Chapter 3:
The 1949 Anti-Indian Pogrom and the Crisis in the Natal ANC

> *Today world events profoundly affect the home politics of each and every nation. And to speak of local traditions [in matters of race relations] is to ignore the rapid and fundamental changes that are taking place in all countries in the world—changes that are giving birth to a new world order.*[1]
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> --"Contrast, Contradictions, and Impossibilities," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 31 July 1948.

> *We would pray and thank God for the 14th, the day when the Indian Riots started. When the Riots started, God, you knew what you were doing on that day. That* lightening *that struck that day made Africans think differently from the way that they had been thinking. Some started working by selling potatoes. Others sold food and changed their characters.*[2]
>
> --Ambrose Africa interviewed by Colin Shum, 1981.

> *Day after day I slept on the sickbed fearing the worse by night. After about a week the Indians returned and found their belongings intact. I was a relieved and very happy man when they took their things out of my house and saved me from possible attacks by my people.*
>
> --Jordan Ngubane, *Unpublished Bibliography*.[3]

This chapter focuses on one of the most traumatic and controversial events in Natal's history. On the 13th of January 1949, a clash between and an Indian shopkeeper and an African boy escalated into a melee between crowds of Indians and Africans in the Grey Street Area. After word of the battle (in Zulu, *impi*) spread overnight, African workers from local hostiles and groups of shantytown dwellers in areas like Cato Manor organized to retaliate the next day, leading to large-scale racial violence directed against Indians throughout Durban and outlying areas. Groups of Africans humiliated, beat, and killed Indian men and raped Indian women; after most Indians had fled, they turned their rage against Indian-owned stores and houses. The rioters directed their rage at those nearest at hand; frequently, they attacked poorer Indians who lived near and among Africans in the city's slums. Many Africans who worked for Indians fled the carnage, afraid for their own safety; other Africans helped shield Indians from vengeful mobs. Indian men, sometimes armed with guns, retaliated when they found opportunity. At the end of the two-day pogrom, South Africa police and Navy forces suppressed the rioters with heavy weapons fire, killing dozens more. The violence resulted in the death of over 140 people, the temporary displacement of nearly half Durban's Indian population, and the destruction of the Indian presence in large parts of once racially mixed shantytowns, like Cato Manor.

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[1] "Contrast, Contradictions, and Impossibilities," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 31 July 1948.

[2] Ambrose Africa interviewed by Colin Shum, 25 September 1980, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 300), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

[3] Jordan K. Ngubane, "An Unpublished Biography," Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, University of Chicago, 16.

The "Durban Riots" remain a highly charged part of Natal's living memory, an almost latent point of reference embedded in representations of an African/Indian racial divide. The year itself has become iconic in Natal and throughout South Africa. In 1976, members of the Kwa-Zulu Natal legislature made threatening references to 1949 after Fatima Meer suggested that the true leaders of blacks were imprisoned on Robben Island, not running the Bantustans.[4] When the Soweto township revolt erupted the same year, a large number of Indians—especially of an older generation—feared the possibility of anti-Indian violence and directly referenced the pogrom.[5] Reinforced by the violence in Inanda in 1985, these rhetorical gestures have continued in the post-apartheid period.[6] One apocryphal narrative, frequently reiterated in memoirs and novels by Indian writers, depicts Indians as victims of a state orchestrated plot to disrupt an emerging non-European unity.[7] This narrative generally implies that the pogrom interrupted a long history of harmonious coexistence, "friendship," between Indians and Africans. Another version of these events (which became central to an ideology of Zulu plebian nationalism that consolidated in the 1950s) describes the Riots as a battle for the liberation of the city against the foreign and exploitative Indian.[8] According to this construct, the "war" between the Indians and the Zulus not only retaliated against the arrogance of the Indian, it also facilitated the emergence of African self-assertion through business.[9] Despite their nearly diametrical valence, both versions laid claim to collective victimization; both also assumed that the violence should be understood in the context of a history whose protagonists are coherent racial formations.

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[4] Moodley, "The Ambivalence of Survival Politics," 450.

[5] Razia Timol and Tutuzile Mazibuko, *Soweto: a People's Response: Sample Survey of the Attitudes of People in Durban to the Soweto Violence of June 1976* (Durban : Institute for Black Research, 1976).

[6] On Inanda, see Heather Hughes, "Violence in Inanda, August 1985," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 13, no. 3 (Apr., 1987).

[7] See, for example, Azzim Hassim, *The Lotus People* (Durban: The Institute of Black Research/Madiba Publishers, 2002); Meer, *A Fortunate Man*; and Fatima Meer, *Portrait of Indian South Africans* (Durban:

Although a significant literature exists on the 1949 pogrom, most of it remains in the form of unpublished theses.[10] These analyses are largely sociological rather then historical; they focus on explaining the possible causes of people's actions rather than analyzing the actions and statements of the *dramatis personae* themselves. With one partial exception (Iain Edward's dissertation), the scholarship has virtually ignored the debates over these events within the African and Indian press as well as testimony by the rioters. As a result, discussions of the Riots

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Avon House, 1969), 36.

[8] See Edwards, "Mkhumbane, Our Home," chapter 3. Although I rely heavily on Edwards's discussion in this chapter, it has two substantial limitations. First, Edwards follows an Indian leftist analysis that attributes African resentments primarily to the actions of the petite bourgeois elite. As I argue in chapter one, African resentments were, in large part, a result in of their interactions with a much poorer, less elite layer of Indians like bus drivers and shop keepers. Second, in his desire to uncover "proletarian" (or more properly plebian) consciousness of Cato Manor residents, he sometimes slides into utilizing the rioter's own language regarding the "liberation" of space. As a result, he both tends to homogenize African responses and underplay the coexistence and interpenetration of Indians and Africans that existed before the pogrom. In part, this flows from a social history project centered on uncovering "consciousness," rather than a spatial analytic that would have led to a fuller picture of the lives of all of Cato Manor's inhabitants, African *and* Indian.

[9] For the pogrom as the origin point of African initiative and business, see A.W.G. Champion, *The Views of Mahlathi: Writings of A.W.G. Champion a Black South African* , ed. M.W. Swanson, trans. E.R. Dahle (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1982), 68-69.

[10] I have drawn on the following works: Kirk, "The 1949 Durban riots—A Community in Conflict"; L.K Ladlua, "The Cato Manor Riots 1959-60" (MA Thesis, University of Natal, 1985); Tim Nuttall, "'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War': The Durban 'Riots' and the Struggle for the City," *South African Historical Society: 12th National Conference* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal, 1989); and Desai, "A Context for Violence."

tend to overlook the relative novelty of the pogrom's immediate context (the rapid and large-scale urbanization and the accompanying transformation of Durban's racial dynamics), generalize about motivations and experiences on the basis of race, and minimize the Riot's political dimensions: both the role of anti-Indian racism in Natal African politics and the enormous repercussions of the pogrom on the development of the ANC.[11] Importantly, the three principle explanations advanced in the secondary literature originated in the political debates over the pogrom that occurred in its immediate aftermath. They included 1) ostensible instigation by the state and white media; 2) the surrogate targeting of Indians for broader African grievances; and 3) resentment produced by the racial hierarchy created by segregationist legislation.[12] Exploring the discourses in which these claims were embedded, this chapter will examine them primarily within the intellectual and political context of the late 1940s.

The election of the Nationalist government in 1948 did not, at first, significantly transform racial dynamics in Natal. But it reinforced a growing sense of frustration and despair among many Africans; the post war optimism regarding the promises of the Atlantic Charter, the United Nations Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and a coming "New Africa" had begun to fray. The victory of India at the United Nations in 1946 and Indian independence the following year raised enormous expectations of rapid, profound social change in South Africa—even relatively sober observers felt a tremendous sense of possibility. Less than two years later, *Inkundla* described a widespread view “among African people today that they are facing the grave threat of physical extermination.”[13] Beginning with African responses to Indian decolonization and the murder of Gandhi, this chapter places the changing political mood of the late 1940s in a broader international context. Articles in *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* from this period provide considerable insight into the aspirations and anxieties of the Zulu intelligentsia; they also reveal the ways in which their views of the changing domestic and international situation were refracted through the “Indian question” in Natal. This chapter then discusses the pogrom in depth and the response of the ANC, NIC, and Natal press to these events. Even as the Riots sharply polarized Durban’s Africans, they provided a potent unifying symbol for Indians: a fear of African violence derived, partly, from a colonial image of bloodthirsty and savage Zulu hordes. The chapter then concludes with an analysis of the profound crisis in the Natal ANC following the Riots and the backlash against cooperation with the Indian Congresses among Durban Africans. While the pogrom created the possibility for a much stronger alliance between the ANC and NIC/TIC at the level of the political organizations, it also resulted in the increased alienation of a great many Africans and Indians from both organizations. This disillusionment, combined with the growing political and economic power of the cooperative movement in the shanty towns, would shape Durban African politics for the decade to come.

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[11] These criticisms can be made of even the two best discussions of the pogrom, Nuttall, "'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War'" and E.C. Webster, "The 1949 Durban 'Riots'—A Case Study in Race and Class," in *Working Papers in Southern African Studies*, ed. P.L. Bonner (Johannesburg: University of the Witswatersrand, 1977). Both authors focus on "a process of differential incorporation into a social hierarchy of whites at the top, Indians in the middle, and Africans at the bottom" (Nuttall, 2). The main problem with this analysis is that it substantially overstates the efficacy and stability of an existing racial hierarchy at the municipal and provincial level and, therefore, endows racial groups with more sociological and political homogeneity than they possessed during the same period. It should be underlined that not only were most Indians as poor as most Africans, but that the Afrikaner nationalist government and much of the white population advocated the eventual expulsion of this "foreign" element. The intensity of African resentments reflected the local, haphazard, and relatively novel character of their subordination to the "Indian" in the cities (see chapter1).

