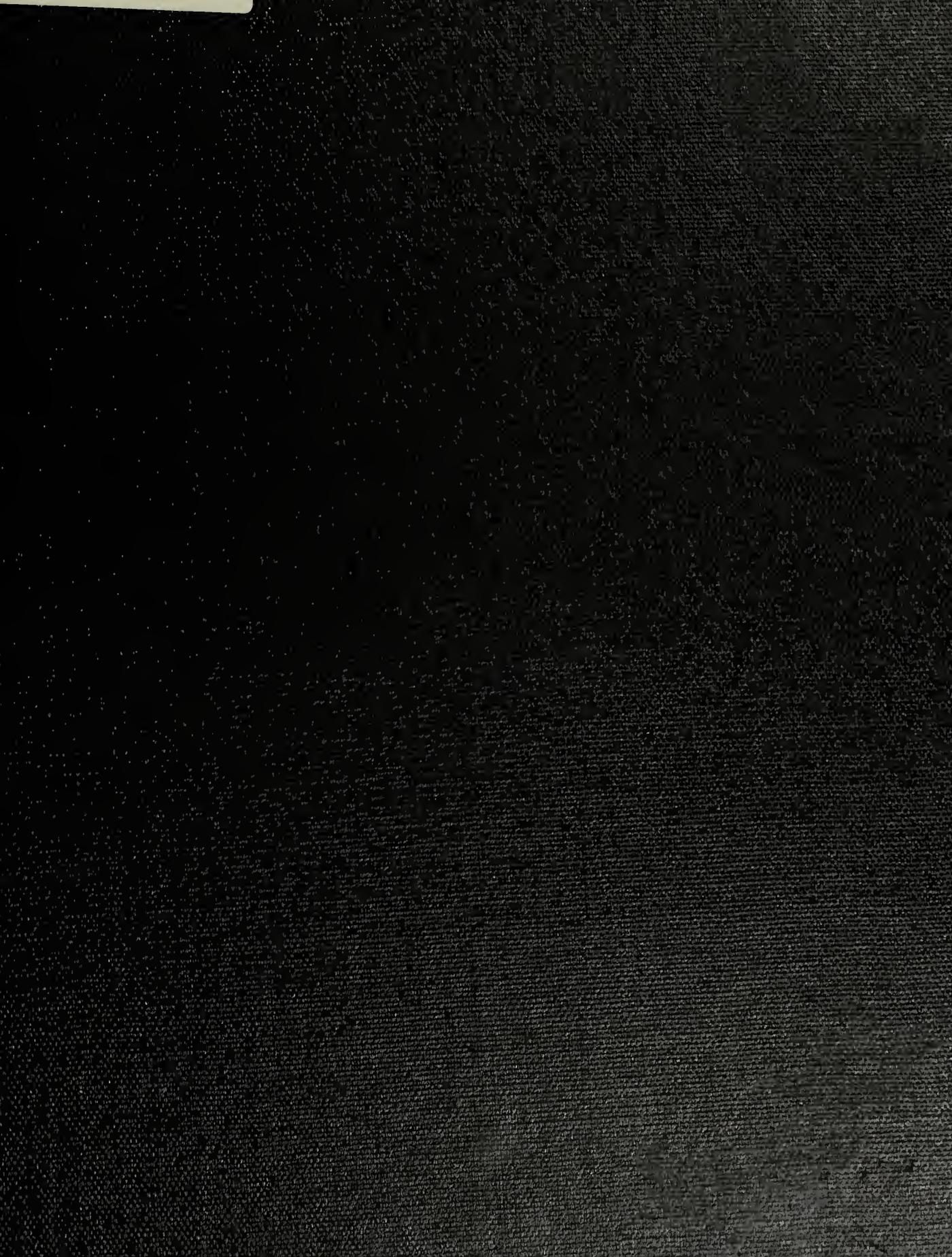




University of  
Massachusetts  
Amherst

## **Indians and apartheid in South Africa : the failure of resistance.**

Item Type	Dissertation (Open Access)
Authors	Johnson, Robert E.
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.7275/dfhm-2b75">10.7275/dfhm-2b75</a>
Download date	2025-08-23 00:00:53
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/11967">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/11967</a>



Erratum: Page 19 does not appear in the text. This is an error in numbering sequence. The text is complete.

R 8 73

INDIANS AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA:  
THE FAILURE OF RESISTANCE

A Dissertation Presented

By

Robert E. Johnson

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August

1973

Major Subject Political Science

(c) Robert E. Johnson 1973  
All Rights Reserved

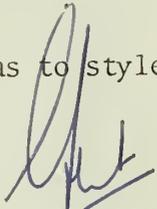
INDIANS AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA:  
THE FAILURE OF RESISTANCE

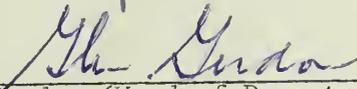
A Dissertation Presented

By

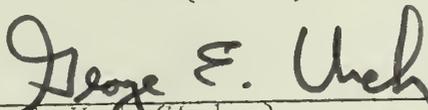
Robert E. Johnson

Approved as to style and content by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Edward E. Feit (Chairman of Committee)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Glen Gordon (Head of Department)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Howard J. Wiarda (Member)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
George E. Urch (Member)

August 1973

## PREFACE

This dissertation is the result of a fascination with the ability of South Africa's White population to maintain itself as the dominant political force in that country. White rule throughout southern Africa has demonstrated a remarkable ability for self-preservation that few scholars and pundits of a decade ago believed possible. The granting of independence to most British and French colonies during the 1950's and early 1960's prompted a widespread belief that the advent of Black governments in Africa south of the Zambezi was inevitable. Events have not yet sustained this expectation. Historians perhaps will determine that the primary characteristic of the anti-colonial movement was that independence was normally granted after only token opposition from the colonial powers. In southern Africa, however, the permanent White population determined to resist what former British prime minister Harold Macmillan once called the "winds of change". To date that resistance has been successful.

This study is based on the premise that the preservation of White rule cannot be attributed simply to the presence of superior military or police forces, although these forces were of course important. Proper evaluation of the non-White political movements in southern Africa must subject them to the same scrutiny applied to political groups anywhere. In particular, we must investigate their ability to recruit support and maintain organization and communication among their followers. This is best achieved through close examination of individual campaigns planned by various non-White political organizations.

For the most part, the literature dealing with the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa has been written by protagonists motivated more by a desire to advance the objectives of their cause than to explore in depth the political characteristics of the organizations themselves. Books such as Albert Luthuli's Let My People Go and Mary Benson's The African Patriots provide insight into the goals of the anti-apartheid organizations and the personal sufferings encountered by their members, but explain little of the problems encountered by the political organizers among their own people.

No major study of the Indian role in resisting apartheid has been made previously, although individual Indians held important leadership positions in the campaigns of the 1950's. Indeed, references to Indian political activity are minimal in general studies of South African politics. In his Peoples and Policies of South Africa, for instance, Leo Marquard devotes twenty-two pages to describing the African population, eight to the European, eleven to the Colored and only four to the Indian. Indians are described rather indistinctively as "fertile, hard-working, ingenious people". Studies of individual campaigns and general comments on Indian political activity often credit the Indian Congresses with an unsubstantiated strength. The comment of Pierre van den Berghe in South Africa: A Study in Conflict that "the SAIC can claim the support of the mass of the . . . Indian population" reports a claim made often by the Congress itself. It conflicts, however, with Leo Kuper's observation in Passive Resistance in South Africa about the Defiance Campaign of 1952:

"The level of participation in Natal was exceedingly low when compared with the extent of Indian resistance in the 1946 campaign. This is all the more remarkable, since Indian life is seriously threatened."

To more accurately evaluate Indian politics, the primary sources used have been the records of Congress conferences, the statements of Congress leaders, and reports from the pro-Congress press, particularly New Age and Indian Opinion. Although these are obviously not unbiased sources, they remain the most useful in examining the campaigns conducted by the Indian Congress. Official press releases and public speeches contained considerable self-congratulation, but internal documents and correspondence dealt frankly with obstacles encountered during each campaign. Especially important are the several Agenda Books published after each annual meeting of the Natal Indian Congress. In each edition, the General-Secretary's Annual Report reviews in detail the gains and losses of the previous year. Comparison of these reports over an extended time, combined with a review of the Congress press, discloses not only immediate problems, but also persistent weaknesses that proved impossible to correct. From such comparison will come the majority of data for this study.

Additional information has been culled from the debates of the South African parliament, White newspapers, and articles and books written by Indian and African participants in the Congress movement. Most published sources are less useful than private documents, for they contain most of the self-congratulation with little of the self-criticism.

Indians joined with African allies in sponsoring a movement that was revolutionary not because it plotted the armed overthrow of the government,

but because its goals clashed with the basic values of the White group supporting apartheid. Apartheid was more than a policy introduced by the new Nationalist party government in 1948, to be casually overturned by the election of a new party to parliamentary majority. Apartheid reflected the fundamental wishes of most Whites on the question of South Africa's racial future. Afrikaner and Englishmen might at times clash over the implementation of various aspects of the apartheid program, but they were united in their desire to preserve White rule. The main White opposition to the Nationalist government, the United party, has been reduced since 1948 to criticizing apartheid's excesses and suggesting more economical means of implementing it. The electoral opposition of the small Liberal and Progressive parties has been persistent but not significant.

Given this overwhelming White opposition combined with a readiness to employ the force available to any modern government, it is not surprising that the opposition to apartheid failed. This is a study of political failure. The opposition of the South African government, however, cannot be used to explain completely the inability of Indian Congress leaders to build an effective political organization. The basic assumption of Congress officials that Indians would rally in support of an organization promising them equal opportunities with Whites and Africans must be considered more carefully than it has yet been.

I am indebted to Professor Edward E. Feit for the intensive review and thoughtful criticism which have considerably improved this work. Professors Howard J. Wiarda and George E. Urch also read the manuscript and offered valuable comments. I remain, of course, responsible for all of the facts, opinions and conclusions presented here.

Indians and Apartheid in South Africa:  
The Failure of Resistance (August, 1973)  
Robert E. Johnson, B.A., M.A., University of Massachusetts  
Directed by: Edward E. Feit

Resistance to apartheid in South Africa is associated primarily with African political organizations, with relatively little attention given to opposition from other racial groups. This is justified to the extent that Africans comprise nearly three-quarters of the population and provided the majority of participants in anti-apartheid campaigns. Such a narrow focus, however, creates a blurred image of the goals of the Congress Alliance in the 1950's. An important part of the strategy of the main African resistance organization, the African National Congress (ANC), was to work in alliance with White, Colored and Indian groups, thereby demonstrating that members of various races could work effectively together in a political system free of apartheid laws.

This dissertation evaluates the contribution made by an Indian organization, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), to the multi-racial anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1950's. In doing this, it also examines the origins of Indian politics in South Africa from the time of Gandhi and the conflict among Indians for control of the NIC which took place in the 1940's.

The study is based on the premise that the preservation of White rule cannot be attributed simply to the presence of superior military or police forces, although these forces were of course important. Proper evaluation of the non-White political movements in southern Africa must subject them to the same scrutiny applied to political groups anywhere. In particular, we must investigate their ability to recruit support and maintain organization

and communication among their followers. This is best achieved through close examination of the individual campaigns planned by the NIC. Examined here are the passive resistance campaign of 1946, the Defiance campaign of 1952 and the campaign for the Congress of the People in 1955.

The primary sources used have been the records of NIC conferences, the statements of Congress leaders, and reports from the pro-Congress press, particularly New Age and Indian Opinion. Although these are obviously not unbiased sources, they remain the most useful in evaluating the political activities of the Indian Congress. Especially important are the several Agenda Books prepared after each annual meeting of the NIC. In each edition, the General-Secretary's Annual Report reviews in detail the gains and losses of the previous year. Comparison of these reports over an extended time, combined with a review of the Congress press, discloses not only immediate problems, but also persistent weaknesses that proved impossible to correct. From such comparison has come the majority of data for this study.

The basic conclusion is that the NIC leadership failed to rally the Indian people to participate in the Congress Alliance movement. Three primary reasons are suggested for this failure. First, the NIC leadership was never able to demonstrate that its resistance policies had any prospect for success. This became apparent as early as the first post-war resistance campaign in 1946. The crucial date was October, 1946, when the South African government successfully ignored the weak opposition of the United Nations to its Indian segregation policy. The NIC campaign had been designed to peak with the meeting of the General Assembly. When that meeting passed with no change in the domestic situation, the resistance

collapsed. The NIC leadership was never again able to generate the enthusiasm for resistance to apartheid created during the first nine months of 1946.

The second reason was antipathy between Indians and Africans. Indian relations with Africans had never been close and in Durban especially the tension was evident between the two races in disputes over trade and housing rights. The comments of both NIC and ANC officials in the mid-1950's indicate that Africans and Indians were reluctant to cooperate with one another. The Congress Alliance was not able to reverse racial patterns that had been developed during the previous seventy-five years. Given the choice between being a racial minority in an African-dominated South Africa or in a White-ruled society, many Indians simply abstained from politics.

Given the first two reasons, the third is not surprising. NIC officials were unable to construct a viable political organization. Membership disappeared after 1946 because there was no apparent reason to belong to the NIC. Branches did not bother to maintain communications with provincial headquarters because the headquarters officials were not engaged in political work of interest to the branches. Provincial conferences could discover no practical solutions to the organizational problem because none would work until Indians were first convinced that the NIC was necessary to their welfare. Indians were never so convinced.

This triad of circumstances made the South African government's task in defeating the Congress Alliance easier than it is often depicted by Congress members. The bannings and detentions which began in earnest in 1952 without question prevented NIC leaders from dealing with their

political problems. It is improbable, however, that had bannings and detentions never occurred the NIC leadership would have been able to solve its difficulties. Until late 1952, the Congress leaders were relatively free to prepare their followers for the rigors of political combat with White authority. That they failed in this task was demonstrated by the poor Indian response to the Defiance campaign of 1952. For the NIC, the Defiance movement had already failed before the South African parliament passed the Public Safety Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act in late 1952. Few Indians supported the provincial leadership of the NIC after the end of the 1946 resistance campaign and the primary cause was not the activity of the South African police.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INDIANS AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA	1
	The Importance of Natal	4
	Indians and the Congress Alliance	6
	European Opinion: We Must Not Be Overwhelmed	11
	Government Response: Control the Alien	17
	Commentary	26
II.	THE ORIGINS OF INDIAN POLITICS	31
	Resistance Without Organization	34
	Resistance Without Control	38
	Commentary	42
III.	THE REVIVAL OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE	46
	Non-European United Front: No Compromise With Whites	50
	In the Transvaal: Resistance Revived	52
	In Natal: Organize the Workers	58
	The NIC: The Accommodationists Defeated	64
	Commentary	68
IV.	THE FAILURE OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE	74
	1946: The Failure of Resistance	75
	Aftermath of Resistance: Unity with the ANC	81
	1952: Leaders Without Followers	82
	NIC: Organization in Decay	85
	1954: "The People Shall Govern"	88
	NIC: The Decline Continues	93
	Postscript: One Million Signatures Campaign	96
	Commentary	97
V.	THE AFRO-INDIAN ALLIANCE	104
	The Conditions of Rivalry	107
	The Failure of Conciliation	112
	Commentary	116
VI.	THE FAILURE TO ORGANIZE	120
	The Formal Constitutional Structure	121
	The Failure of Organization	125
	The Failure to Communicate	126

Chapter	Page
Merebank: From Strength to Weakness	130
The Ninth Conference: "We have made no serious effort . . ."	133
Commentary	137
VII. CONCLUSION	142
NIC: The Final Years	143
NIC: Three Causes of Failure	147
The Future of Indian Politics	151
BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
Figure 1 (Chapter I):	Racial Population of Five Natal Cities in 1951	9
Figure 2 (Chapter I):	Racial Population of Natal, 1891-1951	21
Figure 1 (Chapter VI):	Attendance at Five NIC Annual Conferences	125

## CHAPTER I

## INDIANS AND APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

For the past two decades apartheid in South Africa has been one of the more controversial topics in political studies. This is not surprising, for the policy of apartheid, or separate racial development, contradicts a strong international movement since World War II toward racial equality. The rhetoric of equality has been used to hasten the dissolution of several European colonial empires and has created political upheavals within the United States that continue today. Opponents of racism have been able to justify their positions from philosophies as contradictory as those of John Locke and Karl Marx, for neither includes a belief in the incompatibility of different racial groups. Neither American, nor British, nor Russian law assumes that some will be allowed to participate in politics, while others must be excluded because of their race.

Few countries, of course, have been free of discrimination against racial minorities within their borders. The political system in the American South for a hundred years after that country's civil war may reasonably be regarded as de facto apartheid. The South African system remains unique in modern politics, however, because only here has a racial minority succeeded in the subordination of the majority of a country's population. The institutionalization of apartheid has earned South Africa the frequent condemnation of the United Nations and forced her withdrawal from the Commonwealth of Nations.

Apartheid as a formal governmental program was introduced by the

Nationalist party after its victory in the parliamentary elections of 1948. The Nationalists have since presided over the elimination of limited representation of Africans in the South African parliament, the removal of thousands of Africans and Indians into racially separate "Group Areas", the proclamation of "Bantustans" for the independent development of the various African tribes, and the virtual exclusion of Africans and Indians from the White university system. <sup>1</sup> Despite the furor caused by the introduction of apartheid, it did not represent a revolutionary change in South African life. For the most part, the apartheid legislation passed by the Nationalists in the 1950's merely gave legal sanction to social customs existing since the 1700's. The dominant Whites had never encouraged the mingling of racial groups; non-white political participation had always been limited by provincial legislation, and few Africans and Indians had ever been educated in White universities.

Apartheid did challenge the hope of liberal South Africans that discriminatory social customs would eventually give way to allow at least "Westernized" Africans and Indians to participate in South African society on a par with Whites. Apartheid thus produced the most extensive non-white political activity in South African history. African, Indian, White and Colored opponents of apartheid attempted in the 1950's to form mass political organizations among their respective racial groups with the object of ending White domination of the political system.

As might be expected, resistance to apartheid has been strongest among the racial groups excluded from political life. Although the intensity of opposition has varied greatly, few Africans and Indians have accepted

with enthusiasm a policy guaranteeing them a subordinate role. African opposition to White exclusiveness began as early as 1912, with the founding of the the African National Congress (ANC). The early ANC did not protest the exclusion of tribal Africans from politics, but argued that entrance into the White political community should be granted to African lawyers, teachers and other suitably educated in the Western style. The tactics adopted of petitioning and visiting government officials to request various legislative changes did not alter substantially until the 1940's, when a younger generation of African leaders formed a Youth Congress within the ANC to press for more militant tactics such as mass demonstrations and strikes.<sup>2</sup> Included among the new militants were African members of the Communist party, who gave the ANC a "leftist" rhetoric and policy neither shared nor understood by much of its membership.

Reports of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1950's have emphasized the African contribution, with relatively little attention given to the efforts of the other racial groups. This is justified to the extent that Africans comprise nearly three-quarters of the population and provided the majority of participants in anti-apartheid campaigns. Such a narrow focus, however, creates a blurred image of the anti-apartheid strategy during the 1950's. By working in alliance with other racial groups, the ANC hoped to demonstrate that members of different races could work effectively together in a political system free from apartheid regulations. To wage this common struggle, the ANC joined with the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) in 1947 to begin the Congress Alliance. In 1953 the Alliance was extended to include the Congress of Democrats (COD) for Whites and the Colored People's Organization (CPO) for those of mixed White and African

descent.

The primary purpose of this work is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Indian contribution to the Congress Alliance. This will be done by examining the political organization of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC), a provincial member of the SAIC, during two major Congress Alliance campaigns, the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and the campaign in preparation for the Congress of the People in 1954 and 1955. It is assumed that the state of political organization reflected both the degree of support received from the Indian community and the NIC's ability to mobilize its support for participation in the campaigns.

A secondary purpose is to trace the development of Indian political organizations from their beginnings as moderate groups seeking little more than inclusion in the White political system to their adoption of mass protest tactics against the entire structure of apartheid. A history of early Indian political movements does not exist. A brief outline is necessary here to emphasize that Indian participation in the Congress Alliance represented a departure from prior political tactics. The dominant theme of Indian politics before the 1940's was a willingness to accept anti-African legislation if it was not applied to Indians and a corresponding reluctance to engage in joint political activity with Africans. This position began in the 1900's and never entirely disappeared from Indian political life.

#### The Importance of Natal

Indian politics in Natal are stressed because the SAIC was a coordinating group with no direct membership and because its three

provincial affiliates were not of equal importance. Of South Africa's Indian population of 366,000 in 1951, more than 299,000 lived in Natal.<sup>3</sup> The NIC reflected this as the largest and most active SAIC member. The NIC was the only affiliate with a registered membership and regular provincial meetings.

The Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) is important primarily for the politically militant leadership, including several communists, that came to dominate that group in the 1940's. The goals and tactics adopted here were copied in Natal. The Transvaal leadership introduced the idea of cooperation with African allies and resurrected the use of passive resistance begun by Gandhi in 1907. Its president, Yusef Dadoo, was probably the best known Indian political leader. The Indian population of the Transvaal, 49,000 in 1951, was small, however, and the TIC did not play a prominent role in the anti-apartheid campaigns of the 1950's. It will be considered for its ideological innovations, but its organization will not be studied in detail.

The Cape Indian Congress, due to the small number of Indians--18,000 --in that province, did not conduct political activity of any significance nor did it produce any important political leaders. No formal Indian political organization existed in the Orange Free State, where provincial residency laws restricted Indian settlement to less than two dozen.

While the COD and CPO were first formed in the 1950's and represented few beyond their own leadership, the NIC was potentially a valuable ally for the ANC. Founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1894, the NIC maintained a membership of several thousands throughout the 1940's and 1950's and claimed to represent the sentiment of the entire Indian community. Congress

officials expected Indian opposition to apartheid in Natal to be great. Indians traditionally had opposed legislation restricting them to segregated residential and business locations. The Nationalist party's Group Areas Act of 1950 authorized extensive relocation of the Indian population with potentially large financial losses to its business class. Few Indians welcomed the mandatory segregation provisions of the act. Congress leaders argued that the Group Areas plan could not be halted without first destroying the entire apartheid structure. Union with the African majority was considered essential to accomplish this.

#### Indians and the Congress Alliance

The importance of Indian participation for the other Congress Alliance members was enhanced by the concern of the Government of India for the treatment of Indians in South Africa. By attacking apartheid at the United Nations and at Commonwealth meetings, Indian diplomats created world sympathy for the African as well as the Indian community. Congress Alliance leaders hoped international opinion would force the South African government to modify or terminate its apartheid program. An effective Indian political organization was essential in achieving this goal. If the South African Indian community appeared divided in its opposition to apartheid, external support for the Congress position was likely to weaken.

Membership in the Alliance, however, created problems for Indian Congress leaders that threatened their efforts to create a well-organized mass membership group. The most important was the general relationship between the Indian and African communities. A second obstacle existed in

the disagreements among Indians themselves over the best strategy to oppose apartheid.

A successful Congress Alliance required Indians and Africans to work closely together in the various Alliance campaigns. Without such cooperation, the Alliance would remain an artificial creation of its leadership rather than a viable political organization. To achieve this cooperation required overcoming numerous economic and social barriers between the two communities.

Indians shared both similarities and differences with Africans. The most conspicuous difference was economic. In the late 1940's, the average mean family income of Indians was more than three times that of Africans.<sup>4</sup> Within the Indian community the disparity between rich and poor was great, but Africans were more concerned with the economic advantages of the successful Indian trader and merchant than with the poor Indian worker. Indians controlled much of the trade at African locations near urban centers. The belief among Africans that Indians took advantage of their economic monopoly to exploit them was strong. The economic situation was regarded as a potentially serious threat to Congress Alliance unity by Indian leaders. A. M. Kathrada, for instance, admitted that Indian economic superiority was the cause of several anti-Indian riots in the 1950's.<sup>5</sup> What must be evaluated more closely is the claim of Kathrada and other Indians that the common danger of apartheid had overcome these rivalries and made unity possible.

Complementing their economic advantages, Indians were subjected to fewer discriminatory regulations than Africans. Natal Indians were not subject to African pass laws and until the 1940's were legally free to

to own and occupy land on a par with Europeans. In practice, only a handful of wealthy Indians escaped the residential ghettos of the less affluent but apartheid threatened to eliminate completely Indian purchase of property in White residential and business areas. Until the institution of legislative apartheid, Indians had possessed at least the hope that economic and educational achievement might gain them a status in South Africa not available to Africans. Congress officials sought Indian support by arguing that as the Nationalist government implemented apartheid, Indians would eventually be subject to all the laws applied to Africans. Common political struggle with the ANC was preached as the only alternative to increasing discrimination under White rule.

Indians had always suffered some of the discriminatory measures applied to Africans. Indians, for instance, were excluded from the political process throughout South Africa. Natal Indians had once been allowed to vote in provincial and municipal elections, but lost this franchise in the 1920's. One of the reasons for this exclusion was the fear of Whites that Africans would ask for similar participation. Like Africans, Indians could not travel from one province to another without a special permit, although their movement within provincial boundaries was unrestricted. Indians were also subject to the economic color bar that reserved many jobs for Whites. The economic advancement of both Africans and Indians was restricted when workers were not allowed to become supervisors and skilled technicians. NIC leaders emphasized all of these points in their quest for recruits.

Indians throughout South Africa were far more urbanized than Africans. In 1946, two-thirds of Natal's Indian population resided in urban areas,

while nearly eighty-five percent of the Africans in that province were considered rural inhabitants.<sup>6</sup>

In Durban, the population was divided almost equally among the three main racial groups and Indians were strongly represented in other Natal cities (see figure 1). This situation made Natal, and especially Durban, a potentially important center of Congress Alliance activity. In no other South African province did Indians comprise such a large percentage of the urban population. Indians and African workers often lived as neighbors in common slums, particularly in Durban's Cato Manor district.

Figure 1. Racial Population of Five Natal Cities in 1951<sup>7</sup>

	White	Indian	Colored	African
Durban	151,111	160,674	17,457	146,994
Pietermaritzburg	32,139	16,048	3,414	22,806
Ladysmith	5,503	3,031	389	7,456
Dundee	2,455	1,423	279	4,618
Glencoe	2,062	1,293	61	2,705

The task of organizing Natal Indians was complicated by the fact that they did not form a cohesive bloc. They were divided along religious, linguistic and economic lines. Most Indians were Hindus, descendents of the first immigrants brought to South Africa as indentured workers in the nineteenth century. These early agricultural workers were followed by primarily Moslem merchants, who formed an economic elite that continues today. The workers settled mainly in Natal, while an undertermined number of merchants were attracted to the Transvaal during the various mining booms of the late 1800's. Both Hindus and Moslems maintained their own religious and charitable organizations and relations between the two groups often reflected the Moslem-Hindu differences found on the Indian

sub-continent. Communal differences were criticized frequently in the newspaper Indian Opinion, but it is difficult to assess their impact on Indian politics. The NIC was open to Indians of both religions; most leaders were Hindu, but Moslem officials were common. In 1956, the NIC's twenty-five member Executive Committee had a membership of sixteen Hindus, eight Moslems and one Christian.<sup>8</sup>

Indians unwilling to support the radical policies of the NIC did maintain a separate identity as the Natal Indian Organization (NIO). The NIO was dominated by the Moslem business community, but there is no evidence of any attempt to build a mass political following. The NIO did, however, perpetuate a policy of accommodation with White authorities. The "accommodationist" position opposed racial segregation in principle, but maintained that some form of race separation was inevitable. Accommodationists were therefore inclined to work with Whites to achieve a more favorable state of segregation than was often initially proposed by the government. During the 1950's, the NIO submitted proposals for the establishment of Indian "group areas", while the NIC fought the establishment of mandatory segregation of any sort.

