the action condemned by the ANC until much later. Although Mandela visited the area and tried to placate fears, the impact on popular perceptions remained negative. The Mandela visit did not attract much media attention, neither was it given much prominence, as it seemed that the ANC did not want to appear too soft on Indians in a province where the IFP was a serious electoral threat. The Cato Manor homes had been vacant for eight months due to an administrative bungle and Indians perceived the "invasion" as a denial of housing to them. The fact that people also felt threatened by the mushrooming shack settlements nearby rendered the situation ripe for ethnic manipulation. Memories of the 1949 and 1985 Inanda riots and the attacks in Warwick Avenue in 1990 fuelled Indian anxiety, and probably contributed to a drop in support for the ANC.

However, a survey, entitled Negotiations and Change: An Opinion Poll of 3275 South Africans, July 1990, suggested that the outcome of the Indian and 'Coloured' vote was not a foregone conclusion. It found that more than three quarters of Indians, Africans, whites and Coloureds favoured negotiations to bring about change. Armed struggle was favoured by about 5% of Indians as compared to 16% of Africans. Only one in ten Indians felt that parliament could be used to facilitate change. The ANC was the most favoured party (35%) followed by the NP (24.5%), the NIC (11.3%), the DP (8.9%), COSATU (3.8%) and the UDF (2.4%). Only two percentage points separated De Klerk, who led Mandela as choice for Prime Minister. Despite concerns over violence, the majority of Indians were optimistic about the transition. The survey concluded that:

All three disenfranchised race groups are closer to each other in their attitudes to capitalism, socialism and a mixed economy; they support the ANC and want a new constitution on the basis of universal adult franchise, and a single parliament in a unitary state. There is a general rejection of minority rights. However, Indians and Coloureds are closer to whites than Africans on the issues of the armed struggle, total nationalisation and the participation of workers in companies. Until racism is destroyed, a long and difficult process in the South African climate, it may well be that as the African muscle strengthens, so the three minority race groups may come closer together.

The survey suggested that Indians were not homogenous and while many were keen to eschew politics directly, they were open political game. As a result, Indians as a constituency attracted the enthusiastic attention of all the major political parties.

The establishment of ANC branches

Forming ANC branches throughout the country was a challenging and difficult process. For the first time, membership cards were issued and people were required to pay a fee of R12 a year. Patrick

Terror Lekota, the convenor of the Southern Natal Regional Interim Leadership Committee (RILC), appointed only one Indian, Billy Nair, to the RILC. Nair was closely aligned to the cabal, but when choosing the other 14 members of the RILC, Lekota avoided people associated with the cabal and the NIC. This circumspection and under-representation of Indians was seen as a rebuff to the NIC.

Middle-class Indians, few of whom had been involved in the struggle, dominated the formation of ANC branches, even in the predominantly working-class townships of Phoenix and Chatsworth. This was common across the racial divide and was the source of resentment and disillusionment as many activists felt that too many professionals were elected to branch executives despite their having been "Olympic-level fence-sitters during the days of struggle." This policy of broadening the "peoples' camp" meant that almost anyone was welcomed, irrespective of their past and any undercurrents surrounding some of these "2nd February 1990 converts". Working-class Indians were under-represented on branch executives and in the general membership of the ANC. Younger leaders were well represented on the branch executives as many ANC supporters were associated with youth organisations or were politicised as students.

The enthusiastic participation of an estimated 5% of Indians in the formation of ANC branches in Durban was seen as significant support for the organisation. It was observed that Indians, like their [African] and Coloured counterparts rejoiced, and many rushed to join the ANC. Branches of the ANC began to spring up in Indian localities and townships all over the country. This flood of support for the ANC shocked the white minority regime and its allies, particularly the [IFP], who realised that if this went unchecked they would be swept aside in the event of free democratic elections [particularly in KwaZulu Natal].

However, the conflict over the role of the NIC in the formation of ANC branches was the source of much confusion both amongst activists and the general public.

In Chatsworth, there was disagreement over whether or not to form one or several branches. In this area the debate showed how deeply the conflicts around cabalism and control of the political process had permeated Indian left politics. It also reflected how ethnicity had become an issue. For instance, those who favoured a single branch described Chatsworth "as a single geopolitical unit". Their opponents maintained that such an assertion was a euphemism for saying that Chatsworth was an Indian area which should focus narrowly on Indian concerns. The thrust of the argument of those wanting several branches was that there would be greater expansion of the political life of township residents, and participation in the ANC would increase. They argued that outlying parts of Chatsworth could go into partnership with neighbouring African areas when forming branches, and that a single branch would create only nine Chatsworth ANC leaders while five branches would create forty-five. Those mooting one branch said there were not enough skilled people to run several branches and that they would not be organisationally viable. Chatsworth activists eventually opted for five branches to serve its 350,000 residents while Phoenix with 400,000 people chose one branch. These branches were part of the ANC's first regional conference in 1991, when four Indians were elected to serve on the Regional Executive Committee, with only one having a direct association with a working-class area. Significantly, two NIC/ANC stalwarts, Billy Nair and Pravin Gordhan, were defeated, presumably because of their cabal associations.

In addition the state-controlled SABC radio and television were also able to negatively influence Indian perception of the ANC. Although there was a low level of politicisation among Indians, there was a high degree of literacy. However, the SABC's Radio Lotus had a greater penetration than the

ethnic editions of major Sunday newspapers and other Indian weeklies, which readily supported the ANC and its newly-returned exiles. As violence escalated around the country, the NP government was able, through the SABC news, to depict a society riven apart by ANC-inspired violence. The SABC, without blatantly spelling out ethnicity, constantly reiterated the insecurities of minorities by portraying the ANC as an exclusively African organisation. Although Indian ANC activists had good media skills and through pamphlets, posters and roadside banners tried to counter the state propaganda, they were not effective. The organisation also relied on the positive images of leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki and Mac Maharaj to help influence the Indian public. However, the continued disjointed media coverage did not help in the debates around the relationship between the NIC and ANC.

Statements by the NIC that it would dissolve once the ANC was legalised, as the movement's strategy was not to organise along ethnic lines, were accepted as conventional wisdom by most progressives and some of the newspapers. The debate was complicated since, despite the Congress alliance's commitment to non-racialism, Indians were starting to see themselves as a separate group that could come under attack as violence increased. While there was significant support for disbandment, one school of thought asserted that the NIC was necessary to encourage Indian participation in politics and to promote the ANC's political agenda. The argument in support of retaining the NIC was that it could play a pro-ANC role during multi-party negotiations and thus off-set the conservative Indian parties' alliance with the NP. However, some contended that those who wanted the continuance of the NIC were mainly hoping to use it as a spring-board to higher political office. It was also argued by others that those in the NIC who were against disbanding, were afraid of being sidelined by Africanists within the trade union movement and the ANC in Natal. A number of Indian ANC members who saw themselves as "ANC comrades" and not "Indian comrades" disagreed with the NIC/TIC position which promoted the idea of a group identity which was contrary to the ANC policy of non-racialism. However Ahmed Kathrada pointed out that it [was] useless to shout non-racialism when the ANC had not succeeded in reaching out to other (racial) groups.

The raging debate around disbandment was eventually resolved when, at a meeting chaired by ANC deputy president Walter Sisulu, it was decided that the NIC and TIC would continue to exist. The discussions were wide-ranging and took into consideration the insecurities of Indians as an ethnic minority. A statement issued after the meeting revealed the contradictions and tensions around the desire to build a non-racial ANC while trying to gauge whether the NIC was the better organisation to mobilise Indians. The 'consensus' at the meeting declared that the ANC is the primary organ to mobilise the Indian community as an integral part of the South African people and that the strengthening of the ANC within the Indian community is among our common, vital tasks. At the same-time, and for the present, there is a continuing role for the TIC and NIC in the Congress tradition, to help bring about unity in action between the Indian community as a whole and the ANC-centred national liberation movement.

Rajbansi pointed out that "if the NIC and TIC are to organise Indians into the ANC, does this mean that the ANC is accepting group representation within its own ranks." Ismail Omar, of Solidarity stated that the decision of the NIC:

to act as a conduit in the Indian Community to gather support for the ANC amounts to a total vote of no-confidence in the ability of Africans in the ANC being able to gather Indian support. This…tarnishes the Indian community as being racial. In adopting this line, it would appear as if the NIC has taken over policies it attacked in the past. For the NIC to say that Indians had to be

organised as Indians and that a link had to be found between ethnicity and nation building makes even Solidarity blush.

One ANC member who did not want to be named argued that the NIC "is doing nothing more than accept the basis under which the tricameral government was formed - that of separate race groups to be represented separately".

It should be noted that despite its commitment to non-racialism, the ANC, and before that the UDF, were largely comfortable with allies who concentrated on organising along racial lines. Unlike AZAPO and the PAC, it did not define or propagate unity among Indian, African and Coloured people on the basis of being black, neither was patriotism equated with a total identification with being a South African. Debates around identity and racial definition were prominent since the Africanists split from the ANC to form the PAC in 1959 and continued beyond the rise and decline of the Black Consciousness Movement. The government and its supporters referred only to Africans as black in order to stress the differences from Coloureds and Indians. But in the 1970s and 1980s, progressives increasingly used 'black' to refer to anyone who was not white. During the debate around the NIC's future, some of its leaders and activists reverted to the apartheid definitions. While it was argued that this was how the majority of Indians and Coloureds saw themselves, and that it was therefore appropriate to use such terms, it must be remembered that during the repressive 1980s NIC leaders used black as an inclusive term. Mandela and some ANC leaders still refer to "all blacks, including Indians, Africans and Coloureds". However, it can be argued that the ANC was not strategic in its handling of ethnicity. Instead of encouraging black people to see themselves as an amalgamation of diverse and culturally rich groups, sensitivities around ethnicity led to the different races retreating into their own laagers.