[12] For the claim that the riots were orchestrated by the state, see Fatima Meer, *************

India on the World’s Stage

The years of the Second World War, as Iain Edwards observes, magnified the interest of ordinary Africans in the “outside world” of international affairs and nation states.[14] In Durban, demobilized African service men and foreign sailors—including Indian and Black American seamen—found audiences hungry for information, however anecdotal. The experience of food rationing and blackouts made the events transpiring on other continents tangible in the rhythms of daily life.[15] African newspapers published articles on the Nazi Holocaust, the Greek Civil War, and the question of Palestine that invited readers to draw parallels and appreciate differences between developments transpiring in South Africa and elsewhere. Perhaps even more importantly, these articles self-consciously promoted the emergence of nationalist consciousness by encouraging Africans to conceive of themselves as potential members an emerging international order, a community of sovereign nations in part defined by its collective interest in the shared arena of world affairs.[16] In other words, African nationalism promoted a greater degree of international awareness, particularly concerning political changes elsewhere in Africa and throughout the colonial world.[17]

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[13] “The Durban Riots,” *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 22 January 1949.

[14] Edwards, “Swing the Assegai Peacefully?” 63.

In the pages of African newspapers, the independence of India in August 1947 possessed a tripartite significance. First and foremost, columnists enthusiastically speculated on the impact that an independent India—a country of 347 million and the oft celebrated "jewel" of the British Empire—would have on the Common Wealth of Nations and the colonial system elsewhere. Not only did Britain's withdrawal and the establishment of universal franchise definitively establish the capacity of the "non-European" for self-government, African intellectuals also hoped that an

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[15] For the importance of African soldiers and foreign sailors, see Ibid., 64.

[16] See, for example, "Contrasts, Contradictions, and Impossibilities," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 31 July 1948.

[17] Recent scholarship of the development of nationalism in China and the Indian Ocean has stressed the ways in which the emergence of transnational associations (for example, linking together a Chinese diaspora re-imagined according to an ethno-nationalist principle of unity) combined with a new spatial imaginary of a global world composed of nations states. It was in part through and in relation to broader international developments and a new idea of the global that intellectuals defined, articulated, and located an idea of nation within an emerging world order. See Rebecca E. Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). For a broader overview that situates the near simultaneous development of nationalism within both Europe and Asia within the broader context of nineteenth century imperialism, see C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 199-242.

Indian democracy would provide a powerful counterweight to Western imperialism in the U.N. and elsewhere.[18] Secondly, African writers employed the image of India as a historical mirror, a device that allowed them to reflect on Africa's colonial experience and future prospects. The mode of writing in these essays sometimes approached allegory: they used India to reframe the particularities of South Africa's experience within a universal history of colonial rapacity and (implicitly) post-colonial deliverance.[19] Even when contrasting elements of the two histories, this juxtaposition shifted the axis of historical narration from the colonizer's dominance of the colonized to a shared story of resistance, foreign oppression, and nationalist rebirth. Third, African newspapers anxiously questioned the significance of India's independence for race relations within South Africa, particularly in Durban. In the weeks before the momentous date, the entire country seemed gripped with anticipation and the topic preoccupied both Indians and Africans. Festive decorations covered buildings across Natal, and thousands of men, women, and children attended political meetings and celebrations at which the new Indian flag was unfurled. [20] In Johannesburg, Xuma publicly thanked Nehru for his messages to Africans and predicted: "the light of the East will naturally spread to Africa and help the African people's struggle for freedom."[21] In sharp contrast, *Ilanga* struck a chord of anxiety and growing resentment: "Must both the Indian and the European be the supreme masters in the land of his birth, whilst he remains a hewer of wood and drawer of water? Must he be crushed economically between the European and Indian 'grinders'? Must he politically and socially remain their underdog?"[22] Many Africans worried that an independent India would strengthen the position of South Africa's Indians to their increasing detriment.

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[18] "India's Independence and Africans," *Ilanga Lase Natal,* 23 August 1947.

[19] See, for example, "India and Ourselves," *Ilanga Lase Natal,* 14 June 1947.

[20] "In Durban and Other Parts," *Indian Opinion*, 22 August 1947.

[21] "Celebrations in Johannesburg," *Indian Opinion*, 22 August 1947.

[22] "India's Independence and Africans," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 23 August 1947.

On 30 January 1948, an assassin shot Mohandras Gandhi in Bombay, killing him. Most coverage in the Natal African press—which invoked all of the above themes—did not, strikingly, mention Gandhi's almost 21 years in South Africa.[23] Perhaps the editors of *Ilanga* and *Inkundla*, sincere in their expression of grief for the martyred figure, judged that a lengthy discussion of his career in the country would raise uncomfortable questions regarding his attitude towards Africans. In any case, the tenor of outrage and sorrow in these newspapers was undeniable. *Inkundla* sermonized: "By murdering the greatest advocate of peace, the advocates of violence have only exposed the poverty of their own human worth."[24] *Inkundla*'s editorial focused on defending India itself from cynical accusations of national failure: the true friends of India, it argued, will not turn their backs on the "non-European democracy" and Africans should see in India's staggering sacrifices the path of struggle yet ahead. Gandhi died at India's hands, *Inkudla* implied, and this tragedy was India's trial to collectively endure and overcome. In effect, the article was a defense of the principle of Indian nationhood (and hence the general right of non-European self-determination) in the face of the Partition of India and Pakistan, communalist strife, and Gandhi's murder by a rightwing Hindu nationalist.

The article on Gandhi's death in *Ilanga* expressed a more complex and uncertain array of attitudes. *Ilanga* began by meditating on Gandhi's exemplification of the human soul's universal and constant dignity, the greatness of personhood that transcends "race and colour, creed and class, clime and time."[25] Greatness, the writer eulogized, knows no color and is respected everywhere. This appropriation of Gandhi for the entirety of the human race, ironically, served to contest his status as a specifically *Indian* symbol. Admiration for the fallen leader, the writer soon made clear, did not entail respect for the political and economic doings of Indians—even if, the article conceded, some Africans believed that “we can profitably learn from them.” *Ilanga* prophesized:

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[23] An exception is the brief mention of the march from Natal to the Transvaal in "Bambulaleleni uGandhi?" *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 19 February 1948.

[24] "Gandhi," *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 4 February 1948.

[25] "Weekly Review and Commentary," *Ilanga Lase Natal,* 7 February 1948.

> Naturally, most of us will think about the practical and political implications of the matter not only in connection with India, but as it affects South Africa and other parts of Africa where the presence of the Indians is creating complex problems. There were some who think that Mahatma Gandhi was a steadying and sublimating influence in this direction; that he was against nascent Indian imperialism and Indian exploitation of the peoples of Africa. Now that he is gone they fear that Indian economic greed and exploitation, Indian adolescent political assertiveness and Indian expansionist tendencies will have a new lease on life. They doubt if free and ambitious India and Indians care for the freedom and aspirations of Africans.

The tone of the Natal African press had shifted considerably since the first victory of India at the U.N. a year and a half earlier.[26] In the aftermath of Indian independence, two of the themes in the above passage achieved a novel prominence. First, both *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* worried about the increasing diplomatic assertiveness of India and began to depict the Indian population of South and East Africa as potential agents of a new empire. Articles in *Inkudla* had sounded this note in the mid 1940s, but this concern intensified considerably after Nehru began to strongly assert India’s interest in East African affairs.[27] In 1946, Nehru argued that India, along with Britain, should participate in a U.N. trusteeship over Tanganyika.[28] Although virtually every later account stresses Nehru’s role in bringing about a greater degree of understanding between Indians and Africans, *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* viewed such pronouncements with an enormous degree of suspicion in the late 1940s. Implicitly casting doubt on Nehru’s injunction that Indians should support the liberation struggle of Africans, *Inkundla* warned against "the imperialistic ambitions of the new India. …It is not impossible that certain Asiatics might support our own cause so that they should have our people's support for their expansionist ambitions."[29] Second, the Indian National Congress's acquiescence to a Partition negotiated and engineered by the former colonial rulers severely damaged the moral authority of the new Indian state in the eyes of many African intellectuals. *Ilanga* cautioned African leaders to learn from India's failures: "events in India show how deep, dangerous and crippling cultural, language and religious differences can be among people supposedly of one nation. …African leaders should heed this warning and lesson." [30] Natal's African press continued to argue that India's fate would have far reaching consequences for their own struggle for freedom and South Africa as a whole; they also still viewed their own recent history through the lens of India's experience. But the post war optimism regarding Indian independence and non-European cooperation had largely faded.

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[26] See also “Africans and the U.N.,” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 8 March 1947. This editorial claimed that both the white and Indian delegations are cynically utilizing the African for their own purposes at the U.N. and, contrary to widespread belief, the African’s case had not been presented at the U.N. the previous year: “It was, as we have said, used as a convenient springboard for attack by the two contending groups.”

[27] “Comments on Events,” *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, first fortnight, April 1946.

[28] “Policy on Dependent Territories, note written 15 September 1946, External Affairs Department File No. 6(76)-cc/46, pp. 31-34/n., National Archives of India. Reprinted in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, second series, vol. 1, ed. S. Gopal (New Dehli: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984), 445-9.

The 1949 Anti-Indian Pogrom

Early in the evening of Thursday, January 13th, an Indian attacked an African youth, George Madondo, knocking him through a window and cutting open his head.[31] Articles in

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[29] "Pan-Asiatic Conference," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 27 March 1947.

[30] "Indian and Ourselves," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 14 June 1947.