The NIC attitude toward apartheid contrasted sufficiently with that of the NIO to be described as "confrontationist". Confrontationists directly challenged the implementation of segregation laws in an effort to demonstrate that the government could not enforce them. The most popular tactic was passive resistance. To be effective, this style of political activity required mass support among the Indians combined with an effective organization capable of mobilizing and controlling this support at the appropriate moments. Both the origins of the accommodationist

position and the conflict between the two groups for control of the Indian political organizations are considered in later chapters.

#### European Opinion: We Must Not Be Overwhelmed

Neither the pattern of Indian protest in the 1950's nor the White desire to prevent Indian social and political equality began with the election of the Nationalist party government in 1948. The problems faced by Indian political organizers in the post-World War II years will be better understood by recounting first the attitudes of Whites toward Indians and the legislation prompted by these attitudes.

Indians first came to South Africa in the 1860's in response to the quest of Natal sugar and cotton planters for a reliable work force after efforts to employ African labor had failed. Under an agreement between the governments of Natal and India, immigrant workers were indentured for a period of three years and were then given the option of either accepting an assisted passage back to India or of becoming a free resident of Natal. From the beginning, most remained. The importation of new laborers to replace those whose indentured status had expired guaranteed a steady increase in the Indian population. By 1872, 5,700 free adult Indians were living in Natal and it is estimated that no more than half continue to work on the agricultural estates. The remainder became traders, shop-keepers, domestic servants and fishermen. At this early date, barely a decade after their arrival in Natal, Indians already had a near-monopoly of the fishing industry and were offering keen competition to White traders.<sup>9</sup>

Under the terms of both the original importation agreement and the officially non-racial policies of the British Empire, Indian free men

expected to receive the same citizenship rights as Whites. Similar expectations were held by the Indian traders and merchants who soon followed the plantation workers. In 1843, Sir George Napier, Governor of the Cape Colony, had extended equal protection of the law to all under British jurisdiction, regardless of "distinction of colour, origin, language, or creed . . ."<sup>10</sup> During the 1870's the law usually was fairly applied to Indian and white alike. Relations between Indian workers and their white employers have been described by one Indian author as "on the whole . . . quite good."<sup>11</sup> Fifty Durban Indians had satisfied the property requirements necessary to become voters by 1877; the number increased to 136 by 1881.<sup>12</sup>

The relative racial harmony of the first two decades, however, did not survive an increased immigration rate in the 1880's, with its inevitable increase in the number of free Indians. Between 1876 and 1889, the number of immigrants tripled.<sup>13</sup> Indians entered the Transvaal for the first time, working as traders and merchants among European miners and farmers. The result was an increasingly vocal demand from Whites in both Natal and the Transvaal that further Indian immigration be ended. Many desired repatriation of the entire Indian population, but labor requirements in Natal precluded this.

The Natal government responded by appointing the first of numerous commissions formed during the next sixty years to study what had now become the "Indian problem". The Wragg Commission reported in 1887 that White opinion strongly favored the retention of Indians as indentured workers, but opposed granting free Indians equal rights with Whites.<sup>14</sup> This attitude remains characteristic of White opinion today. For the most

part, Whites have been willing to employ African and Indian labor where the economy requires it, but have never coupled this with an extension of civil "rights" to non-White groups.

The Wragg Commission also noted opposition to the open immigration of Indian merchants. A typical attitude is that in a petition of the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce expressing fear that "the whole of the social polity of this country would be disturbed" if restrictions were not placed on future Indian immigration.<sup>15</sup> The Chamber offered what in later years became a constant theme: registration of all free Indians and their required residence in locations controlled by the government.<sup>16</sup> The prevention of contagious disease was often cited as a justification for such locations, but wealthy, educated Indians with higher standards of living were not exempted. The proposal was not adopted since the government considered it discrimination against a particular racial group.

In the Transvaal, however, a similar proposal was adopted. Transvaal opinion differed little from that of Natal. Anti-Indian pressure was sufficiently strong by 1885 to secure passage of legislation that might have been drafted by the Pietermaritzburg businessmen. Indians were required to register at government offices and mandatory residence areas for Indians were authorized.<sup>17</sup> Although the legislation was not strictly enforced, Indian hopes that it would be repealed entirely when the Transvaal came under direct British rule after the Boer War were not realized. The new Lieutenant Governor of the Transvaal wrote in 1901 to the Colonial Office explaining that ". . . though in the eye of the (British) law they are equal, there is not in this country one man in a hundred who would agree to recognize the coloured man as capable of

admission to the same social standards as the white."<sup>18</sup> His superior endorsed his opinion with the additional comment that a proposal for admitting educated, Westernized Indians to equal status would be "very unpopular in Transvaal."<sup>19</sup>

This unpopularity is most often traced to two factors, a lower standard of living which allowed Indian traders to maintain lower profit margins than their White competitors, and a distaste for Indian social customs that made their assimilation into White society unlikely. Jan Hofmeyr, a minister in several South African governments and often described as a "liberal" on the race question, indicated this mingling of the social and economic aspects of anti-Indian opinion. Although he wrote that the Indian problem was "in the first instance, an economic one. . ." and only "to a lesser extent a social one", his description of developing anti-Indian opinion appears to contradict his own analysis:

"The European may find it difficult to resist the temptation of buying cheap at an Asiatic store --but he will not welcome the establishment of such a store next to his own property; he will become acutely conscious of maladjustment when he sees the business of the Asiatic growing until he is able to attract European salesmen and European girl assistants into his employment; and his anger will rise within him when he sees European children playing in the street with Asiatic children. So there is constant friction, and a growing feeling of hostility, and the perfectly natural determination of the European to defend his economic standards against insidious attack from within."<sup>20</sup>

Hofmeyr expressed the fear that economic success might permit Indians to achieve a dominance over Whites which would weaken the image of White superiority.

The social threat was more important than the economic one since the basis of South African society was supremacy of the Whites and Indians were not seen as candidates for assimilation. They could therefore not be allowed to achieve dominance or even equality with Whites. The White view of the Indian position in South Africa was acknowledged by General Smuts in a letter to Mahatma Gandhi:

"I may have no racial legislation, but how will you solve the difficulty about the fundamental difference of our cultures. Let alone the question of superiority, there is no doubt that your civilisation is different from ours. Ours must not be overwhelmed by yours. That is why we have to go in for legislation which must in effect put disabilities upon you."<sup>21</sup>

D. F. Malan, once South African prime minister, less diplomatically referred to Indians as an "alien element" in South African society.<sup>22</sup>

White attitudes cannot be attributed solely to a fear of being "overwhelmed" by a growing Indian population. Indians did slightly outnumber Whites in Natal in 1900 and for two decades thereafter, but in the Transvaal Whites exceeded Indians by nearly thirty to one in 1909. Despite these differences in proportions of the population, White opinion toward Indians differed little in either province.

More important perhaps than the size of the Indian population was the fear that granting Indians equality would influence Africans to make the same demand. The British High Commissioner in South Africa, Lord Selbourne, aware of the possibilities, argued that the Indian passive resistance campaigns of the 1900's might be copied by educated Africans seeking White privileges.<sup>23</sup> This fear led General Smuts in 1920 to reject the idea of parliamentary voting rights for Indians in Natal since he

believed any such extension of the franchise might create demands by Natal Africans for the same franchise held by Africans in the Cape province.<sup>24</sup>

Smuts' and Selbourne's sentiments were echoed at the local level.

A Government minister campaigning in Natal warned his constituents that:

"If the Indians are successful, the next agitation will probably be from the natives here and on the Witwatersrand for the removal of all taxes . . . otherwise they may threaten to strike. The next step would be the brushing aside of the Constitution and all law and order and the establishment of mob rule."<sup>25</sup>

Despite White fears of a united non-European front, Indians were not prepared to cooperate with Africans. Gandhi described the tribal African as a timid creature "afraid at the sight even of a European child" and incapable of understanding the technological superiority by which "a handful of Europeans have been able to subdue such a numerous and savage race as themselves." The civilization missionaries brought was seldom beneficial: "Hardly any Negro who has come in contact with civilization has escaped from the evil of drink."<sup>26</sup> Indian traders feared Africans, Gandhi noted, for when cheated by traders Africans used physical force to gain redress. "So far as Indians and Negroes were concerned, it is the former who feared the latter."<sup>27</sup>

If Gandhi's view is at all representative, Africans were considered inferior. A few Whites were prominent in Gandhi's South African passive resistance campaigns, but there is no account of African participation. Indians sought White rights and believe themselves fellow citizens of a common Empire. They protested legislation which grouped them with Africans,

but did not protest at anti-African legislation itself. Locations were not necessarily evil if they were not Indian locations. Smuts and Selbourne may have been correct in fearing the effect of Indian protest on Africans, but there is no evidence to indicate that Gandhi or Indian leaders solicited African support in the early 1900's.

#### Government Response: Control the Alien

In the 1880's both Natal and Transvaal legislators began to propose legislation restricting Indian commercial activity, halting immigration and compelling a return of Indians to India. Similar in intent to the apartheid policies of the present Nationalist government, implementation of this early legislation was limited by the frequent intervention of the British and Indian governments. Pressured by British colonial authorities to comply with Imperial racial policies, White South Africa was not free to regulate her peoples completely. This did not last. Most of these external influences were eliminated with the weakening of Empire ties marked by the Statute of Westminster in 1931. As the Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa notes, the Statute allowed South Africa "unhampered freedom of legislation", even when such legislation was "repugnant to the Law of England."<sup>28</sup> With the independence of India in 1947, the old Imperial obligations were virtually ended. By the 1950's, South Africa was relatively free to implement racial laws sought since the 1880's.

It is not intended to enumerate all the early racial legislation here, but rather to cite such major Acts which affected Indians. The legislation can be divided into three fairly distinct periods determined by South Africa's increasing ability to regulate her domestic affairs. During the

"colonial period" from the 1880's until formation of the Union government in 1910 White efforts to apply residential and commercial restrictions to Indians and compel their repatriation were often frustrated by British authorities. In the second phase, from 1910 until the early 1930's, the Imperial influence remained strong enough to require South Africa to acknowledge the importance of India to Britain's international position. White anti-Indian opinion was strong, but the South African government attempted to placate it by seeking large-scale Indian repatriation. The final phase began in the 1930's when it became apparent that repatriation attempts had failed. The result was passage of increasingly more restrictive anti-Indian legislation. What the following review of each period will make clear is the persistent White refusal to grant equal status to the Indian community.

British colonial policy required early South African racial legislation to exhibit a subtlety not necessary in modern times. When the Natal provincial government passed legislation in 1893 depriving Indians of the franchise because of their race, the Colonial Secretary refused to accept it. "We ask you to bear in mind the tradition of the Empire, which makes no distinction in favour of or against race or colour."<sup>29</sup>

Natal received home rule in 1894, however, and domestic opinion was against the Imperial racial policy. London approved legislation in 1894 prohibiting the parliamentary franchise to individuals who, although they met educational and property requirements, came originally from non-European countries which did not enjoy "elective representative institutions founded on the parliamentary franchise."<sup>30</sup> Whites were not acting against an immediate threat to their political domination, but

against the future danger of an expanding Indian electorate. In 1894 there were 9,309 White voters and 251 Indian voters in Natal.<sup>31</sup>

Whites devoted more attention to discouraging permanent Indian settlement than to removing a franchise for which few Indians qualified. Although the governor of Natal refused in 1891 to approve a recommendation of the Legislative Council that Indians be permitted to remain only as indentured workers, he did accept an Act halting the granting of free land to Indians after completion of their indentured service. An 1895 law passed under home rule attempted to further discourage permanent settlement by imposing a £3 annual tax on all male Indians except indentured workers. The law was modified in 1903 to include in the tax male children over the age of sixteen and female children over the age of thirteen.<sup>32</sup> The penalty for non-payment was deportation to India. It was not a severe tax for prosperous traders, but was a hardship for free Indians whose indentured time had just expired.

Natal circumvented British reluctance to approve racial legislation through general laws enforced only against Indians. By this method, restrictions were placed on the expansion of Indian trade, thereby reducing the number of Indians who might be expected to earn enough to pay the £3 tax. An 1897 statute placed the authority to grant new trade licenses with a licensing officer appointed by local Town Councils. Although no racial quotas were stipulated in the law, licenses were denied Indians even when they met the formal requirements. Whites were not hesitant to admit its discriminatory intent. The Durban licensing officer testified before a government commission that "A European license is granted almost always as a matter of course, whereas the Indian license is

refused as a matter of course, if it is a new one."<sup>33</sup>

These efforts to stimulate Indian repatriation failed. White agricultural interests continued to demand indentured labor in the early 1900's and the Natal government complied with their wishes, although an increasing section of White public opinion opposed any further Indian immigration. As long as new workers were imported and no means existed to force their return to India, the free Indian population continued to rise. If White opinion did not succeed in driving Indians from Natal, however, it did eventually bring an end to labor importation. In 1911 the government of India, unwilling to continue the system in the face of increasing White hostility, unilaterally terminated its agreement to provide indentured workers for Natal. With the end of indenture, the Indian population stabilized and during the next forty years remained approximately equal to Whites in Natal.

Figure 2. Racial Population of Natal, 1891 - 1951<sup>34</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Indian</u>	<u>Colored</u>	<u>African</u>	<u>Total</u>
1891	46,788	41,142	---	455,983	543,913
1904	97,109	100,918	6,686	904,041	1,108,754
1911	98,114	133,420	9,111	953,398	1,194,043
1921	136,838	141,649	11,107	1,139,804	1,429,398
1936	190,549	183,661	18,629	1,553,629	1,946,468
1946	236,697	232,317	24,895	1,708,483	2,202,392
1951	274,240	299,491	31,485	1,803,347	2,408,563

The government of the new Union of South Africa formed in 1910 inherited the problems of its provincial constituents. Although South Africa was now for the most part a self-governing member of the British Empire, her freedom of action on the Indian question was circumscribed by British Imperial goals. India had achieved new importance within the

Empire after World War I. To placate Indian opinion, the South African government was required to conduct extensive negotiations during the 1920's and 1930's with representatives of the Government of India concerning the treatment of Indians in South Africa. Successful negotiations were unlikely, for the two parties had fundamentally different goals. South Africa sought the repatriation of most of its Indian population; India emphasized the improvement of living conditions for Indians in South Africa.

White opinion in South Africa continued to demand legislation restricting the freedom of Indians. The differences between local sentiment and international agreements were vital, for pacts reached between the Union government and India required provincial implementation to be successful.

Continuing differences between Whites and Indians are best illustrated by examining the conflicting interpretations given to the Cape Town Agreement, signed between India and South Africa in 1927. Indian hopes for their future status in South Africa were raised because for the first time the Union government recognized Indians as a permanent part of the population:

"The Union Government firmly believes in and adheres to the principle that it is the duty of every civilised Government to devise ways and means and to take all possible steps for the uplifting of every section of their permanent population to the full extent of their capacity and opportunities, and accept the view that in the provision of educational and other facilities the considerable number of Indians who will remain part of the permanent population should not be allowed to lag behind other sections of the people." 35

In subsequent years South African Indians used noncompliance with the "uplift" clause of the Agreement as a major charge against White governments. In retrospect, it is difficult to believe that the Cape Town Agreement offered any real solution to the Indian problem. The Union government expressed its willingness to encourage compliance with the Agreement by provincial governments, but cautioned that allowances might have to be made for the pressures of local politics.<sup>36</sup>

Union leaders did not believe the "uplift" clause posed special problems because they emphasized provisions in the Agreement for increased repatriation. It was hoped that the Indians "who will remain part of the population" would be few. The Joint Communique issued with the Agreement noted South Africa's intention to subsidize the repatriation of Indians and legislation to this effect was passed by the Union parliament.<sup>37</sup>

The Agreement found little support among either White or Indian opinion. It was especially unpopular among Whites in Natal because of the mild language planning repatriation.<sup>38</sup> Jan Hofmeyr felt public opinion made fulfillment of the uplift clause impossible because Whites were reluctant to spend the funds necessary to create housing and educational facilities satisfactory to Indians.<sup>39</sup> Whites were often oblivious to the uplift concept. In 1942 the Broome commission studying Indian penetration of White housing areas reported that Whites did not understand the Agreement's commitment to a permanent Indian population of any size. The uplift concept was as unknown as repatriation was popular.<sup>40</sup>

Indians, moreover, showed little inclination to leave South Africa. The large majority regarded South Africa as their permanent home and did not welcome the prospect of returning to an overcrowded sub-continent where

economic prospects were bleak.<sup>41</sup> By December, 1940, only 17,542 Indians had left and this total was reduced by the admission of 2,212 wives and children of Indians already in South Africa. The Indian population of Natal and the Transvaal continued to rise, from 157,000 in 1921 to more than 209,000 in 1936.<sup>42</sup>

Repatriation represented the Whites' ideal solution to the Indian problem, but when India and South Africa met in 1932 to review the Cape Town Agreement it was clear that the ideal could not be realized. The South African representatives declared the Agreement had failed because repatriation had failed. South African Indians concurred in part, asking that repatriation no longer be considered a part of the Agreement but continuing to demand that the uplift provision be fulfilled.<sup>43</sup> They were not, however, optimistic. The government of India's Agent-General in South Africa, filling a position created by the Agreement, commented that there "can be no doubt that Europeans . . . judge the success or failure" of the Agreement by the working of the repatriation plan.<sup>44</sup> According to a biographer of General Smuts, by 1932 the Cape Town Agreement had become a "fantasy".<sup>45</sup> There is no reason to doubt his evaluation.

With the failure of repatriation, it is not surprising that South Africa entered a third phase in its attitude toward Indians: increasing domestic regulation. White South Africa ignored Indian demands to be uplifted to equal status while the Union parliament placed increasing restrictions on Indians. After 1932 the Cape Town Agreement served only as an historical document used to support international statements attacking South Africa's treatment of its Indian people. For the most part, the Union government refused to consider foreign objections to its

domestic policy. Unable to remove the Indians, Whites worked to perfect their control of the "aliens" among them.

In 1932 the Union parliament passed legislation mandating the segregation of Indians on the Rand gold fields, an area long settled by Indian businessmen. Indians with businesses outside reserved areas were required to dispose of their properties to White buyers. Protests from the Indian government caused modification of the act to permit designation of "Indianized" areas within White settlements as Indian residence areas. The compromise was not popular with Whites, for it thwarted a main purpose of the original bill--the removal of Indians from proximity with Whites.<sup>46</sup> White opinion was more completely satisfied with passage of the Asiatics (Transvaal Land and Trading) Bill of 1939. Purchases by Indians of land owned or occupied by Whites and the issuing of trade licenses outside Indian bazaar areas were banned.<sup>47</sup> Similar legislation was applied to Natal in 1943 and the Union parliament instituted uniform national limitations on Indian trade, residence and property acquisition in 1946 with the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act. In 1950 the new government of the Nationalist party formally applied the racial segregation principles of apartheid in the Group Areas Act. Under Group Areas, Indians were threatened with removal from "Indianized" residential locations when these were located within White areas.

The "modern" era of Indian politics in South Africa began with resistance to the Transvaal legislation of 1939. A new generation of Indian political leaders attempted the first passive resistance campaign since 1913 against the provisions of this act. Further campaigns were undertaken against the laws of 1943, 1946 and 1950. Successive chapters

will describe these Indian resistance movements and analyze the reasons for their failure to affect apartheid in South Africa.

### Commentary

Membership in the Congress Alliance was an unnatural political position for Indians to assume but perhaps by the 1950's an inevitable one for Indians unwilling to accept apartheid. Since the 1890's the attempts of educated Indians to acquire the benefits of White society had been rebuffed. If assimilation was not feasible and acquiescence rejected, the only alternative was opposition to the entire concept of White domination on which apartheid rests. It was this conclusion which prompted many Indian political leaders to accept the Congress Alliance.

The Indian hope of equal status with Whites persisted for more than sixty years but equality was never a viable goal. Had White opinion not been restrained by the external intervention of Britain and India the legislation of the 1930's and 1940's would probably have been applied in the 1880's by White legislative bodies unwilling to dilute the principle of White supremacy. There is no indication that the testimony given to the Wragg Commission by the Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Commerce in 1897 did not continue to summarize White opinion in the following decades until passage of the Group Areas Act was achieved in 1950.

The political postures open to Indians after World War II have already been characterized as "accommodationist" and "confrontationist". The latter stance was clearly the more innovative for it required forming an alliance with the African majority against the Whites. Indians were not numerous enough to confront the White political structure by themselves

and although it was not clear that the African numerical majority could be transformed into a powerful political organization, it was clear to the Indian radicals of the 1940's that the attempt had to be made. White liberals and foreign diplomats had not been able to halt apartheid; the Congress Alliance worked to prove through large-scale strikes, demonstrations and boycotts that Whites could not govern South Africa by themselves. The Congress Alliance failed to achieve its goal and the NIC shared in this failure. The inability to organize effective political movements was a key reason for this failure. The following chapter will demonstrate that Indian politics was more properly viewed as sporadic protest from the elite, rather than organized protest from the Indian people as a whole.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A variety of terms have been used in the past to designate South Africa's racial groups. The term "Indian" is often replaced by "Asiatic". Indians in South Africa include the descendents of immigrants from what is now Pakistan as well as India. Several thousand Chinese are included in this group, but Japanese are placed in the "White" group because of Japan's economic importance to South Africa.

<sup>2</sup>Not all members of the Youth League were enthusiastic about cooperation with other racial groups on an equal basis. Many who opposed the Congress Alliance broke with the ANC in 1959 to form the Pan-African Congress.

<sup>3</sup>South Africa. Bureau of Census and Statistics. Official Year Book of the Union 1952-53, p. 1096.

<sup>4</sup>University of Natal. Small Towns of Natal: A Socio-Economic Sample Survey, p. 67.

<sup>5</sup>A. M. Kathrada, "Indians in Africa", Fighting Talk, 13 (July, 1959), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Small Towns of Natal, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup>Official Year Book of the Union 1952-53, p. 1093.

<sup>8</sup>Hilda Juper, Indian People in Natal, p. 50.

<sup>9</sup>Iqbal Narain, The Politics of Racialism, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup>The Governor-General is quoted in Calpin, Indians in South Africa, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup>The treatment of the early Indian workers is described in some detail in Narain, pp. 88-93.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>14</sup>The Wragg Commission report is quoted at length in Narain, p. 97. See also Jan Hofmeyr, South Africa, p. 175, for similar comments on White opinion.

<sup>15</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 13.

<sup>16</sup>Narain, p. 103.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 163-167.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., The endorser was Lord Milner, Governor of the Transvaal after the Boer War.

<sup>20</sup>Hofmeyr, p. 302.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in W. K. Hancock, Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919, p. 346. Hereafter cited as Smuts I. A companion volume in this two part biography, Smuts: The Fields of Force 1919-1950, is cited as Smuts II.

<sup>22</sup>Hancock, Smuts II, p. 456. Calpin, p. 59, believes the Malan view was shared by most Whites.

<sup>23</sup>Hancock, Smuts I, p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Hancock, Smuts II, p. 144.

<sup>25</sup>Sir Thomas Watts, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, quoted in the Transvaal Leader, November 1, 1913. Reprinted in Great Britain, Colonial Office. Union of South Africa, Correspondence relating to the Immigrants Regulation Act and other matters affecting Asiatics in South Africa, pp. 71-72. Cited hereafter as Correspondence . . .

<sup>26</sup>M. K. Gandhi, Satyagraha in South Africa, pp. 11-13.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>28</sup>Official Year Book of the Union 1952-53, p. 65. The impact of international events on South Africa's domestic politics is related most clearly by B. Pachai in The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup>The act is reprinted in Narain, pp. 121-127. Note that Whites from non-democratic countries were eligible for the franchise.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 98-149.

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 45. Testimony was given to the Lange Commission.

<sup>34</sup>Official Year Book of the Union 1952-53, p. 1090.

<sup>35</sup>South Africa, Report of the Indian Penetration Commission, Appendix A, p. 11. Hereafter cited as Penetration Commission.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>38</sup>Calpin, pp. 63-68.

<sup>39</sup>Hofmeyr, p. 305.

<sup>40</sup>South Africa, Penetration Commission, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Pachai, p. 130.

<sup>42</sup>South Africa, Penetration Commission, pp. 5-8.

<sup>43</sup>Pachai, pp. 134-135.

<sup>44</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 72.

<sup>45</sup>Hancock, Smuts II, p. 456.

<sup>46</sup>Calpin, pp. 84-88.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-96. Exemptions were granted rather freely: two-thirds of those requested were given in the first three years after the legislation was passed.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGINS OF INDIAN POLITICS

Indians did not accept without resistance the progression of legislation described in Chapter I. Occasional protests began in the Transvaal in the 1880's and organized opposition in Natal under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in the 1890's, where it continued intermittently until 1913. During this time Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in 1894 and the Transvaal British Indian Association (TBIA) in 1903. Neither played a prominent role in the early Indian political protests, as Indian politics was centered on the personal leadership of Gandhi.

It is impossible to stress too much the role of Gandhi as a catalyst during these early incidents of protest. During his residence in South Africa, Gandhi lived at various times in the Transvaal and Natal and his personal presence in a province determined where protest was most likely to occur. When he returned permanently to India in 1914, the tactics of passive resistance he introduced were abandoned until 1939.

Despite the growing anti-Indian sentiment evident in the 1880's, neither Transvaal nor Natal Indians showed an inclination to form political organizations designed to influence the White legislatures. Individuals and deputations of prominent Indians protested to British colonial authorities in South Africa and India, but the common attitude was an apathetic belief that little would be gained through formal political organization.<sup>1</sup>

This apathy frustrated Gandhi's initial attempt to organize Transvaal

Indians in 1894. As a young lawyer trained in Britain Gandhi did not accept the personal indignities suffered during his travels from Durban to Johannesburg. The Transvaal's anti-Indian legislation did not, however, restrict the ability of Indian businessmen to earn money, making them content to suffer the humiliations of the social color bar rather than risk arousing even greater antagonism by public protests.<sup>2</sup> Gandhi was unable to find an issue sufficiently threatening to spark organized political activity. Opposition to racial discrimination in principle was not enough.

Gandhi returned to Durban in 1894 after completing legal business in the Transvaal just as the Natal legislature was in the process of depriving Indians of the parliamentary franchise. By arguing that the franchise act of 1894 was only the first of a series of anti-Indian legislation, Gandhi was able to convince influential Durban Indians to protest to government authorities. Although less than 300 Indians were threatened with loss of their voting rights, Gandhi maintained that trading privileges were also in jeopardy if the Indian community failed to protest.