Campaigning for the April 1994 national elections

The first democratic elections were held after four years of transition and intense negotiations. It was inevitable that elections for a new government would be the result of the talks at CODESA, and the ANC tried to prepare for this from as early as 1991, which was declared the year of "mass action for the transfer of power to the people". The year 1992 was declared the year "of democratic elections for a constituent assembly". While some hoped that elections would occur soon after CODESA began, the vagaries of the negotiations process dictated otherwise. The ANC's patriotic front walked out of the talks after the June 1992 Boipatong massacre. However, it was the uncertainty following Chris Hani's assassination, that made urgent the setting of an election date. Racial violence and polarisation led to a fear that the country was on the brink of disaster. However, Nelson Mandela emerged as the unifier and leader of the country, calling for calm in an address on April 10, 1993 to the nation on prime time television, while De Klerk's government was relegated to the shadows. ANC electioneering took place against this background of increasing violence, right-wing threats of mass destruction and latent feelings of hopelessness amongst many South Africans. The only certainty the ANC enjoyed was the majority support of Africans. Almost all the polls at the time showed that the ANC would have difficulties in capturing the support of Indians, Coloureds and whites. Eighty percent of Indians named the NP as their first, second or third choice. The ANC's sophisticated campaign failed to work on obvious weaknesses - such as its lack of support among Indians. The ANC's mistake was that it failed to take into account the specific insecurities Indians felt as a minority. At best, messages in pamphlets tried to reassure Indians that all would be well under the ANC, but the media and politicians opposed to the ANC painted a confusing picture for the electorate. ANC MP Pregs Govender asserted: "Many Indians, by the time of the elections were

unable to distinguish between the ANC and the IFP". This was largely because the media began to apportion almost equal blame for the violence on both parties.

Paradoxically, collaborationists such as Rajbansi maintained a high profile. Despite limited support among Indians in the 1980s, when he was declared unfit to hold office, and a rapid decline in his relationship with the NP, he refined his ethnic approach and stayed the course. After he failed to secure an alliance with the ANC, inviting stringent protests from Indian activists about such a deal, he formed the Minority Front (MF) which focused narrowly on Indian interests. Rajbansi conveyed three simple messages: he understood and appreciated Indians' concerns and was willing to represent those interests; he was able to speak on behalf of and make known the demands of Indians as an interest group; and finally that ethnicity was a central force in national politics. While it was not possible for the ANC to advance Rajbansi's narrow Indian ethnocentrism, it is possible that the ANC's electoral perfomance might have been better if there was greater sensitivity towards Indian concerns.

By appropriating Indian cultural and ethnic symbols, Rajbansi was able to carve a political niche for himself. He criticised the NP for not including Indian religions in the new constitution; sought restitution for victims of the Group Areas Act; promoted cultural ties with India; declared that curry was a vital negotiating instrument; and sought to assure Indian South Africans of their safety under an African-dominated government if he represented them. He became the sole representative of his party in the HoD when the rest of his members defected to the NP in the run-up to the elections. To calls that he be expelled from the multi-party talks, he retorted:
For the benefit of the writer who belongs to a small clique that has failed to deliver the Indian community to liberation as promised, and to others, I say that the Bengal Tiger's real political career has just commenced.
His campaign consisted of modest newspaper advertisements and several public meetings for supporters. While he believed that he was the head of a political movement and aspired for national and regional seats, Singh pointed out that the MF was "in constitution, in goals and in rhetoric...the realisation of one man's conceptualisation of what an Indian minority party should represent". Nevertheless, the MF's win of a single critical seat was an indicator of an ethnic strand amongst Indians as it was the only party with an exclusively pro-Indian agenda.

Meanwhile, the ANC had alienated some of its members and the NIC by initially including JN Reddy, the former HoD leader and another of his colleagues on its list of candidates. The move indicated the fissure between the ANC's national leadership, who approved of Reddy's inclusion, and its regional membership, who saw Reddy as a political foe. It also reflected the organisation's concern about the conservatism of Indians and the need to be uniform in dealing with those who had collaborated with apartheid. Several African homeland leaders had been incorporated onto the ANC lists. By embracing Reddy as a candidate, the ANC conceded that the collaborationists could possibly deliver more Indian votes than its own members. Reddy was placed at number 256 on the list which meant that he would have to work hard to deliver the Indian vote to secure his election as an ANC MP, and then only if the organisation won 64% of the total vote. The lack of confidence in ANC branches and the NIC was not helped by its weak campaign in many Indian areas. However, in several areas, including Chatsworth, the ANC branches ran highly efficient and thorough election campaigns, though as one activist put it, "all the organisation in the world could not dislodge an anti-ANC consciousness that has been constructed by the state over the last fifty years".

After the elections, the results from each polling station were not made available so as to avoid identifying how communities voted and to prevent retaliation by losing parties. Instead, the results were given as district and provincial totals, making analysis of class or residential voting patterns difficult. Assumptions about how different classes or residential areas voted depended on "extrapolation from polls, and from the opinion of informed and anonymous individuals involved in the election process." Nationally, it was estimated that the ANC gained 150,000 Indian votes (constituting 1.5% of the ANC's national vote - See Table 8.1) and the NP gained 300,000 votes (constituting 7% of the NP's national vote). The NP, which received approximately one-tenth of the KwaZulu-Natal vote, now depends on its provincial Indian supporters in Chatsworth, and Phoenix. Herman Giliomee observed that in KwaZulu-Natal only six out of the NP's top twenty candidates for the National Assembly were from the "strategically important Indian community, of which more than half backed the NP."

Most surprising was the performance of Rajbansi's MF, which, against all predictions, captured 48,951 votes (1.3% of the KwaZulu Natal tally - See Table 8.2) and secured for himself a place in the Provincial legislature. Rajbansi was the best known Indian figure on the ballot form, and would have attracted all those who simply wanted to vote for an Indian. The most likely reason for people voting MF was the frustration at feeling excluded from the political process. While Indian identity was of importance, it was less of a factor than this feeling of marginalisation.

Class and education influenced the estimated 25% Indian vote secured by the ANC in KwaZulu-Natal. Freund notes that the ANC votes came disproportionately from younger, more educated middle-class Indians. In Chatsworth, the ANC secured almost 23% on the provincial ballot and almost 26% in the national ballot. The ANC also estimated that they received greater support in the Transvaal and from Indians outside of KwaZulu-Natal. This was influenced by the distance from the intra-Zulu violence in KwaZulu-Natal and the middle-class profile of these voters. The IFP gained support from the Indian middle-class and bourgeoisie on the North Coast and some parts of the South Coast. In Durban, the IFP got less than 4% of the Indian vote. The ANC lost votes to the IFP in KwaZulu-Natal partly because of its own disorganisation and the "fear of continuing civil conflict may have prompted many voters to interpret an Inkatha vote as a vote for appeasement and peace".

How do we explain the Indian vote? The NIC's Farouk Meer suggests that fear, racial prejudice and the ANC's poor organisation among Indians were to be blamed. The high crime rate and violence in the province also contributed to Indian insecurities. The NP played the race card in its electioneering and, by doing so, succeeded in winning Indian support. It reminded Indians of dictatorships elsewhere in Africa and their backlash against Indians. Moreover, Meer concedes that Indian leaders and activists were disillusioned and did not play the role they played in 1984...this disillusionment had its roots in the conflicts around an alleged cabal within the NIC which had inordinate influence over politics in Natal and this is the final factor in the tensions that had developed between the NIC and the ANC.

Tensions between the ANC and the NIC were surprising as the NIC had been a key ANC supporter. Meer claims that the national ANC leadership understood the NIC's position and appreciated their work but that President Mandela "chastised us for not doing enough as the NIC".

Conflict between a hegemonic group in the NIC and members of the MDM, COSATU and the ANC had persisted since the late 1980s. Meer asserts that this alienation had its roots in the feeling that certain NIC leaders had somehow hijacked the political process in Natal and were calling the political shots….Through Kagiso [a funding agency], it was said, we were influencing civic structures ...together with this came the whole question of the cabal......a perception that there was

this shadowy group that was in fact controlling political events [in Natal] ....Potential African leaders felt that they were being stifled by the overwhelming presence of the NIC.....This led to the marginalisation of key personnel in the NIC itself when it came to the elections and also when it came to nominating people on to the lists for parliament.

Meer defended the NIC's mode of operation before the ANC's legalisation, arguing that repression forced them to work within a very close network but that they always had clear goals of working towards the national democratic struggle. He conceded that they "did exclude people...but this was done inadvertently, not by specific design".

Historically, sport had played a vital role in building a sense of community among working-class Indians. A founder member of the Chatsworth Football Association and the Chatsworth Cricket Association explained:

When people moved to Chatsworth we first formed civics and sports organisations. Religious organisation came much later and with it came division amongst religious groups. There was a conscious decision to focus on sport since this cut through religious differences and helped to unite the people who had come from a range of different backgrounds.

To their detriment, the ANC neglected the sports, religious and cultural sectors in their election campaign just as the NIC had done in earlier campaigns. The ANC failed to build on the progressive sports tradition of the South African Council on Sport (SACOS).

The ANC was also unable to harness the support from a plethora of religious and cultural organisations which had varying degrees of influence amongst Indians. While individuals from these organisations gave the ANC their vote, it was unable to get them to lobby on its behalf. Ultimately, Rajbansi and, to a lesser extent, the NP made inroads into these groups. In the past, Rajbansi had also secured support by lobbying around such issues as the immigration of Indian brides, and the legalisation of fireworks, which was of significance for Hindu festivals. As for the NP, most of its candidates were once members of the parties that participated in the HoD, and this support appeared to hold. The NIC's problem was that, with a few exceptions, most of their progressive supporters had become distanced from religious and cultural organisations. Activists also believed that the militant rhetoric of the ANC's Peter Mokaba, Winnie Mandela and Harry Gwala cost them some middle-class support. These leaders had popular support amongst the African underclass but limited support amongst Indians.

The ANC needed to win the KwaZulu-Natal Indian vote in order to influence the provincial politics while the NP needed Indian votes to secure their national seats. While the NP won a large number of Indian votes, their influence in the KwaZulu Natal legislature continues to be limited. Even Rajbansi's MF, which won fewer votes, is more influential. Provincial politics is dominated by the IFP and ANC. This is a likely reason why the NP adopted desperate electioneering tactics. Overtly, and especially to African people, they presented themselves as a new party, but when trying to win Indian and 'Coloured' support, they propagated a fear of Africans. Another ploy of the NP was to depict the ANC as hard-line Communists who would restrict freedom of religion. While there was a SACP branch in Chatsworth, it had a low profile and cannot claim to have had popular support. Despite Communists holding key positions in the Congress and union movements, the Indian working-class did not gravitate towards the Communist Party as it had done in the 1940s and 1950s. There was the perception that the party was fighting "more for the Africans than the Indians".