[31] According to one account: "When he arrived an Indian came and took a paper from Madonda. When he had taken the paper the India said when the boy asked him for the money, he said, 'Fuck off!' He took him and pushed him over there so that the boy crashed into a window." Tunya Dlamini interviewed by B.T.C. Mkhize, 14 June 1981, Kwa Mashu, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 305), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban. The Riots Commission Report contains the following version: "A Native boy, 14 years of age, had words with an Indian shop assistant, 16 years of age, and slapped the latter's face. The Indian youth lodged a complaint with his employer, also an Indian, who came out of the Indian Market to Victoria Street and assaulted the Native boy. In the tussle, the Native's head accidentally crashed through the glass of a shop window." See *Report on the Commission of Enquiry into the Durban Riots*, 5. The Indian was later convicted on a charge of assault and sentenced to a fine £1 or seven days hard labor. Notably, while African accounts of this event both in the press and later interviews identify the boy Madonda by name, the Indian remains unnamed in all of the contemporary versions.

Ilanga and *Inkundla* following the Riots stressed that physical conflict between Africans and Indians occurred regularly in Durban, particularly in stores and on busses.[32] But this altercation, as Tim Nuttall vividly describes, took place in particularly explosive circumstances: "It happened at the end of the day amidst the crowds of Victoria Street, near the central bus depot where thousands of Africans and Indians queued for a bus home. This was the heartland of the Indian commercial centre, and the site of Durban's largest 'Native' beer hall and market stalls."[33] Outraged African bystanders attacked the shopkeeper and Indians rallied to his defense. With lightening speed, rumors circulated through the market that a crowd of Indians had beaten or killed the boy. Indian men and women hurled brickbats and bottles from the balconies onto the heads of Africans.[34] Africans rushed to the scene.[35] According to *Inkundla*, "within an hour it had spread to every part of the Indian quarter of Durban. Groups of Indians all over engaged in free fights with Africans. Stones and sticks were freely used."[36] As the number of combatants swelled, an African mob set out from the scene of the initial fracas—chanting "Usuthu!"[37] (in some accounts, "Zulu")—and began to attack individual Indians, stone any vehicle not driven by an African, and loot Indian stores. *Ilang*a claimed "Indians were as much responsible and fought as wildly and behaved as recklessly as Africans at the beginning until superior strength told and Indians retired. Innocent people suffered on both sides."[38] Sporadic looting continued late into the night.

However spontaneous the initial melee, a fair amount of evidence suggests that the next day groups of Africans, organized through workers hostels and other social networks (perhaps *ingoma* dancing troops and boxing clubs), sought to take advantage of the situation.[39] Champion and others later claimed that African leaders from Cato Manor had tried to organize the rioters with some degree of success.[40] Doubtlessly encouraged by the slowness of police intervention (numerous reports also indicate whites cheered on the African assailants and joined in raiding Indian stores), crowds of African workers, domestic servants, and shack dwellers escalated the attacks on Friday and violent confrontations occurred whenever groups of Indians were in a position to retaliate. By the early evening, government troops blockaded the Indian district and the focus of the assault had shifted from central Durban to outlying districts, particularly Cato Manor and the Jacobs area. Rampaging African crowds burnt houses and stores, raped Indian women and girls, and viciously bludgeoned Indians of all ages, sexes, and social classes. Particularly in the outlying areas, the pogrom targeted the Indian poor and working class—the only target readily available. The goal was clear: to drive Indians out. An article in *Indian Opinion* captured the ensuing devastation:

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[32] "Eye-Witness Account of the Durban Riots," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949.
[33] Nuttall, "'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War'," 16.
[34] *Report on the Commission of Enquiry into the Durban Riots*, 4.
[35] Z.A. Ngcobo interviewed by Simeon Zulu, 13 September 1980, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 361), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.
[36] "Eye-Witness Account of the Durban Riots," *Inkundla ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949.
[37] M.S. Manyathi interviewed by C.N. Shum, 16 September 1980, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 327), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.
[38] "How Long, O Lord!" *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

> Huddled under the flames of one of the burning shops were four Indian women and a dozen weeping children. The male owner was in a grotesque attitude on the front path, knifed in several places and dying. A younger son staggered in the road with his head split open. This was one of the hundreds of pathetic sites that were witnessed in Cato and other districts of Durban.[41]

Friday night saw the apogee of the violence: Africans hurled paraffin tins into Indian-owned buildings, families burned alive, Indians retaliated with weapons fire, desperate individuals offered money for their lives and the lives of their families, Zulus who worked for Indians fled for their safety, African women hid in their homes and begged their husbands to stay with them while bullets flew overhead from the direction of Westville.[42] During Friday night, state repression likewise intensified. According to Nutall: "For a local news reporter it seemed the clock had turned back to battles he had observed during the Second World War. Machine guns were set up, and sometimes fired 'for five minutes at a time' in the direction of groups looting and burning buildings."[43] The military and police had largely managed to reestablish order by Saturday, despite scattered acts of revenge by Indian gunmen.[44]A more limited outbreak of violence occurred a few days later in Pietermaritzburg.[45] The official commission of enquiry later set the following casualty and damage figures: 87 Africans, 50 Indians, 4 unidentified, and 1 European killed; 1,087 people injured; 40,000 Indian refuges; over three 300 buildings destroyed; and more than 2,000 structures damaged. Articles in both the African and Indian press insisted that the number injured and killed was likely higher.[46]

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[39] See Nuttall, "'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War'," 18 and Hemson, "Class Consciousness and Migrant Workers," 351-3.

[40] "Mr. Champion Interviewed," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

[41] "Race Rioting in Durban Inflicts Grave Damage to Indians," *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

Drawing a direct parallel with American "race riots," the white Natal Press immediately entitled these events "The Durban Riots," a designation that most historians have respected. Liberal social scientists connected to the South African Institute of Race Relations soon developed the comparison explicitly.[47] In the American context, this term provided a rather thin euphemism for "a tidal wave of homicides, arson, mayhem, and organized racial combat" that swept the country in response to growing African American political organization and assertiveness, particularly following the First World War.[48] The term “Riots” reduced the precipitating causes of the Durban events to racial tension between coherent and unproblematic groups, disappeared the centrality of social hierarchies grounded in segregation and state racism, and—perhaps most disturbingly—abstracted the violence from both perpetrator and victim. Bill Freund’s characterization is far closer to the mark: the later phase was an anti-Indian pogrom followed by the brutal massacre of “rioters” by the police and military. Notably, Africans immediately contested both the appellation of “riots” and its underlying presuppositions. In its editorial the following weekend, *Ilanga* deliberately avoided using the word, in large part because it implied that the participants were “mad, blind and unreasoning impis”.[49] While deploring the brutality and the all-sided suffering, *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* argued that Africans participants—however misguided, tragic, and destructive their actions—were simultaneously redressing a real collective humiliation and fighting to assert their rights as human beings. Numerous articles in the African press also observed that far more Africans had been killed (some by Indians) and harshly criticized accounts that represented Indians as the only victims.[50] In popular African discourse, these events were frequently called an “*impi*”: a battle or a war.

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[42] These details are taken from interviews, in particular Josephine Hadebe interviewed by L. Mabaso, 26 April 1981, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 308), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban. For an African whose mother sent him away out of fear he might be attacked, see William Maseko interviewed by E.N. Yengwa, 22 September 1981, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 342), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

[43] Nuttall, "'It Seems Peace but It Can Be War'," 23.

[44] "Eye-Witness Account of Duran Riots," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949.

[45] "The NEUM on Riots," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 19 February 1949. *Indian Opinion* reports violence in Pietermaritzburg occurring on Wednesday, January 19. See "Race Rioting in Durban Inflicts Grave Damage to Indians," *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

[46] "Riot Deaths and Figures," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 29 January 1949.

[47] Kenneth Kirkwood, "Failure of a Report," in Maurice Webb and Kenneth Kirkwood, *The Durban Riots and After* (Johannesburg: South Africa Institute of Race Relations, 1949), 19. Also see Mabel Palmer, *The History of Indians in Natal*, 158.

Why did Africans participate in the massacres? Testimony at the Riots Commission and interviews conducted during the late 1970s contained a number of self-justifications, including economic desperation and fear of retaliation for appearing to side with Indians. But the foremost reason offered by the participants themselves was retaliation for Indian arrogance. Several sources indicate that rioters largely turned to arson after Indians had fled, leaving them no other targets. *Ilanga* claimed that the "usual" criminal elements, rather than the combatants, carried out most of the looting; in some cases, whites may well have even initiated some of the theft.[51] One participant boasted almost thirty years later: "They learned a great lesson, and to this day you will not hear an Indian say to an African, 'Voetsak.' No matter where he is working, if you say 'Hey!' there is perfect silence to this day."[52] Many of the Rioters' actions appear to have been specifically aimed at humiliating their victims. One Cato Manor resident explained: "When the men returned and told us about it all, they said tins of oil had been poured out on the floor of Indian stores, making it so slippery that people fell and hurt themselves. They looted whatever they could from the shops whenever they saw an Indian they hit him, and that would be that."[53] Participants described the outcome in terms of a military victory over a foreign opponent.[54] Later accounts of the pogrom often manifested a strong sense of Zulu nationalism: "We beat them up. We 'burnt them.' Even though I did not join that company, I can say 'we did it' because it was done by Zulus."[55] As I will discuss in the next chapter, the sexual violence directed at Indian women and girls may have represented acts of retaliation directed at Indian men, whom many Africans believed used their wealth and superior position to seduce African women.

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[48] This quote is a description of the Red Summer of 1919 from David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 579. A shift has occurred in the U.S literature on “Race Riots” from a focus on job competition and social conflict produced by the Great Migration (exemplified by the work of sociologist Elliot Rudwick) to an emphasis on the political aims of disrupting civil rights struggles and destroying black community institutions. Pointing out the parallels between orchestrated racial violence in the U.S. and Jews in Czarist Russia, newer literature argues that the term pogrom (or, in one case, ethnic cleansing) better captures the political character of these massacres. See Charles L. Lumpkins, *American Pogrom: The East St, Louis Race Riot and Black Politics* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), xi-xii. Other recent works that emphasize the political dimensions of organized racial violence include Elliot Jaspin, *Buried in the Bitter Waters: the Hidden History of Racial Cleansing in America* (New York: Basic Books, 2007).