Without Gandhi's prompting, it is doubtful any action would have been taken against the franchise act. Under his direction, "several hundred businessmen" collect 500 signatures on a petition submitted to the Natal legislature. The legislation passed, but the Indian action delayed it. Gandhi's supporters eventually collected more than 10,000 signatures on a petition sent to the Secretary of State of Colonies in London.<sup>3</sup> To conduct this more elaborate signature drive, the NIC was formally established on August 22, 1894.<sup>4</sup>

The NIC adopted a constitution and an organizational structure that

served as a prototype for later Indian political groups. A governing committee was established, consisting of a president, honorary treasurer, twenty-three vice-presidents and "several other prominent Indians." This committee was empowered to determine policy by majority vote, subject to eventual ratification by the Congress membership. The committee was to meet monthly; the entire Congress would convene yearly. During the first year, nine branches were established in Natal.<sup>5</sup>

Potential membership was limited to more prosperous Indians by the requirement for annual dues of £3. Three hundred members were recruited during the first month.<sup>6</sup> Later membership figures are not available, but enrollment expanded sufficiently during the first year to provide a surplus of funds for investment in Congress-owned properties.<sup>7</sup> Not all Indians were eager to join. Gandhi noted that "Everybody did not pay for the mere asking. Some required to be persuaded. This persuasion was a sort of political training, and made people acquainted with the facts of the situation."<sup>8</sup>

The new organization's statement of goals was quite general. It promised to promote the interests of Natal Indians, but made no reference to the political system as a whole.<sup>9</sup> The vagueness was probably intentional. Gandhi later disavowed any plans to achieve political equality with Whites. He did pledge to seek "full civic rights": freedom to trade and live within the South African provinces on a par with Whites.<sup>10</sup> Similar opinions on political rights were expressed by Transvaal Indians of the TBIA, who reassured the Whites that "in view of the existing prejudice . . . Indians do not fight for equal political rights."<sup>11</sup>

The elite nature of the early NIC is clear. Members were recruited

almost entirely from the merchant class and in later years many were uneasy with the prospect of involving lower-class Indians in Gandhi's passive resistance campaigns.<sup>12</sup> In 1894 a majority of Natal's Indians were still indentured workers and thus ineligible for membership in a political group. The NIC's first political action set the pattern for a tradition of moderate protest. The protest petitions failed, but they were not followed by public demonstrations or resistance campaigns.

### Resistance Without Organization

Gandhi's failure to build a permanent Indian political organization in South Africa is best revealed by reviewing briefly his passive resistance campaigns in the Transvaal and Natal. The Transvaal protests occurred in 1907 and 1908, while Natal was not involved until 1912.

The first Transvaal campaign in 1907 proved to be unique, for it was the only one in which the support of the Indian community was nearly unanimous. The protest was prompted by the requirement of the new Asiatic Law Amendment Act that all Indians obtain new residence permits to replace those issued by the former government of the Transvaal Republic before the Boer War. The new measure was designed to remove Indians who could not document their legal residence there before the Boer War from the Transvaal. Indians reacted with dismay, for the registration requirements of the old government had been indifferently enforced. Many had simply not obtained the old permit. Others had entered the province illegally after the war by posing as former residents who fled to Natal to seek British protection. Gandhi was prepared to approve voluntary re-registration for those entitled to permits, but regarded the compulsory aspect as a racial insult since

Whites were not required to register. For Gandhi it was a question of principle rather than substance. For many other Indians the substance of their business was at stake.

Armed with this issue, Gandhi gained extensive support for his resistance plans without difficulty. Before the final passage of the act, Gandhi held mass meetings throughout the Transvaal to protest the registration demand. Oaths were taken vowing defiance of the law. When the campaign began, Indians had already been aroused and were ready for political combat.

Gandhi's tactic was simply to boycott the registration offices. This required extensive public support for his position, but did not call for extensive organization. Registration offices were few. Gandhi was able to maintain an almost complete boycott with the aid of a personally selected and instructed group of pickets. At no time were more than one hundred pickets involved, thus facilitating his personal supervision. Discipline was easy to maintain and Gandhi did not hesitate to replace the few individuals who did not follow his instructions.

The campaign did not have any more formal organization than this. Gandhi did not make much use of the TBIA, although most of its members supported him. The opposition of a few "leading men of the community" persuaded Gandhi not to seek a formal declaration of support. This is the only indication that some of the Indian elite in the Transvaal did not support the mass boycott and their opposition does not appear to have affected the success of the campaign. Gandhi announced formation of a Passive Resistance Council during the campaign, but it had no formal organization or membership.<sup>13</sup>

The boycott ended when Gandhi and Jan Christian Smuts, head of the Transvaal provincial government, agreed to a compromise on registration. Indians were to register "voluntarily". Smuts would then grant registration permits to those who could prove domicile in the Transvaal before the Boer War, whether or not they had the old registration permits. The agreement did not have the support of all the boycotters. Gandhi secured ratification of the agreement at a mass meeting of Johannesburg Indians, but a large minority remained opposed to any registration requirement and considered the compromise unnecessary. Two attempts to assassinate Gandhi were made soon after, but within a few weeks most Transvaal Indians had registered. Gandhi was the first to register.

Two facts must be noted about this campaign. First, Gandhi had not challenged the White monopoly on political power, but merely a single law being applied to Indians. Because of this, compromise was less difficult to achieve than if the resistance movement had been demanding full political rights. By permitting the registration of most Indians living in the Transvaal, Gandhi and Smuts had ratified the status quo. The initial hope of many Whites that the Asiatic Law Amendment Act would cause a substantial reduction in the Indian population through repatriation was not realized, but the principle of control through registration was maintained.

Second, Gandhi did not use the support he enjoyed during the campaign to build a permanent political organization that might later challenge the government on other issues. To support Gandhi, Indians had only to refuse registration, a passive act which nearly all were willing to perform. Gandhi's pickets might have served as the cadre of a new political group, indoctrinating and organizing during the campaign, but they did not.

Gandhi thus had no existing organization to rally when he called for a renewal of resistance in mid-1908. General Smuts had announced that registration under the old guidelines was still mandatory for Indians not resident in the Transvaal during the voluntary registration period. This affected many Indians who had left the Transvaal during the Boer War, but had not yet returned. Most in this group had returned to India, and the government feared that unless proof could be obtained of their former Transvaal residence, many of those returning would actually be new immigrants not entitled to registration permits. Gandhi claimed betrayal of the compromise and Smuts refused to change his position. The new registration permits were burned by 2,300 Indians in Johannesburg in a public rally to begin a new boycott. Exact figures on the Indian response to Gandhi's call are not available, but at least one Indian scholar believes it was much less than during the first campaign.<sup>14</sup>

Smuts initially was uncompromising during this second phase of resistance, and during 1909 Indian support for Gandhi eroded. Despite the initial burning of registration certificates, strong action by the Smuts government, including extensive deportations of unregistered Indians, reduced the number of resisters. Gandhi reported that "only the real fighters remained." The struggle seemed hopeless; few were willing to continue resisting if jail or deportation was to be the only result. By the end of 1909 only Gandhi's personal disciples remained as resisters.<sup>15</sup>

Resistance was suspended in 1911, following correspondence between Smuts and Gandhi in which the Indian leader was satisfied that the worst features of the 1907 legislation would be repealed. At the same time, the number of Indians deported and jailed during the preceding three years was

great enough to warrant intervention by the British and Indian governments. To facilitate a final settlement, the Indian government sent G. K. Gokhale, a member of the Viceroy's Council, to negotiate with Smuts. Gokhale spent six weeks in South Africa, meeting with Indians in Natal and the Transvaal and with Smuts and other members of the Union government. When he left South Africa in November, 1912, he believed that the basis for a permanent settlement of the Indian problem had been reached. Gokhale reportedly informed Gandhi, who did not participate in these negotiations, that the Union government had agreed to repeal the 1907 act, remove racial barriers to immigration, and end the £3 per year tax on free Indians.<sup>16</sup>

Gokhale's negotiations did not, however, produce a settlement. The Immigration Bill introduced in the Union parliament in 1913 was attacked by Gandhi because it did not permit the free movement of Indians between South Africa's provinces, did not repeal the £3 tax, and left uncertain the admission to South Africa of Indian women married under religious rites in India. Since the offensive legislation was passed by the national government, Gandhi planned to again renew the resistance campaign, not only in the Transvaal but throughout the country. In practice, however, only the Transvaal and Natal were involved. It was Natal's first direct participation in a resistance campaign.

#### Resistance Without Control

Gandhi planned that Indian volunteers from Natal would cross the border into the Transvaal without authorization from the Transvaal government, a violation of the Immigrants Regulation Act. As in the past, Gandhi's aim was to generate publicity about what he considered unfair

discriminatory legislation, thereby forcing its repeal. Whether or not Gandhi expected to gain repeal by influencing the Union parliament alone, or through a new intervention of the Indian government is not clear. In any case, Gandhi felt it was his moral duty to oppose the new law.

The immediate response to the call for new resistance disappointed Gandhi; only a small group of personal followers was active in the initial border crossings in September, 1913.<sup>17</sup> Within a few weeks, however, the situation unexpectedly changed. Indian protest increased to a point where Gandhi found it difficult to maintain control.

Gandhi was determined to enlarge the scope of the resistance movement by enlisting the support of Indian indentured workers. Those subject to the £3 tax upon completion of their indenture would be urged to go on strike until the tax had been repealed. Gandhi sent women volunteers to agitate among the Natal coal miners. The miners did not immediately respond, but several women were arrested and one eventually died in jail. Angered by these police actions, the miners went on strike. Thousands left the coal fields and marched to join Gandhi in crossing the border into the Transvaal.

Gandhi's action in seeking the miners' support may be considered a shrewd political move, for his small group of personal followers were not able to exert much pressure on the Union government.<sup>18</sup> Gandhi, however, was startled by the result of his plan and unprepared for the task of organizing several thousand new adherents.

"I received the news by wire and was as much perplexed as I was pleased . . . I was not prepared for this marvellous awakening. I had neither the men nor the money which would enable me to cope with the work before me."<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi was uncertain of both the miners' dedication to his philosophy of non-violence and his ability to control their participation in his campaign.<sup>20</sup> Additional strikes among Indian plantation workers occurred without any direct prompting by Gandhi, and led to armed clashes between police and strikers. The increasingly volatile situation brought new pressure from the British government to achieve a solution satisfactory to the Indian protestors. War appeared imminent in Europe and Britain did not want Indian troubles in South Africa to affect the loyalty of India itself.

Under persistent prompting from the British and Indian governments, South Africa appointed a Commission to investigate the Indian demands. The Solomon Commission, named after its chairman, Sir William Solomon, did not have any Indian members and was therefore boycotted by Gandhi. In private talks with General Smuts, however, Gandhi reached an agreement paralleling much of the Commission's recommendations. The main points of both the Solomon Commission report and the new Gandhi-Smuts compromise were embodied in the Indian Relief Act of 1914, which eliminated the £3 tax and legalized Indian religious marriages. The Act did not end existing trade and residence restrictions, but Gandhi felt enough had been accomplished to leave this to the future, when Indians would be able to "educate public opinion" in their favor.<sup>21</sup> The passive resistance campaign was ended.

What had Gandhi's last resistance campaign contributed to the development of Indian politics? At least one Indian scholar, Bridglal Pachai, has referred to the events of 1913 as a "revolution".<sup>22</sup> The term is misleading. By including the Indian workers of Natal in the resistance, Gandhi had indeed brought into politics a group previously excluded. But

their involvement was brief and was not accepted by the entire Indian community. None were enrolled in a permanent political organization such as the NIC, for in 1913 Gandhi did not have the full support of the group he founded.

Opposition to extending the base of NIC support was demonstrated in October, 1913. Gandhi was rebuffed when he called for the resignation of the NIC's two honorary secretaries because they did not adequately support the campaign in progress. Before an audience of some 3,000 the secretaries attacked Gandhi as a "professional agitator" whose "provacative and inefficient policy" had weakened the Indian cause. The secretaries claimed Gandhi had enlisted the support of Indian indentured workers without "consulting responsible Indian opinion."<sup>23</sup> The meeting refused to accept the secretaries' resignations. That same month Gandhi abandoned the NIC and formed a rival organization, the Natal Indian Association.<sup>24</sup> The new organization did not survive Gandhi's departure from South Africa in 1914.

This public rupture of Indian political unity represented the emergence of a continuing conflict in Indian politics over the best method of influencing White policy. If the action of the Durban NIC was at all typical, few prominent Indians were willing to enlist the aid of Indian workers for the large strikes and civil disobedience which erupted in 1913. Instead, the Indian elite preferred to continue the tactics first used by the NIC in 1894: negotiations with White leaders, supplemented with occasional petitions to demonstrate depth of support. In their debate with Gandhi, the NIC joint secretaries blamed the loss of previous privileges on reaction against Gandhi by Whites, rather than any inherent hostility toward educated, wealthy Indians.

The accommodationist sentiment dominating the NIC in 1913 prevailed without serious challenge until 1939. During these years Indian politics were characterized by disputes among rival leadership cliques for control of poorly organized provincial and national organizations. Opposition to the continued racial legislation of the White governments was limited to petitions and sending delegations to London and Delhi. Passive resistance as a political tactic was abandoned until resurrected by a new generation of political leaders in 1939.

#### Commentary

If Gandhi's fitfull progress toward political mobilization of the Indian masses was rejected by leading Indians of his time, his legacy of resistance to anti-Indian legislation remained. Aided by the pressures of India and Britain, Gandhi had won victories against White opposition in South Africa. The example of passive resistance therefore remained to serve as a rallying symbol for later, more radical Indians seeking formation of a mass political movement in the 1940's.

The move to a new militancy was spurred by the growing realization that despite the Indian Relief Act and the Cape Town Agreement, White hostility had not weakened. What perhaps became obscured with the passage of time was the extent to which Gandhi's successes had been due less to the strength of his movement than to the intervention of Britain and India under the guise of Imperial responsibility. As South African independence increased, the influence of Britain and India waned. The victory of the Nationalist party in 1948 destroyed the constraints of Empire loyalties and obligations on South African racial policies. Attempts by Indians to substitute the United

Nations as the protector of Indian status failed.

The new situation hastened for some Indian political leaders an important break with Gandhi's policy--formation of an alliance with the African majority in a common struggle against the entire apartheid system. To gain credibility and influence with their African counterparts, the new leadership strived for what had eluded Gandhi: a mass membership political organization responding efficiently to the commands of its leaders. Their first task was to defeat the accommodationist leaders.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Specific references to the NIC or other Indian organizations are rare in works dealing with South African Indians of this time. For typical examples see Robert A. Huttenback, Gandhi in South Africa; Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, Indians in Africa; and Banphot Virasai, The Emergence and Making of a Mass Movement Leader: Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, 1893-1914.

<sup>2</sup>Virasai, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 67-79.

<sup>4</sup>Different dates are available for the NIC's founding. B. Pachai, Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, p. 6, gives May 22, 1894 as the founding date, while Virasai, p. 83, says the organization formally began in August, 1894. The distinction is unimportant here, for both accounts agree as to the date political activity began. May, 1894, marked the first meeting to oppose the franchise law and it appears realistic that a formal organization was not established until several months later.

<sup>5</sup>Virasai, pp. 102-107.

<sup>6</sup>Pachai, Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup>Gandhi, p. 47. Gandhi was able to raise sufficient funds to finance the newspaper Indian Opinion, which he founded in 1903.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>9</sup>The statement of goals is reprinted in Virasai, p. 103.

<sup>10</sup>Gandhi, pp. 336-337.

<sup>11</sup>Letter to the editor, Transvaal Leader, October 7, 1913, reprinted in Great Britain, Correspondence . . ., p. 58.

<sup>12</sup>Pachai, Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>Virasai, pp. 137-161.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 215-231.

<sup>15</sup>Gandhi is quoted in Pachai, The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-60.

<sup>17</sup>Virasai, p. 316. During September less than two dozen Indians had crossed the provincial boundaries as participants in Gandhi's campaign.

<sup>18</sup>Two such claims are made in Calpin, p. 34, and Virasai, p. 318.

<sup>19</sup>Gandhi, pp. 282-283.

<sup>20</sup>Gandhi, Letters to the Transvaal Immigration Officer and to the Secretary for Justice, Transvaal, reprinted in the Transvaal Leader, November 4, 1913. From Great Britain, Correspondence . . ., p. 70.

<sup>21</sup>Quoted in Calpin, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>Pachai, The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, p. 62.

<sup>23</sup>Extract from the Transvaal Leader, October 21, 1913, reprinted in Great Britain, Correspondence . . ., p. 58.

<sup>24</sup>Pachai, Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, p. 15.

CHAPTER III  
THE REVIVAL OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

White legislative actions in the 1930's combined with the failure of the Cape Town Agreement demonstrated to many Indians that they could not expect to be gradually "uplifted" to equal status with the White majority. Gandhi's early victories against the tax and immigration restrictions had not been followed by any relaxation of the laws restricting Indian economic expansion and Indians had actually lost political rights. Accommodationist policy had failed because neither Indian nor White was willing to accept the other's view of the proper place for Indians in South African society.

Dissatisfaction with the policies of the existing Indian leadership gave a new generation the opportunity to gain control of the political organizations. The opportunity was not ignored. Indian leaders such as Yusef Dadoo in the Transvaal and George Naicker in Natal attempted to change the character of Indian politics by creating political groups supported and joined by the majority of Indians in each province.<sup>1</sup> Their goals were not limited to improvements in trading or housing, or even to gaining equality for Indians. Dadoo and Naicker attacked the idea of White superiority itself. They worked in alliance with Africans to end White domination in South Africa by attempting to revive passive resistance. To accomplish this they had to overcome the tenacious opposition of the old guard. Throughout most of the 1940's the accommodationists fought Dadoo and Naicker for control of the Indian political organizations. Although eventually defeated, the accommodationists founded new groups such as the Natal Indian Organization (NIO) and retained an influence on Indian

politics during the 1950's.

A diversion must now be made to note the role of Indian communists in shaping confrontationist policy. Since 1924 the Communist party had worked to gain non-White members, motivated by the belief that common economic interests of the White and non-White working class would overcome the barriers of racial separation. Although this policy had failed to produce a significant White membership, the communists had gained strength among Africans and Indians in several areas of South Africa. By the late 1930's the party had considerable influence among the Indian working class in Natal. Individual Indians, including Dadoo, had become prominent communists and were serving on the party's central committee.

It is difficult to measure the exact impact of the Indian communists. The communists sought to control the Indian Congresses, as well as the other organizations participating in the Congress Alliance.<sup>2</sup> This goal was never completely achieved. At no time were either the TIC or NIC controlled exclusively by communists, but it is probable that their influence on policy exceeded their numerical strength. This is an assumption which cannot be proved, but evidence for it exists in the experience of the Non-European United Front (NEUF).

#### Non-European United Front: No Compromise With Whites

During the early 1940's Indian and other communists attempted to build a non-racial political organization, the NEUF. Although its immediate impact was insignificant, it is important because many of its demands were adopted by the Congress Alliance in the 1950's. It was, in this sense, an organization ahead of its time.

Formed in April, 1939, in Cape Town, the NEUF contained "Communists, Trotskyists and members of every racial group" except the White.<sup>3</sup> Its first national council included Dadoo and H. A. Naidoo of Durban, both of whom were Indian communists preparing for leading roles in the politics of their respective provinces. H. J. Simons, a former member of the South African Communist party, correctly described the importance of the group: "The seed of a grand non-racial alliance had been planted; but seventeen years were to pass before it bore fruit."<sup>4</sup>

The NEUF partisans brought to Indian politics militant goals and militant tactics unused since the campaigns of Gandhi. Emphasizing that Indians would never be treated as equals by Whites, Dadoo warned that acceptance of voluntary Indian residential segregation, as advocated by many accommodationist Indian leaders, would be followed by "industrial and commercial segregation." For Dadoo, the eventual Indian experience in South Africa under White rule was mirrored in African locations throughout the Union. On this basic issue, Dadoo maintained: "There cannot be any question of compromise with the Government at any price."<sup>5</sup>

The NEUF also pioneered perhaps the most radical innovation for Indian politicians: alliance with Africans. Reluctance in seeking African support remained strong in 1939. Gandhi's son, Manilal Gandhi, wrote: "the Union Government's Indian segregation policy has nothing in common with the policy governing the African races."<sup>6</sup> The NEUF disagreed. In February, 1941, the Durban NEUF sponsored what was described as the first join African-Indian protest meeting in the city's history.<sup>7</sup> African speakers subsequently joined Indians at meetings protesting various racial laws both in Natal and the Transvaal. Indian NEUF members successfully promoted a resolution at the

NIC's provincial conference, in 1944, supporting African opposition to pass laws and favoring the formation of African trade unions.

Indians were prominent in the NEUF. Dadoo served as secretary of the Transvaal NEUF while seeking control of the TIC. H. A. Naidoo was chairman of the NEUF in Natal, with C. I. Amra as secretary and D. A. Seedat as treasurer. All were active in Indian political and labor organizations during the 1940's. Other Indian members included I. A. Cachalia in the Transvaal and George Singh, Ismail Meer, George Ponen, M. D. Naidoo and M. M. Desai in Natal. The NEUF formed a common bond among these men. In 1939 Indian NEUF members in Natal enlisted support for Dadoo's passive resistance in the Transvaal, while Dadoo campaigned for Indian radicals in conflict with the old guard in Natal.<sup>8</sup>

The NEUF did not succeed in gaining a large membership and by the late 1940's it was abandoned by Indian communists who had secured leadership positions in the regular political organizations. The goal of not cooperating with White officials and of seeking cooperation with Africans was continued within the framework of the Congress Alliance. The revolutionary goal, however, had not changed. Instead of a non-racial organization, communists worked for control of the African and Indian Congresses, hoping to form

" a revolutionary party of workers, peasants, intellectuals and petty bourgeoisie, linked together in a firm organisation, subject to strict discipline, and guided by a definite programme of struggle . . . It would be their task to develop an adequate organisational apparatus, to conduct mass struggles against race discrimination, to combat chauvinism and racialism in the national movement, to develop class consciousness in the people, and to forge unity in action between the oppressed peoples."<sup>9</sup>

In pursuit of these goals, Indian communists combined with militant non-communists to cease apparently futile negotiations with White authority. Their first task was to gain control of the Indian Congresses.

#### In the Transvaal: Resistance Revived

The Transvaal Asiatics Land Tenure Act imposed mandatory segregation on the Indian community. This gave Dadoo the issue needed to challenge the traditional leaders. The Act was a temporary measure passed to halt the continued expansion of Indian trade and housing into White areas, pending the report of a new commission studying the problem. Dadoo discounted the measure's temporary aspect. He stressed that it reflected the desires of Whites to permanently subordinate the Indian minority. Residential and commercial segregation was merely part of an overall system of discrimination enforcing low wages, poor housing and limited educational opportunities. These were popular issues and enabled Dadoo to divide the TIC by isolating the established leaders. Although his two resistance campaigns of 1939 and 1941 were unsuccessful in defeating offensive legislation, their preparation demonstrated the extensive potential support available to the new militants.

Dadoo laid his first challenge against the accommodationists at a public meeting called by the TIC in March, 1939, to protest the Land Tenure Act. Against the wishes of the TIC's president, M. Valod, a motion to begin preparations for a passive resistance campaign was approved. As its chief proponent, Dadoo announced plans to form a Passive Resistance Council to coordinate the campaign. He left the possibility of including Africans open, citing "the urgent necessity of cooperating with all other sections

of the non-European community."<sup>10</sup> TIC officials either had not expected the resolution to pass, or perhaps had not even known it would be introduced. They were confused, the president denying the resistance resolution to have passed, while the secretary, S. M. Nana, offered his resignation because his inability to defeat the measure indicated a lack of confidence in his policy. Dadoo was urged to end his resistance plans as they risked the loss of White support for Indian progress.<sup>11</sup> The argument differed little from that used against Gandhi in 1913 and was rejected by Dadoo.

Resistance leaders recognized the symbolic importance of linking themselves to Gandhi. A "veteral soldier" of Gandhi's resistance campaigns who had been arrested fourteen times, E. A. Asvat, presided over several rallies. Dadoo was, however, less successful in obtaining Gandhi's personal support. Gandhi did not reject the idea of a campaign outright, but his statement to Dadoo was equivocal: "You have to suffer, not I, therefore let God alone be your judge."<sup>12</sup> Despite its ambivalence, the statement did not deter the confrontationists from further preparations.

The Passive Resistance Council gained sufficient strength at rallies throughout the Transvaal to be accorded separate status at an SAIC executive meeting in May, 1939. The TIC delegation was seated as the official representatives of Transvaal Indians, but the resisters were allowed to participate in discussions on the Land Tenure Act.

The meeting revealed the inability of the SAIC to affect Indian provincial politics. The Resistance Council delegation demanded that the SAIC support the planned resistance and also order new elections for the TIC executive. The TIC officials opposed both requests. The SAIC executive

board ruled that since resistance plans were already in progress, they could be discussed at TIC meetings. It also ruled, however, that since passive resistance was a question of principle concerning all South African Indians, a decision to begin a campaign could only be reached at a formal SAIC conference. No decision was taken on the question of new elections for TIC officials, although it was admitted that elections had not been held for several years.<sup>13</sup> The executive committee meeting proved meaningless. Although Dadoo had not received permission to begin his campaign, his preparatory efforts did not cease. The TIC continued a futile opposition.

By July Dadoo's support was great enough for him to announce that the resistance campaign would begin on August 1. At least eleven TIC branches had declared their support. The tide was so strong that one branch that had opposed resistance in March changed its position in July.<sup>14</sup> Bridglal Pachai's belief that the Passive Resistance Council was more popular than the officials holding office in the TIC at the outbreak of World War II seems correct.<sup>15</sup>

The campaign was unexpectedly cancelled at this point. The exact reasons are not clear. It was done, it seems, on the advice of Gandhi, who informed Transvaal Indians that he would attempt to negotiate a settlement of the Land Tenure Act with the Union government. Indian Opinion editorialized that Gandhi had intervened because the resistance movement had become so strong that the Government might be willing to compromise.<sup>16</sup> There is no record of any negotiations by Gandhi, but if any were planned it is likely that the outbreak of World War II led to their postponement.

The Resistance Council continued to exist as the Nationalist bloc of

of TIC. It continued to call for elections to remove the TIC officials, claiming that the many branch resolutions in favor of resistance demonstrated a lack of confidence in the accommodationist leadership.<sup>17</sup> The TIC ignored the election demand.

Beyond the imprecise statement that the number of Indians participating in Transvaal politics increased and that a majority supported the resistance movement, it is difficult to assess the Nationalists' impact. Records of increased enrollment in the TIC due to the Indian Nationalist campaign do not exist. The TIC had no registered membership in the 1930's, as all Indians were considered members on turning eighteen years of age.<sup>18</sup> Resolutions at branch meetings were taken by those present, and were often decided by those who shouted the loudest in support of their favorite resolution. Much of the Indian Nationalists' success must be attributed to their ability to mobilize their supporters to attend meetings.

White officials intervened indirectly in the Indian political quarrels by recognizing the accommodationist leaders as the true representatives of the Indian people. This was important to moderates who argued that Indian problems would only be solved by those willing to work with the Government. The attitude of the Indian Penetration Commission, appointed in 1940 to investigate the extent of Indian penetration into White residential areas, typified the Government position during the 1940's and 1950's:

"We are informed that the Nationalist group, though numerically stronger, is not an influential body, its rank and file being recruited from the lower social and economic levels."<sup>19</sup>

The Government's attitude was not immediately important to Dadoo, for his policy was based on confrontation rather than cooperation. If Whites did

not, for the moment, consider his efforts significant, that was not a liability. Political organizations must in the long run produce results to ensure continued support of all but the most faithful adherents. If the Indian Nationalists "no-compromise" tactics failed to improve the Indian position, Dadoo's stature would decline while that of the accommodationists, with whom the Government would discuss the implementation of programs, might grow.

The Government's ability to frustrate the confrontationists was evident when the Indian Nationalists attempted another passive resistance campaign in 1941. The immediate issue was renewal of the Land Tenure Act for two years. Dadoo announced that the 1939 resistance plans had been suspended only because Gandhi believed he could reach a compromise with the Government. Renewal, Dadoo maintained, proved compromise impossible. Dadoo called for the enrollment of volunteers, publication of regular resistance bulletins, and public meetings to renew support.<sup>20</sup>

Conditions were not as favorable in 1941 as in 1939. The Land Tenure Act remained unpopular, but most Indians appeared reluctant to confront the Government during a time of war. Dadoo himself was about to serve a prison sentence for inciting Africans and Indians not to volunteer for military service. He had campaigned against Indian participation in the war for nearly two years, while attempting at the same time to extend the support of the Indian Nationalists. In this latter task he had met with mixed results, as seen in his effort to gain support among Indian youth and to organize a boycott of the Indian Penetration Commission.