During campaigning for the 1994 election in Bayview, Chatsworth residents who had been visited three times, assured fieldworkers of their vote. However, on election day, despite organisational support from the ANC, at least half did not vote for the ANC. Clearly, residents had lied to ANC

campaigners, assuring them of their vote as momentary appeasement. It is likely that the residents who lied did so out of an irrational fear. They were also "playing it safe" so that if the ANC won in the district, they would be able to say that they had contributed to the victory. What appears to be common across the class divide is that significant numbers of Indians, like most other South Africans, have eschewed direct political involvement. At most they voted because the election was seen as an historical moment and one way of confirming their South Africanness. An estimated 85% of Indians voted in the general elections, most of whom voted for the NP. After the elections, the debate on disbanding the NIC continued. Some still felt that the organisation had an important role to play in persuading Indians to vote for the ANC in the local government elections.

The ANC in Government A breakdown of national parliamentary representation by race shows that Indians, who make up 3% of the population, have 16% representation in Parliament. Among the 40 Indian parliamentarians from all the parties, there is no MP from Chatsworth or Phoenix, where almost two-thirds of the Indian population live. Whites are also "over-represented" having 27% of MPs, while constituting 15% of the electorate. Africans, who constitute 73% of the population, have just over 50% of MPs. (See Table 8.3) By October 1996, five ANC cabinet posts were held by Indians: Mac Maharaj (transport), Jay Naidoo (initially RDP and later posts and telecommunications), Dullah Omar (Justice and Intelligence), Kader Asmal (Water Affairs and Forestry) and Mohamed Valli Moosa (constitutional development and local government). The deputy foreign affairs minister is Aziz Pahad and President Mandela's advisor is Ahmed Kathrada. Essop Pahad is the Deputy Minister in Deputy President Thabo Mbeki's office.

Reynolds attributes the prominence of Indians in the cabinet and ANC leadership to the "historical role played by Mahatma Gandhi, Yusuf Dadoo and the Indian Congresses in opposition to apartheid and colonialism". However, it is unlikely that the prominence of Indians is a result of the direct contribution of the NIC. Prior to the election, a moribund NIC was largely alienated and had resorted to simply issuing press statements. It is significant that none of the Cabinet Ministers have been directly involved with Indian organisations in Durban over the last decade and a half. Jay Naidoo, however, had been briefly involved in civic work in Chatsworth in the early 1980s. Despite over-representation in the National Assembly, only five Indian ANC MPs were elected from KwaZulu-Natal in April 1994. They are: Billy Nair (La Mercy), Pravin Gordhan (Overport), Mewa Ramgobin (Verulam), Ela Gandhi (Central Durban) and Yunus Carrim (Pietermaritzburg). In the provincial assembly, the ANC has only two Indians: Ismail Meer (Sydenham) and Yusuf Bhamjee (Pietermaritzburg). There is no Indian MP in the 10-person provincial cabinet. Rajbansi is the only Chatsworth-based MP and Ramesh Romalal of the IFP is the only Phoenix MP. The lack of representation from Chatsworth and Phoenix has contributed to the alienation of the Indian working-class from the ANC and the political process.

While Indians involved in the anti-apartheid struggle may have been formidable cadres and continue to be prominent in post-apartheid politics, they are out of touch with the average Indian voter. This disjuncture is potentially a weapon for those wanting to challenge the ANC on representativeness in the run-up to the 1999 election. For example, other groups, whether white, African or Coloured, can question the disproportionate influence that Indians have in the organisation. They would have to bear in mind though, that many of the Indian ANC parliamentarians, particularly former exiles and Robben Islanders, see themselves as black South Africans of Indian origin rather than as simply Indians. Their rise in ANC ranks happened through several routes: for example, Jay Naidoo had been General Secretary of COSATU, a non-racial sectoral organisation; Mac Maharaj and Aziz Pahad had distinguished themselves in the ANC's exiled leadership; Mohamed Valli Moosa and Pravin

Gordhan were powerful leaders in the Mass Democratic Movement; Ahmed Kathrada had spent more than 25 years on Robben Island; and then there were activist intellectuals who were aligned to the struggle either internally, like Dullah Omar, or externally, like Prof. Kader Asmal.

The ANC is likely to use an MP's performance rather than race as the primary criteria to measure the value of a member. Some may argue that the prominence of Indians' is proof that the ANC's commitment to non-racialism has worked. Mac Maharaj reflected this thinking when he declared that:

The only thing I have in common with Indians is that I share a mutual love of curry and rice. I am [as] non-racial as they come or supposedly come, but don't call me Indian.

This prompted the UK-based Asian Times to observe that:

Indians in the ANC are so sensitive to the real or imagined resentments of Africans that they have gone out of their way to divorce themselves from even the most innocuous cultural associations with their people, sometimes even making fools of themselves in the process.

Nevertheless, the ANC is quick to trot out its Indian parliamentarians to gain favour from the populace, overlooking the fact that most of them do not have a social base amongst ordinary Indian voters. This is because there is a physical, ideological and cultural distance between these leaders and the Indian working-class.

The fact that Indian ANC leaders do not have popular support amongst Indians, is also ignored by President Mandela. When addressing a group of about 300 "Indians of influence", the President chose to highlight "how well represented the Indian community is within government". Mandela described his old friend Ahmed Kathrada as his most trusted political advisor, and stated that he did not appoint him to the cabinet because he trusted his judgement the most, and therefore wanted him by his side. Mac Maharaj was lauded as one of the most talented politicians and someone with whom the President never debated for fear of losing the argument. Mandela also reiterated that he had proposed Minister of Water Affairs, Kader Asmal, as a replacement for the late Oliver Tambo as chairperson of the ANC, but had been defeated when Thabo Mbeki was elected to the position. Many South African Indians were concerned about affirmative action and the process of policy implementation. Despite repeated ANC statements that affirmative action would include redress for all black people, private sector employers appeared to favour Africans over Indians and Coloureds, causing much consternation. There was a perception amongst Indians of being sandwiched between Africans and whites. On the one hand, Indians see the ANC government as "cosying up to whites, who many believe, are not running only the economy, but also controlling vital ministries". On the other hand is the issue of affirmative action. Senzo Mchunu, provincial secretary of the ANC claimed that "corporate companies and industries were exploiting affirmative action to a point of turning Indians and Coloureds against the ANC". Affirmative action has been abused by the private sector.

In September 1995 the situation became explosive as tension erupted between Indian and African people at UDW "over jobs, power, the future of the university and the cultural survival of a previously oppressed and now possibly threatened Indian minority. The progressive staff, which is still 95% Indian, realise that their composition has to change, but nevertheless feel threatened, and so the term "affirmative action" has become a contentious one".

The civil service is slightly more complex. In the past, Indians were beneficiaries of a distorted form of affirmative action under policies designed to co-opt Indians. (See Tables 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6) The

growth in the number of Indian civil servants is one indicator of how the apartheid government tried to win Indians over. During the transition, the status and position of the middle-classes were and are expected to stay the same. For example, teachers' salaries will not be raised substantially and discrimination has been addressed. There is expected to be less motivation for teachers to improve their qualifications as salary increases are no longer an incentive. Projects to narrow the gap between teachers will be held and those with lesser qualifications, mainly African teachers, will be encouraged to study further. The position of those who are well paid is likely to remain the same and even the possession of two or more degrees is unlikely to result in substantially higher pay. Given this, it was inevitable that there would be insecurity over the new government's policy as African people, who have been most marginalised, would be given preference in the civil service.

The Indian civil servants, like their counterparts elsewhere, are likely to support the party in power, and therefore in KwaZulu-Natal they appear to align themselves with the IFP. Educational administrators and some senior teachers are also moving towards the IFP, as education is under provincial control. Generally however, Indians remain perturbed by the escalating violence, armed robberies, and the insensitivity of the IFP controlled education and culture department to their religion and religious holidays. The working-class finds itself without clear leadership and is experiencing a high level of dislocation. There is concern about whether affirmative action will continue to keep those who are out of work unemployed, and whether those who are employed will lose jobs. Affirmative action is also apparent in student admissions to tertiary institutions. In the past, working-class students with good passes were assured of places at Indian tertiary institutions such as UDW, whereas now there are more African students on these campuses. The Indian middle-class prefers, and can afford, to send their children to former white institutions or even overseas to study. This uncertainty around affirmative action is part of a broader fear of exclusion that many Indians experience. Politically, these insecurities have been skilfully manipulated by the NP and the MF.

When local government elections were held nationally in November 1995, it appeared that the major political parties in KwaZulu-Natal could have won more support from the Indian working-class voters if greater efforts had been made to persuade them to vote. (See Table 8.7) Although many people were cautious about being identified with a political party, fear of involvement in politics had by then lessened. The ANC took advantage of Mandela's stature when trying to draw Indians closer to the organisation and in trying to placate their fears. Even though there were weaknesses in their approach, ANC activists felt that they were having the desired impact. The ANC recognised the electoral importance of Indians, and at its regional conference in 1995, noted that voters from Chatsworth and Phoenix were alienated from the ANC and resolved to treat those townships as a priority. Mandela's highly publicised visit to India - his first official state visit - received substantial television coverage. The fact that he has an Indian housekeeper, has visited Chatsworth and Phoenix at least half a dozen times since his release from prison, addressed the World Hinduism Conference in Chatsworth in July 1995, and has stated that he has two areas of love - Africa and the East has been highlighted by ANC activists in Durban. He has also attended celebrations to mark Deepavali, the Hindu festival of lights, and his office issues a greeting on religious holidays like Eid. At Mandela's inauguration, a Hindu and Muslim priest joined their Christian and Jewish counterparts in leading prayer. On the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the NIC, Mandela once again showered praise on Indians. He reasserted the government's commitment to building "non-racialism, national unity and reconciliation" and further stated that the "Indian community is a full part of South African society" and that they have "an enormous role to play in the reconstruction of the country". Clearly, Mandela has made an effort to cultivate Indian voters.

The Indian middle and working-classes are highly critical of the new bureaucracy who they see as having enriched themselves in the same way as their predecessors under the old regime had done. There has been widespread criticism of the salary packages MPs receive with even the government's alliance partner, COSATU, attacking parliamentarians' remuneration. Rank and file supporters are not impressed by the culture of "high living by ANC ministers, MPs, directors-general, diplomats and top aides". Furthermore, the closure of the RDP office sent a weak signal to voters that "Mr Mandela's "better life, housing and jobs for all" slogan won't work for very long.