[49] “How Long, oh Lord!” *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1947.

[50] “Eye-Witness Account of Durban Riots,” *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949.

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[51] "How Long, oh Lord!" *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1947; *The Commission of Enquiry into the Durban Riots*, 4-5.

[52] Tanya Dlamini interviewed by B. C. Mkhize, 17 June 1981, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 305), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

[53] Josephine Hadebe interviewed by L. Mabaso, 26 April 1981, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 308), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

[54] This is particularly stressed in Edward's account.

[55] W.S. Manyathi interviewed by C.N. Shum, 16 September 1980, Killie Campbell Oral History Project (KCAV 327), Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban.

We do not know how many Africans participated in the Riots. None of the contemporary sources—including the Riots Commission Report—provide even the roughest estimates. This persistent vagueness strengthened the image of racial conflict between two seamless totalities. Among Durban Africans, the Rioters' perceived goals found broad support, although many people also expressed shock, horror, and disgust over the violence. *Inkundla* reported: "Almost every African this correspondent asked about the riot had a measure of sympathy with the Indian's attackers. This does not mean that they approved of the methods used."[56] The article claims that Africans were almost evenly divided over the use of violence. Resentment and anger at the "Indian" appear to have been nearly ubiquitous; the complete dehumanization and depersonalization of Indians was not. Some rioters made efforts to protect familiar individuals even while they lashed out against the property and lives of others. In her autobiography, Dr. Goonam describes the following incident, which took place after she drove into Cato Manor to treat a patient during the pogrom:

> I saw a group of burley Africans with stones and bricks. I immediately braked. 'This is it … the end of me,' I said to myself. They surrounded my car and were about to take aim when they recognized me and throwing away their missiles shouted in chorus, 'Aeo Doktela, Aeo Doktela', I explained that I was going to the camel man's house, his wife was very ill. They listened sympathetically and said, 'Hamba Kahle, Hamba Kahle' (go well)…. As I was leaving the camel man's home, one or two of the African's who stood poised with stones came to ask me how the 'camel lady' was feeling. Shaking their head, they showed concern, and called in God's grace, 'Nkulunkulu!'[57]

Other Africans actively opposed the attacks and took action to protect Indians—although, here again, the evidence does not provide a basis to even begin speculation regarding the actual numbers. Goonam writes: “All Africans did not attack Indians. Many, in fact, in Cato Manor, Mayville, Second River, Briardene, Sea Cow Lake and Springfield protected their Indian neighbors and sheltered them in their home against attacks by Africans.”[58] In response to the press coverage that demonized all Africans, *Inkundla* celebrated the “Heroes of the Riots”: African men and women who risked their own personal safety to shelter Indians in their homes and the African nurses who cared for the wounded, regardless of their race, in the pogrom’s aftermath. According to the newspaper, many of those who shielded Indians lost their homes and escaped only with their lives. “There are hundreds of instances,” Ngubane claimed, “where Africans were beaten up by their own people for giving sanctuary to Indians.”[59] One editorial focused on the sacrifice of an unnamed African man in Cato Manor, who died attempting to rescue two Indian children from the flames of a burning house. Comparing this individual to Gandhi and Abraham Lincoln (leaders murdered by members of their own race), *Inkundla* sermonized that he “was the true representative of the Africa that will endure. When friends and foes heap insults on the whole African race, the Unknown Man of Africa stands out as a silent rebuke to their smallness of mind.”[60]

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[56] "The Riots and Propaganda," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 22 January 1949. See also "Eye-Witness Account of the Riots," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949.

[57] Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 138-9. The camel man received his name—and local notoriety—because of his unusual pet.

Initial Responses

In the years preceding the pogrom, *Ilanga* had pointedly warned the ANC that the failure to defend African trading rights “might lead to organised and patriotic gangsterism when impatient Africans will raid and damage or burn Indian buses and stores in African Areas.”[61]

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[58] Ibid., 138. Note that she reinforces the generalization of “African” violence by depicting the attackers in racial terms even while she argues against the involvement of all Africans.

[59] “Eye-Witness Account of the Riots,” *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 29 January 1949. On the basis of her own experience, Moodley writes: “The writer’s own memory of the riots brings to the fore the assistance many Africans, at risk to themselves, gave to Indians by shielding them from activists.” See “The Ambivalence of survival politics,” 449.

[60] “Heroes of the Riots,” *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 5 February 1949.

[61] “Weekly Review and Commentary,” *Ilanga Lase Natal,* 1 June 1946.

Few Durban Africans expressed much surprise over the massacres.[62] In striking contrast, the Riots caught the Transvaal leadership of the ANC, and the Indian Congresses of both provinces, completely off guard.[63] In the immediate aftermath, G.M. Naicker and A.W.G. Champion toured the city with loudspeakers, both men appealing for calm in Zulu and English; and the ANC and NIC cooperated in providing relief to those displaced.[64] The Communist Party sent a team of Moses Kotane and H.A. Naidoo (who had been living in Cape Town) to Durban in order to address the situation.[65] On February 6, the ANC and Indian Congresses released a joint statement, signed by African and Indian leaders from across the country, expressing "deep and heartfelt sympathy to the relatives of all the victims." Ignoring the grievances voiced by Durban Africans, the statement forcefully indicted the policies of segregation: "the fundamental and basic causes of the disturbance are traceable to the political, economic, and social structure of the country, based on differential and discriminatory treatment of the various racial groups and the preaching of racial hatred and intolerance."[66] Groups of concerned Africans and Indians formed non-European Friendship Committees in towns across the country.[67] When the government commission of inquiry refused to allow the cross examination of witnesses by African and Indian organizations, the ANC and Indian Congresses protested and then boycotted the official proceedings.

In his autobiography, Ismail Meer argues that the February 6th meeting in Durban inaugurated meaningful, ongoing collaboration between the ANC and Indian Congresses.[68] Goonam describes a similar reaction: "Politically we had to reorganize and reorient ourselves, and the Durban Riots … made it clear to us that never again would we take up the government as Indians alone. Our survival lay in a non-European United Front."[69] M.B. Yengwa, at the time a Natal Youth League member, later expressed a similar opinion: "It was the incitement to racial animosity which was responsible for the riots. We felt that we had to confront the question of our deprivation of rights together, and fight as a united organization."[70] The president of the Youth League in Natal and the editor of *Inkundla*, Jordan Ngubane, was profoundly shaken after witnessing the pogrom first hand. He began to question significant aspects of the Youth League's nationalism. According to Ngubane, A.P. Mda (who like many others traveled to Natal) reacted strongly to the violence, blaming the quality of political leadership on both sides. In an unpublished autobiography, Ngubane remembered:

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[62] "The Riots and Propaganda," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 29 January 1949.

[63] The first sentence of the *Ilanga* editorial on the Riots is "The inevitable has happened."

[64] Desai, "A Context for Violence,"152.

[65] Pauline Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party* (Pietermaritzburg: Hadida Books, 1993), 109.

[66] "Statement issued by the Joint Meeting of African and Indian Leaders Held in Durban on Sunday 6th February, 1949"

The Transvaal ANC and Indian Congress released an earlier joint statement appealing for calm on January 15th. See Press Statement signed by R.S. Ramohanne, 15 January 1949, A.W.G. Champion Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witswatersrand.

[67] "Indo-African Clashes: Practical Steps to Build Friendship," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 12 February 1949.

> After the riot, Mda came out clearly with his insistence on the quality of our ideals in the League being above reproach . He had been a very close friend and admirer of Lembede, who had attempted to popularize Africanism. Mda did not say Africanism should be scrapped. He produced a new phrase. African Nationalism was the force for which he stood. For him, Africanism had racial connotations he found dangerous.
>
> At the Bloemfontein Conference toward the end of 1949, he delivered a long speech in which he warned that the African's fight for freedom would be in vain if it was waged merely to ensure that the African debased the human personality in the way the white man did. Fascism, he said, like race oppression, was evil from the White side as it was from the African. He warned that there could be fascists also right within the League itself who had in mind the idea of establishing a closed racial state precisely in the way Afrikaner Nationalism wanted to do. These were the most dangerous enemies of African nationalism.… Uttered against the background of the riots, these were brave words. [71]

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[68] Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 118-9.

[69] Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 134.

[70] Quoted in Julie Frederikse, *The Unbroken Thread: Non-Racialism in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Raven Press, 1990), 52.

[71] Jordan K. Ngubane, "An Unpublished Biography," Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, University of Chicago, 136-7. According to Ngubane, Mda intended this address to be published, but it was later lost.

Additionally, the ANC faced significant external pressure to prevent another conflagration and develop stronger ties with Indian organizations. Representatives of the Indian government intervened during the months after the Riots, warning ANC leaders that African anti-Indian sentiments compromised India's efforts to isolate the Apartheid regime internationally.[72]

The Indian Congress immediately declared that the hand of a third party was behind the riots. Speaking at a press conference in England on the 27th of January, Dadoo (who employed the terms "pogrom" and "massacre" rather than "riots") alleged the existence of a government conspiracy to disrupt the emerging forces of opposition to Apartheid. Dadoo cited the race policies of the "Fascist" regime and the enormous utility of the Riots for the state:

> One cannot escape the conclusion that the outbreak here has the resemblance of organized attack, that it was premeditated, although something went wrong with the timing, that a hidden hand of instigators lurks behind the events, that such events eminently suited the Government in order to weaken the growing opposition to the Government policy, and that it may be used as a weapon to impose further repression on both Indian and African people…[73]

As many Indians struggled with the trauma of the Riots, the leaders of the Indian Congress largely remained silent regarding the grievances voiced by Africans. Among intellectuals and political activists, considerations of political strategy (i.e. attributing primary blame to the unjust system rather than its foremost victims), a powerful sense of community pride, and personal denial all contributed to embracing a narrative of white instigation. Fatima Meer later summarized this position: "direct blame was apportioned to the Government, the white public, and the local authority in Durban, which had for years waged a vendetta of unrestrained malignancy against the Indian people."[74] Indian activists pointed to circumstantial evidence that suggested a state-orchestrated conspiracy: anti-Indian statements by the government; the intensified campaign of vilification by the white press during the Passive Resistance campaign; the failure of police to protect Indian property and lives; the participation of whites in looting; the undisguised glee of white Natal at Indian suffering; and the cynical manner in which the white press circulated "alleged" African complaints. A paternalist undertone frequently accompanied this explanation. It generally implied that white propaganda and unnamed provocateurs had misled credulous and unsophisticated Africans: Indians were simply a convenient and accessible scapegoat for their real frustrations over poverty, urban overcrowding, and segregation.