Early in 1940 Dadoo founded the Transvaal Indian Youth Organization (TIYO) to enroll young Indians in an organization distinct from the TIC.

TIC officials had made no special appeal to youth to participate in their organization, but Dadoo believed the youth were likely to support his more militant politics. Members enrolled in the TIYO would be subject to greater control and indoctrination than was possible in the poorly organized TIC and the registration fee and annual dues required would provide the Nationalists with a source of income not otherwise available. The amounts were small, but it was presumed that those willing to pay them would also be willing to follow Dadoo's political initiatives.<sup>21</sup> The officers of the new group, including I. A. Cachalia and M. M. Moosa, had been active with Dadoo since 1939.<sup>22</sup> Five hundred members were registered in the first three months of recruiting,<sup>23</sup> but the overall response disappointed the confrontationists. During the next three months, only one branch was formed, at Krugersdorp.<sup>24</sup> The TIYO did not play a role in the 1941 resistance.

Dadoo was less successful in attempting to organize a boycott of the Indian Penetration Commission. Participation would, he felt, continue the policy of "compromise and cooperation" which had previously only weakened the status of Indians.<sup>25</sup> Dadoo claimed that the Land Tenure Act violated the "uplift" provisions of the Cape Town Agreement as it discriminated against all Indians without regard to their educational or financial status. He therefore condemned TIC officials for testifying.<sup>26</sup> The Commissioners themselves were aware of the boycott but did not consider it effective as their meetings were attended by a "large number of Indians."<sup>27</sup>

The boycott probably never had much chance of success. Sufficient wealthy Indians were opposed to the Indian Nationalists to act as witnesses for the Commission, while the Commissioners were only interested in the testimony of Indians wealthy enough to purchase White properties. Few of

Dadoo's followers were in this category.

Despite these setbacks, at the beginning of 1941 Dadoo declared the new year would intensify the struggle.<sup>28</sup> The 1941 resistance was formally declared on April 27 at a public meeting of the Nationalist TIC. Dadoo was by now in prison and the leadership of the movement had temporarily passed to I. A. Cachalia. His call to resist recognized the limited support likely from Indians:

"In order not to embarrass the Government during the progress of the war, but at the same time to lodge its dignified protest against the humiliation and oppression which this Act subjects them to, the Indian community hereby resolves to have recourse to passive resistance, which shall be individual in character and empowers the executive committee to direct the movement."

29

It is misleading to describe what followed in the next ten months as either a "campaign" or a "movement". Few Indians participated actively and these were virtually ignored by the Government, to the consternation of the resisters.

Four Indians began the activities by opening unlicensed fruit and vegetable stands in Johannesburg. Despite the prominence of their location, near Magistrate's Court and the City Hall, the law-breakers were not arrested. For several months they continued to break the law, disregarded by everyone but an occasional photographer for the newspaper, Indian Opinion.

Government inactivity frustrated the resisters, who chided authorities for not enforcing the law against them.<sup>30</sup> Illegal vending stands were opened at several locations in Johannesburg where the Indian Nationalists felt the police would be forced to act, including the main post office and railroad

station. These efforts to gain retaliation by the Government continued unsuccessfully throughout the resistance.

The "campaign" lingered till March, 1942, when the Indian Nationalists decided to support the Allied war effort. Nationalists cited several reasons for the failure of their movement to attract wide support, including the lack of arrests, the apathy of wealthy Indians, Government censorship of the White press which precluded extensive publicity abroad, and the reluctance of Indian sympathizers to actively participate.<sup>31</sup> Resistance leaders were especially disappointed by the poor response from young Indians. S. B. Mehd, "Commandant" of the small "Volunteer Corps", complained that:

Our struggle has been going on now for nine months and yet we have only four or five persons to carry it on. In Europe you find universities empty because the youth have gone to the front to fight for their country and their cause. Compare our position with their's and you will find that we are doing nothing to fight our own struggle."

32

It is difficult to compare the poor results of this campaign with the enthusiasm evident in 1939. The most likely explanation has already been suggested. Although opposition to the Land Tenure Act remained great, there was strong sentiment to avoid embarrassing the Government during the war with Germany. It should also be remembered that Dadoo was in prison throughout the campaign and that the Government's refusal to make arrests would probably not have continued if mass resistance tactics had been possible. These factors seem to have been realized by Cachalia when he issued his call to resist.

Dadoo's communist affiliations were no doubt responsible for his decision to support the war after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Although

Dadoo did not explain why his switch occurred nearly a year after Russo-German hostilities began, he announced in March, 1942, that the war had become a "people's war" against Fascism and deserved the support of South Africa's non-White peoples.<sup>33</sup> After this declaration he was released from prison.

Ending the resistance campaign and supporting the war aided the Indian Nationalists in their immediate goal of gaining control of the TIC. After several months of negotiations, they agreed to rejoin the TIC and were given eighteen seats on its General Committee.<sup>34</sup> In accepting the merger, TIC officials agreed to allow Nationalists to participate in the selection of new leaders. Within a year of the merger, the Nationalists demonstrated their continued strength when Dadoo was elected the new TIC president. Despite the failure of his resistance campaigns, Dadoo had gained a primary goal: by 1945 the confrontationists controlled the TIC.

#### In Natal: Organize the Workers

Indian politics in Natal during the war years were similar to those in the Transvaal, but were complicated by factionalism which appeared within the NIC during the 1930's. In 1933 Indians opposing a Government proposal to re-colonize South African Indians abroad, left the NIC to found the Colonial Born and Settlers Indian Association (CBSIA). The dissidents disapproved of the willingness of NIC officials to study the scheme. Although the plan was quickly abandoned by the NIC, the new organization continued to exist. Religious differences between the NIC and CBSIA became pronounced in 1936 when the Moslem Agent-General for Indians in South Africa married a Hindu woman. Many Hindus left the NIC, some abandoning

politics completely and others joining the CBSIA. The NIC became a largely Moslem organization in a predominantly Hindu community.<sup>35</sup>

Unity was temporarily restored by common opposition to the Land Tenure Act of 1939. Members of the NIC and CBSIA approved a merger of their organizations into a new group, the Natal Indian Association (NIA). Several NIC officials, led by A. I. Kajee, a Moslem businessman, balked at the emergence of the NIA with the largest membership, but without the support of many prominent Moslem merchant leaders.<sup>36</sup>

An Indian Nationalist faction within the NIA clashed with moderates to determine the proper response to the growing White demands for residence and trade restrictions. In general, both NIC and NIA officials favored voluntary restrictions on Indian residential expansion to prevent Government-imposed sanctions, whereas NIA Nationalists opposed any segregation, voluntary or compulsory. As in the Transvaal, Nationalists supported alliance with African organizations and many were members of both the Communist party and the NEUF.

Dissension within the NIA was evident early in 1940, when a Nationalist minority of the governing committee opposed a resolution pledging the NIA to prevent Indians purchasing homes in White residential areas. The division was clear: Nationalist opponents of the resolution argued that it implied acceptance of racial segregation; while proponents claimed voluntary restrictions would lead to improved housing and municipal services in Indian residential areas.<sup>37</sup> The NIA majority appointed a committee to work with the Durban City Council in restricting Indian land acquisition. The dissenters included George Naicker, P. M. Harry, C. I. Amra, D. A. Seedat and H. A. Naidoo. All except Naicker were NEUF members

and communists.

There was conflict also over whether or not to support the war effort. Nationalists offered an amendment to a resolution supporting the war to withhold support until racial equality was established within the armed forces and until the Government pledged itself to grant Indians democratic rights after the war. Both measures received considerable support according to Indian Opinion and it was difficult to tell which had passed.<sup>38</sup> The NIA officially supported the war, despite the closeness of the result.

Despite these differences, the Nationalist group declared its intention to remain within the NIA. Nonetheless seven of their leaders were expelled by the NIA executive in June, 1940.<sup>39</sup> The Nationalists then withdrew support from the NIA and remained a separate bloc for three years, until April, 1943. During those years, Indian Nationalists travelled throughout Natal attacking the NIA officials and organizing support in Indian trade unions.

Although expelled from the NIA, Naidoo, Amra, Seedat and others retained a political base through their membership in several unions. At union meetings they continued to denounce voluntary segregation and the war. For the first time in Indian political history, a systematic attempt was being made to organize what the Indian Penetration Commission had somewhat scornfully referred to as the "lower social and economic levels." Between 1940 and 1942, for instance, Naidoo served as secretary of the Natal Sugar Workers Union, vice-president of the Distributive Workers, and secretary-treasurer of the Natal Teachers Union. During these same years he was also chairman of the Natal NEUF and chairman of the Communist party's Durban branch. He was later elected a member of the Communist party's

central committee. Harry was similarly active, as chairman of the Iron and Steel Workers Union, secretary of the Durban Non-European Bus Employees Union and organizing secretary of the Sugar Workers Union. Like Naidoo, he was a communist and NEUF member. The unions these men organized varied in size from the 2,000 of the sugar workers to the thirty employees of the Maritzburg Standard Yoke and Timber Mills.<sup>40</sup> No immediate effort was made to bring these unionized workers into the NIA, but the potential was obvious.

The Indian Nationalists had not yet developed a political organization within the NIA, but they dominated the trade union movement. Thousands of Indians were being prepared for political participation.

The strength of the Nationalist union leaders was demonstrated by their successful opposition to the recruitment of Indian workers for the South African armed forces. Recruiting officers were driven from union meetings by Nationalist speakers who emphasized the unequal pay and dependent aid given to Indian soldiers.<sup>41</sup> Nationalists also identified with their Transvaal counterparts and the nationalist movement in India. Meetings were sponsored to protest Dadoo's imprisonment and the arrest of Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian Nationalist Congress.<sup>42</sup>

Government reaction to anti-war activity in Natal was stronger than to passive resistance in the Transvaal. It attempted to stop Naidoo, Seedat, and Amra from speaking publicly under its National Emergency Regulations. In October, 1940, for instance, seven Indians were arrested for attending an unlawful meeting, but were found not guilty on a technicality.<sup>43</sup> Seedat was himself convicted the following year under a provision of the Security Code specifying that "No person shall utter a

a subversive statement in the hearing of any other person."<sup>44</sup>

As in the Transvaal, the German invasion of Russia in June, 1941, eventually brought the Indian Nationalists in Natal to support the war. Six months after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nationalists confirmed their opposition to the war, though noting a "radical change" in its character and pledging their "sympathy" with the Soviet Union. The Nationalists admitted: "The majority of our people are confused as to the stand of the Nationalist Bloc."<sup>45</sup> Within five months the Nationalist position had changed. In May, 1942, Naicker urged all Indians to support the war, while asking the Government to end the anti-Indian policies which had prevented full Indian cooperation in the past.<sup>46</sup>

The reason for the change is not clear, though a few suggestions can be offered. The December statement continuing opposition to the war was made while the Transvaal resistance campaign was still in progress. Natal Nationalists were travelling in the Transvaal as late as January, 1942, speaking in favor of continued resistance.<sup>47</sup> The change of policy came about two months after the end of resistance in the Transvaal and Dadoo's declaration that World War II had become a "people's war", rather than an imperialist war. It is likely that at least informal coordination between politically sympathetic Nationalists existed in the two provinces.

The change in Indian Nationalist policy on the war removed one of the issues responsible for the split within the NIA. The Union government helped to remove the other. The report of the Indian Penetration Commission upheld the Durban City Council's claim of increased Indian penetration of White residential areas since 1940. Legislation extending the 1939 Land and Tenure Act to Durban was introduced almost immediately

afterwards in the Union parliament. Natal Indians were for the first time to experience the restrictive property acquisition of the Transvaal. This threat again united Natal's Indian organizations.

The Indian Nationalists announced that they were willing to rejoin the NIA to ensure unity against the new threat. While hastening to capitalize on the political opportunity the Union legislation provided, the Nationalists transformed themselves into a new group: the Anti-Segregationist Committee of Action. Twenty-five Indian organizations joined the Anti-Segregationist Committee in April, 1943. Seventeen were trade union, while the others represented a variety of social and religious groups. Naicker was elected chairman of the new group. Billy Peters, a union organizer, was elected vice-chairman.<sup>48</sup>

The NIA in turn rescinded its 1940 resolution expelling the Nationalists, adding several of them to its General Committee, among them Naicker, Ponon, M. D. Naidoo and Peters.<sup>49</sup> The NIA and NIC formally dissolved their organizations in August, and reconstituted themselves as the new Natal Indian Congress.<sup>50</sup> For the first time, since 1932, Natal had a single Indian political organization.

The Anti-Segregationists were a minority within the new NIC. They immediately began efforts to increase their strength by drawing in their union supporters. "It is the duty of every trade unionist to give the newly formed national organization every support and provide it with a mass basis by enrolling members of his union," Seedat exhorted the workers.<sup>51</sup> Union meetings urged the NIC not only to seek repeal of the new Trading and Occupation of Land Restriction Act, popularly known as the Pegging Act, but also to work for return of the municipal franchise lost in 1924.

Anti-Segregationists spoke not of negotiations, but of an "immediate offensive to regain lost rights."<sup>52</sup>

### The NIC: The Accommodationists Defeated

The unity among Indian factions in the Spring and Summer of 1943 was shallow. The dispute between accommodationist and confrontationist tactics broke out again at the NIC's first provincial conference in 1944. Conference delegates struggled with the working of its resolution on the Pegging Act, with cooperation with yet another government commission as another disruptive if subordinate issue.

The accommodationists proposed a resolution condemning the Pegging Act and suggesting voluntary segregation as an alternative to government legislation. Confrontationists won acceptance of an amended resolution deleting acceptance of voluntary segregation, and asking the NIC to begin a "mass campaign" with "mass meetings of protest" to gather a "mass petition" for presentation to the government.<sup>53</sup> This resolution placed the NIC on record as opposing any form of segregation. At the same time, it authorized large-scale political work among the Indian people to gather signatures for the protest petition. Petition gathering was not a radical innovation, but the public campaign authorized was a departure from the politics practised by NIC and NIA leaders since World War I. The Anti-Segregationists planned to solicit the signatures not only of the Indian elite, but of the Indian workers as well. If the Government did not abandon segregation plans, and there was no reason to expect it would, the groundwork for a new passive resistance campaign would have been prepared.

However, the Anti-Segregationists failed to pass a resolution condemning cooperation with the Government's new Commission of Enquiry into Matters Affecting the Indian Population of the Province of Natal. A compromise resolution was passed. The NIC agreed to cooperate with the Government investigation, but its representatives were pledged to seek restoration of the municipal and parliamentary franchise, removal of provincial immigration barriers, implementation of the Cape Town Agreement, extension of Indian educational facilities and increased housing and civic amenities in Indian residential areas.<sup>54</sup>

All in all the results of the conference pleased the Anti-Segregationists. The NIC was committed to goals that, if implemented, would have ended the Indians' status as second class citizens. There was little hope of attaining these goals, but this was anticipated by the militants who, like Dadoo, believed the conference marked the "beginning of the end of the policy of compromise and defeatism."<sup>55</sup>

The militants could not, however, control the actions of the moderates, who secretly negotiated an agreement with General Smuts suspending the Pegging Act in Durban, substituting a Licensing Board of Indians and Whites in its place. This was to supervise residential race patterns in Durban.

The "Pretoria Agreement" was opposed by the Anti-Segregationists. They portrayed it as a violation of the NIC's resolution against segregation and called for a new NIC election, promising to "build the Congress up until it becomes truly representative of the people."<sup>56</sup> The trade unions began a campaign against the Pretoria Agreement, several unions passing resolutions condemning it as an acceptance of voluntary segregation.<sup>57</sup>

NIC officials, in turn, responded that only eighteen of eighty-one

members of the governing committee opposed the Pretoria Agreement, defending their actions as in accord with the general instructions of the provincial conference to continue negotiations with the Government on the problem of Indian penetration. They refused to hold elections for a new governing committee.<sup>58</sup>

The Anti-Segregationists were well prepared to contest for control of the NIC. They had used their union organizations to increase the membership of the NIC from about 17,000 in 1943 to 35,000 in 1945.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, their members were concentrated in Durban, while many supporters of the NIC leadership were rural Indians. The moderates, by contrast, had virtually no organizational support. Their records were kept in the home of an official and funds were donated by a few wealthy individuals.<sup>60</sup> As an elite lobby they were unequipped for a public struggle determined by the numbers of adherents a faction could mobilize.

The NIC governing committee attempted to preserve its control by postponing scheduled general meetings in September, 1944, and March, 1945. The need for a new constitution; the inability of rural members to meet in Durban; and the absence of reliable membership lists were cited as reasons for the postponements.<sup>61</sup> The general meeting might have been postponed indefinitely had the Anti-Segregationists not been willing to temporarily abandon their confrontationist tactics. In October, 1945, they obtained a court order requiring NIC officials to hold new elections. Seven thousand Indians attended the meeting to elect forty-six Anti-Segregationist nominees as a bloc to the governing committee. Edward Roux, a former White communist, claims that twelve of the new committeemen were communists, but does not identify them.<sup>62</sup> Indian Opinion reported that the NIC had become

"virtually the mouthpiece of the Indian trade unions and the Communist Party."<sup>63</sup> The old NIC officials did not stand for election. In Durban, many withdrew from it, though they retained control of several NIC branches in northern Natal.

George Naicker was elected president of the NIC. The confrontationists dominated Indian politics and could now prepare to test their strategy against the Government. Their attitude had been clearly expressed in a resolution proposed a year before their victory:

"This special general meeting of the Natal Indian Congress repudiates and rejects the Pretoria Agreement and instructs the Committee of the Congress to pursue a policy of uncompromising resistance to any measure aimed at furthering segregation or discrimination against the Indian people."<sup>64</sup>

Having gained control of both the TIC and NIC by 1945, confrontationist control of the SAIC was inevitable. New provincial representatives attending the SAIC's biennial conference in 1947 elected Yusef Dadoo as president and removed most moderate leaders from the executive committee. Until the banning of most Indian militants in 1963, the SAIC reflected the goals of its provincial constituents.

Accommodationists might have retained more influence in the NIC if their attempts to arrive at compromise on segregation through the Pretoria Agreement had not been doomed by the refusal of the Natal Provincial Council to agree to repeal of the Pegging Act in Durban. If the Whites themselves seemed unwilling to accept the possibility of voluntary Indian segregation, it was clear that Indians could not make such a policy work.

The accommodationists did not abandon politics completely. They

formed the Natal Indian Organization (NIO) in 1947 and continued opposition to mandatory segregation, while emphasizing their determination to work for improved status for Indians only by "constitutional" and "legitimate" methods. The NIO specifically opposed integration with the White community, noting that most Indians preferred to live in separate Indian communities.<sup>65</sup>

The NIO did not attempt to build a mass organization in competition with the NIC. Membership was largely limited to businessmen seeking to soften the impact of the 1950's Group Areas legislation by accommodation with the Government. Although continually attacked by the NIC because of its lack of popular support, its prestige among the Indian commercial community grew as the confrontationists appeared unable to prevent the imposition of legal segregation.

#### Commentary

The confrontationists appeared to have altered completely the character of Indian politics between 1939 and 1945. The NEUF had not become an important political force, but its policy of uncompromising resistance to segregation had been carried to Indian politics by several of its Indian members. The accommodationists were in disarray. Passive resistance had become an acceptable tactic for thousands of Indians, even if it was not yet clear how many would join resistance activity. In the Transvaal resistance had already been attempted; in Natal it was about to begin.

But if the Indian Nationalists had generated considerable popular support, the depth of that support was not clear in 1945. The Nationalists had not captured control of formidable political organizations. Indian

politics was based on street meetings and mass rallies. Accommodationist leaders had not been interested in political groups with registered memberships, clear lines of communication with subordinate units, and regular financial contributions because these had been unnecessary for their purposes. For the Nationalists, the task of organizing their supporters remained.

The Nationalists had won because they were willing to capitalize on the tremendous unpopularity of the mandatory segregation laws by involving the Indian people in politics on a massive scale. If it is not certain that a majority of Indians supported the Nationalists, it is evident that their opponents could not compete with them in the task of getting their followers to political meetings.

The Indian militants were free to move their organization into alliance with the African National Congress and to demonstrate the ability of their confrontation strategy to defeat the segregation plans of the Union government. The Whites, of course, could not be expected to suddenly concede equality to Indians. Under Naicker's leadership, the NIC participated in two passive resistance campaigns and a third movement requiring mobilization of the Indian people, but not active resistance. These campaigns offered the prospect of either gaining or losing support, depending on their success. Their failure is the subject of Chapter IV.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Dadoo was born in Krugersdorp in 1909. During the 1930's he studied abroad in India and Britain, receiving a medical degree from the University of Edinburgh. He returned to South Africa in 1937 and became a member of the Communist party in 1939 or 1940. Like Dadoo, Naicker was also a doctor who studied overseas, but he was not a member of the Communist party.

<sup>2</sup>The testimony of Bunting is given in South Africa, Parliament. House of Assembly. Select Committee on Suppression of Communism Act Inquiry. Report, p. 214.

<sup>3</sup>H. J. Simons and R. E. Simons, Class and Colour in South Africa, p. 503.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. p. 504.

<sup>5</sup>Y. M. Dadoo, "The Government and the Non-Europeans," Indian Opinion, February 9, 1940, p. 55

<sup>6</sup>Indian Opinion, July 7, 1939, p. 260.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., February 21, 1941, p. 60.

<sup>8</sup>Descriptions of one such tour can be found in Indian Opinion, January 23, 1942, p. 31, and January 30, 1942, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup>"Report of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa to the National Conference to be Held in Johannesburg on the 6th, 7th and 8th January, 1950." Reprinted in South Africa. Parliament. House of Assembly. Select Committee on Suppression of Communism Act Inquiry. Report, p. 214.

<sup>10</sup>Indian Opinion, March 3, 1939, pp. 82-85.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., March 10, 1939, pp. 92, 96.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1939, p. 179.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., May 26, 1939, p. 203.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., July 28, 1939, p. 289.

<sup>15</sup>Pachai, The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, p. 151. The numerous branches supporting resistance are reported in Indian Opinion, May 26, 1939, p. 203 and July 14, 1939, pp. 270-271.

<sup>16</sup>Indian Opinion, August 4, 1939, pp. 294-295.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., August 11, 1939, p. 304.

<sup>18</sup>Testimony of I. A. Cachalia, during the trial Regina versus Farid Adams and Twenty-nine Others, held from December, 1956 until March, 1961. Hereafter cited by its popular designation as the Treason Trial. Cachalia's testimony appears on p. 14,893 of the unpublished, mimeographed record. Cachalia was a member of the Passive Resistance Council in 1939.

<sup>19</sup>South Africa, Penetration Commission, p. 12.

<sup>20</sup>Indian Opinion, February 14, 1941, pp. 53-54.

<sup>21</sup>The Guardian, July 12, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup>Indian Opinion, June 14, 1940, p. 205.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., May 24, 1940, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup>The Guardian, September 26, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup>Indian Opinion, October 11, 1940, pp. 335-336.

<sup>26</sup>The Guardian, October 17, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup>South Africa, Penetration Commission, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Indian Opinion, January 3, 1941, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., May 2, 1941, p. 137.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., July 11, 1941, p. 214.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., January 16, 1942, p. 18.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., March 13, 1942, p. 75.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., December 21, 1945, p. 348.

<sup>35</sup>Hilda Kuper, Indian People In Natal, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup>Indian Opinion, September 1, 1939, p. 338.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., February 16, 1940, pp. 64-65.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., June 14, 1940, pp. 201-202.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., June 28, 1940, pp. 218-219. Expelled were Naicker, Seedat, Naidoo, Amra, Harry, George Singh and B. Athmanan Maharaj.

<sup>40</sup>The activities of Nationalists in Indian unions are taken from various issues of The Guardian and Indian Opinion.

<sup>41</sup>Indian Opinion, August 21, 1940, pp. 2-3 and August 23, 1940, p. 281.

<sup>42</sup>For accounts of several meetings, see the following: Indian Opinion, August 30, 1940, p. 290. September 20, 1940, p. 316 and November 29, 1940, p. 405: The Guardian, August 29, 1940, p. 1

<sup>43</sup>An account of the unsuccessful prosecution is available in the following Indian Opinion reports: October 18, 1940, p. 356 and November 8, 1940, pp. 382-383. When a Nationalist meeting to discuss "Dr. Dadoo and the War" was banned, the sponsors held a later meeting the same day in the same place to consider "The Welfare of the Indian Community". The forbidden subjects were discussed and the speakers were arrested. Unfortunately for the Government, the Court ruled the banning order applied only to the first meeting and did not ban discussion of the same subject at a later meeting.

<sup>44</sup>Indian Opinion, February 21, 1941, p. 59 and May 2, 1941, p. 135. Seedat was released in July under the condition that he not address political gatherings. In November, he was convicted of violating this ban and returned to prison.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., December 12, 1941, p. 366.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., May 8, 1942, pp. 136-137.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., January 16, 1942, p. 18. Natal visitors to the Transvaal were Amra, Seedat and E. I. Moola.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., April 23, 1943, p. 99.

<sup>49</sup>The Guardian, May 6, 1943, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup>Indian Opinion, July 23, 1943, pp. 173-174, claimed that the unity move was motivated more by a desire to control the financial assets of Gandhi's original NIC held in trust by the Government than by any political reasons.

<sup>51</sup>The Guardian, August 19, 1943, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., September 2, 1943, p. 1, and Indian Opinion, December 10, 1943, p. 316.

<sup>53</sup>Yusef Dadoo, "Natal Indian Congress Conference", The Guardian, March 16, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup>Indian Opinion, February 25, 1944, p. 62.

<sup>55</sup>Dadoo, "Natal Indian Congress Conference."

<sup>56</sup>Indian Opinion, May 5, 1944, p. 135.

<sup>57</sup>The Guardian, May 14, 1944, p. 1. The unions included the Bus Employees, Tin Workers, Sugar Workers, Biscuit Workers, and the Laundry, Cleaners, and Dryers Workers.

<sup>58</sup>Indian Opinion, April 28, 1944, pp. 125-126.

<sup>59</sup>The 1943 figure is from Indian Opinion, July 13, 1945, p. 158, the 1945 figure is from Hilda Kuper, p. 49.

<sup>60</sup>Calpin, p. 185.

<sup>61</sup>Indian Opinion, March 9, 1945, p. 45 and March 16, 1945, p. 52.

<sup>62</sup>Edward Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, pp. 359-360.

<sup>63</sup>Indian Opinion, September 7, 1945, p. 233.

<sup>64</sup>The Guardian, June 1, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup>Indian Opinion, May 30, 1947, pp. 170-174.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE FAILURE OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

If political leaders were able to plan their campaigns as meticulously as military tacticians organize their field exercises, the new leaders of the NIC might have paused after their victory and attempted to consolidate their strength. The goals they had set at the NIC's first provincial conference were ambitious, requiring a virtual capitulation by White authority before they could be attained. At the same time, the depth of support for the confrontationist position was unknown. Thousands of new members had been recruited, but little had been done to organize them. Some modest victory similar to that won by Gandhi might have consolidated Naicker's strength and demonstrated that participation in political campaigns was a useful endeavor that benefitted the Indian community. Events permitted none of this.