The middle-class appear to be impatient with the perceived incompetence of both ministers and administrators. Education, which is of immense interest to all black people, is perceived to be equally mismanaged. The ANC Education Minister, Sibusiso Bengu, started his tenure with a dispute with the head of the ANC's Education Department, John Samuels. Samuels, an Indian, was expected to be appointed Director-General of Education as he had played a key role in educational struggles and was highly regarded within the educational sector. However, he was by-passed in favour of Chabani Maganyi, a university professor with lesser resistance or education policy credentials. After six months in office, the Mail and Guardian carried out an assessment of all the Ministers and ranked Bengu's performance amongst the weakest. They reported that education was in a serious crisis, but not only had the Minister not left the starting blocks, he was still trying to find them. In short, government ineptitude, which was probably no more substantial than in the past, was now being judged negatively by those in the middle-classes who kept abreast of the transition.

At the 1995 Chatsworth ANC AGM, Maggie Govender, an ANC and SACP stalwart, was surprisingly defeated for a post on the executive by a local businessman who had recently joined the ANC. There was a feeling in some quarters that the organisation needed to deliver to the Indian middle-class as it was they who had historically supported the ANC. It is ironic that this political choice should emerge from Chatsworth, which is still primarily working-class and has a growing number of unemployed residents. Although by the 1990s, like many other townships, Chatsworth had a complex class structure. While there are distinct demarcations between middle and working-class areas, there has also been rapid change as residents have been allowed to purchase and improve on their council-built homes. Social mobility has contributed to the stratification. The new middle-class appears to be moving to established middle-class areas like Isipingo Hills, and Reservoir Hills or former white suburbs. There is also a move from sub-economic housing to better developed areas within the township. Such trends are difficult to discern in Phoenix as it is newer than Chatsworth.

Local government elections, June 1996

When the twice-postponed local government elections finally took place in KwaZulu-Natal on 26 June 1996, there was little doubt that the Indian vote was crucial. Despite being a minority, Indians were courted by all political parties as the mechanics of the new local government system ensured that the former group areas of minorities got equal representation to that of African areas. However, while Indians may have attracted substantially more attention from political parties, a survey conducted in February 1996 showed a further shift towards conservatism and apathy. While Africans were mildly positive about the central government, Indians were negative and whites were intensely negative. Most Indians were sharply critical of both the provincial and central government, and there was a high degree of pessimism about the direction the provincial government was taking.
When the survey was conducted by Project Vote, 65% of Indians as opposed to 74% Africans and 75% whites said they planned to vote - indicating declining political interest as it was estimated that more that 80% voted in the 1994 general elections. Ten percent of Indians said they would not vote

and 25% were unsure whether they would or not. At the time of the survey, about 60% of Indians had heard or read about the election, but 29% had not. Of the Indian women surveyed, 45% had not heard or read anything about the election and 46% of Indian youth had not registered to vote. Among the Indians who had not registered, 11% said it was because they did not understand politics; 28% said they did not know how to register; 24% were unable to register; 16 % did not want to register; and 2% had failed to register.

While occupying centre-stage in the electioneering, the majority of working-class Indians in Chatsworth and Phoenix were apparently confused or ignorant of their sudden importance in the province. This ignorance, can be mainly attributed to poor voter education in the run-up to the polls. Although there had been a budget of R70 million allocated to voter education 18 months before the election, authorities acknowledged that not much had actually been done to increase awareness. There had been no television advertising, and general awareness was through the controversies surrounding the election rather than the election itself. The radio awareness campaign was equally weak and ineffective. One study noted that "Indian and Coloured respondents did not find [radio] helpful with voter education, but this derived from their hostility to the election rather than to the medium [of radio]".

The Indian vote was important because of a compromise by the ANC and its allies at the Local Government Negotiating Forum - the arena at which the details of local government were negotiated. The deal was dubbed the 50/50 Dispensation and for the last time allowed for disproportionate representation of minorities. The agreement ensured that for the first all-inclusive municipal elections, the number of wards within councils would be equally distributed between Indian, White and Coloured areas on the one hand and African areas on the other. While council jurisdictions were drawn with the intention of blurring Group Areas demarcations, in practice the system was designed to ensure special representation for minorities. For example, a former African group area with 10,000 residents could have the same number of representatives as a former white area with only 50 if they were both incorporated into the same council.

The compromise was made in the wake of the national negotiations at CODESA. The distortions caused by the 50/50 dispensation were seen for the first time in November 1995 when local elections were held in other parts of the country and transitional local councils were set up. Indians, make up 13% of the province and are the largest minority and, were thus important during the KwaZulu-Natal local poll. White voters made up 10% of the vote, Coloureds 1.6% and Africans 76%. Thus 24.6% - the combined vote of the minorities - had equal representation to the 76% of the African vote. It must be noted that the 50/50 Dispensation relied on total registration and participation of voters for minorities to make an impact.

However, ethnicity may have been a factor that contributed to neutralising this weighted vote. All the contesting parties in the election approached Indians as a homogenous group. They did not acknowledge their diversity and therefore expected them to vote uniformly. As with local elections in other parts of the country, the contesting parties were varied, but featured the four national players: the ANC, IFP, NP and DP. There were also several independents, among whom were former ANC members. While the ANC showed its concern with capturing the Indian vote by holding a special conference to discuss the election, it chose to focus on broader national issues when electioneering. In its campaigning the ANC chose to focus on the performance of the government, the sharp decline of the rand, the commemoration of the Rebellion of Bambatha, the new constitution and the esteem Indians enjoyed in the ANC. Crime, violence in the province, affirmative action, the death penalty,

job losses and unemployment were some of the main concerns of the electorate, but remained unaddressed.

One criticism of the ANC strategy was its insistence on fielding a candidate in opposition to the Merebank Resident's Association (MRA) candidate, a long-established civic organisation that had strong links with the organisation. The MRA candidate won but the ANC was blamed for splitting loyalties and the vote in that ward. Only one former LAC (Local Affairs Committee) person was fielded by the ANC in Chatsworth. The organisation had relied on his past experience in the local government system to win the seat, but while faring the best of any ANC candidate in Chatsworth, he lost by 36 votes. There were two reasons for this: ANC members did not campaign on his behalf and many said they could not bring themselves to vote for him because they still saw him as a collaborator.

In his campaign Mandela praised Indian involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle. However, Mandela's pandering to Indians reinforced their "separateness". Desai contends that by meeting with Rajbansi, Mandela was nurturing a narrow Indian ethnicity and this contributed to the alienation of Indians from the rest of the population.

The NP addressed similar concerns as the ANC, but portrayed itself as the opposition (it had by then withdrawn from the GNU), blaming the ANC-led government for the weak rand, escalating violence in the province and its inability to curb crime. When soliciting support from Indians, the NP mourned the loss of jobs through affirmative action and continued to play on national issues. Party leader De Klerk recognised the threat the MF presented and accused Rajbansi of "playing the ethnic guitar". However, the ANC's Charm Govender observed that:

The National Party in Chatsworth operates as a party for elections only. It does not feed into the policy process in a serious manner. There appears to be no branches or an organised presence….no interventions around civic issues….Rajbansi is the same. A group of people meet at his house and then he runs around funerals and weddings and keeps his profile up.

Rajbansi's MF was the most ethnically-focused party during the elections. Campaigning was made easier as he had a base only among Indian people, and a single race constituency meant that unlike the larger parties, he did not have too many (often contradictory) interests to satisfy. His message as protector of the rights of the minority Indians was sold easily and received well, especially in his stronghold of Chatsworth. Long before the election, he had focused on affirmative action. Living among his supporters, he was able to gauge the pulse of the community and understand the conservatism and hesitation in embracing the unknown. He was also aware of the importance of the minority vote and declared: "The mother of all battles will be the battle for the Indian mind". He further stated that despite President Mandela's talk about the "rainbow nation", in KwaZulu-Natal there was only a zebra nation - it was simply black and white with no space for the (brown) Indians. Rajbansi's politics became apparent in amateurish newspaper advertisements where he stated: "We were the first to expose the fact that affirmative action was hurting Indians, Coloureds and whites". Despite his crude play on ethnicity, the ANC tried to make a deal with him over the elections. The organisation admitted that "high level" talks had been held with Rajbansi. One of the suggestions was that in wards where the MF had a strong candidate and the ANC a weak one, it would withdraw its candidate in favour of the MF. While this did not happen, there was pressure from the ANC provincial leadership on local ANC activists to refrain from attacking him as his support in the KwaZulu-Natal parliament had helped thwart the IFP's constitutional agenda.

The DP also chose to address crime and focused on the competency of its candidates, highlighting its track record in both national and local government. However, the DP is generally not well known among the black electorate - several of its Indian candidates were former HoD politicians who could not claim unblemished records. While the DP tried to carve a support base among middle-class Indians, as it has among whites, it also targeted working-class areas. The IFP, which employed a British consultancy firm at a cost of R2.5 million to advise them on the elections, concentrated on winning the rural vote. Its bid for the Indian vote was left mainly to less politically astute Indians who failed to win the desired support. The utterances and actions of its own party members had alienated Indians. The IFP's inefficiency as leader of the provincial government also counted against it. In short, the issues and concerns that the parties tackled were generally similar. There was, however, a strong contest from Independents and candidates from Ratepayers' Associations who dealt only with local issues. The large number of Independents were seen by voters as a positive sign but it also suggested that people were tiring of narrow party politics.

While the ANC won control of the Province's economic heartland, Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the results showed a swing to conservatism, with the NP holding onto much of the support it secured in the 1994 elections. The MF showed the biggest growth in support among Indians. Rajbansi's narrow focus on Indian issues succeeded. Indeed, conservatism and concern about ethnicity is manifesting itself as a trend in Indian politics. The strong support shown by Indians of Tamil-descent for the militant struggle of Sri Lankan Tamils also indicates that various sub-identities of Indians are relevant. When analysing why the ANC lost the Indian vote, political scientist Adam Habib noted that the organisation had used a strategy that treated Indians as a homogenous group, failing to deal with Indians as a diverse group with varied interests, concerns and fears. He also stated that the ANC had played the "race game" by asking people to vote for it simply because there were many Indian cabinet ministers, while the NP had none. The NP's success in Phoenix was attributed to the Party's "swart gevaar" (black danger) tactics, relying on fear of crime to win its support.

