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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

A F R I C A N S T U D I E S I N S T I T U T E

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Title: A Long Way to Walk: Bus Boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945.

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A long way to walk: bus boycotts in Alexandra, 1940-1945

Tomorrow awaits you
A long way to walk
Its useless talking
To gold propped ears.

Modikwe Dikobe.

Bus boycotts assumed central significance in the political struggles in urban areas during the forties and fifties. The Alexandra boycott of 1957, which evoked sympathy boycotts across the country, even in areas in which bus fares had not been increased, reached the proportions of a major confrontation between the state on the one hand and African communities and political organisations on the other.

Boycotts mobilised the energies of organisations of widely varied political complexions While the question will be raised whether the involvement of these organisations placed a burden upon the movements which they could not sustain, attempts to exploit the boyco ~~is~~ are understandable enough, given the strength of grass-roots commitment to the boycotts. It is this commitment which needs to be explained. Why was it that thousands of peopl poorly fed and poorly clad, would walk up to twenty miles a day, often in heavy rains, harrassed by police and officials, for periods lasting up to six weeks?

Part of the explanation lies in the economic condition of the African working class. A penny on the bus fares, the common precipitant of boycotts, inflicted a direct and serious injury on urban communities located a long way from the workplace. This injur was further compounded by the penalties which inadequate and inefficient transport services imposed on factory workers, who sometimes had to wait for hours to get onto the buses and who lost wages for being late for work. Other groups, like washerwomen, lost incomes through the inefficiencies of the transport service. In general, women were more heavily disadvantaged than men by the inadequate services and crowded conditions on the buses and were prominent in the boycotts. In part, the boycotts assumed significance because of the complexity of the working class communities in places like Alexandra, which meant that solutions such as a levy ~~-~~imposed on employers with the purp of subsidising bus fares did not cover all classes of labour, nor the unemployed. Moreover, such solutions disadvantaged <u>all</u> groups in areas like Alexandra in favour of groups living nearer town, for it increased the cost of their labour.

However, while the working class was the most important group in the boycotts, elements of other classes were also important. Particularly in areas like Alexandra, where Africans enjoyed freehold rights, a small but politically significant petty bourgeoisie had been all but squeezed out of the transport field by the beginning of the war as a result of developments towards a monopoly in the hands of white entrepreneurs. These developments which created the opportunity to increase bus fares worked simultaneously to push black transporters out of the indsutry. During the

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war, African entrepreneurs had an immediate interest in trying to regain their positions; some took a leading part in the boycott movements. Moreover, boycotts provided a short-term bonanza to small-scale transporters; the owners of lorries and horsecarts, were important providers of transport for boycotters. In sum, the boycotts had support from all classes in a community like Alexandra.

Transport costs have always been an important component in the domestic economy of urban African workers. The effects of state, including municipal policy, even before the passage of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act, was to locate a growing proportion of the urban African work-force at considerable distances from the city centres. In 1939, something over 80,000 blacks lived in Orlando, Kliptown and Alexandra. The position was similar in Pretoria, where there had been a large-scale removal of the black population of the city to locations like Lady Selbourne during the 1930's, and in Vereeniging and the Reef towns, though Reef locations were frequently situated within three or four miles of the towns.

Whereas it was estimated that in the United Kingdom most working class households spent not more than four per cent, and in London not more than two per cent on transport, black workers in Johannesburg were spending between six and seven per cent of family incomes on transport, and in the case of Alexandra as much as 9.5 per cent. (1)

The location of increasing numbers of the African working population at long distances from the workplace made transportation a field of keen activity among small entrepreneurs who found the small outlays and high returns, and - before the thirties - absence of significant regulations, attractive. A multitude of taxis, private transport "clubs" and even rickshaws (during an earlier period) plied the long hauls between places like Kliptown and Alexandra and the city centre; by the late twenties, small bus companies, at first owner-driven, had entered the field. During the twenties, taxis serving Alexandra charged 1s.3d. for the trip to Johannesburg; a bus service was introduced in 1929 and charged 9d.; the appearance of a second bus service in 1931 forced fares down to 6d. By the late thirties, the fares were down to 4d. One of the consequences of the development of bus services was that taxi fares fell sharply; in 1943, taxis from Alexandra were charging 6d. and even 4d. (2)

Relatively cheap transportation combined with comparatively low rentals made Alexandra a viable proposition to black workers, and accounted in part for the rapid increase in its population during the 1930s. But both factors began to change towards the end of the decade. By the late thirties, rentals were becoming sufficiently high for tenants' associations to emerge as pressure groups. (3)

Although bus fares fell during the 1930s, developments in the transport industry threatened to expose the inhabitants of Alexandra to a radical increase in transport costs. These developments must be explored if the full implications of the increases which were attempted during the war are to be understood.