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[72] Ibid., 153.

[73] "Press Conference Held by Dr. Y.M. Dadoo, the President of the Transvaal Indian Congress," 27 January 1949, Dr. A.B. Xuma Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[74] Fatima Meer, "African and Indian in Durban," *Africa South in Exile*, vol. 4, no. 4 (July-September 1960), 30.

While this view was strongly held by Indian Congress activists, it did not reflect the rage, despair, and horror of most Indians. *Indian Opinion* followed the Congresses in blaming the government, but it also forthrightly voiced Indian outrage at the attackers, generalized to represent all Africans: "The murders committed, the ravages on our women and girls, the burning of our homes and our business premises, make us wonder whether there is human feeling in some human breasts. The hatred shown and the fury with which our people have been attacked, makes one shudder."[75] In Indian press accounts, the strident denial that Africans were ultimately responsible for the violence went hand-and–hand with images of Zulu barbarism, primitiveness, and savagery: Shaka reborn and unleashed during the evening rush hour. *Indian Opinion* praised the "good work" of the navy and police who suppressed the rioters; *Indian Views* printed ominous reports of African drilling squads preparing for war in central Durban and "Native" nurses in an unnamed hospital attempting to poison Indian patients.[76] Multiple sources indicate that some Indians threatened retaliation and Indian vigilantes attacked Africans in the pogrom's aftermath.[77]

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[75] "The Racial Disturbances," *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

[76] I discuss the coverage of the Riots in *Indian Opinion* and *Ilanga* more fully below.

Representatives of the Indian government publicly challenged both the outpouring of anti-African racism and the willful indifference of Indian leaders (both conservative and radical) to the grievances articulated by Africans. Addressing a forum in Pietermaritzburg, the secretary to the High Commissioner for India in South Africa, R.T. Chari, demanded that relief funds sent by India be used to assist all sufferers, Indian *and* African. He strongly criticized a speaker who had argued that political unity was impossible because Africans were savages. "Because people are illiterate and do not conform to Western standards of life," he pointedly declared, "it does not mean they are savages." In villages across India, he cuttingly observed, thousands of such "savages" were receiving full franchise. Chari went on to argue that the Indians must stop ignoring Africans and find a way to come to their aid. If Africans had not felt truly aggrieved, the Riots would not have been so widespread.[78] Having witnessed the Riots in Clairwood, Chari spoke with a degree of authority and an edited version of his remarks appeared in both *Inkundla* and *Indian Opinion*.[79] But as the thousands of displaced sought new homes and families interred their dead, the equanimity of his stance found little popular resonance.

The Debate between *Ilanga Lase Natal* and *Indian Opinion*

The outpouring of accusations by Africans provoked swift and impassioned denials from Indian newspapers. "It is an irony of fate," the small journal *Pravasi* virtually lamented, "that of all people the Indian should have suffered for no fault of their own."[80] None of the charges were new: they included black marketing and overcharging in Indian shops, exploitative rents charged by Indian landlords, the alleged arrogance that Indians displayed towards Africans, the seduction of African women by Indian men, and the abuse of legal and social privileges created by the policy of segregation. African newspapers had regularly voiced all of these complaints in the past. But the Riots compelled the Natal Indian press to respond to these grievances in print, particularly after white newspapers like the *Natal Mercury* began to publicize African statements in lurid and self-serving detail.[81] The result was a rare, open discussion of African stereotypes of Indians and Indian attitudes toward Africans in the pages of *Indian Opinion* and *Ilanga*.

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[77] *Report on the Commission of Inquiry into Riots in Durban*, 5; "How Long, O Lord!" *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

[78] "Indians and Africans Must Unite," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 12 February 1949. The amount of aid was £3,500. The article also appears in *Indian Opinion*, 11 February 1949.

[79] Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 117.

[80] "Durban Massacre---First Fruit of Apartheid," *Paravasi*, April 1949.

Although *Ilanga*'s editorial following the Riots presented an analysis largely based on a race-relations framework, H.I.E. Dhlomo tried to place the violence of recent days within the broader context of South Africa's system of discrimination. At the same time, he trenchantly criticized the attitudes and actions of many Indians. In contrast to white and Indian journalism which casually invoked stereotypes of rampaging Zulu hoards, *Ilanga* emphasized the objective basis of long-simmering African resentments and the extent of the violence directed against both Indians and Africans. The stunning first paragraphs of this article surveyed the misery and devastation unleashed by these events without so much as mentioning race. While insisting that the "conflict" was perfectly foreseeable (and therefore preventable), Dhlomo also attempted to capture a human dimension to the all-sided suffering that transcended any particular group:

> The inevitable has happened. The flood has burst out. Much damage has been done. Many places lie waste and desolate. Some people mourn and will not be comforted. There is fear, shock and confusion. There is hate, the nursing of wounds and a fatal desire for revenge. Although the main current of the storm has passed, there are rumblings of discontent, uncertainty and a savage desire to hurt. People continue to be assaulted and

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[81] Several articles in the African press warned Africans against a new found solicitousness on the part of Europeans: "All of a sudden the European community of Durban has discovered that the African has been cruelly exploited by the Indian; that he has been charged extortionate rentals by the Indian and that, after all, 'he is a better human being' than the Indian." "Timeo Danaos…" *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 12 February 1949.

killed indiscriminately.

> If what has taken place is tragic, sudden and regrettable, it is not surprising nor was it unexpected by unprejudiced, honest and well informed observers of our racially corrupted society. The whole grim business was logical, simple, and inevitable.[82]

Despite the painstaking equanimity of the above passage, Dhlomo's article proceeded to reiterate a series of racial stereotypes based on the image of the Indian merchant. In many respects, this process of generalization was the product of a deterministic analysis that derived racial antagonisms directly from the legal-economic system. The repetition of the word "inevitable" conveyed that Africans, however brutally, were responding to a situation that they neither created nor had any recourse to change. The very ambiguity of agency in the above description implied that Africans and Indians were both victims in a tragedy that neither had authored. This version of events, as we shall see, must have stunned most Indian readers.

After the initial paragraphs, Dhlomo enumerated a comprehensive list of complaints against Indians. The first and most virulent charge was directed against the practices of Indian shop owners and merchants: "It is a well known if unpalatable fact that many Indian business men use unfair and immoral business methods. Haggling and downright fleecing of Africans is the order of the day, and has been going on for decades." Underscoring the questions of space, land, and property at the heart of African resentments, Dhlomo particularly objected to Indian efforts to defend their monopoly position in "the Reserves and exclusively or predominantly African areas [.]" Dhlomo assailed not only the deliberate sabotage of African business, but also the quotidian humiliations suffered by Africans in the spaces controlled by an other race: "the very Indians who oppose to the bitter end those Africans who desire to run their own buses, stores and cinema houses, behave with nauseating, adolescent arrogance, superiority, patronage and even brutal insult to African customers and patrons." It was, he implied, simply too much to endure.

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[82] "How Long, O Lord!" *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

In effect, Dhlomo's editorial contended that each racial group responded rationally to an unjust system that gave Indians legal and economic advantage: Indians, by exploiting these avenues for profit and advancement; and Africans, by striking out against Indians. However inadvertently, he shifted in the course of his argument from an empirically qualified assessment of "many" Indians to an evaluation of a racial group based on actions and prejudices that he himself recognized were prevalent, but not necessarily universal. In part, this generalization served his defense of African actions during the pogrom. Although he used words like "tragic" and "regrettable," Dhlomo strongly rejected the term "riots" and condemned the racism behind an exclusive emphasis on innocent Indian victims, a "dangerous" myopia that ignored the many Africans likewise displaced, wounded, or killed. Dhlomo described the pogrom as a war that the Indians lost: "Indians were as much responsible and fought as wildly and behaved as recklessly as Africans at the beginning until superior strength told, and the Indians retired. Innocent people suffered on both sides."[83] He also defended the rationality of the African combatants in their choice of targets (particularly their decision not to attack whites) and ultimate objectives:

> The so-called mad, blind and unreasoning impis were angry groups of Africans who sedulously attacked Indians only, were most careful even at the height of the storm not to have clashes with Europeans…
>
> To paint the whole affair as the work of wild, blood thirsty savages doing they knew not what, is not true…. as if the fighting taking place in Greece, Palestine, etc., is the work of wild savages and not men prepared to die for their rights.

Dhlomo's bitterness throughout was extraordinary. "It should be remembered," he asserted with sardonic control, "that in normal times Indians assault Africans daily." Once Africans reversed the terms of oppression and retaliated against decades of abuse, they immediately became unreasoning barbarians—a racial slander whose intent in the post-World War II international order was pellucid.

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[83] For the prevalence of this narrative in the 1950s, see Edwards, "Mkhubane" 50-1.

Already, the Nationalist government and European press had begun to argue that the Riots illustrated the necessity for Apartheid.

In response, Dhlomo predicated a defense of the African capacity for political reason, and therefore the very possibility of national self-determination, on the equation of Indian merchant with the Indian victim. Behind this argument rested a vicious irony. If white liberals and Indian nationalists could rationalize that the behavior of merchants and buss drivers did not represent a racial group, but instead reflected a natural response of individuals to the structural conditions created by an unjust system, the same could be said of their African assailants.