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a period in which substantial political and social change took place. The chapter analysed the impact of the ANC on Indian politics, examined the first national democratic elections, the ANC in government and the local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal. During the early 1990s, the NP was substantially better prepared to deal with the vagaries of the transition, unlike the newly legalised ANC, the NIC or other liberation movements. The uncertainty and violence during the transition enabled the NP to build on existing fears of Indians in order to draw them closer to the party and away from the ANC. The international explosion of ethnic and religious conflict and the rise of ethnic mobilisation in KwaZulu-Natal forced the liberation movements to deal with ethnicity in a manner in which they had not done so in the past. However, the NIC's and ANC's new-found sensitivity to ethnicity in KwaZulu-Natal was too little too late. In effect, their attempts to engage with ethnicity was inorganic, ad-hoc, and lacked creativity and impact. Indian fears and insecurities were further heightened against the background of intensifying Zulu ethnic mobilisation by Inkatha.

The NIC played no significant role during this period and did little to boost the ANC's electoral chances. It subsequently suffered a decline in stature and credibility - a condition from which it would be hard to recover. The ANC's failure to consolidate coherent organisation and networks with the fabric of Indian civil society prevented it from doing better at the polls. While the ANC branch formation process attracted the participation of significant numbers of Indians across the class divide,

the process was hindered by several factors. The turbulent politics of KwaZulu-Natal, riddled with internecine violence, sometimes aimed at Indians, led to fear and uncertainty. Both NIC and ANC leadership dithered over the role of the NIC, leading to confusion among activists and Indians at large. The legacy of the cabal, coupled with internal divisions in the Congress movement in the province, militated against the ANC rooting itself with sufficient strength in Indian areas.

However, by international electoral convention, a 24% share of the vote in a particular constituency would be regarded by many established Western political parties as a good result. The ANC's performance must be seen against the background of a systematic hostile propaganda campaign since its banning in 1961. Despite minor changes at the SABC from 1990, the playing field, particularly in the domain of the electronic media, was hardly even by April 1994. Although the ANC was expected to perform better in the local elections it still did not make inroads into the Indian electorate. The NP, who claimed the role of protector of minorities against an African government, found support among many Indian voters. Despite the ANC's and Mandela's statements about Indians in government, it is clear that votes will not be gained until parliamentarians are representative of constituencies, like those of Chatsworth and Phoenix, where two-thirds of Indians live. Indian resistance, which showed much promise in the early 1980s, thus did not translate into a progressive electorate in the mid-1990s, contrary to the expectation of the ANC and other observers.

Class, Consciousness and Organisation: Conclusion

Non-racism is always a fragile plant and it could easily be destroyed by the winds that blow in a rapidly changing society with scarce resources, and as people hide racism behind alternative discourses...A beleaguered state, the heir to massive black-white inequalities and limited resources in an unpropitious international economic climate, is going to find non-racism far more difficult in the face of the demands of its followers for redistribution and positive discrimination...Nevertheless the renewed hegemony of ideals of non-racialism and pan-tribalism in a country which has seen more than a century of the retrenchment of racial separation and racial privilege and the manipulation of ethnicity on an unprecedented scale is surely remarkable and remains truly inspirational.

Shula Marks, Non-Racism in South Africa, 1994

Opening remarks

This thesis has examined an important period in South African politics. By using a micro-periodisation approach, we have identified several themes of Indian resistance to apartheid from 1979 to 1996. During this period Indian resistance politics was characterised by a combination of innovation, commitment, disunity and strategic flaws. The ANC, as the pre-eminent resistance organisation, succeeded in attracting only modest support from the Indian electorate in the national elections of 1994 and the local government elections of 1996. However, if these results are viewed from an international perspective and against the historical background of the intermediate location of Indians within the South African social system, and the systematic programmes at co-option implemented by the apartheid state since 1961, they amount to a satisfactory electoral performance.

However, the ANC did not do as well as anticipated. Their optimism was based on the growth of popular grassroots politics in the early 1980s, as discussed in chapters three to six, which witnessed many Indian civil society organisations embracing an anti-apartheid disposition. Furthermore, by 1984 Indian political mobilisation and organisation, while not on par with African resistance, was an important part of the re-emergent national resistance effort. Indians occupied a prominent profile in the leadership of the broader liberation movement and were disproportionately prominent across several sectoral organisations.

The NIC were able, for most of the 1980s, to justifiably claim that there was no credible alternative resistance to the apartheid state amongst Indians. The 1984 anti-election victory, discussed in chapters 4 and 5, ensured that the conservatives were in disarray, disunited and highly unpopular. Furthermore, the NP had historically been anti-Indian and owed its early electoral victories partly to an aggressive anti-Indianism. Also, as chapter 2 illustrated, the early implementation of some of the apartheid policies devastated the social fabric and economic well-being of many Indians. The Group Areas Act (GAA), for example, affected Indians most adversely. Despite the NP's strategy of selectively developing Indians as a favoured buffer group, it did oppress Indians in numerous ways. For these reasons, the ANC erroneously believed that the majority of Indians would embrace them at the polls.

The ANC and the NIC did not sufficiently acknowledge the shift in NP policy towards Indians from 1961 and its impact on the structural context of Indian life and consciousness. In order to make sense

of the relative failure of Indian resistance politics, one must look beyond the confines of Indian reality in South Africa. While this thesis has endeavoured to maintain a comparative eye on developments in Coloured and African resistance, I have relied on my earlier work where structural factors and human agency were concerned. In attempting to understand why the discourses of non-racialism, Black Consciousness and Pan-Africanism failed to take root amongst Indians, and why the ANC and the PAC failed at the ballot box, we need to give attention to both objective and subjective factors and to understand how they influenced and interacted with each other. This conclusion also suggests areas of possible further research and attempts to anticipate future scenarios. Finally, I suggest that there is an urgent need to construct an Afrindian Identity to deal with the existing alienation and perceived marginalisation of the majority of working-class Indians.

Objective factors influencing resistance
The structural context

From 1961 onwards the apartheid state sought to improve the economic and social conditions of Indians. This policy was driven by two objectives: co-option and the need for skilled personnel. The Indian working-class still constitutes about 60% of the total Indian population and is highly stratified, as are the middle-classes and the commercial bourgeoisie. There has been some social mobility due to education and this has benefited both the working and middle-classes. The upward mobility of the working and middle-classes over the last thirty years had a significant impact on political consciousness and structurally incorporated many Indians into the social and economic system. However, changing economic conditions in the 1980s did bring pressures to the lower middle-class and the working-class and resulted in greater fears about the impending political transition. By the early 1990s, most working-class people began to withdraw into a mental laager of "better the devil you know than the devil you do not know" in the face of Inkatha's aggressive Zulu nationalism.

Conditions in Indian working-class townships were also of a better standard than in African townships. This gave working-class Indians a stake, albeit a small one, in the system. While many still carried anger about the devastation caused by the GAA, there were those who were too young to remember the removals, or too old and settled to conceive of a life outside of these group areas. However, many of those who were moved to the townships came to share a view that while community life was not what it used to be, the material environment had improved. A greater access to education and sometimes to jobs was perhaps the most important structural factor during the 1970s and 1980s.

Following the 1994 elections, affirmative action threatened the economic space that the Indian working-class had secured over the decades. Although ANC policy made it clear that affirmative action included Indians, most Indians believed otherwise. Apart from this, many employers in the commercial and industrial sector misinterpreted affirmative action to mean the inclusion of Africans only. Others firmly understood and believed the term "previously disadvantaged communities" to imply Africans, while still others deliberately chose to misunderstand affirmative action in an effort to alienate Indians and Coloureds from the ANC. Hence a number of Indians encountered the experience of not being considered for affirmative action positions or promotions. It is practices like these that lead to Indians feeling marginalised and excluded.

While the commercial bourgeoisie and the Indian middle-class stood to gain from the transition, many of whom supported the ANC, it must be noted that there has been insignificant changes in the status and position of teachers and civil servants. As was pointed out in chapter eight, Indian civil

servants are likely to support the party in power and so in Kwazulu-Natal, some appear to be aligning themselves with the IFP. Since education in Kwazulu-Natal is now under the control of the IFP, a number of senior administrative staff in Indian schools are leaning towards the IFP. The NP, who opposed affirmative action, started to directly seek Indian support in 1994 through its own party structures whereas over the past three decades they had used intermediaries.

Class formation processes and structural changes have improved life for many Indians over the last three and a half decades. While structural segregation set the broad terms for the development of political discourses and practices, non-racialism was at best practised on the shop-floor and at universities but was mainly relegated to a theoretical hope. Only a small number of resistance leaders and activists were able to develop serious inter-racial relationships based on trust, common experiences and a shared political vision. The GAA was thus a huge limitation in building non-racialism for all resistance organisations.
The ANC and NIC, while acknowledging the marginalisation of Indians, often failed to effectively translate the realities of differentiated oppression, both in discourse and praxis. Therefore the ANC and other left organisations failed to build an effective political organisation which could draw on the rich plethora of organisations that constituted Indian civil society. The objective dividing features of language, religion and culture further hindered the promotion of non-racialism and impeded organisational efforts. As we saw in chapter six, some campaigns recognised the importance of promoting non-racialism in a practical way, but were unsuccessful as a result of the structural constraints faced by resistance formations. Indians were also highly heterogeneous. Class, religion, residential locations, language-background, gender and generation gaps were some of the social variables militating against a common Indian identity.

The influence of the media

This thesis has shown the power, pervasiveness and persistence of the mass media in moulding political consciousness. The construction of a separate Indian identity has been central to this process. The capacity of resistance organisations to counteract this formidable agency was limited as the electronic media was controlled by the state and was used to propagate its apartheid agenda. Racially targeted media had a powerful influence, and while the print media was fragmented, they - as a result of political choice and government restrictions - enforced racial segregation. The small alternative press did not exert much influence over Indians as they did not target them as a group and were unable to compete with the hegemony of the SABC and commercial media. Not being exposed to the alternative media meant that many Indians had a very skewed, one-sided picture of the South African reality. Furthermore, the literacy level amongst Africans was low and the cutting edge of resistance ran deep. In contrast, Indians had a standard of living that was relatively bearable and they were bombarded by the state ideological apparatus in such a manner that it was difficult to escape its influence. While there was awareness of this objective reality, NIC leaders often did not show sufficient sensitivity to the influence of the media when implementing their programmes.

The political shifts in editorial policy that coincided with the ANC's rise to power was expected to help increase Indian support for the organisation, but this did not happen. Although there has been profound changes to SABC policy which now promotes inclusiveness, rather than separateness, there is no noticeable shift in the consciousness of Indians. However, one should not expect changes in consciousness as a result of the combined effect of the media. The role of the media as a central and defining feature of political consciousness construction does not suggest that the media alone can

shape consciousness, nor does it suggest that during the 1980s there was no space for creative interventions to counter the state's media offensive.