The major legislative instrument of changes in transport was the Motor Carrier Transportation Act of 1930.(4) Before the passage of the Act there had been little regulation in carrier transport. R.G. Balloi, who ran buses and taxis during the twenties and thirties, and was to play a role in the boycotts of the mid-forties, records that

> at that time there was no control. Each and every owner could just run as he wished. This system made it difficult for European Bus owners to operate....In 1931, the Transportation Act was enforced.... It compelled all owners to work and operate according to one timetable and a stipulated fare. This was done in order to do away with competition. (5)

The primary purpose of the act was to protect the South African Railways from the competition of road carriers,(6) but it also empowered the Board set up under its aegis to issue certificates in order to limit competition in areas where there were no railways.(7) In 1932, it enunciated the policy of preventing

> the establishment of such new transport undertakings within areas or routes which are served by existing facilities, and have as far as possible confined new applicants to the spheres in which they can serve the public in a useful and economic manner. (8)

The effects of the policy were apparent by the time the Board made its first report:

> On review the local board by reducing the number of vehicles or their frequency considerably lessened the degree of excess which had previously existed, and by imposing minimum fares on certain routes and regulating the tariffs of charges on which carriers operated, a greater degree of stability and standardisation was achieved. (9)

For example the seven vehicles plying between Johannesburg and Germiston at the end of 1932 were reduced to four; the two between Johannesburg and Boksburg West ceased operating. Of the 24 seven-seat carriers (taxis) operating between Krugersdorp and Krugersdorp West 12 were granted carrier certificates and the others "ceased operation As the Board admitted in its report the following year, "the elimination of wasteful competition resulted in hardship to certain carriers...." (11)

One of the effects of these regulations was a "marked increase in the use of motor cars as distinct from omnibuses."(12) Throughout the thirties, the Board complained of the "operation of taxis and private cars in contravention of the Act" (13) and asserted furthermore that the

> alarm felt by the established rail or motor services at inroads of the donkey- or ox-wagon into traffic legitimately belonging to the established carrier is not exagerated. 14

The Act was only tightened up sufficiently to effectively prevent taxis from competing with buses when it was amended in 1941. Taxis could, in suitable conditions, force bus fares down. Thus on the route between Germiston station and the location

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> the taxis now operate virtually as buses, departing from either terminus at regular intervals.... The bus owners who hold certificates for this route have been obliged to reduce their fares to an uneconomic level in an endeavour to maintain their services until such time as the provisions under the Act relating to the operation of taxis shall have been amended. (15)

The certification policy of the Board, while ostensibly committed to the principles of "stability and standardisation" operated in effect to the benefit of white operators. The Board was not openly racist, and indeed it averred that, other things being equal it would grant certificates to blacks wishing to operate services for blacks.

> but it would be a very unsound policy and contrary to the spirit of the Act if natives were to be granted certificates merely because they are natives wishing to serve natives. 16

While blacks were given certificates to operate in the rural areas (some of these were extremely lucrative, for instance the Zwane brothers' enterprise in the Eastern Transvaal) and a few, like Dick Mathole and R.G. Baloyi, acquired certificates to run the highly profitable routes between the large cities and the locations, white operators rapidly came to dominate these urban routes. The Board claimed that it protected "established" operators against newcomers, but in fact all operators started on a small scale and could only become "established" through support from the Board. The Board itself averred that before the Act came into operation, "an extremely small outlay was required in order to enter the transportation field..." 17 The transport field was invaded by marginal elements during the twenties and thirties many bore Afrikaner and Italian surnames; in the countryside, landless whites often turned to transportation (or rather returned, for they had been transport riders up till the rinderpest epidemic in 1896.) 18

There were only two bus services operating on the Johannesburg-Alexandra route when the Board commenced operation. By 1943, there were seven, none controlled by Africans, though Baloyi's United Bus Company, in which Mathole held shares, had only recently been placed in liquidation. It is true that African entrepreneurs, with less access to capital than whites, were more vulnerable to "market forces", but those forces were certainly strengthened by the Board's policy. It hardly needs stating that no black ever sat on either the central or local boards.