White opinion was determined to enforce Indian segregation. Natal's rejection of the Pretoria Agreement was followed by the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act in 1946. Briefly, the Act divided Natal into "controlled" and "uncontrolled" areas. Indian acquisition of land in controlled areas was prohibited, unless a special exemption was received. No restrictions were placed on uncontrolled areas, but these were already largely Indian areas. The act also prohibited Indians who had purchased but not occupied land in White areas from occupying it after January 21, 1946. In terms of the Act, Indians were, for the first time, granted representation in the South African Senate and Assembly. They were to elect two Whites to the Union Senate and three to the Assembly and were to be

directly represented in the Natal Provincial Council. The NIC rejected the representation provisions as discriminatory and this part of the Act was never implemented.

Naicker had won control of the NIC by promising to end the ineffective negotiations of his predecessors. It was now incumbent upon him to prove that his leadership differed from those he had defeated. The result was the passive resistance campaign of 1946. The campaign, limited largely to Natal, lasted nearly two years. It was the most ambitious Indian political effort since Gandhi inadvertently aroused the masses in 1913.

In judging the effectiveness of the resistance movement, two criteria might be applied: the NIC's ability to change the laws opposed, and its success in building an organization capable of mobilizing Indian participants. Both were declared goals. The two goals were related. Success in changing segregation laws would generate additional support. A viable organizational cadre would improve the NIC's ability to mobilize this support before a campaign began.

#### 1946: The Failure of Resistance

The NIC's poor organization before Naicker assumed control has already been discussed. There was little scope for improvement in the few months between October, 1945 and March, 1946, when the decision to prepare for passive resistance was taken at the NIC's provincial conference. A Joint Passive Resistance Council was formed with the TIC, but no acts of resistance were attempted in the Transvaal until the campaign drew to a close in 1948. TIC volunteers did, however, participate in the Natal movement and donated money to it.

The Natal confrontationists recognized that Indians there were, despite their opposition to the Land Tenure Act, not yet ready for an extensive resistance movement. Naicker therefore began seeking Indian support for his militant goals in January, 1946. He promised not only resistance to residential segregation, but also improved housing and educational facilities, free movement for Indians within South Africa and a new conference between India and South Africa.<sup>1</sup> Naicker limited his appearances to Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Much of Natal was not visited until events had been underway for several weeks. The neglected branches were far from Durban and their support for resistance was anyhow doubtful.<sup>2</sup>

Resistance began in June, with several women crossing from the Transvaal to Natal illegally. For the next eighteen months the campaign was limited to illegal occupation of selected property sites in Durban. Internal resistance was coordinated with diplomacy. Delegations from both the moderate and militant factions visited India, Britain and the United States prior to the United Nations opening in October. The main tactic of the NIC was to force the arrest of numerous resisters for violating the Land Tenure Act to engender international sympathy and support for the Indian position in the United Nations Organization. The idea of international intervention was still important in Indian political strategy, for they hoped that United Nations pressure would eventually force South Africa to repeal segregation laws.<sup>3</sup>

The resistance strategy, then, was designed for extensive visibility abroad. The Government was only partially cooperative. Arrests were not made for violating the new Pegging Act, but for contravening the Riotous Assemblies Act or for simply trespassing on Government property. Resisters

were treated not as political opponents but as criminals. There is no evidence this reduced the number of Indian volunteers, but it certainly produced less dramatic news accounts.

To counteract this, the NIC in August opened a second resistance center in the Wentworth district of Durban. Volunteers now violated the segregation law by occupying previously unoccupied land of their own in the White residential area. Again, the Government did not oblige the resisters. None were arrested until after the United Nations session had considered the South African question in October. Once again, the movement failed to receive the publicity it desired.

As in the Transvaal in 1941, the lack of arrests led resistance leaders to taunt the Government. The NIC sent letters to the Minister of the Interior and the Durban police commandant setting out current violations of the law and asking whether the failure to arrest implied that the Government did not intend to enforce its own legislation.<sup>4</sup> No arrests were made despite this provocation.

In addition to favorable publicity, the resistance strategy also required high Indian participation and unity within the Indian community. Divisiveness or apathy would weaken the NIC's claim for international support as the representative of Indian opinion. Despite the wide opposition to the Land Tenure Act, complete unity was not attained.

The news that A. I. Kajee, former president of the NIC, had held private talks with General Smuts about a resolution of the segregation problem disconcerted some Indians abroad. Sorabjee Rustomjee, an NIC official seeking support for resistance in India, complained that such negotiations weakened his claim to represent all South African Indians and cast doubt on

the necessity for passive resistance.<sup>5</sup>

Support among Indians was also not as widespread as resistance leaders had anticipated. George Singh, a union leader and a resister who also was chairman of the NIC Working Committee, was distressed by the lack of active participation two months after events began:

"man<sup>y</sup> people do not know how vitally, how directly and viciously this Act hits our people, probably because they have not yet come into direct conflict with its provisions. It has been designed in a way that no Indian will escape its provisions for long. We cannot and must not wait for the stage when we are personally hit. Now is the time for action."<sup>6</sup>

Singh's complaint reflected a common political problem: relatively few people are motivated by principle alone; most must be directly affected by the conditions against which they are urged to protest, the more so when the consequences of protest may involve imprisonment and financial loss. The Land Tenure Act affected most seriously those Indians capable of purchasing land in White areas for either residential or investment purposes. It did not immediately affect the majority of less affluent Indians who had no plans for either living or investing outside existing Indian ghettos.

Most of the active resistance participants were Indian professionals dissatisfied in principle with segregation, workers following the lead of ideologically motivated union officials, and a few merchants angered by limits placed on their commercial expansion. More than half the resisters were young Indian workers, many unemployed.<sup>7</sup> This was reflected in support from NIC branches in working class areas. By December, 1946, for instance, the Clairwood branch had furnished approximately twenty percent of all volunteers and raised some £1,000 in contributions. The branch established

a canteen to feed resisters and a welfare department to care for the children of the resistance volunteers.<sup>8</sup>

The number of volunteers increased steadily from June until the opening of the United Nations session in October. The United Nations resolution on the South African question was ambivalent. It noted that the treatment of Indians in South Africa harmed international relations between India and South Africa and urged South Africa to treat its Indian population in accord with the United Nations Charter. The South African Government did not accept the implied criticism of its Indian policy and announced its intention to continue enforcing the Land Tenure Act.<sup>9</sup>

The failure of the United Nations resolution to alter the Government's segregation policy all but collapsed the resistance movement. During the first five months, approximately 1,500 resisters had been arrested; during the remaining fifteen months of the campaign, the number of additional arrests was only about five hundred.<sup>10</sup>

The failing response caused NIC officials to convene an emergency NIC conference to consider ways of continuing the movement. Only ten of thirty branches sent representatives. The remedies suggested reveal that organizational preparation before resistance began had been limited. The delegates agreed to begin a "door-to-door" canvass for funds and volunteers, to attempt a "proper area distribution" of resistance literature and to appeal for continued support from trade unions.<sup>11</sup> By inference, union support for resistance was weakening and the NIC had never conducted extensive canvassing of the Indian community to gain the participation of those who were not already members. Like their predecessors, the NIC militants relied primarily on public meetings, parades, and pamphlets both

to gain recruits and to propagandize.

The proposed remedies were not especially successful. Two months after the special conference, The Guardian continued to report that "resistance had slackened somewhat and there had been a resurgence of political cleavages. . ." H. A. Naidoo promised that resistance would resume "as strong as ever," but this required favorable action by the United Nations in 1947 and "effective collaboration between the Non-European peoples."<sup>12</sup> Neither was forthcoming.

Although the NIC's regular provincial conference in June, 1947, approved continued resistance, the movement did not recover. By November, the Government had ceased arresting trespassers on the main "resistance plot" of Government-owned land in Durban. A second NIC emergency conference sought to revitalize the campaign by expanding it to include violation of the Immigration Act of 1913, which forbade the movement of Indians between Natal and the Transvaal without a permit. The decision had little effect. During the first three months of 1946, only fifty Indians entered the Transvaal illegally. After a period of inactivity, police arrested the leaders, Dadoo and Naicker. The rest were deported to Natal.<sup>13</sup>

Resistance had clearly lost its ability to attract extensive participation by the Indian people, although a handful of dedicated volunteers continued to maintain the facade of a campaign. The defeat of General Smuts' United party in the parliamentary elections of 1948 offered the NIC leaders an opportunity to end resistance, while lessening the implication that it had been a failure. The Join Resistance Council announced in June, that since the government responsible for passage of the Land Tenure Act was no longer in office, the campaign would be suspended

pending determination of the new Nationalist party government's attitude toward Indian segregation.<sup>14</sup> The Nationalist government refused to meet with the NIC and reaffirmed its support of racial segregation, but the resistance movement was not resumed.

The resistance movement had not achieved its immediate goal of forcing the repeal of the Land Tenure Act. It had also failed to benefit from the enthusiasm evident during the campaign's early stages. Although a membership of 35,000 was still claimed in 1948, the NIC had not formally recruited any new members since 1945.<sup>15</sup> Naicker doubted the reliability of many volunteers who had joined the movement out of "frustration and hope" rather than any real practical understanding" of the difficulties of the struggle. He admitted that resistance had failed to create sustained support from the people. At the campaign's end, the NIC had "lost support."<sup>16</sup>

#### Aftermath of Resistance: Unity with the ANC

Confrontationists were more successful in achieving a strategic goal that did not require the immediate approval of the Indian community. In March, 1947, Dadoo and Naicker joined with Dr. A. B. Xuma, president of the ANC, to sign a joint statement of principle and pledging cooperation in their future political activities. The common goals were similar to those of the NEUF and placed the organizations in the "no-compromise" position advocated by Dadoo since 1939. The African and Indian Congresses agreed to work for:

- "full franchise" regardless of race
- "equal economic and industrial rights and opportunities"
- "the removal of all land restrictions against non-Europeans"

- " . . . the abolition of pass laws against the African people, and the Provincial barriers against the Indians"
- "the removal of all discriminatory and oppressive legislation from the Statute Book"

17

Few Africans had participated in the 1946 resistance, either before or after the Dadoo-Naicker-Xuma pact. Many were reported to have volunteered, but only a few were actually used.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, a beginning had been made in achieving an alliance that confrontationists considered vital to their eventual success against White racial legislation. It was, said Y. A. Cachalia in the Transvaal, a "first step" toward the eventual liberation of all non-Whites. Four years after the end of the Natal resistance, the Indian and African Congresses began their first major joint campaign, in defiance of several pieces of racial legislation implementing the Nationalist party's apartheid policy.

#### 1952: Leaders Without Followers

If the segregation legislation introduced by the Smuts government in the 1940's had been expected to arouse Indians to mass political action, the legislation of the Nationalist government should have been an even more effective stimulant. The Group Areas Act of 1950 was designed not only to "peg the existing situation", but also to "remove the penetration (of White areas) which has already taken place."<sup>19</sup> For Indians this meant possible dislocation from areas declared White, African or Coloured. Commercial as well as residential relocation was anticipated. The prospects for accommodation with the Government had decreased. Implementation of apartheid, according to one Nationalist representative, was a case of life and death."<sup>20</sup>

Congress politicians had been relatively free to conduct their political work under the Smuts government. The Nationalists, however, resolved to curb the activities of groups which advocated the end of White supremacy. Their first step in this direction was passage of the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. The new law empowered the Minister of Justice to ban from politics individuals or organizations believed to be aiding the aims of communism. The Communist party dissolved itself and many former communists were subsequently banned from membership in other political organizations. Non-communists who had been allied with the communists were also subject to banning. The Suppression of Communism Act was used to ban several Indian militants during the 1950's, including both Dadoo, who was a communist, and Naicker, who was not. The impact of this on Indian political organizing will be considered later.

To combat these and other apartheid laws, African and Indian leaders formed in August 1951, a Joint Planning Council to coordinate their political work. The Council announced that if the Government did not respond to an ultimatum to repeal the offensive legislation, the Indian and African Congresses would begin a nation-wide civil disobedience campaign. A movement on a grand-scale was envisioned:

"A substantial form of mass action will be necessary which will gradually embrace larger groups of people, permeate both the urban and rural areas, and make it possible for us to organize, discipline and lead the people in a planned manner."

21

The Council statement revealed that the proposed campaign was designed to accomplish more than the repeal of a few specific legislative acts. Congress leaders also planned to expand their organizations, giving them a

greater ability after the campaign's conclusion to "organize, discipline, and lead the people." Additional campaigns were considered necessary even if the Defiance campaign was successful, for the ultimate objective was political equality with Whites.<sup>22</sup>

The Defiance campaign, conducted between June, 1952 and April, 1953, received considerable international publicity. By its conclusion, more than 8,500 people had been arrested throughout South Africa for breaking a variety of laws. Approximately 300 of these occurred in Natal. Determination of the exact number of individuals arrested is difficult, for in many cases the same people were arrested more than once. The reasons for the poor turnout in Natal are considered below. The NIC solicited Indian participation by stressing the dangers to Indian homes and businesses from the population resettlement required by the Group Areas Act. Debi Singh, general-secretary of the NIC, visited branches to educate Indians to the possible effects of Group Areas "so that they can be mobilized" for resistance. His speeches also emphasized the necessity of working with other non-Whites against all aspects of apartheid.<sup>23</sup>

Although Indians were expected to react enthusiastically against the Group Areas, the NIC was faced with an important tactical disadvantage similar to that of 1946. Most Indians already lived among groups of fellow Indians and it was not yet clear in 1952 which Indians might be forced to move. No group areas were to be demarcated until after government study groups had held hearings in the concerned area. At these hearings, Indians faced with relocation were invited to offer their objections and submit alternate plans. Again Indians had to choose between the two alternatives that had always existed when segregation legislation was introduced:

"cooperation in the hope of securing some concession, and non-cooperation, either in an attempt to defeat the plans, or as a matter of principle."<sup>24</sup>

The resistance of 1946 had not succeeded in defeating the Land Tenure Act. Indian accommodationists in the Natal Indian Organization now argued that new defiance would have equally little impact. Instead of resistance, they believed Indians should offer their own plans for the formation of group areas, in an effort to minimize population moves. Since few meetings of the Group Areas Boards had as yet been held, it was unclear that accommodation would be a less effective policy than confrontation.

#### NIC: Organization in Decay

In addition to divided Indian opinion, planners of the Defiance campaign were burdened with another serious problem: the condition of the NIC. At the close of the 1946 resistance, the NIC had claimed nearly thirty active branches. By the beginning of 1952, the organization had deteriorated to such an extent that the general-secretary could cite only two branches that were functioning "fairly regularly".<sup>25</sup> The decline was not attributed directly to any political defeats or to competition from the NIO, but simply to a "lack of political activity" since 1948. Branch inactivity was reflected at the provincial level, where absences were frequent among branch representatives to the NIC Working Committee. Several branches were not represented at all.

With such an organization, the NIC was poorly prepared to "mobilize" anyone. It had leaders enough, but their following, to whatever extent it still existed, was comatose. Before implementing the Joint Planning Council's plan to "organize, discipline and lead the people" the NIC had

first to revitalize itself. That its success in so doing was limited provides one answer to what Leo Kuper termed the "remarkable" lack of Indian participation in the Defiance campaign.<sup>26</sup> A second answer may have been the absence of an immediate threat from the Group Areas Act. Finally, the absence of branch organization meant the NIC had done little to implement its alliance with the ANC.

The NIC did not begin the Defiance movement in Durban until more than two months after the national resistance had started.<sup>27</sup> Less than 300 resisters were recruited in the subsequent eight months of the campaign. The limited activity allowed Natal police to ignore much of the protest, thus depriving the NIC of the publicity and sympathy frequent arrests might have generated. One group of twenty resisters at Durban's main railway station was unable to attract police attention until it left the station and individuals removed the armbands identifying them as resisters. They were then arrested for curfew violations.<sup>28</sup>

The Defiance campaign was effectively halted by the Government's response to riots in East London and on the Rand. The violence was blamed on Congress political agitation. The Government was able to gain passage of two new laws--the Criminal Laws Amendment Act and the Public Safety Act--which provided greater penalties for those advocating or financially aiding civil disobedience. The number of volunteers for resistance fell quickly and in April, 1953, Congress leaders decided to end the campaign.<sup>29</sup>

The impact of the Defiance campaign on the NIC was mixed. The general-secretary reported that the number of active branches rose to seventeen during the latter half of 1952 and that attendance at Working Committee meetings improved. Most members of the Executive Committee, on the other hand, did

not treat the campaign as a serious political event. Decisions of that committee were carried out by a "few willing members", while most did not "throw their full weight in the struggle".<sup>30</sup>

The extent to which fifteen branches were actually moved from their lethargy is also questionable. During the first two months of 1953, the reactivated branches were asked to conduct membership drives to capitalize on enthusiasm generated during the movement. Whatever enthusiasm had existed, its duration was apparently short. According to the general-secretary's report to the 1953 provincial conference, only three acted "with any amount of consistency."

Comparison of the NIC's political effort in 1946 and 1952 leaves only the conclusion that the strength of the NIC was declining. The number of resistance recruits had fallen from 2,000 during the 1946-1948 events to less than three hundred in 1952. The latter figure includes an undetermined number of Africans. Even allowing for the shorter duration of the 1952 Defiance campaign, the ability of the NIC to mobilize political activists was not indicative of an organization claiming mass support. Despite the rhetoric of mass politics, NIC militants committed to the confrontationist policy remained an elite group within the Indian community.

The prospects for a stronger organization after 1942 were less auspicious than after the 1946 resistance. With passage of the Criminal Laws Amendment Act and Public Safety Act, the Nationalist government had given notice of its determination to eliminate the non-parliamentary opposition to its apartheid policy. The Defiance campaign was the last planned in relative freedom by Congress officials. After 1952, the leadership was increasingly subject to bannings and arrests that limited

their participation in politics. Under these limitations, Indian radicals began to prepare for their final large-scale campaign with the ANC. Preparations for the Congress of the People in 1954 and 1955 emphasized the defects present in 1952.

1954: "The People Shall Govern"

Following the Defiance campaign, the Indian Congresses shared in the public optimism voiced by Congress Alliance spokesmen. Norman Levy's conclusions are typical:

"The campaign had been from its inception a popular mass movement against oppression. It had involved considerable hardships and sacrifice. Congress had grown by leaps and bounds, matured in the process and emerged strongly on the offensive. A vital unity had been achieved amongst the Indian, African and Coloured elements of the population, and the eyes of the world--and of white South Africans--had been open to African aspirations."<sup>31</sup>

The SAIC claimed that the campaign had increased "the political consciousness of the non-white people" and established the Congresses as "the true spokesmen of the majority of the people of South Africa."<sup>32</sup>

The private evaluation of the national Congress leadership was more pessimistic. The National Action Committee (NAC), successor to the Joint Planning Council, reported to the ANC and SAIC in December, 1953, on the "regrettable state of affairs which has developed since the Defiance Campaign." According to the NAC, activities to increase mass support had virtually ceased during 1953, due in large part to the banning of Congress leaders and the discouragement of increased penalties for breaking apartheid laws. Inactivity had led to "the growth of confusion, vacillation,

misunderstanding, disagreements and diversionary tactics" within the entire Congress movement.<sup>33</sup>

To halt this decay, the NAC proposed a new campaign, based on "concrete conditions" affecting Congress members and potential recruits. It was hoped that new political activity would renew the organizational strength of the Congress Alliance members, and in particular make the branches "live and active units".

To accomplish this and at the same time avoid the new criminal penalties, the NAC recommended adoption of a proposal from Professor Z. K. Mathews, chairman of the Cape ANC. Mathews had suggested that the Congresses sponsor an assembly of representatives for all South African racial groups to draft a "Freedom Charter." The Charter would outline an alternative to the apartheid system. The NAC envisioned no direct confrontation with Government authority in preparing for the assembly, although the Freedom Charter accepted at the Congress of the People in June, 1955, was not compatible with White opinion:

" Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws; All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country; The rights of the people shall be the same, regardless of race, colour or sex; All bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government."

34

The NAC's proposal was adopted within three months by all Congress Alliance members. Representative of the ANC, SAIC, COD, and SACPO selected a joint planning committee in March, 1954, to plan the campaign.

The Congress of the People was the most ambitious project the Congresses

had yet devised. In addition to the public goal of adopting the proposed Freedom Charter, Congress leaders were attempting to create a permanent political organization separate from that of the national Congresses. The planning committee was changed to a National Action Council of the Congress of the People, with an equal representation from each of the Congresses. The eventual goal was establishment of similar multi-racial committees at the provincial level. Eventually it was hoped they would exist "on a town, suburb, factory or street basis."<sup>35</sup>

The provincial committees were the key to the plan. They were to convene provincial conferences to inaugurate the COP movement. Local committees established after the provincial conferences were expected to conduct extensive local propaganda. The Congresses themselves were expected to provide the major initial support for the new organizations, but membership was not limited to those already enrolled in a Congress unit.

The weak link in this plan, of course, was the Congress movement itself. Where Congress branches were strong, it was anticipated that the new COP organizations would be strong. Where Congress was weak, the new organization would be weakest. The NAC recognized that the poor organization and finances prevalent among many Congress units prevented the use of paid organizers during the campaign. Had such organizers been available, they would have been sufficiently occupied restoring Congress itself. As an alternative, it was hoped that initial enthusiasm against apartheid and for the proposed Freedom Charter would attract "thousands of new active workers" to the Congress movement who would volunteer their time to organize additional recruits.<sup>36</sup> Albert Luthuli, president of the ANC, called for 50,000 of these "Freedom Volunteers" as the nucleus of the new organization. Congress

appeals emphasized that Freedom Volunteers were being recruited not to begin a new Defiance campaign, but to work among the people creating mass support for the Congress movement.

Within the NIC, opposition to the COP plans existed. Campaign preparations were criticized because the NIC organizations and finances were weak, because the general goal of adopting a "freedom" charter was too vague to attract Indian support and because the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights made adoption of a Freedom Charter redundant.<sup>38</sup>

Confrontationists answered their critics by claiming that the COP campaign would strengthen multi-racial opposition to apartheid and provide national coordination of individual Congress campaigns against different aspects of apartheid.<sup>39</sup> Naicker maintained the campaign was important because it would test the ability and develop the self-confidence of new leaders. The formation of COP groups at all levels would also increase the political education of participants, eliminating the "political immaturity" that Naicker said had plagued earlier campaigns.<sup>40</sup>

The National Action Council planned the campaign to proceed in three distinct phases. Congress organizations would first establish the provincial and local COP committees. The local committees would next sponsor meetings to determine the grievances of the people and explain how implementation of Congress goals could alleviate them. Finally, delegates to the COP would be elected. The first phase was scheduled to end by January, 1955; the second by February. Delegate selection would occur soon after.<sup>41</sup>

Government bannings of Congress leaders prevented close adherence to the schedule. During October and November, nearly the entire NIC executive committee and secretariat was banned from political activity under the

Suppression of Communism Act. Forced to resign from the NIC were George Naicker, Debi Singh, M. P. Naicker, the organizing secretary, Ismail Meer, J. N. Singh and Fatima Meer. Naicker regarded the bannings as a "grave" setback to the COP work.<sup>42</sup>

The precise gravity of the bannings on the COP preparations is impossible to estimate, but during 1955 the campaign was marked by a lack of communications between the NAC and its provincial counterparts and a failure to meet the schedule established. When Natal was repeating an "urgent" request to the NAC for posters and bulletins to publicize the COP, the NAC was on the same day informing provincial organizations that they had to prepare their own publicity materials.<sup>43</sup> When the NAC was able to supply a leaflet "of great importance", local organizations were asked to duplicate it for distribution because the NAC had no funds.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the campaign, queries were common between provincial and national headquarters and provincial and local units seeking to determine progress in recruiting volunteers, educating the public, and raising money. Few were answered.

By March, 1955, the NAC had as yet received so few demands for inclusion in the Charter that two additional months were allowed for canvassing the people. Anticipating further delays, the date for election of delegates was postponed indefinitely: elections could be held "until very late."<sup>45</sup> Supporters of the campaign were becoming disillusioned. New Age warned Congress leaders that although the organizational hopes had not been met, additional delay would dissipate any enthusiasm already generated: "indefinite delays and procrastinations have the most harmful effects upon the people's movements, leading to a loss of enthusiasm and confidence in the movement and its leaders."<sup>46</sup>

The New Age criticism was justified in Natal. Provincial leaders were unable to organize the elaborate structure originally anticipated by the NAC. As late as May, 1955, one month before the COP convened, the Natal COP committee requested organizers to "please keep in touch" with the Durban Secretariat and to "let them know what you are doing, how many meetings you are calling, how many area drives you have made, how many delegates you have organized."<sup>47</sup> In the final days before the COP, organization was abandoned in favor of spontaneity:

"Who is to organize all this?--You are. . . Start by yourself; talk to your neighbors and your work-mates. Organize a little meeting for them. Then get them to do the same in other places. . . But You Do It! When is this to be done? Now, Right Away, Today. There is no time to lose. Delegates have to be elected; money for their fares collected. So do it now!"

48

The COP campaign in Natal eventually produced 300 delegates. The infusion of new supporters into the Congress Alliance did not materialize. According to the NAC, the number of local committees formed to conduct the COP drive was "negligible," although it believed that some existing Congress organizations had been strengthened.<sup>49</sup> The lack of an efficient organization before the campaign began must be considered an important reason for its failure. Volunteers that were recruited to canvass for the COP in mid-1954 were not organized, if at all, until April of 1955. In the interval, many lost interest.

#### NIC: The Decline Continues

As in 1952, the NIC in 1954 was ill-prepared to provide leadership of

a mass campaign. The SAIC's optimistic interpretation of the Defiance campaign had not been translated into new strength for its Natal affiliate. The NIC general-secretary reported to the 1954 provincial conference that only 450 new members had been added during the past year. The increased membership was distributed among just five branches, Overport, Sydenham, Merebank, Mayville and Bellair. Inactive branches at Clare-Estate and Verulam had been revived, but two others had become inactive in 1953. At Glencoe, the branch chairman and secretary had refused to support the NIC's complete opposition to the Group Areas Act. Durban branches, where the Naicker militants had originally been strongest, were criticized for leaving problems for the solution of provincial leaders, with subsequent inactivity by the branches themselves.<sup>50</sup>

The NIC's condition might have been a prototype for the NAC's worry over the "regrettable state of affairs" in the Congress movement. Attendance at Working Committee meetings followed the general branch inactivity. Its work was termed "disappointing" because poor representation prevented provincial leaders from communicating regularly with branch officials and "hammering out the programme of Congress . . ." The Secretariat and Executive committees, dominated by former Anti-Segregationists and Nationalists had met frequently but their members were talking primarily among themselves. Without a functioning Working Committee, executive decisions could not be passed to the branches.<sup>51</sup> Once again, the NIC was faced with the necessity of revitalizing its own membership before it could be expected to contribute to the COP campaign.

The decay of the NIC organization had persisted despite its increased opposition to the Group Areas Act. At meetings throughout Durban, NIC

speakers charged that the City Council's proposed resettlement scheme was designed to eliminate Indians from the city. A common warning was that at least 100,000 Indians would be forced to move and that the Indian community would lose 9£ million in property.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, the NIC could not maintain a united front among the Indians. Its old accommodationist opponents in the NIO did not accept total opposition to Group Areas and were submitting alternative proposals to the Land Tenure Boards. The Overport NIC branch reported that Indians were "rushing to purchase land in areas designated by the City Council for Indian settlement."<sup>53</sup>

The efforts of the NIC to defeat or delay the final determination of Group Areas was threatened when Land Tenure Boards in Natal began to exclude its representatives from meetings on the grounds that the NIC was not an "interested party", but sought only to prevent the Boards from functioning.<sup>54</sup> The NIC challenged the exclusion in court, but at the start of the COP campaign its prospects for defending the Indian community against what many seemed to regard as an inevitable process must have been in doubt.