During the last two decades the impact of the media as a tool of propaganda was limited in the African areas. There were several reasons for this: there was the strong contemporary culture of mass resistance and oral communication, the direct experience of apartheid atrocities, the high levels of political mobilisation and significant levels of popular organisation. Apart from this, many African households simply did not have access to televisions, radios and newspapers, while almost every Indian household did. The NIC placed their faith in organisation to counteract state ideology. Indian civic organisations and in some instances youth organisations exhibited higher levels of organisational coherence and professionalism than in most African areas. However, there was little translation of this organisation into mobilisation. These efforts ultimately could not counterbalance the impact of the media.

Subjective factors influencing resistance
Assessing organisational strategy

The apartheid regime and the liberation movement competed for Indian political allegiance while reinforcing their separateness. The state's agenda was to try to create a buffer zone between whites and Africans. The NIC's agenda was to deliver Indians to the ANC. In the period between 1979 and 1984, African resistance was relatively weak in Durban, compared to Indian resistance which sometimes appeared to be stronger, so much so that civic organisations from other parts of the country were drawing lessons from civics in Chatsworth. There was a range of organisations in Indian civil society, in schools, sport, religious and cultural institutions, which had a strong institutional base outside of politics. Organisational skills were strong amongst Indian activists but they were unable to translate this strength to mobilisation.

Social distance as a result of factors such as class and geography, between the organisers and the constituencies they sought to organise, raised questions as to whose interests these organisations were advocating. Many Indians viewed progressive political organisations as acting more in the interests of Africans since calls for social justice and the eradication of apartheid clearly were to benefit Africans, whereas the direct benefits for Indians and Coloureds was not clear.

The language of mobilisation used by the NIC and several local progressive organisations was infused with militant rhetoric which, while being appropriate to African constituencies, did not strike a chord with Indians. Organisations were unable to make a connection even through the use of symbolism like toyi-toying and the singing of Nkosi Sikele Africa. There was no attempt to develop a unique, home grown mobilisation strategy that would give Indians the feeling that they belonged and that the struggle was also theirs. The music, the sound, and the culture of mobilisation was imported from African areas. Moreover, cadres developed a cultural distance between themselves and their constituencies. The pressure to borrow cultural symbols of resistance from African areas stemmed from the propensity for a partnership with Africans and the national liberation struggle. Most importantly, Indian activists were not able to clarify to their constituencies how political change away from apartheid would benefit them directly. The greatest clarity provided was in the very generalised slogans of the Freedom Charter.

The issue of deliverance was instrumental in politics and perhaps unwittingly contributed to the image that Indians were a political football of both the right and left. Even the 1984 anti-election campaign was fought on the platform that participation will alienate Indians and Coloureds from

Africans, and will create the impression that they are jointly responsible with whites for perpetuating and reinforcing racial discrimination and apartheid. The slogans of the anti-election campaign rang out messages of "How will African people view our participation", "What will African people say", "We have to demonstrate our solidarity with the Africans by not participating in this election".

There is a need to recognise the difference between deliverance and building genuine non-racialism. The anti-election campaigns for example, while embracing non-racial rhetoric, was essentially arguing for unity between Indians and Africans. This unity did not amount to non-racist discourse. If anything it unwittingly generated greater fear on the part of Indians for Africans and encouraged the feeling that the interests of Indians were subordinate to that of Africans. The idea of deliverance may have also entrenched the notion that Indians have no natural and primary right to be African, or the right to even belong to Africa. This encourages the need for attachments to other constituencies, such as the MF or the NP, that they feel may give them some security.

The disproportionately high youth profile of the activist community is another important factor to consider. The NIC failed to provide substantive leadership in the working-class townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix. Hence the leadership in these areas tended to be very young. When the NIC came to operate in a closed manner it discouraged its own activist base and pushed people away from the organisation. Furthermore, as we saw in chapter seven, the organisational strategy of the NIC did not include physical interactions with people across the racial divide. To be fair, this was difficult because of the GAA, and the question was certainly not ignored. However, the various discussions about building non-racialism in practice, did not result in any meaningful programme of action to reverse the apartheid socialisation processes.

While the NIC utilised a strategy to build consciousness around material concerns, such as rent and transport, they were unable to effectively link these issues to national politics. While some credit is due to the NIC for enabling the emergence of a strong organisational cadre, it would be fair to say that many of these cadre evolved from independent youth, civic and other community based organisations without the direct input of the NIC leadership.

The 1980s saw the emergence of strong and independent social formations. Apart from religious and sports organisations, a plethora of other organisations emerged. These civil society formations did not owe their roots to any historical thread. They were organic to the new townships in which they took root. Within these social formations, there was an emergence of young politically active people who then sought to link up with their counterparts across the racial divide, often without the encouragement of the NIC. It was these young, independent thinking people who raised questions and highlighted the contradictions that existed within the NIC. It can be argued that many of the grassroots civic and youth activists enjoyed a higher credibility and had a greater social base amongst the working-class constituencies of Chatsworth and Phoenix, than many NIC leaders.

The NIC's domination by males had important implications. The fact that women within the NIC were ascribed a particular, inferior, subservient position, status and location under the rubric of "Indian culture", ensured that women were marginal to building resistance. Many traditional roles were invoked: serving; cooking at functions; playing the good wife when husbands were detained; or making appropriate public appearances, not as activists in their own right but as appendages of their "progressive" husbands. Nevertheless, many Indian women did come to play an important role within the trade union movement, and in organisations like the Natal Organisation of Women. Several Indian women also occupied important positions within the underground resistance.

The prominence of Indians in resistance organisations during the apartheid era and in organisations of both the state and civil society in the present period can be attributed primarily to the intermediate location of Indians. While not experiencing the full brunt of racial brutality, Indians experienced several acts of racist control that led to their feeling that their humanity was being undermined. Hence, there was sufficient basis for many people to be aggrieved with the state and to resist it. However, in doing so, an Indian activist would have had the advantage of access to a better education and a less repressive environment. It is fair to say that the intermediate location of Indians provided relatively more protection against the repressive arms of the state. The class structure of Indian society also ensured that Indian activists had a bigger pool of family, financial, and legal resources to draw from. This enabled activists to commit substantial periods of time to political work.

Ethnicity and resistance

It would be incorrect, notwithstanding the high level of heterogeneity, to conclude that Indians have no collective group identity. However, for most of the 1980s this was latent and was only activated around moments of crisis such as the Inanda incidents discussed in chapter seven. This heterogeneity will probably ensure that Indians will adopt three broad approaches to the political world in the future:

- Indifference (the attitude that if certain situations do no affect me directly, then I am not too concerned);

- A Strong ethnic identification (I am an Indian and must side with Indians, irrespectively);

- A Strong South African identity (I must look at society objectively and not align myself narrowly with Indian interests).

This thesis has shown that Indians possessed multiple, vacillating identities that were socially and politically constructed by both the apartheid state and the various political movements. Ethnic conflicts have the capacity to explode unexpectedly, as we saw with the Inanda riots. Resistance agendas came up against the fraught context of KwaZulu Natal, which lent itself to ethnic manipulation. The withdrawal and general retreat from resistance politics by Indians started to recur from 1985 onwards, as we saw in chapter seven, as the muscle of African resistance began to flex itself both in Durban and nationally. The dominant culture of resistance did not resonate with Indians in terms of language, slogans, militancy, content and symbols. The toyi-toyi, for example, as a 1980s cultural phenomenon was largely alienating for most Indians. It was only a small fraction of the student and youth sector who were able to embrace these cultural forms. Efforts to incorporate Indian symbolism in the broader resistance movement failed. When specific Indian symbolism such as garlanding of political leaders and inserting Indian liberation songs into mass rallies were used, they did not succeed in building confidence amongst ordinary Indians.

The NIC and other progressives often negated Indianness, notwithstanding the bearing of an Indian ethnic tag in its name. Ethnicity was engaged with in an inorganic and uncreative manner for most of the 1980s. After the unbannings in 1990, in the context of a heightened focus on ethnicity both locally and internationally, again the response was knee jerk, ad hoc and unable to meet the concerns of the mass of Indians, as was shown in chapter seven and eight. Furthermore, the NIC engaged with non-racialism in a largely symbolic way which was often crude, as when four people represented the

four races on a public platform. The ANC also appears to be doing similar things at times, but Africanist ideas and the need to assert the African leadership sometimes militate against such symbolism.

There will always be a spectrum of political feelings which will include varying levels of ethnic consciousness. But like most South Africans, Indians have multiple identities and for many their religious identity is far more important than a racial or ethnic one. Some are conscious of their working-class location, and, while having an antipathy for the Indian elite, they find themselves in competition with their African counterparts. The future of Indian politics is dependent on the making of a new South African identity which accommodates Indianness. However, Indians have an imagined home base in India and ethnicity thus uses India as a spiritual reference point. What Indians themselves feel about being connected to India is still an open question, and one which invites several diverse answers.

There is clearly a complex, fluid and fractured ethnic identity which came about as a result of generations of social engineering. As generations advanced, the visual collective memory of India became weaker and weaker. I have never met an Indian South African who wanted to go back to India. The main issue was that of a genuine rejection of white domination and fear of African domination. Many Indians saw themselves as being stuck between a fear of Africans and a moral rejection of white rule.

Consciousness and resistance

There were class differences with respect to the four consciousness assessment criteria we evolved in chapter one. If we take the Indian working-class, their political knowledge, political strategy and political vision might have been limited. However, when mobilised around issues that directly affected them, such as rents, their children's education or even workplace issues, political commitment was in evidence. While this commitment had several limitations and hardly ever came close to that of the African working-class, there is evidence of political commitment. Working-class people had little economic and social space to be politically committed, and had limited recourse to resources, but they did have a sufficient stake in the system to be wary of losing their relative economic and political privilege. The bourgeoisie had excellent political knowledge, political vision and a sense of political strategy, but beyond a cheque book contribution to the struggle they had little political commitment. The middle-class, the most stratified of the three broad class categories, tended to have political knowledge, vision and strategy, with those that embraced a progressive perspective being politically committed. However, in sociological terms, this group had the space, economically and socially, to engage in the pursuit of resistance. Yet this category was also the most contradictory, for while there existed a progressive segment, there was also a larger and stronger collaborative strand. In the main, those that abstained from direct political involvement were not supportive of the collaborative strand and would have been broadly sympathetic with the progressives.