The Motor Transport Owners' Association was formed during the mid-thirties; by 1937, its representatives were attending meetings of the Board to "oppose the applications of newcomers to the transport industry." 19 By the beginning of the war, transporters on the Alexandra run had organised themselves into the City-Alexandra Non-European Passenger Service, which operated as a cartel. 20

Despite these discouragements, black entrepreneurs made persistent efforts throughout the thirties and forties to acquire certificates to an extent that irritated "established" operators who had to go to the effort of opposing their applications. The Board shared this irritation. It noted that notwithstanding the fact that

> throughout the country adequate transport facilities are provided between native locations and the larger cities, it is significant that native applicants and their supporters do not appreciate the basic principles of the Act and submit new applications regardless of existing facilities. (21)

The Board opined that there was a need for

> some simple and equitable system of costs whereby existing operators who render adequate services be protected against wilful and repeated attempts, by new applicants, to cripple such operators financially if they themselves cannot also by fair means or foul, obtain authority to operate a service over the same route.... 22

A provision dropped from the original Act in 1932 was reintroduced in 1941 whereby applicants for certificates could be required to deposit up to £100 to compensate existing operators for the costs of opposing new applications.23 Amendments were also introduced in 1941 which had the effect of tightening up controls over the operation of cars for hire.24 In sum, by the beginning of the war, passenger services had been concentrated in the hands of a cartel of bus companies dominated by whites. Black entrepreneurs had been squeezed out of the services which they had pioneered a decade earlier. Small-scale entrepreneurs like taxi-owners, were being increasingly subjected to controls which, while not eliminating them, forced them to the edges of the field.

Notwithstanding these tendencies, bus fares remained remarkably stable during the thirties, and indeed actually declined, at least in Alexandra. But the reorganisation of the industry created a structure within which increases in fares could be made without running the risk that transporters outside the cartel could uncercut the "established carrier." 'The considerable influx of people into Alexandra from shortly before the war, combined with a decline in private transport usage (due to the restrictions on petrol and the difficulties in obtaining tyres) after the war broke out, provided the opportunity to put up prices. 25

The bus owners justified the increase in fares which they imposed late in 1939 on the grounds that costs had radically increased since the beginning of the war. This claim is difficult to assess. It is perfectly true that there was an increase in costs, but there was also a massive increase in demands for transport; evidence of over-crowding may be deduced as much from the statistics provided by the bus owners to the Bus Commission of 1943 as from the complaints of commuters and African organisations.26 Municipal bus services faced equivalent if not

greater increases in costs (and actually claimed larger increases), yet with the exception of a single route in Johannesburg, they either showed a profit in 1941 or 1942 where previously they had shown losses, or increased their profits, or decreased their losses.[27] The Sunday Times reported that £1 shares in a bus company (not running on the Alexandra route) had increased in value to £200, and that after subtracting a generous managerial remuneration, the company was providing a 20% return on investment.[28] The value of the assets of the Alexandra operators was estimated at £36,946 in 1943;[29] early in 1945, these and the certificates were offered to the Johannesburg Municipality for £250,000, and sold to a private consortium for £176,000 in 1945. It was estimated that the value of certificates (in which there was a lively market) varied between £2000 and £2750 each.[30] While both these sums were probably inflated, they indicate the expectations entertained by transporters of the profitability of the routes immediately after a damaging boycott.

The claim for increased bus fares rested, not so much on increased costs as on the right of the companies to get a 15 per cent return on capital and remuneration for managerial services.[31] The structural basis for this claim lay in the transformation of the bus companies over the course of the thirties into fully fledged capitalist firms with exclusive control over the industry.

The exclusion of black entrepreneurs from the transportation field provided an incentive for them to participate in boycotts or stoppages. On one occasion, though it does not seem to have been typical, white-owned buses were prevented from entering Eastwood, Pretoria. According to the Bus Commission, the obstruction was "organised by an African who was planning to obtain certificates..... in order to introduce a bus service of his own."[32] It is also significant that the incidence of boycotts was high in places like Alexandra, where Africans could hold property, and where accordingly small black capitalist interest tended to coagulate.

Prominent among would-be transporters were important members of the African National Congress. Aside from Balloi, who was treasurer-general of the A.N.C. during the war, the president-general himself Dr. A.B. Xuma, was interested in acquiring interests in the transport industry. Thus early in the war, Balloi informed Xuma of his intention to sell his bus certificates in the United Bus Service (at that stage on the verge of bankcruptcy) which operated between Alexandra and Johannesburg. Xuma approached Dr. Moroka, his predecessor as president-general, to suggest that they, together with Balloi, should form a partnership: "this proposition is a much more profitable business than a general dealer's licence".[33] Xuma approached Mathole, proprietor of the Eastern Bus Service, with an offer to buy his shares in the United Bus Service.[34] When the United Bus Service was placed under judicial management, Xuma received copies of

the judicial manager's reports. Approaches to the president-general were made by other entrepreneurs; thus the Clermont Township Aid Fund tries to interest Xuma in the formation of a transport company in 1941.[35] C.S. Ramohanoe, the president of the A.N.C. in the Transvaal, had applied for a passenger certificate in 1935, though it is not clear whether he secured one.[36] In mid-1945, when the "bus question" began stirring again in Alexandra, Baloyi accused him of being an employee of the Public Utility Transport Corporation.[37]

These interests were stimulated by the boycotts. In evidence to the Bus Commission in 1943, Baloyi said he was prepared to run a service at the old fare.[38] During the later stages of the Alexandra boycott of 1944, a group of African businessmen applied for certificates, and affirmed that they could run a service at the old fares.[39] Baloyi held the position of chairman of the non-European section of the Alexandra Emergency Transport Committee.