It is possible to imagine Manilal Gandhi's shock and disbelief while reading Dhlomo's article. The editor of *Indian Opinion* felt compelled to reply in the next issue of his journal. Even if all of these accusations were true—which Gandhi did not for a second concede—how could Dhlomo possibly justify the rape of young girls or the immolation of entire unarmed families, atrocities the *Ilanga* editorial passed over in silence? Gandhi ominously concluded that *Ilanga* "is believed to be a Bantu paper, but here too there seems to be a hidden hand doing mischief."[84] His own article the previous week had already endeavored to refute the allegation that African resentments ultimately precipitated the violence. The contrast between the two accounts could scarcely have been more dramatic. "Our people being non-violent by nature," Gandhi sermonized "do not arm themselves with any lethal weapons and, fully armed, as they were, the Africans found a defenseless people, an easy prey."[85] Dhlomo's attempts to qualify his racial generalizations, however partial, did not find a parallel in *Indian Opinion*'s columns. Refusing to countenance any suggestion of Indian culpability, Gandhi presented the tenants of the Mahatma's philosophy, particularly non-violence and personal sacrifice, in the form of shared Indian racial attributes. He also explicitly called into question the rioters' humanity and pointedly expressed sympathy for the *Indians* who had lost their homes and members of their families.

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[84] "Poisoning the Minds of Indians and Africans," *Indian Opinion*, 28 January 1949.
[85] "The Racial Disturbances," *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.

Echoing the position taken by the Indian Congress, Gandhi alleged that the riots were orchestrated by an unknown mastermind, most likely the Apartheid state. Africans, oblivious to the government's strategy of *divida et impera*, had been duped: "The Africans have no hatred against the Indian people but their pent-up feelings resultant of the repression by the Whites, have had to be directed against the innocent and defenseless people." In the same issue of *Indian Opinion*, Gandhi reprinted numerous articles from the more liberal European newspapers and statements by Indian leaders that broadly supported his claims. Many of these pieces also contained the imagery that informed Gandhi's own paternalism. "We must try to tolerate the African," he warned Indians, "because it was their savage instinct that prompted them to do what they did." Employing logic perfectly symmetrical to *Ilanga*, Gandhi's insistence on the irrationality and primitiveness of the rioters coincided with a defense of the Indian merchant. Crucially, Gandhi employed an alternate spatial language to describe their role. Against the accusation of exploitation and undermining African control in their own areas, he claimed that the Indian merchant—here also standing in for the entire racial group—had served the economic needs of Africans despite the barriers erected by the state:

> One word to the Africans. Both the Indians and Africans are repressed by the same law. The Indian suffers from discrimination just as much as the African. It grieves us to learn that Africans are attributing economic causes for these disturbances. Nothing could be more absurd. It was the Indian who ventured into the wilds to serve the wants of the Africans. It was the Indian who had pioneered in the Transport business and carried the African to their remote homes. It was the Indian who, as the vegetable gardener, had been

> supplying the Africans at prices which are within their reach.[86]

The assertion that Indians suffered "just as much as the African" facilitated an attitude of racial superiority. Why had Africans not managed to found businesses, develop gardens, provide for their own needs? If this question remained implicit in this article, the ensuing series of metaphors conveyed Gandhi's attitude. The Indian had ventured the wilds of Natal, dared far-off regions ("remote" for whom? according to what geography?), and tilled the land to provide for the incapable and now resentful African. The pioneer had brought the rudiments of civilization to the bush. The imperial context of this "service," or the fact that Africans could not purchase land outside of reserves following the 1913 Native Land Act, went unstated. In dismissing African complaints, Gandhi appropriated the stock tropes of settler colonialism. The Indian merchant had entered an uncharted, undeveloped, and putatively vacant landscape—he had, in effect, "made the desert bloom."[87]

The Crisis in the Natal ANC

The political rapprochement between the ANC and Indian Congress following the pogrom was built on precarious foundations. The ANC itself was fragmenting under the strain of events. *Inkundla*'s diagnosis was clear: "African leadership has never been so divided."[88] Without consulting the Natal executive, Xuma initially organized a joint meeting with the Indian Congress in Kimberly. We do not know exactly what Champion said to the ANC's President, but his and Msimang's protests apparently forced Xuma to immediately change his plans and move the venue to Durban.[89] After arriving with a group of advisors, Xuma then hastened to convene a joint meeting with Indian and African leaders without first consulting with the Natal ANC or holding a public rally to speak directly to Durban's Africans. Rumors of a deep rift between Xuma and Champion circulated throughout the province.[90] According to Mary Benson, Champion, Msimang, and Lutuli initially opposed cooperation with the Indian Congress, but eventually acquiesced to Xuma's arguments.[91] In an act of startling indifference to local African opinion, Xuma apparently left Durban immediately after the joint statement's release.

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[86] "The Racial Disturbances," *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949. Similar language appears in the Natal Indian Organization's submission to the Riots commission, which also echoes the language of Hollywood westerns: "They [Indian traders] ventured the wilds to serve the Natives of the colony. In carrying trade to the reserves of the Natives, when mere footpaths served as roads and access to their stores, the Indian traders faced untold hardship and hazards both from desperadoes and wild animals. Their tenacity, their will to serve and their inherent courtesy, have time and again earned encomiums from the Native people." See "Statement submitted by the Natal Indian Organization to the Chairman and Members of the Judicial Community Appointed to Enquire into the Durban Riots (1949)" 3.

[87] Jordan Ngubane responded sharply to this article several times in *Inkudla Ya Bantu*, pointing out that Africans had been sharply divided about the Riots and that wealthier Indians had behaved provocatively towards Africans. Strikingly Indian Opinion did not publicly responded to Ngubane. Rather Manilal Gandhi answered this critique in a personal letter, apologizing and inviting Ngubane to visit the Phoenix settlement. This correspondence began a close friendship and political alliance, in part based on both men's strident anti-Communism and increasing political isolation, which lasted until Manilal's death. Eventually Ngubane, who had left the ANC and joined the liberal party, became the editor of *Indian Opinion* for a short period. See Jordan Ngubane, *Unpublished Autobiography*, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 346.

The February 6 joint statement soon generated its own share of controversy. *Ilanga* derided the statement and openly declared that Xuma had become outmoded: "The statement itself was a futile and puerile attempt to avoid the facts and difficulties of the situation." Lambasting Xuma's clumsy maneuvers, the newspaper declared: "All along the line, it seems the African leaders have been made pawns of the Indians."[92] Without descending to the same depths of naked race baiting, *Inkudla* likewise condemned "the cowardly and not convincingly sincere effort".[93] Neither paper denied that the policies of segregation bore ultimate responsibility for the explosion. But in their eyes, this truth hardly accounted for the depth of antagonism between the two parties, which they attributed to the complicity of Indian merchants in blocking African economic development and the complacency of African leadership. [94] In particular, *Inkundla* argued that the Doctors Pact had misled Indian leaders by minimizing the intensity and significance of anger: "In so far as these African leaders misled the Indians and did not advise them to mend their ways, they are guilty of the Durban massacres."[95] Shortly afterwards, the Transvaal ANC Youth League raised almost identical criticisms. [96] African figurers soon began to distance themselves from the joint statement. In an interview with *Ilanga*, S.B. Ncgobo (secretary of the Combined Locations Advisory board) denied that he had wished to sign the declaration and protested that "he had nothing to do with the statement …he attended the meeting as an observer, was not allowed to speak, and was not even present when the resolution was made." Another alleged signatory, D.W. Moshe, also claimed that his name had been falsely appended.[97]

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[88] "Indo-African Friction and Oppressors," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 19 February 1949.

[89] After consulting with Indian leaders in Pietermaritzburg, Msimang discovered they were completely ignorant of Xuma's proposed meeting. He warned Xuma "you will achieve very little in the way you are going about this delicate question." A subsequent letter reiterated the point: "The focus should be in Natal. To send the conference away from the explosive centre would be begging the question." H. Selby Msimang to Dr. A.B. Xuma, 31 January 1949, Dr. A.B. Xuma Papers, Historical Papers, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[90] "Out-Moded Leadership" *Ilanag Lase Natal*, 19 March 1949;

[91] Mary Benson, *The African Patriots: The Story of the African National Congress of South Africa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), 153. Benson's source is unnamed. It is possible that this opposition was in fact to the proposed meeting in Kimberely, not to "cooperation" altogether.

[92] "Out-moded Leadership," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 19 March 1949.

In the midst of such recriminations, Champion clearly sensed that the Natal ANC leadership had lost control of an increasingly volatile situation. Acting on their authority as members of the Native Advisory Board, Champion and Ngcobo organized a public meeting at the Bantu Social Centre "with the people Durban in order to enable them to express themselves on the Riots."[98] According to the press report in *Ilanga*, the meeting teetered on the brink of chaos as different factions made impassioned speeches—"impossible to report verbatim"—from both the platform and the floor of the house.[99] Acutely aware of the widespread dissatisfaction with the ANC's response to the Riots, Champion launched into a lengthy and emotionally charged apologia that defended his actions and violently berated the "mushroom leaders" who had begun to spring up around the city. After strongly denying that "he was under the influence of certain Indians," Champion insisted that the issues dividing Africans and Indians were "not political but economic," invoked Nehru's warnings to South Africa's Indians, attacked the Indians for "things they had done," and lambasted all the South African governments for their crimes against the Africans. Despite its longstanding disagreements with Champion, *Ilanga* characterized the performance as brilliant and mesmerizing. Nevertheless, a series of "rank-and-file" speakers rose to challenge the stance taken by Champion and other African leaders. *Ilanga* reported:

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[93] "Indo-Africa Peace," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 26 February 1949.

[94] "Comments on Events," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 26 February 1949.