The NIC itself was not strengthened by the COP campaign. Between August, 1954 and May, 1955, the Natal Action Committee was able to raise only £ 70 for COP work. At the end of the campaign, the NIC was forced to supply virtually all funds for the transport of delegates to the COP, some £275 of £315. At the movement's end the NIC was in debt for more than £2,000.<sup>55</sup> Instead of announcing a renewal, the general-secretary's report to the NIC provincial conference in 1956 reported that since the COP, branch activity had undergone a "steady decline" and that no meaningful estimate of active NIC members was possible. Of the fifteen branches remaining active, most were considered to be "in a serious state organizationally"

and virtually none were soliciting new members.<sup>56</sup>

#### Postscript: One Million Signatures Campaign

Congress leaders made a final attempt to capitalize on the publicity received from the Congress of the People. National executives of the Congress Alliance agreed to begin a follow-up campaign to collect the signatures of one million apartheid opponents by the first anniversary of the COP, June, 1956. To coordinate the drive, the COP's National Action Council was continued as the National Consultative Committee (NCC) and the titles of the provincial Action Councils were similarly altered. The campaign was declared without the prior approval of provincial Congress conferences because the national executives believed their subordinate units would not begin to work for signatures quickly enough.<sup>57</sup> New Age noted that "to reach its goal, workers would have to gather signatures at the rate of "3,000 per day, every day, beginning tomorrow."<sup>58</sup>

The NCC hoped to use the signature drive to complete the work of the COP campaign. Workers were expected to coordinate their activities with local issues such as Group Areas to explain how achieving the goals of the Freedom Charter would solve the "everyday" problems of the people. At the same time, new Congress recruits were anticipated from the canvassing.<sup>59</sup> Natal was assigned a quote of 150,000 signatures.

Considering the limited organization activity in Natal during the COP movement, it is difficult to believe Congress leaders expected the new project to succeed. Nevertheless the public posture was optimistic. The SAIC announced its intention to gather the signatures of all adult Indians; Naicker maintained the goal could be achieved "if every Congressmen sets

out to get these signatures with energy and enthusiasm and convinced of the success the signature campaign must achieve."<sup>60</sup> Despite these exhortations, the campaign failed. Congress groups in the Transvaal collected 50,000 signatures from a target of 450,000. No figures were reported from the other provinces, but the NCC doubted that more than 50,000 had been gathered from Natal, the Cape province and the Orange Free State combined.

The poor response from the provinces prompted the NCC to speculate about whether or not it was "really regarded as necessary in the eyes of the constituent bodies."<sup>61</sup> In Natal the NIC had for the most part ignored the signature drive. Congress branches were criticized by the NIC general-secretary for assuming that the Durban Consultative Committee would conduct the campaign by itself:

It must be stressed that it is not the function of the Consultative Committee to organize the campaign to popularize the Freedom Charter. It is merely to function to coordinate the work that is being done by the different national organizations . . . The Consultative Committee has not the organizational apparatus at its disposal to wage any campaign of its own . . . Congress cannot divest itself of the responsibility for organising the Freedom Charter campaign by loading such work into the Consultative Committee and then forgetting all about the matter."

62

At the end of the campaign, the NCC reported that it had been "rather a very ambitious scheme, taking into consideration the state of our organizational machinery."

#### Commentary

Support for Naicker's confrontation policy in 1945 had been great

enough that his opponents within the NIC failed to contest the election of his faction to leadership. Ten years later the NIC was characterized by branches that were either dissolving completely or ceasing to participate in provincial meetings. Throughout the campaigns of the 1950's not more than five branches could be expected to respond to the directives of NIC leaders. What had happened?

The most obvious answer must also be considered the most important. Beginning with the resistance of 1946, the NIC had failed to demonstrate an ability to effectively challenge the South African government. Segregation was not popular with Indians. The NIC had been consistent in voicing its complete opposition to segregation, but by the mid-1950's its policy had produced no indication of compromise from the Nationalist government. According to Indian Opinion, the ineffectiveness of the NIC on this issue caused Indians to ask "Why should we join Congress? What have they to offer us when our life possessions are in jeopardy?" The government's promise of improved housing and social services at new Indian housing sites was an attractive alternative to a defense of overcrowded slum areas.<sup>63</sup>

A second cause must also be considered. NIC leaders never claimed an ability to defeat the Group Areas plan without acting in concert with the ANC against the entire apartheid system. The idea of such an alliance deviated from Indian political tradition since the time of Gandhi. Relations between the African and Indian communities in Natal must be considered in any analysis of the NIC's failure. If Indians were reluctant to work closely with Africans, their approval of the Defiance and COP campaigns must have been doubtful. Victory for the Congress Alliance in all probability meant

replacing White domination with African superiority. Indian reluctance to accept this will be considered next.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Guardian, January 10, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., August 1, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1946, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Star, September 3, 1946.

<sup>5</sup>The Guardian, May 9, 1946, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., August 22, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., September 12, 1946, p. 3. Of 754 resisters arrested by September, 400 were classified as workers, 31 as farmers, 8 as teachers, 7 as students, 3 as priests, 27 as businessmen, 4 as doctors, 8 as tailors, 24 as housewives, 4 as dressmakers, 22 as clerks, 11 as shopkeepers, 3 as photographers and one was a city councillor from Cape Town.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., December 12, 1946, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>For a review of the United Nations session, see Pachai, The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, pp. 200-206.

<sup>10</sup>The statistics have been compiled from various issues of Indian Opinion and The Guardian, 1946-1948, reporting the total resisters arrested from month to month.

<sup>11</sup>Indian Opinion, February 28, 1947, p. 69.

<sup>12</sup>The Guardian, April 17, 1947, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>The number of arrests was obtained from several issues of The Guardian, January-April, 1948.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1948, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Ninth Annual Provincial Conference, June, 1956, General-Secretary's Annual Report, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>George Naicker, Self-Discipline for Volunteers of the Congress of the People, unpublished speech delivered at the Natal Conference of the Congress of the People, September 5, 1954.

<sup>17</sup>Indian Opinion, March 14, 1947, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup>Statement by Ismail Meer printed in The Guardian, September 23, 1946, p. 5.

- <sup>19</sup>Dr. T. E. Donges, Minister of the Interior, Hansard, May 21, 1951, cols. 9547-9548.
- <sup>20</sup>Dr. A. J. R. Van Ryn, Hansard, May 21, 1951, col. 1457.
- <sup>21</sup>The plan of the Joint Planning Council is included in the testimony of I. A. Cachalia, Treason Trail, p. 14,993.
- <sup>22</sup>Statement by Yusef Dadoo in The Guardian, April 17, 1952, p. 1.
- <sup>23</sup>The Guardian, November 15, 1951, p. 2.
- <sup>24</sup>Leo Kuper, Durban: A Study in Racial Ecology, p. 180.
- <sup>25</sup>Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1953, General Secretary's Annual Report, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>26</sup>Leo Kuper, Passive Resistance in South Africa, p. 123.
- <sup>27</sup>The delay was anticipated by H. Selby Msimang, provincial secretary of the Natal ANC, when he termed the proposed starting date "suicidal and sheer lunacy" because neither the ANC nor NIC was properly organized. The Guardian, January 17, 1952, p. 8. Msimang had been an opponent of the African-Indian alliance.
- <sup>28</sup>Advance, December 4, 1952, p. 8.
- <sup>29</sup>Report of the National Action Committee to the Secretary-General of the African National Congress and the Joint Honorary Secretaries of the South African Indian Congress. December 5, 1953. Typed document, unpublished.
- <sup>30</sup>Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1953, General-Secretary's Annual Report, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>31</sup>Norman Levy, "8,000 to Jail", Fighting Talk (June, 1961), p. 15.
- <sup>32</sup>South African Indian Congress, Agenda, 21st Conference, July, 1954, p. 10.
- <sup>33</sup>Report of the National Action Committee.
- <sup>34</sup>The complete Freedom Charter is reprinted in Africa South, (April-June, 1957), p. 13-16.
- <sup>35</sup>National Action Council of the Congress of the People, Report to the Joint Executives of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, and the SACOD, p. 1.
- <sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

- <sup>37</sup>Speaking Together: Congress of the People Bulletin, No. 2, August, 1954.
- <sup>38</sup>Ahmed I. Bhoola, "Congress of the People", Indian Opinion, July 23, 1954, p. 340.
- <sup>39</sup>Yusef Dadoo, "Congress of the People, An Historical Step Forward", Advance, Auguts 12, 1954, p. 2.
- <sup>40</sup>Naicker, Self-Discipline for Volunteers of the Congress of the People.
- <sup>41</sup>Letter from Y. A. Cachalia for the Secretariat of the NAC to "All Provincial and Regional Committees", December 20, 1954.
- <sup>42</sup>Dr. Naicker's Message to the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Natal Indian Congress, unpublished report delivered in absential, November 20, 1954.
- <sup>43</sup>Letter from N. T. Naicker to the Secretary of the NAC, January 19, 1955 and Letter from P. Beyleveld, for the NAC Secretariat to "All Regions and Provinces", January 19, 1955.
- <sup>44</sup>Letter from National Action Council to "All Regions and Provinces", Janaury 31, 1955.
- <sup>45</sup>Letter from National Action Council to "All Regional and Provincial Executives of the ANC, SAIC, COD and SACPO," March 3, 1955.
- <sup>46</sup>New Age, March 17, 1955, p. 2.
- <sup>47</sup>The Call, special issue, May, 1955.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup>National Action Council of the COP. Report of the National Action Council of the Congress of the People to the Joint Executives of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO and the SACOD. No date, but prepared after the COP.
- <sup>50</sup>Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Seventh Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1954, General-Secretary's Annual Report, pp. 32-33.
- <sup>51</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup>Advance, March 5, 1953, p. 1.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., December 10, 1953, p. 4.
- <sup>54</sup>NIC News, May 20, 1954.

<sup>55</sup> Natal Indian Congress, Statement of Income and Expenditures Re: Transport of Delegates to the C. O. P.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., Agenda Book, Ninth Annual Provincial Conference, General-Secretary's Organizational Report, pp. 1-2.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from National Consultative Committee of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, SACOD to "All Regions and Provinces", January 19, 1955.

<sup>58</sup> New Age, August 11, 1955, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> National Consultative Committee, Plan of Campaign for the Collection of Signatures for the Freedom Charter, reprinted as Annexure B5 of South African Indian Congress, Agenda 22nd Conference, October, 1956. See also Walter Sisulu, "Forward with the Freedom Charter", in Fighting Talk, September 11, 1955, pp. 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> For SAIC opinion, see New Age, September 15, 1955, p. 1. Naicker is quoted in New Age, September 22, 1955, p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> National Consultative Committee, Report to the Joint Executives of the African National Congress, S. A. Indian Congress, S. A. Congress of Democrats and the S. A. Congress of Trade Unions. Reprinted as Annexure B6 to South African Indian Congress, Agenda, 22nd Conference, October, 1956.

<sup>62</sup> Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Ninth Annual Provincial Conference, General-Secretary's Organizational Report, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Indian Opinion, May 11, 1956, p. 183.

## CHAPTER V

## THE AFRO-INDIAN ALLIANCE

A consideration of relations between the Indian and African communities is essential to an evaluation of the NIC's contribution to the Congress Alliance. Apartheid is based on presumed racial differences. It stresses that within a multi-racial society, racial peace is best preserved by maintaining as little contact as possible between the different racial communities. To a great extent, apartheid is based on the reality of White political experience in South Africa. Before the franchise was legally limited to Whites, for instance, education and property requirements were manipulated to restrict the number of African and Indian voters. Similarly, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 did not establish a segregated educational system, but instead altered the curricula and control of already segregated schools. In short, apartheid can be interpreted as the natural result of a persistent White effort to monopolize political power. In their early political activity, Indians fought to share this monopoly, but did not protest anti-African regulation preceding the elaborate apartheid legislation of the Nationalist party government in the 1950's.

The Congress Alliance represented a repudiation of South African political history. Alliance leaders attempted to build a multi-racial organization in which each racial group received equal representation. Various Congress officials often spoke of forming a non-racial organization recruiting members without regard to race, but this did not materialize. The alternate structure of an alliance based on racially exclusive organizations was itself an acknowledgement that racial ties were

fundamental to political organization. A non-racial organization inevitably would have been dominated by the numerically superior Africans. This was regarded by Congress leaders, African and Indian alike, as too great a departure from South African tradition to be politically acceptable in the 1950's. The multi-racial format was advantageous for the COD and SAIC, for it gave Whites and Indians a representation on national committees that did not reflect the inferiority of their membership to that of the ANC. It was thus possible for Indians and Whites to overrule their African allies in the Congress Alliance. Dissatisfaction with this system was at least partially responsible for the formation of the Pan-African Congress in 1959, an organization advocating a form of "black power" several years before that term became fashionable in the United States.

Considering their desire to eliminate White exclusiveness in South African politics, Indian militants such as Dadoo and Naicker understandably were adamant in their support of a multi-racial alliance. It was obvious by the late 1940's that Whites were not going to extend the privilege of political participation to the Indian community. Without joining the ANC, the Indian Congresses had no viable alternative to accommodation with the Whites, for their numbers were simply too few. A multi-racial rather than a non-racial alliance was also to their benefit, for it enhanced their prospects of national political leadership by guaranteeing equality with the larger ANC.

Potential advantages in the Congress Alliance also existed for Africans. As the racial majority, Africans might in theory have been able to overturn apartheid without Indian or White allies, but ANC leaders

believed multi-racialism a more responsible policy. Moderates such as Albert Luthuli were anxious to prove that the defeat of apartheid would not destroy the positions of Indians and Whites in South Africa. The Congress Alliance was designed in part to demonstrate this. It was also hoped that political unity with Indians and Whites would bring to the ANC organizational experience, funds and international exposure unavailable to a purely African movement.

At the national level, the alliance was established relatively easily when Dadoo, Naicker and Xuma signed the "pact of the doctors" in 1947, pledging mutual cooperation between the TIC, NIC and ANC. The alliance remained intact until the banning of the ANC in 1961. National and provincial conferences of the member organizations were addressed regularly by representatives of the opposite race. Resolutions promising continued racial cooperation were common, and after 1951 a multi-racial national executive coordinated major Congress campaigns. Congress Alliance officials frequently proclaimed that they had ended racial problems within their organization.

To effectively pursue its goals, however, the Congress Alliance required more than racial amity among a score of national leaders. The national executives were faced with the task of reproducing their national cooperation at the provincial and local level and here the Natal experience indicates they were less than successful. While the Anti-Segregationists preached political cooperation with Africans in the 1940's, the Indian and African communities of Durban found themselves in an increasingly competitive struggle over housing and trade privileges.

White officials recognized the value of maintaining a rivalry which Congress leaders claimed existed only because it grew from a social system dominated by the White values of racial separateness. Whether or not the root cause of Indo-African hostility was inherent racism or the prevailing economic and social structure, rivalry existed that endangered the NIC-ANC alliance.

### The Conditions of Rivalry

There had been opposition to the "doctors' pact" as early as 1948 from at least one ANC branch in Natal that asked the Minister of the Interior to segregate Indians from Africans because "there could never be mutual understanding between the two races." Dr. Xuma and Oliver Tambo, president of the ANC Youth League, publicly refuted the branch, but Tambo admitted that relations between the two groups appeared to "verge on the critical" because Africans felt they were being "preyed upon" by Indian merchants and landlords.<sup>1</sup>

Despite Tambo's warning, Congress leaders of both races professed surprise when less than a year later in January, 1949, several days of rioting in Durban by Africans against Indians left 123 dead and 20,000 homeless. The Guardian reflected the general public shock among both African and Indian leaders when it commented that "Up until Thursday evening there was nothing to indicate that there was any deep feeling of resentment for the Indians."<sup>2</sup> If this was indeed the private attitude of Congress officials, they were guilty of considerable self-delusion for the conditions breeding racial animosity in Durban had been developing

for some time.

During World War II thousands of Africans migrated to Durban for employment in the expanding war economy. Suitable housing was non-existent and most Africans found accommodations rented to them by Indian landlords in the Indian Cato Manor district. A contemporary housing survey sponsored by the University of Natal described living conditions for most Africans:

"Among the Indians, as in every community, there are slum landlords, and today in this area on rented sites between 45,000 and 50,000 urban Natives live in congested shacks and lean-to's . . . Some are decrepit structures of tin, mud walls and sacking which give little shelter from rain, wind and cold. The shacks are grouped in huddled clusters, often clinging precariously to the steep lides of hills in crazy and chaotic patterns."  
3

Following the riots, Africans attempted to relieve their congestion by occupying housing vacated by Indian refugees, beginning a continuing conflict over the allocation of non-White land in Durban. The NIC was in a difficult position, for the issue was naturally divisive to Afro-Indian unity. Initial NIC opposition to a proposal that the Durban City Council purchase Indian land in Cato Manor for the construction of African housing was criticized by Africans. The newspaper Ilanga Lase Natal argued that the African need for increased living space was immediate and required satisfaction even if Indians were the victims:

"The Africans do not want to see Indians deprived of their land . . . They are interested in the facts of the situation. And the facts are that some land belonging to somebody must be taken and used. Others have land and to spare; the African has nothing at all. That is the bitter truth whether we like it or

not. Meanwhile the position is deteriorating further and the volcano might explode at any moment"<sup>4</sup>

The belief that Indians had more land than they needed was widespread among Africans. The prospects for future racial harmony were considered dim if a "compromise was not reached that took at least some Indian land for African use."<sup>5</sup> Under such pressure, the NIC altered its opposition to the confiscation of Indian land and supported development of several hundred acres in Cato Manor for African housing. It continued to maintain that this was a less than ideal solution and recommended instead the building of African communities on agricultural land to the north and south of Durban.

Predictably, the changed NIC policy was welcomed by Africans as an example of "exemplary statesmanship", but attacked within the Indian community as "a stab in the back of the Indian people".<sup>6</sup> The disagreement persisted throughout the Defiance campaign and was resolved only when the Durban City Council recommended in 1953 that both Africans and Indians be removed from Cato Manor and the area declared White under the Group Areas Act.

In addition to the housing problem, friction was also evident from African resentment of the Indian monopoly on commercial life. After the 1949 riots, Africans declared a boycott of Indian shops and bus lines and asked the ANC and Durban city officials to pressure Indians into selling their businesses to Africans as proof of their goodwill.<sup>7</sup> In the first months of 1949, more than 200 unlicensed traders replaced Indian expellees in Cato Manor. Some subsequently received legitimate trading licenses,

but five years later at least seventy illegitimate traders remained.<sup>8</sup>

Indian businessmen generally resisted the African competition and claimed that their monopolies were not a factor in causing the riots. The statement of the Indian Bus Owners Association following new riots in 1953 was typical:

"The Bus Owners Association maintains that the feelings between the bus owners and the thousands of Africans living in Cato Manor has always been cordial and still continues to be. The riot is not the work of Africans legitimately living in Cato Manor, but is the work of irresponsible Africans who do not belong in the area."<sup>9</sup>

Indian businessmen were often willing to associate with their African counterparts, but were less willing to accommodate the "irresponsible" African. Hilda Kuper determined after a survey in the mid-1950's that contact between the African and Indian middle class was increasing slowly, but noted also that the "merchant elite" was indifferent to any Africans not considered "educated" and Westernized.<sup>10</sup> Most Cato Manor Africans were of course not part of the Westernized middle class. Jordan Ngubane claimed that discrimination by Indian businessmen against all classes of Africans was common in movie theaters, hotels, restaurants and employment hiring.<sup>11</sup> Moses Kotane, an African communist and Congress official, blamed the riots in part on the "contemptuous" attitude of many Indians for Africans.<sup>12</sup>

Most Indian businessmen supported the NIO. The political consequences of their anti-Africanism, however, were shared by all Indians, including the NIC. According to Ngubane, Africans regarded the NIO as more

representative of Indian opinion than the NIC simply because they had more contact with the merchants of the NIO: "The riots were, in actual fact, a demonstration against the merchant class, but then the African regards the merchant class as the leadership of the Indian community as well."<sup>13</sup> More dramatic is the view of the African writer Bloke Modisane describing the consequences for the Congress Alliance of the Durban African's "simmering hatred" for the Indians:

"It was an intellectual concept not easily equated with the fact that the discrimination suffered at the hands of the Indians was far more intimate than that from the Whites, with whom contact was confined to eight working hours, that the rest of the time was spent in the neighborhood of Indians who resented violently any form of social mobility with Africans".<sup>14</sup>

The accusations of Modisane and Ngubane were acknowledged by some Indians. Manilal Gandhi wrote in Indian Opinion that Ngubane's charges were "unfortunately irrefutable" and that many Indian merchants regarded Africans only as subjects for economic exploitation.<sup>15</sup> Naicker urged Indians to abandon notions of racial superiority, which he claimed were too often evident in their "day to day activities" with Africans.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these communal differences, the Indian and African Congress leaders preserved their unity in the aftermath of the Durban riots. Indians and Africans were asked to surmount the daily problems dividing them and recognize that the riots were caused by the "political, economic and social structure" of apartheid imposed by White authority. To eliminate the causes by defeating apartheid, membership in the ANC and

NIC were encouraged. Naicker and A. W. G. Champion, president of the Natal ANC in 1949, promised to establish local committees to promote "mutual understanding and goodwill" between the two races.<sup>17</sup> An Indian Congress official interviewed after the riots emphasized not the immediate causes of dissension, but the common struggle of African and Indian against the color bar. The Indian people, he said, had "no ill-feeling against the Africans."<sup>18</sup> More than twenty years after the riots, an Indian scholar observed that the riots had created "an era of understanding between Indians and Africans that was sorely wanting before."<sup>19</sup>

#### The Failure of Conciliation

Congress leaders certainly recognized after the riots that their hopes for an effective multi-racial alliance based on mass organizations of Africans and Indians were in jeopardy. The extent of their success in solving inter-communal differences is more doubtful. In the months immediately after the 1949 riot, little local work was done by a joint council established by the Congresses to improve race relations.<sup>20</sup> It was perhaps too soon to expect people who had only recently been killing one another to respond to appeals to join the respective political organizations that advocated unity between them. The immediate demands of the Africans boycotting Indian shops and buses can reasonably be presumed to have had more appeal than the plaintive pleas for cooperation and understanding. The Congresses in fact had no immediate alternative to offer to Africans occupying their homes in Indian areas, or to Indians who wanted their old homes and businesses returned. Since the Congresses were unable to solve the problems separating

their potential supporters, it is not surprising that their committees to improve race relations were inoperative.

The interventions of White authorities sustained African-Indian tension. The Durban City Council's reaction to a national day of protest against the Suppression of Communism Act sponsored by the Congress Alliance in 1950 is indicative. Congress claimed that in Durban sixty percent of the city's 200,000 non-White workers stayed at home on the June 26 protest day. Most were Indians. The response of the City Council was calculated to prevent any further inter-racial cooperation among the city's workers. The Council dismissed 300 Indians and eighty Africans who had not worked on the protest day. The Council also announced a future policy of replacing all Indians leaving the municipal service with Africans, in "appreciation of the responsible and loyal conduct of its Bantu employees, who performed their normal duties on June 26, 1950, thereby distinguishing themselves . . . from the Indian political agitators . . ." <sup>21</sup> In addition to their jobs, the dismissed workers lost unemployment benefits and municipal housing. The firings increased the penalties for participation in political protest beyond the occasional fines levied against the Congress leadership. African and Indian unemployment was high and the prospects for new jobs in 1950 were few. By not joining with Indians, Africans were being rewarded with work as well as housing gained during the riots.

The continuing African-Indian rivalry of the early 1950's in Durban offers an additional reason for the failure of the Defiance campaign there. Indian suspicion of Africans was suggested by one Congress official as a direct cause of the limited Indian participation. <sup>22</sup> A member of the NIC

executive reported that Indians questioned the ability of Africans to resist White-inspired provocation against Indians.<sup>23</sup> The mistrust was not limited to the NIC. Ngubane suggested that ANC leaders did not make a vigorous appeal for African participation because the campaign required close cooperation with the Indian Congress.<sup>24</sup>

An appeal by Luthuli to the Natal ANC suggests the White policy of dividing the potential allies had had some success:

"I have deliberately referred to the need for a multi-racial democratic front because there is much confusion on the subject in Natal, especially as regards the Indians. Some in Natal are being misled by the Indian bogey . . . All people in their struggle seek allies. Africans must get it into their heads that the stumbling block to their progress are (sic) the many discriminatory laws made by a White Parliament and not by Indians. What privileges Indians enjoy which we don't enjoy were given them by a White Parliament. Why blame the recipient and not blame the giver for not giving Africans those rights and privileges? It is only white propaganda that makes the Indian appear a mortal danger to South Africa. Let us cooperate without fear with all people who share our objectives."<sup>25</sup>

A similar appeal to Indians was made by George Naicker:

"Members of Congress must at all times in all their actions demonstrate in no uncertain terms that they completely reject the idea of 'superior and inferior races.' All day to day activities must be such that no one can accuse them of being guilty, no matter in how small a measure, of accepting the 'herrenvolk' ideology of the ruling class."<sup>26</sup>

Both the Luthuli and Naicker addresses were delivered after the Defiance campaign and suggest a lack of candor in the more common Congress

claim that the campaign greatly improved Afro-Indian political cooperation in Natal. A conclusion more consistent with the results of the campaign is that continued disputes over housing and trade privileges virtually precluded effective collaboration. National and provincial Congress leaders were willing to cooperate, but their followers were less than enthusiastic.

These continuing difficulties combined with organizational decay in the NIC in 1953 explain the inability of the NIC to establish the racially mixed political units called for during the campaign. The campaign itself does not appear to have substantially raised the level of political cooperation. Both supporters and critics of the Congress movement continued to note the need for improved relations between Indians and Africans. Ngubane criticized "unwise wishful thinking" which maintained that race relations were good: "There is no valid reason to substantiate the generally held view that all is well between the African and the Indian."<sup>27</sup> Indian Opinion reported that a majority did not yet exist within the NIC in 1956 for cooperation with Africans as political equals. Before unity of purpose was achieved, a "recasting of attitudes" would have to occur.<sup>28</sup>

The findings of an informal survey conducted by Fatima Meer at late as in 1960 reveal few Indian attitudes were "recast". She reported the continuing cooperation between Congress leaders, emphasizing that all important political decisions were reached only after consultation between officials of the two organizations. On the other hand, she also reported a continuing bias against Africans on the part of most Indians. Little informal contact between African and Indian occurred. This was blamed not on racial prejudice, but on the "arrogance" of Indians who did not believe

in "the inherent equality of the two peoples."<sup>29</sup> Whether "arrogance" or "racism", the effect on close political cooperation between African and Indian was likely to be the same.

The potential for disagreement was great enough for Ngubane to suggest, after the Defiance campaign, that the two Congresses in future not attempt close collaboration at the local level. Instead, he urged that each concentrate on building support within its own community without emphasizing the multi-racial alliance.<sup>30</sup> Ngubane's proposal was frequently attacked by Congress supporters as an acceptance of apartheid principles, but there was some merit in his opinion, for if nothing else, it would have prevented the leaders of the Congress Alliance from establishing unattainable goals. Ngubane asked Congress to accept Modisane's claim that, for most Africans, the Congress Alliance was an "intellectual concept" offering no solution to the labor and housing problems of the African community.