For many Indians political allegiance and consciousness appeared to be a transient notion with a short shelf life. This was as Indian resistance does not run deep and is not part of the mass culture of the Indian working-class. In moments of high social volatility, it is likely that people can experience substantive shifts in consciousness over a short period. For example a bomb blast could have the capacity and indeed did convert a person from being pro-ANC one day to being violently opposed to it the next. The armed propaganda of the ANC caused high levels of consternation amongst Indians, instead of bringing them closer to the ANC. The portrayal of the ANC, by the media as a villainous

organisation no doubt gave credence to this image. Consciousness formation amongst Indians was not only dependent on the state agenda and the subjectivity of Indian reality, but was powerfully influenced by the political developments amongst Africans in and around Durban.

Resistance and political leadership

One of the biggest failures that must be attributed to the male, middle-class, suburban leadership of the NIC was its inability to develop political leadership in Phoenix and Chatsworth. There were many leaders who emerged in these townships, but they were given mainly local space and were not encouraged to develop into NIC provincial leaders. There was also little conscious attempt to develop a cadre of leadership in anticipation of elections, and to lay the basis for Congress electoral candidates. To be fair, though, most of the energies were focused around building organisational profiles rather than leadership profiles in the context of collective leadership approaches. Of course, different periods and contexts require different leaderships, and the emergence after the unbanning of the ANC of a new brand of middle-class politicians who had been largely inactive in the past, further blocked the participation of working-class activists. But the failure of the ANC to generate a single MP at either the provincial or national level, from Chatsworth or Phoenix is a reflection of the vast difference between the Indian working-class and the ANC and its allies. However, this reality reflects more of a failure of the 1980s. By the 1990s it was already too late to make an effort to reverse the withdrawal from resistance politics by the majority of Indians.

Amongst other reasons, which included the high levels of conflict, the apparent control by a elite and unaccountable leadership of the NIC, several Indian cadres moved away from organising specifically in the Indian sector. The huge difference between activist consciousness and that of their constituents also contributed to this flight of Indian activists from the terrain of Indian resistance politics to serve NGOs, trade unions, the ANC and other progressive organisations. In effect, the Indian activists constituted a particular left sub-culture which shared some bonding with Indian social reality. On the other hand none of the NIC executives seemed to inspire the permanent and enthusiastic confidence of the Indian working-class. By comparison,, Rajbansi, notwithstanding the fact that he had been tarnished publicly as being corrupt, had a very high media profile. Love him or hate him, his was a recognisable face. Using what appeared to be a simple philosophy that all publicity is good publicity, Rajbansi would by the 1994 election inspire greater confidence in the electorate than any other Indian. One reason for this is that many people believed that those who received media coverage could get things done.

Rajbansi lives in Chatsworth, where he has developed a political base. Unlike ANC and NIC leaders, he is seen to be close to the people. The material and physical distance between the NIC leadership in the 1980s and the people of Phoenix and Chatsworth was an important subjective factor that explains the electoral failures in the 1990s. Some have suggested that certain Indian resistance luminaries such as Pravin Gordhan deserted Indians in the early 1990s for greater national political glory. While it is tempting to suggest that certain key figures in the NIC who now enjoy the benefits of senior positions in parliament or in the state bureaucracy acted out of a narrow political careerism, I desist from endorsing this position. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the transition does make space for this kind of upward social mobility, and these examples demonstrate that Indians are actually not being marginalised. The NIC, it must be remembered, was not a monolithic, homogenous body. However, one of the features that characterised most of the NIC leaders and the inner circle was a deep commitment to the liberation struggle. As transition accelerated, it is fair to speculate that personal career choices did motivate decisions, but to suggest that this was part of a long-term

strategy by certain individuals is not true. Rather there were both philosophical and organisational blunders, and there were inappropriate levels of arrogance which led to the demise in status of the NIC and its incapacity to deliver the Indian electorate to the ANC at the ballot box.

The failure to resolve the future of the NIC after the legalisation of the ANC generally undermined the status of the Indian left. They appeared incoherent, uninspiring and incapable of influencing the ANC leadership. The earlier decline in Indian/African relations within the emergent legal ANC in Natal as a result of what was seen as cabalism and a history of undemocratic practices within the UDF (which had been disproportionately dominated by the NIC since its formation in 1983) was another organisational failure that took its toll. The failure to develop programmes to build non-racism in practice resulted in existing stereotypes being enforced and consolidated. There appeared to be a greater willingness by Africans to embrace Indians in sport and politics. However, in reality the inter-racial contact between Indians and Africans was restricted to the leadership level and hardly involved the rank-and-file. When this did happen, it was mainly at mass rallies which were not conducive to personal interactions and did not help to confront prejudices ingrained over decades, however subtle they may have been. The upshot of this was that non-racialism was in effect an abstract construction of the liberation leadership which did not resonate in a meaningful and practical way in the life of the Indian and African masses.

In any event, even this abstract construction of non-racialism was ill-defined or at best an evolving notion. It is worth remembering that the PAC was formed as a result of a split from the ANC in 1959 which arose partly out of conflict around questions of domination by whites and Indians within the ANC. The evolution of BC in the 1970s sought to create space for Black self-determination, and the relatively late inclusion of all South Africans in the ANC executive in 1985 indicated that the notion of non-racialism was evolving and was certainly a contested terrain. These discourse and organisational transformations and contestations were happening within the space of four decades, and as such they constituted fluidity in the macro-resistance environment which partly prescribed the limits and possibilities for Indian mobilisation. In effect, it was impossible for the Indian left to develop a conception of non-racialism and operationalise it in an environment where that notion was still evolving nationally and, worse still, was being intensely contested.

Gender and resistance

Gender relations also affected resistance patterns and involvement. As we have seen, Indian women were fighting for greater space in the political world. The civic and student struggles of the early 1980s enabled several Indian women to emerge as grassroots leaders. However, this was not reflected either in the NIC or in the UDF in a substantial manner. The absence of a visible women's presence in the leadership was a major failing of the resistance movement. It appeared that the imperatives of urgent political tasks relegated gender issues to the back burner. It was only "once in a while" that gender issues formed a part of the political discourse. However, the location of women as ascribed by "Indian culture" also made it difficult for women to assert themselves in politics.

It was much easier for young women to get permission to go to a disco than it was to get parental consent to participate in politics. Here the fear factor was the major problem. Within this constrained context, it is remarkable that many working-class and middle-class women did participate in a range of grassroots and other organisations. Indian women, albeit in small numbers, joined Umkhonto we Sizwe and worked in the national youth, student and women's movement, thus reflecting yet another left sub-culture amongst Indians.

Areas of further research

Given that this thesis has covered a lengthy chronological period, it has not been possible to treat various events in as much detail as they warranted. While I have given thorough treatment to the significance of the 1984 tricameral elections campaign, further work and studies focusing specifically on the April 1994 elections and the June 1996 local government elections will be important in order to complete the picture of resistance and transition. One of the difficulties in undertaking a study of Indian resistance politics in the 1980s and 1990s is the absence of substantial historical work covering the period 1948 to 1979. While there was a proliferation of generalised studies of resistance in the 1980s, the absence of contextualised studies during the period in which Indian resistance was largely moribund makes it difficult to fully understand political responses in the present. It is for this reason that such a study, focusing both on state strategy and civil society would be invaluable.

Indian involvement in trade unions also requires special attention. This thesis has not been able to delve in depth into the operations and functioning of unions. It would be important to undertake such a study in an historical perspective since there have been significant shifts in Indian involvement in unions from the 1940s till the present. Other civil society organisations that have been discussed in this thesis besides trade unions, also provide a basis for in-depth study in the future. The predominantly working-class townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix have now consolidated into politically significant residential communities. While some studies have examined religious and educational developments within these communities, and while this thesis has examined resistance politics with a special emphasis on Chatsworth, both these townships require specific investigation so as to understand better the Indian working-class, the class formation processes amongst Indians, and how these affect political consciousness and organisation.

This study has been influenced by some of my earlier work looking at resistance in Durban in a comparative perspective, in particular a study which dealt with youth resistance in the 1980s. Further comparative studies which look at the commonalities and differences amongst Indian, Coloureds and Africans are needed in order to understand how non-ethnic solidarities might be able to emerge. One factor, only alluded to briefly in this study is the question of language as a barrier. More Indians speak Afrikaans than Zulu, and this restricts the capacity to build non-racial organisations, as we discussed in chapter four. A specific study examining resistance and language will be of importance.

Future scenarios

It is more useful to consider the South African Indian as a socio-historical construct rather than a racial or biological one. Class structure will continue to be a factor in Indian politics. However, it will not be static or uniform, but will depend on ethnicity, religious, linqua-cultural and residential area distinctions, and will be reconstructed in relation to broader socio-political developments in South Africa. Ethnic networks will continue to have salience for the working-class since Indian townships are unlikely to witness substantial demographic change, but instead will retain the core character that apartheid intended. The upper echelons of the middle-class and the growing commercial bourgeoisie will continue to consolidate commercial cocoons, typical of other "middlemen minorities" elsewhere.

Sections of the middle-class, particularly those who are incorporated into the emerging bureaucracies of the state and capital, and who move into former white areas, will develop a more strongly South

African identity. The marginal urban poor, who constitute about 10% of Indians, might yet come to invest their confidence in trade unions and other civic bodies but still hope that their interests might be safeguarded by the Indian elite. Generally, what this thesis has established is that Indians have two dominant strands of identification: an exclusive Indian ethnic minority-marginality strand, and a South African inclusive non-racialism strand. The Indian ethnic minority strand can be broken down further: an exclusive ethnic minority strand represented by supporters of the MF, and an inclusive strand of minority ethnicities represented by those who voted for the NP.

Violence and insecurity will need to be substantially absent before the ANC can swing the support of Indians to its side. Given the political equation in KwaZulu-Natal, Indians have a critical role to play in assisting the ANC to win power. However, the consciousness of fear, the sense of being victim rather than actor, the perpetuation of the sandwich syndrome, and the notion of "being between the devil and the deep blue sea" need to be addressed by the political forces wishing to consolidate hegemony for non-racialism in the KwaZulu Natal province. Minority rights protection measures will do little to safeguard the interests of any of South Africa's minorities beyond what has already been provided in the new constitution and the Bill of Rights. The future security of Indians lies in their own actions. Indians need to work more closely with other South Africans in the building of a democratic South Africa and must take a more active role in the discussions, debates and activities emanating from the Reconstruction and Development Programme. However, this must be done in such a manner that the propensity to homogenise Indians is resisted. Indian women, for example, must assert their specific concerns and interests, which are often different from those of Indian men, in terms of the work of the Gender Commission. Indian workers must do likewise within trade unions.