[95] "The Durban Riots," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 22 January 1949.

[96] In particular, the Youth League harshly criticized the "Dr.'s Pact": "Instead of a serious effort to look the Natal situation in the face, the African Congress leadership went out of its way to sign a pact with the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congress. In the pact itself no reference was made to the ugly situation in Natal, and there can be no doubt that the signatories to the Pact were fully aware of the conditions. In fact the pact itself was an impudent piece of bankrupt opportunism because neither side had any intention of implementing it." See "Plan to Stop the Riots: Statement by Working Committee of Congress Youth League," *Inkundla* ^{Ya} *Bantu*, 26 February 1949.

[97] "Joint Statement by Leaders," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 19 February 1949.

> From this point, there came fiery after fiery speech from the floor of the house. It was clear even to a child that the cleavage that had been caused by the riots would be most difficult to repair. Leader or no leader, trouble or no trouble, the people are grimly determined to have their way…. What the people demand is separate land and residential areas for each group. They demand not to be mixed up either in the Reserves or in the city. They want Africans to run their own busses and stores. Many attacked the European bitterly for giving Indians better rights and treatment.

This public revolt against Champion and ANC's right to speak on behalf of Natal's Africans was the culmination of mounting distrust and frustration by the Durban African working class in the post war years. Previously "*tsotsis*" had disrupted ballroom dance classes and musical recitals at the Bantu Social Centre and intimidated "educated Africans" to such an extent that they stopped attending Joint Council meetings.[100] Following the pogrom, this diffuse, plebian assertiveness expressed itself in the form of a direct challenge to Champion's personal leadership, the ANC's style of politics, and the national position of "non-European cooperation." Both the opponents and advocates of non-European cooperation recognized that the pogrom signaled the bankruptcy of the current leadership. As one critic from outside the province argued: "The Riots show, too, that no African leader enjoys the confidence of the people. The people are ripe for political organization; the leadership, at any rate the present leadership, is out of touch with them."[101] A contributor to *Ilanga* similarly observed: "We have now come to a point where people in Durban are out touch with their leaders on the question of the riots. They prefer now to place more reliance on the authority than on their leaders."[102] Increasingly frustrated with the paralysis of the Natal ANC, some Africans turned directly to the government. *Ilanga* and *Inkundla* published several letters by Africans calling on the state to intervene and impose segregation between the two groups: "Indians despise Africans and Africans keep patronizing their businesses. This lop-sided relationship should be ended once and for all. We should ask the government to intervene and separate us. 'When your sons do not get along, one leaves the home.'"[103]

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[98] "Advisory Board Meeting: A Call to Africans," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 19 February 1949.

[99] "A Strange, if Remarkable Meeting," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 26 February 1949.

A mass boycott of Indian stores and busses began immediately after the repression of the Riots. At the same time, African small traders seized the opportunity to displace Indian business in areas like Cato Manor.[104] In the eyes of many observers, these actions dramatized the gulf between the ANC's declarations on the Riots—particularly the February 6th statement—and the attitudes of most Africans. The reality was far more convoluted. Working through African newspapers and the Native Location Advisory Boards, Natal ANC leaders supported the campaign against Indian business and attempted to co-opt it for their own purposes—even while they worked with Indian leaders to calm the city, they entered into negotiations with the Indian Congress, and provide relief to the displaced, and signed the Joint statement.

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[100] Edwards, "Swing the Assegai Peacefully?" 73-4.

[101] N. Nomnganga, "Is Natal Really Impossible?" *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 5 February 1949.

[102] "Lack of Foresight in Our Leadership," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 19 March 1949.

[103] Zulu-language article in *Inkundla* from August 1949. Quoted in Ime J. Ukpanah, "Yearning to Be Free: *Inkundla Ya Bantu* (Bantu Forum) as a Mirror and Mediator of the African National Struggle in South Africa, 1938-1951,"(PhD Thesis, University of Huston, 1993), 192.

[104] Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 301-6.

The boycott was apparently "spontaneous" (a political characterization denoting that the action was organized outside the channels of the ANC's political authority). Nevertheless it was immediately defended by the Advisory Boards, which at this time included leading members of the Natal ANC. By January 16, the Boards had already petitioned the Durban City Council to provide de facto legal sanction of the displacement of Indian traders. Their demands included the banning of busses operated by non-Africans, new premises for African traders in predominantly African areas, the exclusion of non-African hawkers from African locations, and the reclassification of the areas of Cato Manor "which are at present predominantly occupied by natives."[105] According to *Inkudla*, unnamed ANC leaders (likely Champion and Msimang) drafted this program.[106] A month later, the Advisory boards organized a mass meeting at the Bantu Social Centre, nominally to endorse the ANC's declared boycott of the Riots Commission. Yet far from echoing the position of the national (or, rather, Transvaal) ANC leadership, the motions proposed at the rally called on its conveners to give every possible support to the boycott. [107] They continued:

> This mass meeting of Durban Africans instructs the African National Congress of Natal and the Durban Locations Advisory boards either jointly or separately to set up machinary to, (a) stop malicious and anti-African propaganda in sections of the Indian press; to stop Indian attacks on isolated Africans; to stop the eviction of African tenants

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[105] "Statement to City Council by Native Representatives," dated 16 January 1949, S. Bourquin Papers, Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban. These demands were subsequently publicized in *Ilanga*, which reported that Chief Isaac Zulu was among the representatives who addressed the Durban City Council. See "African Leaders on the Riots," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

[106] "Comments on Events," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 26 February 1949.

[107] Ukpanah, "Yearning to be free," 305-6.

> by Indian landlords; and these things are regarded as evidence of lack of goodwill towards the Africans; (b) impress on the Indians that African development is such that African economic progress can no longer be delayed or obstructed; (c) ensure that whenever the African expresses willingness to take over the services at present in Indian hands in predominantly African areas the Indian should give proof of his goodwill by disposing of these to the African at a reasonable price and that the African be given every facility to trade and to run buses to and from African areas…[108]

Although the boycott movement began to atrophy by February, Indian businesses in African areas still suffered in early March, a month and a half after the Riots.[109] Educated African leaders helped hundreds, perhaps thousands, apply for trading licenses in areas that were previously almost the exclusive preserve of Indians.[110] The boycott also received extensive and positive coverage from the Natal African press, although *Inkundla* warned that it might veer out of control without proper leadership.[111] The government and Durban Corporation directly condoned many of these efforts, for example by expropriating Indian traders in areas of Cato Manor and allocating their shops to Africans.[112] Deepening the schisms in the Natal ANC, the Communist Party opposed the boycott and courageously distributed leaflets warning "African workers …that their problems will not be overcome with the granting of licenses to African businessmen."[113]

The Vicissitudes of A.W.G. Champion

The Natal ANC had been significantly compromised by the contradictions between the National policy and the actions of its own leaders. Champion's opportunism and prevarications were largely responsible for this outcome. Nevertheless, the statements and actions of his harshest critics—Jordan Ngubane, H.I.E. Dhlomo, M.B. Yenga—evinced similar inconsistencies: they rejected the violence of the pogrom, but endorsed many of its goals; they argued for collaboration with the Indian Congresses and simultaneously embraced the boycott; they denounced anti-Indian racialism while perpetuating many of its stereotypes. Both Champion and Yenga utilized the Riots and subsequent boycott to advance their own business interests, for example by investing in the Zulu Hlanghani cooperative that established its dominance in Cato Manor.[114] In later years, Champion would become an intensely bitter, open racist. But it is impossible to make sense of his actions in January-February 1949 solely in those terms. According to Edwards, Champion openly expressed joy on multiple occasions following the Riots.[115] But he never removed his name from the February 6th statement and, despite widespread criticism of this stance, honored the commitment not to testify at the Riots commission. Not only did he publicly defend all of the ANC's actions, he took steps to implement the new understanding with the Indian Congress. In May 1949, Champion launched a Joint Conciliation board with the NIC, a decision that was far from popular with "the rank and file of his followers."[116]

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[108] Resolutions at Durban African Public Meeting about Riots, 8 March 1949, S. Bourquin Papers, Killie Campbell Africana Library, Durban. See also Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 301-2.

[109] "Durban Africans Rush to Become Traders," *Ilanga Lase Natal*, 5 March 1949.

[110] Ibid.

[111] "Boycott of Indian Establishments, *Inkudla Ya Bantu*, 12 February 1949.

[112] Kuper, *An African Bourgeosie*, 302.

[113] "Communists Angry," *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 30 April 1949.

As a younger generation of ANC activists understood, Champion's gyrations represented the failure of a style of Durban African politics based on state patronage through advisory boards, the authority of the chiefs, personal enrichment in the name of race progress, provincial insularity, and Zulu nationalism.[117] His conflicted actions stemmed from conflicting imperatives. He struggled to maintain the position of the Natal ANC in the national organization, fulfill his official responsibilities as a member of the Advisory Board, and safe guard his personal alliances with key Indian political and business figures. At the same time, he moved to reinforce his rapidly collapsing authority among urban migrants and utilized the Riots—and the possibility of future violence—to negotiate personal business deals behind closed doors.[118] In the 1951 election for the Natal presidency, Lutuli defeated Champion by a slim margin. Most accounts attribute Champion's removal to his conflict with the Youth League and anger in the executive over his dictatorial methods.[119] However, there is some evidence to suggest that Champion's response to the pogrom was also a factor. M.B. Yengwa remembers:

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[114] Edwards, "Mkhumbane," 214-5.

[115] Edwards, "Mkhumbane," 214. Champion's own accounts of the Riots differed over the years, growing more bitter and stridently anti-Indian with time. See Champion, *The Views of Mahlathi*, 68-69.

[116] "Co-Operation with Indians," *Unkundla Ya Bantu*, 14 May 1949.

[117] For a forceful expression of this critique, see N. Nomnganga, "Is Natal Really Impossible Politically?" *Inkundla Ya Bantu*, 5 February 1949.