#### Commentary

The belief that the Durban riots began an era of understanding between African and Indian is not supported by the political events of following years. African and Indian leaders failed in their attempt to make the Congress Alliance work on a grand scale. The speeches of Congress officials to their organizations indicate that the members of each group remained mutually suspicious. Given this situation, it is misleading to speak of an effective Congress Alliance in Natal. In neither the Defiance Campaign nor the COP campaign did the two Congresses work effectively together.

Racial antagonism may not have been the only cause of this disunity, but its impact must be considered significant. Antipathies existing since the Gandhi era proved impossible to eradicate in only a few years of the Dadoo-Naicker-Xuma pact. The "arrogance" of Indians toward Africans discovered by Fatima Meer proved that the disparaging descriptions employed by Gandhi to describe Africans in 1900 still existed in 1960. The common disabilities shared under apartheid were not, despite the urgings of ANC and NIC leaders, sufficient to overcome this.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>The Guardian, July 29, 1948, p. 5.
- <sup>2</sup>Ibid., January 20, 1949, pp. 1, 6.
- <sup>3</sup>University of Natal. Department of Economics. The Durban Housing Survey, Natal Regional Survey, Additional Report No. 2, p. 370.
- <sup>4</sup>The statement is reprinted in The Guardian, January 18, 1950, p. 6.
- <sup>5</sup>Ikundla ya Bantu, reprinted in The Guardian, December 21, 1950, p. 6.
- <sup>6</sup>The Guardian, March 8, 1951, p. 4 and April 5, 1951, p. 1.
- <sup>7</sup>Leo Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, p. 301.
- <sup>8</sup>Jacqueline Arenstein, "The Illegal Traders of Cato Manor", The Guardian, September 22, 1955, p. 4.
- <sup>9</sup>Advance, October 1, 1953, p. 6.
- <sup>10</sup>Hilda Kuper, Indian People in Natal, pp. 62-63.
- <sup>11</sup>Jordan Ngubane, "Goodwill Between Indians and Africans", Indian Opinion, June 22, 1956, p. 259.
- <sup>12</sup>The Guardian, February 17, 1949, p. 6.
- <sup>13</sup>Ngubane, "Strains on Afro-Indian Alliance," Indian Opinion, January 23, 1953, pp. 57-58.
- <sup>14</sup>Blake Modisane, Blame Me On History, pp. 133-134.
- <sup>15</sup>Indian Opinion, January 23, 1953, p. 50.
- <sup>16</sup>"Presidential Address", Natal Indian Congress, Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1953, p. 3.
- <sup>17</sup>Statement Issued by Joint Meeting of African and Indian Leaders in Durban on Sunday, 6th February, 1949. Unpublished, typed copy of press statement.
- <sup>18</sup>A. I. Meer, Joint Honorary Secretary of the SAIC, is quoted in The Guardian, February 10, 1949, p. 5.
- <sup>19</sup>Pachai, The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question, p. 224.

<sup>20</sup>The Guardian, July 28, 1949, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., July 13, 1950, p. 1. Strong opposition to this punishment existed in the White community and the City Council rescinded its decision to replace Indians with Africans, leaving the race of new workers to the discretion of individual municipal departments.

<sup>22</sup>Testimony of I. A. Cachalia, Treason Trial, p. 15,140.

<sup>23</sup>Fatima Meer, "Africans and Indians in Durban," Africa South (July-September, 1960), p. 30.

<sup>24</sup>Ngubane, "Mr Luthuli on the Indian Question", Indian Opinion, May 1, 1953, p. 269.

<sup>25</sup>Luthuli's address is reprinted in Advance, November 5, 1953, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>"Presidential Address", p. 3.

<sup>27</sup>Ngubane, "Goodwill Between Indians and Africans", Indian Opinion, June 22, 1956, p. 259.

<sup>28</sup>Indian Opinion, October 26, 1956, p. 470.

<sup>29</sup>Meer, p. 36.

<sup>30</sup>Ngubane, "Mr Luthuli on the Indian Question".

CHAPTER VI  
THE FAILURE TO ORGANIZE

Organization is a goal of virtually all political groups. Leaders by definition must have someone to lead and the exercise of leadership is made easier when supporters are organized. The necessary functions of communicating decisions, determining the morale of members, recruiting new members and raising money are all facilitated when leaders can work through organized political channels. If leaders must depend on the press, mass rallies and pamphleteering to communicate with their followers, control, particularly during an active political campaign, becomes difficult. Without organization, leaders have little precise knowledge of how many will follow their instructions and therefore find it difficult to estimate beforehand the potential success of any venture.

Organization is made both more necessary and more difficult when the leaders seek to form a "mass" political body. To enroll and lead thousands of members ideally requires a cadre of permanent organizers, popular issues and some reasonable prospect of success. In a mass organization, the executive level of leadership cannot maintain personal supervision of the entire membership; a second and possibly a third echelon must be delegates this function. If the leaders cannot rely on these subordinates, they are likely to find themselves with little to command.

Organizations resemble military units in their striving for command and control. This was a particular characteristic of "left" political parties which at times was copied by their political enemies of the "right". Michels and Duverger have explored at some length the strengths

and weaknesses of such political parties in Europe, while Hodgkin has examined the numerous attempts to build similar parties in Africa.<sup>1</sup> Until the mid-1960's, Africans were thought to have been unusually proficient at building parties patterned after the socialist and communist parties of Europe, although that opinion is less fashionable today.<sup>2</sup> The relative ease with which several governments based on "mass" party support, particularly those in Ghana and Algeria, were toppled by military coup d'etats contributed to the revised opinions. In South Africa, leaders of the African National Congress worked in the 1950's to build such an organization, but were only partially successful.<sup>3</sup>

Confrontationist leaders of the Natal Indian Congress also attempted without success to construct a mass political organization. Their failure in three attempts to mobilize the Indian people has already been studied. This chapter reviews in detail the failure to transform the NIC from an elite organization dependent on street<sup>u</sup>corner rallies for contact with its "membership" into a disciplined structure responsive to the commands of its officials.

#### The Formal Constitutional Structure

Unlike the TIC, the NIC possessed much of the constitutional regalia of a mass political party. Constitutions are frequently not very useful guides to the functioning of organizations, but they do permit comparison of reality with an ideal. In the case of the NIC, the constitution's omissions are as interesting as its description of how the Congress was supposed to work. The constitution considered here was adopted in 1951

and used with only minor revisions throughout the decade.<sup>4</sup>

NIC members were organized into branches with a minimum enrollment of twenty-five each. Branch members elected a Branch Committee which was required to meet "not less than once every two months." This committee appointed an Executive Committee of five members to supervise branch activities between meetings of the Branch Committee. Meetings of the entire branch membership were required at least once a year. Participants at this annual meeting elected the branch chairman, two joint secretaries, a treasurer and the delegates to the NIC's annual provincial conference. Branches were required to keep "detailed" membership lists and account books. Their annual contribution to the provincial NIC was fixed at 1/1 for each of the first 500 members and 5/- for each additional 100 members.

According to the constitution, NIC policy was determined by the branch delegates to the annual provincial conference. The conference was described as the "supreme authority". Each branch was allowed a minimum of three delegates for its first twenty-five members, with one additional delegate for each additional 100 members. The number of delegates required for a provincial conference was small: twenty percent of the maximum possible, representing at least one-third of the branches.

Delegates to the provincial conference elected a Working Committee to "exercise the power and function of Congress and assume the direction of its affairs" between annual meetings, as long as it did not change policy determined at the provincial conference. The Working Committee included the Congress president, secretaries, treasurers and branch representatives. Each branch had two representatives on the Working

Committee for its first 300 members and one delegate for each additional 300 members. The Working Committee was required to meet at least once every three months. In the intervals between meetings, its authority was delegated to an Executive Committee, consisting of the President, General-Secretary, Honorary Treasurer, several vice-presidents and eleven others elected by the provincial conference. This committee possessed the "administrative and executive" powers of Congress. The Executive Committee in turn selected a seven member Secretariat from among its members to deal with subjects assigned by the Executive.

The 1951 constitution said little about ideology, discipline, or the obligations of members. The official "Objects" of the NIC contained nothing to suggest the "left" orientation of its leadership. The NIC was pledged to "work for and to foster cooperation . . . on matters of common interest" with non-Indian political organizations, but the constitution made no specific reference to formal pacts with non-Indian groups.

The only requirements for membership in the NIC were residence in Natal, payment of an initial fee of 1/- (about fourteen cents) and an age of eighteen years. Members had no monetary obligation after the initial payment. The constitution is silent on any requirement to attend regular branch meeting or perform any other duties to maintain their status. The possibility of a tenuous connection between branch members and their officials was apparently recognized. Members were to be contacted "by ordinary post or by advertisement in a newspaper circulating in the area or by the distribution of hand bills. . ." It does not mention disseminating the news at any regular branch meetings because the constitution did not

provide for them.

The contrast between the vague references to the role of the membership and the detailed outline of committees at regular provincial and branch levels is interesting. Members organized at the branch level were to be the basis of Congress political strength. Branches were expected to provide the nucleus of support for any Congress activity, working within their districts to gain additional support for such projects as the Congress of the People. Despite this, the attitude towards members of the NIC constitution was reminiscent of the accommodationist disregard for building a mass political organization.

For the leadership, the link with the branches was the Working Committee. Without regular, well-attended meetings of this committee, Congress officials could expect little information about branch affairs and would find it difficult to communicate their proposals to branch officers. If the branches did not function, Congress would be powerless. However diligently the provincial Executive Committee and Secretariat planned political activities, without the branches they were for the most part planning for themselves.

It has already been noted that when Naicker and the Anti-Segregationists gained control of the NIC in 1945 organization was minimal. The new leadership, however, claimed it had brought into the NIC at least 17,000 new members, giving a total membership of approximately 35,000. The task of the new leadership was to organize this support into a political organization responsive to its demands. The Naicker group failed. In the following ten years, they requested much but received little.

## The Failure of Organization

The Congress organization is best examined by studying participation at its annual conferences, attendance at committee meetings and communications between provincial headquarters and the branches. Branch records are more difficult to obtain than provincial records, but when available the minutes of branch meetings provide insight into the functioning of the NIC on a local level not found elsewhere.

Although the provincial conference was officially the "supreme authority" of the NIC, from the first annual meeting in 1947 through the twelfth in 1959, no more than sixty percent of the eligible delegates attended.<sup>5</sup> A majority of branches considered active sent delegations, but few were fully represented. Since conference records did not contain the number of delegates allotted to each branch, a more precise determination of the representation of various branches is impossible. As seen in Figure 1, the number of delegates was relatively constant. The impact of particular campaigns appears insignificant in determining attendance at the annual conference.

Figure 1. Attendance at Five NIC Annual Conferences<sup>6</sup>

<u>Conference</u>	<u>Delegates</u>		<u>Branches</u>	
	<u>Attending</u>	<u>/Eligible</u>	<u>Represented</u>	<u>/Active</u>
1947	101	/ NA	28	/ NA
1951	96	/ 173	15	/ 20
1953	88	/ 169	16	/ NA
1955	110	/ 219	14	/ 17
1959	80	/ NA	12	/ NA

The number of branches considered active by the NIC's general-secretary fell by more than half, from twenty-eight in 1947 to twelve in

1959. The Defiance and COP campaigns failed to increase participation by branch delegates, as Congress Alliance officials had hoped they would.

The low participation at provincial conferences continued during the year at the Working Committee meetings. Attendance here fluctuated during the 1950's. Preparation for the Defiance campaign was reported to have increased participation "greatly" between 1951 and 1952, although some branches were not represented at all during the campaign.<sup>7</sup> During the following year, however, representation again became "disappointing" and one scheduled meeting was adjourned for lack of a quorum.<sup>8</sup> After a year's work on the COP campaign, the NIC general-secretary reported the Committee was functioning well, but the improvement was not sustained. By 1956, the general-secretary again had to report that attendance at the committee left "much to be desired". He was especially critical of the lack of concern members showed for the decline in Congress activity after the COP.<sup>9</sup>

The work of the ten-member Executive Committee provided little inspiration to the Working Committee. During the Defiance campaign its affairs were conducted by "a few willing members"; "lethargy" and "inactivity" were adjectives used to characterize the attitude of most members.<sup>10</sup> By the middle of the COP work, a majority of members were attending, but some continued to be regularly absent. Government political bannings in 1954 produced several vacancies on the committee. The replacements were not an improvement. The general-secretary felt they were not serious about performing the duties of their office.<sup>11</sup>

#### The Failure to Communicate

Considering the disorganization and disinterest evident at the

provincial level, it is not surprising that NIC officials found it difficult to maintain contact with individual branches, or that branches responded with indifference to many headquarters directives. The problem is illustrated by considering the effort of the NIC to begin a series of political lectures in each branch.

Insufficient political education had been cited by the National Action Committee coordinating the Defiance campaign as a major reason for the campaign's failure.<sup>12</sup> To correct this, the NIC began in 1953 to urge branches to hold political classes using lectures provided by the provincial headquarters. The effort continued until after the COP campaign in 1955. The lectures explained South African history, politics and economics according to Marxist theory. Several lectures were planned, including ones on "Capitalism", "Wages Under Capitalism", "Fascist Dictatorship", and "The Rise of the Working Class". There is no indication that more than the first two were ever distributed to Congress branches.

The limited success of this membership indoctrination program is evident from the constant queries from NIC officials to the branches attempting to increase the number offering the classes. The use of the lectures was apparently left to the discretion of individual branches, for copies of lecture notes had not been distributed to every branch. Branches were asked to obtain their copies from the Congress headquarters in Durban. Implementation of the program was described in a newsletter to branches as a "must".<sup>13</sup>

By October, 1953, NIC branches at Merebank, Sydenham, Overport, Pietermaritzburg and Durban Central were conducting lectures. A new branch,

Greyville, began classes in early 1954, while the Ladysmith branch was preparing to begin them "soon".<sup>14</sup> The initial enthusiasm of some branches faded quickly, however. By March, 1954, Sydenham, Overport and Merebank had suspended their classes.

At the beginning of the COP campaign, therefore, NIC officials had made little progress in implementing the Congress Alliance belief that increased political education would strengthen their organization. NIC headquarters at this time was in fact receiving little information of any sort from the branches. The NIC newsletter criticized all the branches for not responding to the appeals of the Organizing Secretary for monthly reports of their activities: "not one single branch responded."<sup>15</sup>

Similar difficulties were encountered in attempting to raise funds from the branches. Lack of funds was a common complaint voiced by the national coordinating committees formed to oversee the various Congress Alliance campaigns. Whatever the willingness of the provincial NIC to contribute, its ability would in any case have been restricted because of the poor financial contributions received from the branches.

In late 1953 the NIC was described as "dangerously broke", with only the Overport, Sydenham and Merebank branches donating money to the headquarters. The Congress newsletter asked "What are the branches doing?" to raise money.<sup>16</sup> A special appeal in early 1954 produced few results, even after a list of the delinquent branches and the amounts owed had been circulated. The monthly sums requested from each branch varied according to the estimated membership, but were not large. Before the COP campaign began, most branches owed less than £10 and only two owed more than £20.

Monthly levies were small. Overport, for instance, was expected to pay £1 5/- and Tongaat, £ 15/-.

Despite the claimed rejuvenation of the COP campaign, the situation did not improve. Only six branches contributed money to send delegates to the COP and at the end of that movement the NIC was more than £2,000 in debt.<sup>17</sup>

These financial problems are partially explained by the fact that the NIC had no systematic plan for raising funds after recruits had paid their initial membership fee. Since members were not required to pay periodic dues, both branches and the provincial headquarters were dependent upon requests for donations made in conjunction with whatever political activity was in progress. At no time did the NIC have a regular source of income which allowed it to estimate with reliability its financial status six months in the future. Of the approximately fifteen branches considered active in the mid-1950's, no more than two or three consistently contributed to the provincial NIC. The remainder responded only occasionally to the pleas of Congress officials.

Branches that did not sponsor political lectures or contribute to Congress finances were not necessarily inactive. Several branches concerned themselves with a variety of local problems not directly related to Congress Alliance campaigns. In early 1954, the Verulam branch had appointed no members to the NIC Working Committee, but was reported to be organizing hawkers and peddlers to protest against the Durban Licensing Board. The Pietermaritzburg branch was preparing presentations against the declaration of Group Areas in that city. Expenses here may explain why that branch

owed more to the NIC than most others.<sup>18</sup>

Concentration on local problems had been recommended by the National Action Council of the COP as a means of increasing support for the Congress movement, while at the same time propagandizing for the Freedom Charter. It is doubtful that NIC branches in their local work made such a connection. After the COP, the NAC reported that the "four sponsoring organizations at no stage managed successfully to link COP with the day-to-day struggles of the people."<sup>19</sup>

It is apparent that the organization outlined for the NIC in its constitution functioned only spasmodically. The trend was to decay rather than growth, whatever the public reports made by Congress leaders that "the people" were supporting the movement. The enthusiasm of Congress workers fluctuated from issue to issue and the NIC was not able to construct from this a viable organization. Instead of increasing its support, the NIC had by 1959 admitted losing more than half the branches claimed in 1947. This decay can be traced more specifically through the Congress branch at Merebank.

#### Merebank: From Strength to Weakness

The Merebank branch was founded in 1953 in one of Durban's Indian areas. During that year it was one of the few branches to conduct regular political classes for its members and one of only three cited for its financial contributions to the provincial NIC. At the Seventh Annual Provincial Conference in 1954, Merebank reported it had recruited 225 new members during a year in which NIC leaders were critical of the low level

of Congress activity. Only four other branches reported adding new members at that conference; their total was only 205. In April, 1954, Merebank was congratulated for its "consistency" after the branch had organized a conference on housing attended by representatives of twenty-four other groups.<sup>20</sup> The branch chairman, R. G. Pillay, was a member of the NIC Executive Committee during the COP campaign, although he attended only two of five meetings in 1954. In 1956, he was elected by the NIC Working Committee to be one of thirty delegates to the SAIC conference. Merebank contributed more money for the transportation of delegates to the COP than any other branch except Mayville. In an organization characterized by inactive branches, Merebank apparently was an exception.

After three years of relative diligence in fulfilling its Congress obligations, the Merebank branch virtually collapsed after the COP. Its annual general meeting in July, 1955, was attended by only forty-five members.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps because of its contribution to the COP, the branch had no funds.<sup>22</sup> Subsequent minutes of branch committee meetings revealed that at no time during the next year did the branch have more than £2 available for expenses.

Merebank's participation in the One Million Signature drive after the COP was conducted irregularly by its officials. No signatures were collected until December, 1955, when the Branch Committee decided that "those members available" would canvass the branch area. No further action was taken until February, 1956, when three groups were formed under the leadership of Pillay and the branch secretary and treasurer. In the following two months, the officials reported collecting 100 signatures.

After March, no further reports were made on the signature campaign.

During the year after the COP, Merebank attempted to continue the political classes it had begun in 1953. Results, with one exception, were poor. A class held on March 10 was considered "well-attended" but more common were reports to the Branch Committee that the classes were a "flop".<sup>23</sup>

The declining interest represented by poor attendance at the branch annual meeting and the political classes extended to members of the Branch Committee as well. Seventeen committee members had been elected in July, reminders of possible expulsion for non-attendance were sent to absentees at both the October and December meetings. The notices had little effect. In March, five members were expelled and additional warnings were sent to five others. In April, the Secretary, R. S. Balli, announced his intention to resign from the committee at the next annual meetings because the branch was disintegrating. Before leaving office, he wrote to all committee members after the July meeting had been postponed for lack of a quorum:

"This is a bad state of affairs and postponing meetings is a waste of time and retards the work of the Branch. We have many important matters that require the attention of the Committee and members failure to attend the meetings make it impossible for the Branch to function as it should."<sup>24</sup>

The decline of the Merebank branch during the year after the COP was not unique, for most branches were not active. Merebank's problems were those of the provincial NIC on a local scale. More than half of the branch leadership was not sufficiently interested to regularly attend

their committee meetings. Membership was disappearing. The COP signature drive did nothing to increase membership; the signatures collected amounted to less than half the membership of 1953.

The Merebank Branch Committee minutes from which this account was taken did not specify the cause of the decline. The impression that emerges most strongly, however, is one of apathy and resignation on the part of both members and officials. This is not surprising. Confrontationist tactics had failed to defeat Group Areas or any other aspect of the apartheid system. This was especially obvious in Merebank. The Durban City Council was preceeding in 1955 with plans to acquire privately-owned Indian land for construction of municipal housing for Indians. The opposition of R. G. Pillay, as chairman of the Coordinating Committee on Housing for Merebank, obviously did not renew interest in NIC activities in the area. Whether or not Merebank Indians supported the City Council's plan, it is obvious that they did not feel sufficiently threatened by it to join the NIC in opposition.<sup>25</sup> Without such motivation, the NIC could not expect to sustain itself.

The provincial leadership was not unaware of the disintegration of its organization. Self-criticism was common and organizational changes were proposed. The Ninth Annual Provincial Conference in 1956 featured the most exhaustive analysis of the Congress organization ever presented to the branch delegates.

The Ninth Conference: "We have made no serious effort . . ."

The general-secretary's organizational report to the delegates at the

Ninth Conference contradicted completely the public recitations of Congress accomplishments made after the campaigns of 1952 and 1954-55. Failure at both the branch and provincial levels was reviewed and the conference adopted resolutions acknowledging the vailidity of the criticism.

The most serious charge was that Congress had done nothing to halt the decline in its membership:

"Since the 1945 campaign by the present leadership against the 'old guard' of Congress we have made no endeavor to recruit new members or to consolidate the old. Since this campaign was carried out over ten years ago, we have made no serious effort to recruit the many thousands that are eligible for Congress membership each year. Neither have we made any endeavor to recruit those that were not recruited during the 1945 campaign."<sup>26</sup>

The primary responsibility for not recruiting was placed with the branches. Branches were specifically criticized for expecting the provincial Executive Committee to plan and conduct all campaigns without assistance from the branches. Too often, the general-secretary reported, Branch Committees were dominated by "windbags" and "old members who occupy executive positions merely on the strength of their past services." Delegates were asked to seek "reliable, responsible and energetic" replacements willing to work actively on Congress plans.

The proposed solutions were logical, but the report did not suggest how they might be achieved. Branches were to renew their enire membership, collect dues of 1/- per month from all members, and hold membership meetings monthly. To make meetings more interesting, the general-secretary suggested frequent political discussion, guest speakers and literature

sales. Branch executives themselves were advised to meet regularly and to send organizational reports to the provincial Executive Committee.

The difficulty with this reform program was that it had all been proposed before. The experience of the Merebank branch illustrates the probability that they would not succeed. The Merebank Branch Committee had already attempted to revitalize itself by threatening expulsion of delinquent members. The actual removal of nearly one-third of the committee had not prevented the Secretary's resignation. Faced with such difficulties at the executive level, it was unrealistic to expect Merebank to revive its membership. Merebank had also held the political discussions proposed by the NIC general-secretary, but they had not enticed large turnouts of Branch members.

The provincial leadership was also criticized for failing to provide an adequate example for the branches to follow. The atmosphere of a Congress in crisis was absent:

"Attendance at Working Committee, Executive Committee and Secretariat often leaves much to be desired and the tendency to transact business in a routine day to day basis is ever present."

27

The remedies suggested for provincial inactivity were no more innovative than those for the branches. Provincial officials were asked to request regular reports of branch activities, keep branches informed of Congress policies by issuing "bulletins, leaflets, and news flashes", and provide lecturers to explain Congress positions. All of these criticisms and the recommended solutions were adopted in a resolution noting the seriousness of the NIC's organization and the Ninth Annual

Provincial Conference adjourned.<sup>28</sup>

The conference had spawned committees to continue investigating its problems. The first report of the organizing sub-committee indicated that the hopes for immediate improvements were modest.<sup>29</sup> The committee recommended publication of a monthly bulletin for distribution to all branches, regular meetings by the provincial executive with at least one "activists" from each branch in the Durban area, and the collection of monthly levies from "all contributors". One half of the money was to be kept by the branches and the other sent to NIC headquarters. The number of donors was not expected to be large. The committee said it would prepare 500 cards to record the contributions of individual members.

A constitutional sub-committee proposed that new members be more carefully scrutinized by requiring potential recruits to make a written application. The committee also suggested minor revisions in branch representation on the Working Committee and the creation of a "register of levy-paying members" to be kept by the NIC's joint honorary secretaries.<sup>30</sup>

These changes were not adopted and the decline in Congress continued. As already noted, the number of active branches fell to twelve by the twelfth annual conference. Membership requirements had not been changed. Life membership remained available for payment of 1/-; annual dues were still not required. New Age reported the most important topic to be considered at the twelfth conference was the state of the NIC's organization.<sup>31</sup>

## Commentary

The era of mass campaigns by the Congress Alliance had ended. The State of Emergency declared by the South African government after the Sharpville shootings in 1960 resulted in the banning of the African National Congress and the arrests of major Indian Congress leaders, including George Naicker. Dadoo left South Africa. If reorganization had not been successful by then, its prospects in the future were non-existent. Fatima Meer understated the situation when she described Indian political activity in 1960 as "comparatively subdued".<sup>32</sup> Congress had been subdued since its failure to revitalize itself during the COP campaign. The head of the organization remained active and therefore visible for a few more years, but the body steadily disintegrated.

The NIC failed to become a mass political organization in part because it had no organization, even for a minimum cadre of branch activists. The potential for organization had existed in 1945, but little had been done to take advantage of it. The failure of the 1946 passive resistance campaign apparently discouraged many who were not firm in their support. At the conclusion of the 1946 campaign, the NIC remained what it had always been; an elite group. Leaders knew that thousands supported them, but this support was evident through attendance at rallies and demonstrations announced by the press, not through branch reports citing increased membership registration. Only the politics of the elite group had changed. Confrontationists had displaced accommodationists without significantly improving the NIC's organizational status.

Without an effective organization at the beginning of their tenure, the NIC militants had no reasonable expectation of expanding it during the 1950's. At best, the NIC was static; at its worst, it lost members. The Congress Alliance often stressed its ability to "mobilize" support among Indians and Africans. In the Indian community, this was rhetoric. Alliance campaigns did not mobilize the Indian community; Alliance campaigns did not even mobilize the NIC. The 1952 and 1954 campaigns were in part conducted to expand Congress organization. Their actual effect was a partial reactivation of a failing NIC organization. Within a few months, the organization was again in decline.

Perhaps the most serious shortcoming was a communication failure between provincial headquarters and the branches. Communication with most branches was poor during the 1950's. The continued failure of branches to respond to pleas for information leaves only two conclusions: branch officials were too embarrassed to report the state of their branches, or they were simply not interested in the campaigns planned by the provincial NIC. Either reason was equally serious. Without communication, it may have been difficult for NIC officials to appreciate the extent of disorganization in the branches, or the reasons for it. Perhaps this explains why the remedies suggested at the Ninth Conference were essentially a compilation of previous solutions.

If the testimony of the leadership is accepted, and there is little reason to doubt it, the NIC was never very "organized" at all. It is difficult to claim organization for a group which at no time knew who its members were or made serious efforts to recruit new members. Not only was

the NIC never a "mass" political organization of the Duverger type, the leaders did not seem to care very much. In its political organization, the NIC remained more the party of Gandhi than the party of Lenin.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Robert Michels, Political Parties, and Maurice Duverger, Political Parties, have long been standard works describing the development and characteristics of mass political organizations. Hodgkin, in African Political Parties, applied the Duverger style to his analysis of African political movements in the 1950's and early 1960's.

<sup>2</sup>David Apter, The Gold Coast in Transition, created a model of the African mass party that dominated work in this area until the mid-1960's. Aristide Zolberg, Creating Political Order, was one of the first to argue that few African parties ever achieved the degree of organization Duverger described for European parties.