The ANC, though, faces a huge challenge to dislodge the ingrained fear that many Indians feel as a minority group. What we have seen is that actual violence and the threat of violence have combined to create "deep trepidation and feelings of vulnerability" among Indians. The spectre of African violence, often criminal acts rather than racially-inspired violence, has become a part of Indian folklore and in the end is the most powerful sponsor of an Indian ethnic group identity. Three and a half years after the institution of a democratic government, many of these fears have proved exaggerated. Houses were not seized, people have not lost jobs en-masse, and violence has not increased substantially in Indian areas.

The NP and IFP are in the main election parties in the Indian areas. They do not seek to become mass participatory political organisations. If the ANC wishes to reverse its electoral failings amongst the Indian working-class, it will need to make a concerted effort in Chatsworth and Phoenix to develop alliances and networks with community-based civil society organisations that articulate the multiple identities present amongst the Indian working-class. I would argue that working-class personalities, or popular middle-class people who reside in Chatsworth and Phoenix, and who are seen as accessible to the electorate, must achieve prominence in KwaZulu Natal. The Indian ANC leaders must develop a profile as being non-racialists as well as being genuinely concerned about the interests of the Indian working-class. While this is not an easy task, failure to engage in this project could see a further growth of reactionary ethnic sentiments coupled with the consolidation of a siege mentality.

The non-racial homogenising project of the ANC might, over time, see a limited blurring of certain frontiers of identity across the racial divide. This will depend primarily on how substantially the structural context changes and how it impacts on such factors as fear, violence and security. The present decline of vibrant ANC-aligned or sympathetic organisations in Indian areas suggests that the

space is now more open for the mobilisation of stronger ethnic consciousness as represented by the MF and the NP. However, the situation is fluid, and will continue to be so, both at the level of consciousness formation and organisation. The ANC has certainly not yet thrown in the towel with regard to Indians, and is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.

The making of an Afrindian consciousness

This thesis has shown that identity is an important determinant of political responses. In thinking through the future of Indians in South Africa it is critical that new identities are imagined, created and developed. Indians are physically and culturally distinct, and it is both unwise and unwarranted that their historical origins should be negated. However, it must be recognised that the Indian South African identity has been constructed over the years by a range of different social processes and agencies. More importantly, it is a highly heterogeneous identity. South African Indian culture is a constructed culture informed by its context and by the historically distinct and diverse experiences of indenture on the one hand and a merchant class experience on the other.

Working towards developing and creating a South African Indian identity is not good enough. We need to either rebuild South Africanness as a cultural and political construct or to undertake the construction of a new Africanness. It is in the strategic interests of Indians to re-imagine themselves as if they were a linguistic/cultural group, like the Zulus or Xhosas, so that they are allowed distinctiveness without question of their right to sit at the South African family table. There are already many positive efforts in this direction. For example, Hindu and Muslim prayers are accommodated at all major state functions. Both the Shaka Day celebration in Durban on 21 September 1996, and Heritage Day, included Indian classical dancing. There are many attempts by the new political elites to recognise Indian cultural distinctiveness, while at the same time trying to be inclusive.

It would be inappropriate to negate history and culture and push for a simplistic assimilation process. We therefore need to construct a space within a South African national identity for an Afrindian Consciousness. We need to make an effort towards nurturing and developing an Afrindian identity that brings together elements of Indian and African culture. However, this process should not be linked to the present nation-state of India since South African Indianness is a specific construction of the African continent. In any event Indian Muslims share a greater affinity to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and other middle eastern countries. So in effect I do not believe it is appropriate to be insensitive to the cultural preferences and religious needs of South African Indians. It needs to be recognised that immigrant communities the world over create new forms of culture, as did the Afrikaner descendants of Dutch and other European migrants. In short, what we have in South Africa today is not Indian culture in any pure sense, but a culture specific to South African Indians.

Furthermore, Indians are first and foremost South Africans. Notwithstanding the fears and insecurities they may experience, they owe their primary and overwhelming commitment to South Africa. It is true that they experience the duality of being insiders and outsiders, as Freund has contended. However, the feelings of marginality are not accompanied to any substantial extent by identification with India or anywhere else. A small section of the upper echelons of the Indian middle-class have the option of emigrating to countries of the "first world" that will accept them. But for the majority, South Africa is home and that is where they will need to mediate their existence and location despite the uncertainties that lie ahead. Indians need to recognise that these feelings of uncertainty affect millions of South Africans across the racial divide. They also need to recognise

their commonalties and their differences, and work together with other South Africans to ensure their security and a comfortable location in society.

However, one is left with the question as to whether non-racialism can accommodate a South African Indian identity? Is it possible to be non-racial and be proud of Indian dancing and music? Can Blackness within the BC framework allow space for Indians and Coloureds and other distinct language groupings amongst Africans? I would argue that there is no compelling reason why, even within the terms of BC, there should not be a space for Indianness, a position articulated by Biko himself in the 1970s. However, while non-racialism, Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism and rainbowism interact and compete with each other, the importance of asserting one's Africanness is also important. The Afrindian construct that I am proposing would seek to indigenise the Indian South African experience. It would enable Indian South Africans to develop a greater commitment to the African continent while recognising their historical origins and their distinctive cultural make up. Afrindianness, if creatively constructed, could help Indians feel less marginal, less alienated and less foreign. Just as Zulus, Xhosas, Afrikaners and so on, take their seat at the South African family table, Afrindians should be able do so with no question of where their primary allegiance lies.

To reiterate, Afrindianness does not suggest a negation of Indian culture or history. It does however, suggest that there is little point in hankering after a distant historical link. The NIC made the erroneous assumption that most Indians were hankering to be closer to India and sought to mobilise around memories of Gandhi, the NIC's history and related symbols of the past. Clearly this has not resulted in political dividends.

There is no sense in longing for India, but there is sense in belonging to Africa. If Indianness is constructed as Afrindianness, then it is recognising its historical Indian origins but is reconstructing a political symbolism that is specific to Africa. Part of the unwillingness of Indians to engage in non-ethnic alliances and engagements relates to a feeling of otherness and foreigness. Rajbansi has expediently mobilised a narrow Indianness which will lead Indians towards a limited Indian ethnic, separatist identity that can only benefit the political agenda of ethnic cultural entrepreneurs like himself. Those like Rajbansi who strum their ethnic guitars and seek to construct pure, compartmentalised identities, clearly give no credence to the forces of globalisation and social change. Such approaches will serve to lead Indians to a racial and ethnic ghetto which will not serve their political and economic interests in the long term. For different reasons both the left and the right in Indian politics stand to benefit from the emergence of an Afrindian Consciousness and identity. How key religious and other political players respond to a notion of Afrindianness will be of importance for its success.

An Afrindian identity and consciousness must recognise the diversity within Indian culture. To talk about a homogenous Indian culture would not be appropriate. Just as it is not possible to speak of a single, distinct Zulu or Xhosa culture, likewise an Afrindian cultural and political construct should exhibit this diversity. I am also not arguing that there should be no space for distinct cultural practices. Fundamentally, there is no problem with the desire to adhere to particular and distinct cultural practices, provided that they do not impinge on other people's rights.

An Afrindian consciousness aggressively pursued by the left will not simply be seeking to assimilate into the dominant culture as is the concern facing immigrant minorities elsewhere in the world. South Africa has arrived at something of a unique historical moment as it seeks to fashion a new meaning of what it means to be South African in the twenty-first century. Rather than withdrawing into a

mythical Indian cultural laager, Indians should assert themselves sensitively and creatively into the broader South African culture. However, to do this effectively, Indian South Africans must indigenise themselves beyond any question of doubt and embrace Africa unequivocally. It is this route that will open up new identities, new alliances and new relations. We can certainly imagine a world where Muslims and Christians from Indian, Coloured, African and white backgrounds embrace each other as family members, and with a oneness of identity where race and ethnicity are not constraints to interaction and relationship building. We can envisage other alliances, interactions and relationships that include workers, women, youth, sport and other civil society organisations. It is true that the group areas reality will not disappear overnight, and that Indian, African and Coloured areas will retain the character that apartheid delineated for them. But already there are signs of this breaking down, albeit only on a limited scale. While the group areas reality, and other apartheid restrictions hindered non-racial interactions in the past, the present macro political environment is ripe for such interactions.

Closing remarks

In this thesis I have asserted that in the period under study there was a significant lack of depth in political organisation, which led to an inability to deal with racism, ethnicity and class in an organic manner; a failure to respond to the new state strategy post 1960; and a failure to develop working-class leadership, particularly in the townships of Chatsworth and Phoenix where the bulk of Indians reside. However, it is important to record that many Indian activists, from the working-class concentrations as well as from middle-class areas, did succeed in developing new organisational forms and broadened participation in the political struggle beyond perhaps what the apartheid state thought possible. There are many lessons to be learned from the processes and the events of the last sixteen years. While I am certain that I have not exhausted all the issues, I hope that this study will contribute towards some earnest reflection on the past and open a small window on the future. Given the social distortions caused by apartheid, South Africa has got off to a brilliant start. To a large extent, antagonism is hardly present. It remains to be seen if Afrindianness can interact with rainbowism to enable the emergence of class solidarities, gender solidarities and educational solidarities amongst the youth.

One wonders if South Africa will ever have as vibrant a civil society as it had under apartheid? The challenge that faces those that continue to support notions of participatory democracy is that they would need to find ways of suggesting to their constituencies the importance of participation in civic, youth and other social formations as well as in the local branches of their favoured political parties. The move towards permanently institutionalising proportional representation at the expense of constituency-based elections for provincial and national elections is a threat to grassroots participatory politics. It also undermines the position of fully accountable, democratically elected public representatives who are directly accessible to their electorate.

The future of non-racialism, Black Consciousness, Pan-Africanism and rainbowism is unclear. What is evident is that the success of any of these discourses is more dependent on the organisational vehicle which promotes it and less on the efficacy and appropriateness of the content of the discourse itself. It is only two years more before South African voters go to the polls in their second national democratic election. Several possible developments might yet occur. As non-racialism merges with rainbowism, and as the ANC government struggles to meet all its 1994 election promises it seems likely that the fragility of non-racialism will be severely tested.