> We were then in the Youth League, and the ANC in Natal was still led by Mr. A.W.G. Champion. Mr. Champion was not prepared to cooperate with the Indians, but from our experience we felt that the Indians were to be trusted to go along with us because they were in the Passive Resistance campaign. We argued that we have no alternative but to work with the Indians, that we are fighting the same enemy. We won, Champion was deposed…[120]

Champion's demise marked an important strategic and rhetorical turn toward building a mass-based, democratically accountable, African nationalist organization. However, the precipitants of this shift were largely internal: the new line was far removed from the political mood of the Zulu working class and urban poor. In the aftermath of the 1949 Riots, the organized buying clubs, plebian Zulu radicalism, and the ideology of racial uplift came to dominate the political landscape of Cato Manor and other urban locations.[121] As Kuper and Edwards both describe, two associations emerged in Cato Manor that directly linked anti-Indian rhetoric with Zulu economic initiative: the Zondizitha ("destroy our enemies") Buying Club and the ZuluHlanganani Association.[122] By the early 1950s, Zulu Hlangani obtained economic dominance and political hegemony in Cato Manor, and it reportedly held annual celebrations of the Riots.[123]

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[118] Champion entered into negotiations with an Indian-owned bus service, suggesting the creation of a new holding company comprised of both Africans and Indians: "I know that whatever happens your Indian people and the present shareholders will control the company because our African people have no money. What the African people have is the name and the means to preserve your business and conduct it without fear of rioting at any other time." A.W.G. Champion to Mr. Moodley, 24 February 1949, A.W.G. Champion Papers, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

[119] See for example, Benson, *The Struggle for a Birthright*, 136-7.

[120] Quoted in Frederikse, *The Unbreakable Thread* 52. In an unpublished interview with Stanly Tradipo, Champion boasts that he played an active role in organizing and encouraging the pogrom itself. He asserts that this transgression constituted the real reason for his deposal by the ANC leadership. See Interview with A.W.G. Champion by Stanly Trapido, undated, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. These claims—neither of which are supported by other evidence—likely reflect the 1949 riot's continuing popularity among Durban Africans and Champion's own immense bitterness.

Conclusion

In 1956, *DRUM* magazine published an investigative article by its managing editor in Durban entitled "Why Do Indians Kill Themselves?"[124] "What despairing economic and social conditions," G.R. Naidoo asked, "are driving these cautious, civilized people to do away with itself?" The article addressed a wave of suicides by Hindu Indians unparalleled in other groups. Its lead page carried a gruesome and unforgettable picture of the five Taplan sisters, who had taken their lives together on 22 July 1955. In the breathless and sensationalist tone characteristic of *DRUM*, Naidoo explained:

> The family itself was of reasonable means until they lost all they had in the 1949 riots and were destitute. The father was a farmer in the Marianhill area, a reasonably prosperous area. He later moved to the Newlands area and with the help of his daughters struggled for a living. The girls were doing a man's job. They woke up early in the morning, prepared the breakfast for the family and worked on the farm until sunset….
>
> They were poor and deeply conscious of it. Their father was unable to provide them with things girls of that age expected, and, like most poor fathers, he ruled his children with an iron hand of discipline. The girls must have discussed well beforehand the intention to commit suicide, and on the fateful morning after their father had refused them permission to visit their brother, the set out with the dreadful determination to do away with themselves.

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[121] Ashwin Desai quotes a 1949 *Ilanga* article written by a cooperative movement leader: the cooperative movement was "much more powerful, in membership and accumulation of funds, than the Congress." See "A Context for Violence," 91.

[122] Edwards, "Mkhumbane," 200 and Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 302-6.

[123] Edwards, "Mkhumbane," 201.

[124] G.R. Naidoo, "Why Do Indians Kill Themselves," *DRUM* (August 1956), 27-31.

Photographs of more suicides, complemented by name and method of self-destruction, encircled the following pages. Each of these suicides revealed the disintegration of a family, someone's debt and economic failure, the stress and humiliation produced by racist discrimination, or growing despair at the failure of Indian politicians to change the existing situation. Historians have generally depicted the period following the pogrom as a high point of multi-racial unity, largely based on the pronouncements of nationalist leaders and political events in the Transvaal. But stories like Naidoo's inadvertently reveal a far darker social landscape: the ongoing insecurity, economic desperation, and psychological torment endured by many of Durban's Indians following the pogrom.

Writing in the early 1960s, Fatima Meer denied that the Riots had produced any significant resentment against Africans. "The outburst against the Indians," she claimed, "was a freak occurrence, a deviation from the common rule, which—due to some rare chance causes—lost its target and became confounded in a mood of violent human imbalance."[125] Such statements represented the projection of an activist's perspective onto Indians as a whole. For many Indians, these events were in fact profoundly traumatic. When Lutuli won the Nobel Peace prize in 1962, Phyllis Naidoo asked students at the Durban Indian High School if they had read about the event in the papers: "A deathlike silence greeted me. Then a shy student said, 'You were not in Cato Manor when we hid in our ceilings and they burnt our homes in 1949."[126] The pogrom became part of Indian identity, a core element of a collective racial mythology that demarcated "Indian" from "African." Koglia Moodley described the continuing influence these events—and their multiple retellings—on Indian racial consciousness during the 1970s: "By the exaggerated transferal of the stories of rape and looting, common in the folk history of Indians and endowed with the legendary authenticity of personal experience, the dominant view of Africans creates a climate for fear and apprehension."[127] Fear of African violence became engrained in the psychology of Durban Indian life.

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[125] Meer, "African and Indian," 33.

[126] Phyllis Naidoo, *Footprints in Grey Street* (Durban: Far Ocean Jetty, 2002), 29.

In his autobiography, Ismail Meer argues: "the riots unwittingly had positive results, in that they provided a basis for Afro-Indian cooperation."[128] At the level of political organizations, this statement has some degree of truth. Within the ANC, the pogrom heavily discredited the different approaches to the Indian Congress that dominated throughout the 1940s (Xuma's "non-European cooperation" and the Youth League's hard-line nationalism), and it may have contributed to the downfall of the Old Guard in Natal, particularly Champion. Among a layer of politically conscious Indians, the Riots greatly strengthened the conviction that a strategic alliance was a matter of literal life or death. To considerable degree, these developments facilitated the multi-racialism of the 1950s Congress Alliance. But two significant qualifications to Meer's evaluation are in order.

First, it is necessary to stress the complex social and geographic physiognomy of the coalition that began to form in the Riot's aftermath. Centered in Johannesburg, the alliance was based on a section of the Indian middle class (particularly a new generation of younger professionals and their economic supporters in the merchant elite), the leadership of the Transvaal ANC, the ANC Youth League in Natal, and the Communist Party working in both the ANC and Indian Congresses.[129] The new arrangement provided the ANC with desperately needed financial assistance, organizational expertise and infrastructure, and international connections at a crucial juncture. But this coalition did not receive the support of the majority of Indians or Africans, particularly in Natal. The end of Passive Resistance represented a partial defeat for the new leadership of the Indian Congresses, and the Riots unquestionably strengthened a tendency toward political disillusionment and isolationism among the Indian working class. The conservative leadership of the Old Indian Congress—roundly defeated in the mid-1940s—was considerably strengthened by both of these events. In the eyes of many Durban Africans, the Natal ANC emerged from the pogrom both compromised and discredited. As Iain Edwards has shown, the working class in Cato Manor and elsewhere rejected collaboration with the Indian Congress and refused to support ANC initiatives in the 1950s, like the Defiance Campaign.[130] While ANC membership exploded elsewhere in the country, the Natal ANC remained virtually stagnant until the end of the 1950s.

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[127] Moodley, "The Ambivalence of Survival Politics," 450.

[128] Meer, *A Fortunate Man*, 119.

[129] In looking for a way to prevent another outbreak of violence, the ANC/YL in Natal decided not approach the Indian Congress directly and left in to the Transvaal ANC to begin discussions due to the connections that existed between Indian and African activists in Johannesburg. According to Ngubane, Lutuli approved this approach. See Jordan K. Ngubane, "An Unpublished Biography," Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, University of Chicago, 138.

Second, the decisions of ANC leaders during the next decade continued to be guided by the potential volatility of the alliance and the danger of another pogrom: the ambient hostility toward the Indian trader remained a fact of political life. Youth League members worried about militant actions spinning out of control and producing another pogrom. In an autobiographical manuscript, Ngubane recalls the concerns voiced during this period: "If we launched a campaign confined to Africans only, we would, indirectly, emphasise the racial angle. The danger was very real from this that our people would conclude that the Indian was sitting on the fence as usual, remaining neutral in the fight where this helped the whites."[131] A number of smaller outbreaks of anti-Indian violence erupted during the early 1950s, although in each case the ANC and Indian Congresses minimized their racial dimensions. In late January 1950, African protestors engaged in a series of pitched confrontations with police around the freehold township of New Clare in the Transvaal. The first upheaval took place after the arrest of a local woman for selling liquor; the second occurred when cops assaulted an African man during a pass raid. In the midst of these events, crowds burnt down Indian and Chinese shops. Walter Sisulu's report to the ANC executive captures the fraught character of the ANC's position: "In my opinion this fact did not indicate an anti-Asiatic attitude. My impression was that this was directed against certain individuals. I must point [out] that throughout this situation, there was much cooperation between Indian and African leaders."[132] Whether or not Sisulu was correct in his estimation regarding the absence of "anti-Asiatic" sentiment, distrust and resentment toward the Indian shop keeper remained profound.

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[130] Edward, "Mkumbane," 217.

[131] Jordan K. Ngubane, "An Unpublished Biography," Gwendolyn Carter Papers, Center for Research Libraries, University of Chicago, 154.

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[132] W.M. Sisilu to the Executive Committee of the ANC, undated [February 1950?], A.W.G. Champion Papers, William Cullen Library, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.