<sup>3</sup>The most detailed account of the ANC's attempt to build a mass party is Edward Feit, African Opposition in South Africa: The Failure of Passive Resistance.

<sup>4</sup>See Natal Indian Congress, "Constitution", included in Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, 1953. All subsequent references to the constitution are from this copy of the document.

<sup>5</sup>Figures are obtained either from newspaper accounts of Congress conferences, or the Agenda Book prepared by the NIC for each conference.

<sup>6</sup>Similar figures for other annual conferences were not available.

<sup>7</sup>NIC, Agenda Book, Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1953.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., Seventh Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1954.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., Eighth and Ninth Annual Provincial Conferences, March, 1955, and June, 1956.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., Sixth Annual Provincial Conference.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Eighth Annual Provincial Conference.

<sup>12</sup>National Action Committee of the Congress Alliance, Report of the National Action Committee 5 December 1953 to the Secretary-General of the ANC and the Joint Honorary Secretaries of the SAIC.

<sup>13</sup>NIC News, October 19, 1953, pp. 2-3.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., March 26, 1954, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup>NIC, Newsletter, April 22, 1954, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>NIC News, October 9, 1953, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>NIC, Statement of Income and Expenditures Re: Transport of Delegates to the C. O. P.

<sup>18</sup>NIC, Newsletter, April 22, 1954, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup>National Action Council of the COP, Report of the National Action Council of the Congress of the People to the Joint Executives of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO and the SACOD.

<sup>20</sup>NIC, Newsletter, April 22, 1954, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>NIC, Merebank Branch. Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting, 31 July, 1955.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., Minutes of a Committee Meeting of the Branch, August 21, 1955.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., March 25, 1956.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., Letter from R. S. Balli, Secretary, to "All Members of the Committee", July 11, 1956.

<sup>25</sup>New Age, June 2, 1955, p. 6; August 18, 1955, p. 4; August 25, 1955, p. 6; May 17, 1956, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup>NIC, Agenda Book, Ninth Annual Provincial Conference, June, 1956.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., Resolutions Adopted at Conference of Natal Indian Congress Held in Durban, 22-24th June, 1956.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., Report of a Meeting of the Organizing Sub-Committee, August 4, 1956.

<sup>30</sup>Letter from L. Moonsamy for Constitutional Sub-Committee to "All Branch Secretaries", November 1, 1956.

<sup>31</sup>New Age, October 1, 1959, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>Fatima Meer, "African and Indian In Durban", Africa South (July-September, 1960), p. 39.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose set at the beginning of this work was to explore the reasons why the Natal Indian Congress failed to become a mass organization, capable of bringing effective Indian political support to the Congress Alliance. To accomplish this, emphasis has been given to a description and analysis of the three major NIC political efforts between 1946 and 1955 and to relations between the Indian and African communities in Natal. It has been shown that the NIC did not possess the popular appeal often credited to it and therefore did not contribute very much to the Congress Alliance campaigns of the 1950's.

In this concluding chapter, two tasks remain. Firstly, the limited political efforts of the NIC after the end of the COP signature campaign in 1956 will be reviewed briefly. The NIC did not disband after 1956, but its contribution to the Congress Alliance became even less significant than in previous years. The Congress Alliance itself ended with the banning of the ANC in 1961 and the COD in 1962. The Indian Congress was not banned, but nearly its entire leadership was removed from political life in 1963 when all individuals who had previously been named as communists under the Suppression of Communism Act were banned.<sup>1</sup> Many of the more militant Alliance leaders began underground political activity and formed a guerilla organization, Umkonto We Sizewe. Only a few Indians participated in this new phase of resistance to apartheid.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, the causes of the NIC's political failure will be summarized and comment made on the Indian political future in South Africa.

## NIC: The Final Years

The COP campaign had not contributed significantly to a renewal of Congress organizational strength, but it had gained considerable publicity for the movement. Publicity was important, for it enabled the Congress Alliance members to maintain the illusion of strength. Perhaps for this reason, Congress Alliance members reacted with enthusiasm to a proposal made at a conference of the Interdenominational African Ministers' Federation at Bloemfontein in October, 1956. The ministers' primary goal was similar to that of the COP: the convening of a conference representative of all South African racial groups to form a multi-racial united front against apartheid.<sup>3</sup> The ministers adopted a document known as the Bloemfontein Charter which reiterated complete opposition to apartheid and maintained that "Africans and other non-Europeans are entitled to all rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by Europeans wherever they live and work."<sup>4</sup> The Charter included the familiar call to "mobilize all people" against apartheid. The South African Indian Congress welcomed the Charter, citing it as evidence that "the stability of the Nationalists is built on sand" and that "the forces supporting the government are diminishing" while the opponents of apartheid grew stronger.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the optimism of the SAIC, the Bloemfontein Charter did not produce any significant change in the status of the Congress Alliance. More than a year after the African ministers had issued their call, a multi-racial conference was finally held, attended by representatives of the Liberal and Labour parties and other "liberal" White political organizations. Conference sponsors from the Congress Alliance included Luthuli, Dadoo, Naicker and

Yusef Cachalia.

The conference adopted a series of resolutions consistent with the COP's Freedom Charter. Apartheid was condemned, and the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights was cited as justification for establishing equal political rights for all South Africans. Universal adult suffrage was recommended as an ideal, but the conference participants could not agree on how quickly this might be achieved.

The conference had no impact on political organization of the Congress participants. Unlike the COP preparations, no mass campaign was conducted in an effort to involve Congress members. The conference was criticized in one Congress publication for its failure to do more than issue "a further tabulation of grievances" and for involving only "some few leaders of the Congress movement . . . a scattering of trade unionists and a little professional yeast."<sup>6</sup> A committee was formed to plan regional multi-racial conferences to coordinate anti-apartheid work, but these regional meetings were never held.<sup>7</sup>

The political futility of the Bloemfontein conference at the national level was paralleled in Natal, where the NIC attempted without much success to widen participation in the anti-apartheid movement. The NIC sponsored a conference on Group Areas in May, 1956, at which Alan Paton, chairman of the Liberal Party, proposed formation of a new Provincial Vigilance Committee. Paton called for the conference to "mobilize the entire province" against Group Areas and asked the NIC to undertake sponsorship of the Vigilance Committee to accomplish this.<sup>8</sup> The Provincial Vigilance Committee was to concentrate on changing White opinion and on organizing anti-Group Areas

protests among the Indians.

The new organization, however, never played an effective role. The members present at the Committee's first meeting did not represent a serious broadening of the Congress Alliance. Of the sixteen people present, seven were from the NIC, one each from the ANC and COD and two from the South African Congress of Trade Unions, a Congress Alliance affiliate. Of the remaining five representatives, two were from the Liberal party and the remainder were divided among the Combined Ratepayers Association, an Indian group, the Federation of (African) Social Clubs, and the Indian Youth Congress.<sup>9</sup>

During the years 1956 and 1957, the Vigilance Committee held public meetings throughout Natal, but was unable to prevent the proclamation of Group Areas in Durban in 1958. The proclamation caused what the Liberal party newspaper Contact described as the "biggest political demonstration ever staged by the Indian community."<sup>10</sup> Indian schools and shops in Durban were closed, but the protest meetings did little beyond passing a resolution asking the Government to withdraw the proclamation. Further passive resistance was not mentioned by the NIC speakers. Instead the NIC reverted to opposition tactics that would have been approved by its NIO rival. A petition was circulated to gather signatures for submission to the Union parliament urging repeal of Group Areas, and the NIC announced its lawyers would challenge the proclamation's legality in the Court system.<sup>11</sup>

The restrained nature of the NIC's response to Group Areas in Durban is not surprising when the difficulty of maintaining a sense of urgency among Indians is noted. This had been cited as a problem by NIC organizer

George Singh in 1946, and the situation had not changed by 1958. Only thirty-five Indian property-owners were required to immediately vacate their homes by the 1958 proclamation, and even these were permitted to retain ownership. An immediate resistance effort would therefore have been impractical, even if the NIC had been prepared to wage one. At the same time, Indians were required to register with the Government for eventual removal within thirty days of the proclamation. Indians resisting this provision were liable to an initial fine of £100 and eventual confiscation of their property without compensation if their refusal continued.<sup>12</sup> The NIC could offer no protection against these penalties and the majority of Indians were not wealthy enough to suffer the consequences of non-registration.

During the five years from the proclamation of Group Areas in Durban until the banning of most Indian Congress leaders in 1963, the Congress Alliance remained without an effective tool to challenge the continuing application of the Nationalist government's apartheid program. The Congresses, for instance, regularly repeated a demand for the convening of a National Convention to draft a new constitution for South Africa.<sup>13</sup> The Government, of course, refused and the Congresses were powerless to enforce their demand. Work stoppages in the form of "stay-at-home" strikes were attempted several times, with mixed results. In June, 1961, thousands of workers reportedly stayed away from their jobs at various cities to protest the Government's failure to hold a National Convention. New Age reported Indian support in Durban as "substantial", but also noted that "disunity prevented the fullest joint action between Indians and Africans in Natal."<sup>14</sup>

The animosities of the 1950's had not yet been overcome.

### NIC: Three Causes of Failure

The failure of Indian confrontationists to rally their people for militant protest against apartheid should not be interpreted as a willing acceptance of White supremacy by Indians. Indians opposed segregation in principle and did not welcome the imposition of legislative apartheid in South Africa. At the same time, most Indians were unwilling to commit themselves to political action against the Government. Several reasons have already been suggested for this reluctance: poor relations between Africans and Indians, the obvious intransigence of White authority which made victory unlikely, and the failure of NIC leaders to adequately organize their followers. These factors were interrelated and it will be useful to review them here.

From 1939 until 1946, the segregation issue aroused the Indian community to the point where Indian confrontationists were able to use it as the main issue in their struggle with the accommodationists. Enthusiasm for passive resistance was strong in the Transvaal in 1939 and in Natal in 1946. Control of this issue was the necessary first step for Dadoo and Naicker and they used it effectively against their political opponents. From this beginning, however, the confrontationists were unable to construct viable political organizations. Enthusiasm was not transformed into enduring political support.

The most important reason for this failure was the inability of confrontationist leaders to demonstrate that confrontation was a viable

policy. This became apparent during the first post-war resistance campaign in 1946. The crucial date was October, 1946, when the South African government successfully ignored the weak opposition of the United Nations to its Indian segregation policy. The NIC's 1946 resistance campaign had been designed to peak with the meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. When that meeting passed with no change in the domestic situation, the resistance collapsed. The confrontationists were never again able to generate the enthusiasm for resistance to apartheid created during the first nine months of 1946. Confrontation had been revealed as an ineffective tactic when not supported by external intervention.

To the leaders of the NIC, the failure of the 1946 movement demonstrated an obvious fact: Indians by themselves were unable to influence South African policy. During the Gandhi years, partial victories had been won through the intervention of the British and Indian governments in South Africa's internal affairs, under the demands of Imperial responsibility. Without that intervention, White opinion would have permitted no concessions against White domination and it is probable that some version of an Indian Groups Areas policy would have been implemented long before 1950. By the 1940's, Imperial intervention was largely a relic of the past. The United Nations was not willing, and in any case was unable, to assume the role of international guardian of South African Indians. This, more than any direct action by the South African government against the NIC, was responsible for the collapse of the 1946 resistance. Until October, Indians were willing to face jail sentences and fines in the belief that their example would prompt United Nations intervention. It did not, and George Naicker became a symbol

of resistance rather than the leader of a political organization.

Antipathy between Indians and Africans was thus not the primary cause of the NIC's impotence. It is reasonable to assume, however, that confrontationists support for the Congress Alliance was not shared by the general Indian community and that this attitude worked to prevent a revival of Indian participation in NIC political movements during the 1950's. Even if Indians had accepted the Congress Alliance argument that a successful multi-racial alliance would bring about the defeat of apartheid, they were still faced with choice between being a racial minority in an African-dominated South Africa, or in a White-ruled society. Indian relations with Africans had never been close and in Durban especially the tension between the two races was evident in disputes over trade and housing rights. NIC leaders preached that the racial hostility existed only because of White rule, but it is not clear that the average Indian was willing to accept this. Certainly the comments of both NIC and ANC officials in the mid-1950's indicate that Africans and Indians were reluctant to cooperate with one another. The Congress Alliance was not able in fifteen years to reverse racial patterns that had been developed during the previous seventy-five years. This is in retrospect not surprising, but in the 1950's it meant failure for the Congress movement's goal of multi-racial anti-apartheid campaigns.

Given these two circumstances--that Indians did not believe the NIC could achieve its goals through confrontation, and that Indians were reluctant to join an alliance with Africans--the inability of NIC officials to construct a strong political organization was inevitable. Membership

disappeared because there was no apparent reason to belong to the NIC, despite the limited obligations incurred by joining. Branches did not bother to maintain communications with provincial headquarters because the headquarters officials were not engaged in political work of interest to the branches. Building a successful political organization is difficult when supported by the most enthusiastic members; building a successful organization with an apathetic membership is impossible. Provincial conferences could discover no practical solutions to the organizational problem because none would work until Indians were first convinced that the NIC was necessary to their welfare. Indians were never so convinced.

This triad of circumstances made the South African government's task in defeating the Congress Alliance easier than it is often depicted by Congress members. The bannings and detentions which began in earnest in 1952 without question prevented NIC leaders from dealing with their political problems. It is improbable, however, that had banning and detentions never occurred the NIC leadership would have been able to solve its difficulties. Until late 1952, the NIC was relatively free to prepare its followers for the rigors of political combat with White authority. That the NIC failed in this task was demonstrated by the poor Indian response to the Defiance campaign of 1952. For the NIC, the Defiance movement had already failed before the South African parliament passed the Public Safety Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act. Indians abstained from politics after the resistance campaign of 1946 and the basic cause was not the activity of the South African police.

## The Future of Indian Politics

As an independent political force, Indians have no political future in South Africa. It is probable that their minority status ensures that Indians will not again seek the political importance that confrontationist leaders claimed in the 1950's. Instead, the pattern of accommodation to the apartheid structure which emerged in the 1960's is likely to prevail in the immediate future. During the past decade, the South African government has acknowledged Indians as a permanent part of the South African population, while at the same time establishing the institutional structures to control Indians under the apartheid system. The Indian response reveals a continued distaste for apartheid, combined with a resignation that, for the moment at least, no other political system is likely to emerge.

The South African government established in 1964 a National Indian Council to act as a spokesman for the Indian community during the implementation of Group Areas. In 1965 the name of the group was changed to the South African Indian Council. Members were appointed by the Minister of the Interior, but the Government offered the possibility that in the future members might be elected by the Indian community. The Council initially was opposed by both the NIC and NIO, but individual Indians have been willing to serve on it. In 1968, P. R. Pather, a former accommodationist leader of the NIO, accepted membership.

That the Indian Council can operate only under guidelines established by the Minister of the Interior is clear. Indians may raise problems encountered during the implementation of Group Areas, but may not oppose

Group Areas itself. Thus when the first Council attempted to restate Indian opposition to the declaration of Durban's Cato Manor district as a White area, the Government refused to accept the recommendation. On the other hand, the Council has been more successful with proposals designed to improve Indian welfare within the guidelines imposed by the apartheid system. Thus the Government has accepted Council proposals to abolish fees for Indian inter-provincial visiting permits and agreed to consider creation of an Indian Investment Corporation to aid Indian businessmen to relocate in new Group Areas.<sup>15</sup>

Neither Gandhi's hope that White opinion might be educated to grant Indians equal status nor Dadoo's belief that direct political action could defeat the apartheid system have been realized. However reluctantly, Indians have been required to accommodate themselves to apartheid as interpreted by the dominant White minority. Should White rule in South Africa end, it is likely that Indians would find themselves required to make similar accommodation with the new African rulers. Whether or not that will happen is beyond the scope of this work.

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Muriel Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1964, p. 8.
- <sup>2</sup>Edward Feit, Urban Revolt in South Africa, 1960-1964, p. 177.
- <sup>3</sup>New Age, October 11, 1956, p. 1.
- <sup>4</sup>The Bloemfontein Charter is reprinted in Africa South, 1 (January-March, 1957) pp. 22-26.
- <sup>5</sup>South African Indian Congress, Twenty-Second Congress of the South African Indian Congress, October, 1956. Report of the Joint Honorary Secretaries.
- <sup>6</sup>Ronald M. Segal, "The Multi-Racial Conference", Fighting Talk, 11 (December, 1957-January, 1958), p. 5.
- <sup>7</sup>New Age, November 20, 1958, p. 2 and August 20, 1959, p. 2.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., May 10, 1956, p. 1.
- <sup>9</sup>Natal Provincial Vigilance Committee, Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of the Natal Provincial Vigilance Committee, June, 1956.
- <sup>10</sup>Contact, July 12, 1958, p. 10.
- <sup>11</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup>See, for instance, New Age, December 15, 1960, p. 6 and November 2, 1961, p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup>New Age, June 1, 1961, p. 2.
- <sup>15</sup>Details of the Indian Councils established to govern Indians under apartheid are taken from the yearly surveys of Horrell, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Note: Most of the works listed below have been used directly in the research. A few additional titles have been included because they contain material closely related to the questions I have considered.

I. Books

- Benson, Mary. The African Patriots. London: Faber and Faber, 1963.
- Calpin, G. H. Indians in South Africa, Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1949.
- Chattopadhyaya, Haraprasad. Indians in Africa. Calcutta: Bookland Private, 1970.
- Feit, Edward. African Opposition in South Africa: The Failure of Passive Resistance. Stanford: The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, 1967.
- Feit, Edward. South Africa: The Dynamics of the African National Congress. London: Oxford University Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Urban Revolt in South Africa, 1960-1964. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1971.
- Forman, Lionel and Sachs, E. S. The South African Treason Trial. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1958.
- Gandhi, M. K. Satyagraha in South Africa. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950, 2nd. ed.
- Hancock, W. K. Smuts: The Sanguine Years 1870-1919. Cambridge: The University Press, 1962.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Smuts: The Fields of Force 1919-1950. Cambridge: The University Press, 1968.
- Hodgkin, Thomas. African Political Parties. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961.
- Hofmeyr, Jan H. South Africa. London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1931.
- Horrell, Muriel. A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, Johannesburg: Sairr, 1960-1970.
- Huttenback, Robert A. Gandhi in South Africa: British Imperialism and the Indian Question, 1860-1914. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971.

- Joshi, P. S. Struggle for Equality. Bombay: Hind Kitabs Ltd., 1951.
- Kuper, Hilda. Indian People in Natal. Pietermaritzburg: Univeristy of Natal Press, 1960.
- Kuper, Leo. An African Bourgeoisie. New Haven: Yale Univeristy Press, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Passive Resistance in South Africa. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.
- Kuper, Leo, Watts, Hilstan and Davies, Ronald. Durban: A Study in Racial Ecology. London: Jonathan Cape, 1958.
- Luthuli, Albert J. Let My People Go. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962.
- Massdorp, Gavin G. A Natal Indian Community. Durban: University of Natal Press, 1968.
- Marquard, Leo. The Peoples and Policies of South Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1962, 3rd. ed.
- Modisane, Bloke. Blame Me On History. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963.
- Narain, Iqbal. The Politics of Racialism. Delhi: Shiva Lal Agarwala and Co. Ltd, 1962.
- Pachai, B. Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, n.d.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The International Aspects of the South African Indian Question 1860-1971. Cape Town: C. Struik Ltd., 1971.
- Roux, Edward. Time Longer Than Rope. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.
- Sampson, Anthony. The Treason Cage. London: Heinemann, 1958.
- Simons, H. J. and R. E. Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969.
- University of Natal, Department of Economics. The Durban Housing Survey. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Experiment at Edendale. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1951.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Small Towns of Natal. Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1953.

van den Berghe, Pierre L. Caneville. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. South Africa: A Study in Conflict. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1965.

Virasai, Banphot. The Emergence and Making of a Mass Movement Leader: Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, 1893-1914. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation. University of California, Berkely, 1968.

Walker, Eric. A. A History of South Africa. London: Longmans, 1968, 3rd. ed.

## II. Articles

Arenstein, Jacqueline. "The Illegal Traders of Cato Manor:", New Age, September 22, 1955. p. 4.

Bhoola, Ahmed I. "Congress of the People", Indian Opinion, July 23, 1954, p. 340.

\_\_\_\_\_. "To the Leaders of A.N.C. and S.A.I.C.", Indian Opinion, March 25, 1955, p. 132.

Cachalia, Yusef. "The Ghetto Act", Africa South 2 (October-December, 1957), pp. 39-44.

Dadoo, Y. M. "Congress of the People--An Historical Step Forward", Advance, August 12, 1954, p. 2.

Dadoo, Y. M. "The Government and the Non-Europeans", Indian Opinion, February 9, 1940, p. 55.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Natal Indian Congress Conference", The Guardian, March 16, 1944, p. 2.

Levy, Norman. "8,000 to Jail", Fighting Talk, 15 (June, 1961), pp. 11, 15.

Meer, Fatima. "African and Indian in Durban", Africa South 4 (July-September, 1960), pp. 30-41.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Resistance in the Steps of Gandhi", Fighting Talk, (June, 1961), pp. 6-7.

Naicker, George. Dr. Naicker's Message to the Meeting of the Working Committee of the Natal Indian Congress. November 20, 1954, unpublished speech.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Self-Discipline for Volunteers of the Congress of the People. September 5, 1954, unpublished speech.
- Ngubane, Jordan K. "Dadooism and Dadoo-Boys", Indian Opinion, September 4, 1953, pp. 555-556.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Goodwill Between Indians and Africans", Indian Opinion, June 22, 1956, p. 259.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Mr. Luthuli on the Indian Question", Indian Opinion, May 1, 1953, p. 269.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Playing Into Our Enemies Hands", Indian Opinion, October 9, 1953, p. 664.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Strains on Afro-Indian Alliance", Indian Opinion, January 23, 1953, pp. 57-58.
- Segal, Ronald M. "The Multi-Racial Conference", Fighting Talk 11, (December, 1957-January, 1958), pp. 4-5.
- Sisulu, Walter, "Forward with the Freedom Charter", Fighting Talk, September 11, 1955, pp. 7-8.
- Uys, Stanley, "The Strike That Failed", Africa South, 4 (July-September, 1958), pp. 44-50.

### III. Government Documents

- Great Britain, Colonial Office. Union of South Africa. Correspondence relating to the Immigrants Regulation Act and other matters affecting Asiatics in South Africa. London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1913.
- South Africa. Bureau of Census and Statistics. Official Year Book of the Union 1952-1953. Pretoria: The Government Printer, 1954.
- South Africa. Act to Provide for the Establishment of Group Areas, for the Control of the Acquisition of Immovable Property and the Occupation of Land and Premises, and for matters incidental thereto. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1950.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Asiatic Land Laws Commission. Report of Asiatic Land Laws Commission. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1939.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Indian Penetration Commission. Report of the Indian Penetration Commission. Pretoria: Government Printer, 1942.

\_\_\_\_\_. Parliament. House of Assembly. Debates of the House of Assembly. Cape Town: Government Printer, 1946-1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Parliament. Senate. Debates of the Senate. Cape Town: Government Printer, 1946-1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Parliament. House of Assembly. Select Committee on Suppression of Communism Act Enquiry. Report. Cape Town: Government Printer, 1953.

#### IV. Congress Documents

Note: Unless otherwise noted the following documents were never published for general distribution. Most were for internal use only.

Natal Consultative Committee. Minutes of the Natal Consultative Committee Meeting Held on Sunday the 7th August, 1955.

Natal Indian Congress. Agenda Book of the Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1953.

\_\_\_\_\_. Agenda Book of the Seventh Annual Provincial Conference, February, 1954.

\_\_\_\_\_. Agenda Book of the Eighth Annual Provincial Conference, March, 1955.

\_\_\_\_\_. Agenda Book of the Ninth Annual Provincial Conference, June, 1956.

Natal Indian Congress. Minutes of the Fifth Annual Provincial Conference, September, 1951.

\_\_\_\_\_. Minutes of the Eighth Annual Conference, March, 1955.

\_\_\_\_\_. Report of a Meeting of the Organising Sub-Committee, August 4, 1956.

\_\_\_\_\_. Statement of Income and Expenditures Re: Transport of Delegates to the C.O.P. n.d.

\_\_\_\_\_. Resolutions Adopted at Conference of Natal Indian Congress Held in Durban, 22-24th June, 1956.

Natal Indian Congress, Merebank Branch. Minutes of a Committee Meeting of the Branch. August 21, 1955; March 25, 1956.

- \_\_\_\_\_. Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting, 31 July, 1955.
- Natal Indian Congress and African National Congress. Statement Issued by Joint Meeting of African and Indian Leaders in Durban on Sunday, 6th February, 1949.
- Natal Provincial Vigilance Committee. Minutes of Inaugural Meeting of the Natal Provincial Vigilance Committee. June, 1956.
- National Action Committee of the Congress Alliance. Report of the National Action Committee 5 December 1953 to the Secretary-General of the ANC and the Joint Honorary Secretaries of the SAIC.
- National Action Council of the Congress of the People. Press Statement: Forward to the Congress of the People. May 17, 1955.
- Report of the National Action Council of the Congress of the People to the Joint Executives of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, and the SACOD, n.d.
- South African Indian Congress. Twenty-Second Congress of the South African Indian Congress, October, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and African National Congress. Statement Issued by Joint Meeting of African and Indian Leaders Held in Durban on Sunday 6th February 1949.
- Transvaal Indian Congress. Secretarial Report Submitted to Bi-ennial General Meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress, August, 1959.
- Transvaal Indian Youth Congress. 11th Annual Conference, Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, April, 1956.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 14th Annual Conference, Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, April, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 15th Annual Conference, Transvaal Indian Youth Congress, October, 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 16th Annual Conference, August, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 17th Annual Conference, August, 1962.

## V. Letters

Note: Unless indicated, letters were either unsigned or the signatures were not legible.

- Natal Action Council of the Congress of the People. January 19, 1955: From N. T. Naicker to the Secretary of the National Action Council.
- Natal Indian Congress. November 1, 1956: From L. Moonsamy for Constitutional Sub-Committee to: "All Branch Secretaries".
- Natal Indian Congress, Merebank Branch. July 11, 1956: From R. S. Balli, Secretary, to: "All Members of the Committee".
- National Action Council of the Congress of the People.  
December 20, 1954: From Y. Cachalia for the Secretariat: "To All Provincial and Regional Committees".
- January 19, 1955: From P. Beyleveld for the Secretariat: "To All Regions and Provinces".
- January 31, 1955: "To All Regions and Provinces".
- February 4, 1955: "To All Regions and Provinces".
- March 3, 1955: "To All Regional and Provincial Executives of the ANC, SAIC, COD and SACPO".
- March 18, 1955: "To All Regional Committees".
- April 29, 1955: "To the Secretary, Natal Action Council of the Congress of the People".
- May 24, 1955: From Ismail Gangat: "To All Branch Officials and Volunteers of the Congress of the People".
- June 7, 1955: "To All Regional Committees".
- National Consultative Committee of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, SACOD.  
January 19, 1955: "To All Regions and Provinces".

## VI. Newspapers

- Advance, Cape Town. November, 1952-October, 1954.
- Contact, Cape Town. February, 1958-December, 1961.
- Fighting Talk, Johannesburg. January, 1954-February, 1963.
- Guardian, Cape Town. January, 1939-July, 1952.
- Indian Opinion, Durban. January, 1939-December, 1956.

New Age, Cape Town. October, 1954-November, 1961.

NIC News, Durban. Published irregularly, 1952-1954.

The Call, Durban. Published irregularly during the Congress of the People campaign, 1954-1955.