Xuma justified his commercial ventures with nationalist rhetoric. Writing to Balloi, he argued that it would reflect badly if people said he had gone backrupt: "We cannot afford to see you, or any of our progressive people disappear from the limelight or fail to lead in certain directions" and, [p]ulling together, we can do a great deal, not only for ourserves, but for our people in general."[40] Xuma, of course, saw a direct connexion between the political aspirations of the African people and the struggles of an aspiring petty bourgeoisie: speaking of Alexandra, he said, "We have our population largely consisting of people who were struggling to get freehold title to the land, thereby building a hope of a future in the hearts of their child[ren]."[41]

While the black petty bourgeoisie, including African political leaders, may have had an interest in the boycotts as a means to returning to activities from which they had been extruded, it would be a mistake to see them as the dominant group in the boycott movements. It would be incorrect to see the boycotts simply as the effects of small entrepreneurs mobilising mass support from among the working class in order to help defeat their white rivals. For if the boycotts present some of the features of a trade war, it was one in which the consumers had an interest which lay beyond those of the combatants. The boycotts were affected by the participation of the petty bourgeoisie; it is possible that the different committees which had developed by the 1944 boycott had their constituencies in different classes, and that their direction was influenced by these political divisions. But the major significance of the boycotts lay in the importance which they assumed to the working classes, who initiated the boycott movements and sustained them.

Transport costs, and the quality of transport services, raised fundamental issues to urban black workers, irrespective of whether or not they opened the way back into the industry for black transporters. The latter might have been satisfied

by a relaxation of the policy pursued by the Motor Transportation Board, and, given the same protection afforded to white entrepreneurs, black transporters with sufficient capital might have found themselves beneficiaries of that conjunction of circumstances - monopolistic control over the industry and rising costs - which would give them the opportunity to take advantage of an increase in fares. Of course, things were going the other way for the African petty bourgeoisie, which accounts for the increasing convergence of their interests with the working class.

The changes in the transport industry during the 1930s struck at the existence of working class communities located at a distance from the cities, especially those dependent on bus transport. (Areas served by the S.A.R. enjoyed relatively low-cost transport, and were never prominent in initiating boycotts, though in 1944 an attempt was made to organise a sympathy boycott in Orlando, and in 1957, Orlando came out strongly in sympathy with Alexandra.)

The costs of all items of subsistence increased rapidly during the early war period.[42] But it was not simply that the proposals to increase fares by a penny made late in 1939 would further strain the seriously eroded wages of urban workers, though this is true. Beyond the immediate proposals, the really threatening aspect was that the assumptions on which the claims for fare increases were made indicated no limits to the rise in transport costs. On the assumption that 4d. for a ten-mile ride was cheap (the "lowest fare in the Union", claimed the bus companies)[43] 5d. was also cheap. The bus companies ennunciated the doctrine that a penny a mile was a reasonable fare, which would suggest that they were aiming at 10d. for the fare between Alexandra and the City. But there was no reason why the fares should stop there, particularly after the report of the Bus Commission of 1943 which lent legitimacy to the claims of transporters for a "reasonable" return on capital and for managerial services.[44] The long-term implication of the proposal to increase fares was that transport costs could escalate to the point where places like Alexandra might cease to be viable locations for black workers, particularly the poorest classes. The viability of Alexandra was a vital issue to the urban African working class. Over-riding even its significance as a free-hold and more or less self-governing area, was its importance to the black labour force as an uncomfortable dormitory on the peripheries of the city, beyond the reach of urban slum-clearing regulations and influx controls (of which it was in part the product.) Difficult to police, attracting the marginal elements in African urban society, Alexandra, like the squatter camps which grew up around South African cities during the war, provided a precarious shelter in the social and economic revolution sweeping over countryside and city.

Fare increases constituted only part of the problem. Whereas Alexandra had been a cheap place to stay during the 1930s, by 1943 the average rent for certain classes of accommodation was more expensive than the overall Johannesburg average though still much cheaper than Sophiatown. [45] One of the reasons was the bonding of African owned property to building societies; in 1943 something like a fifth of the lots in Alexandra were held under mortgage by blacks and coloureds. [46] Thus workers living in places like Alexandra during the war years were caught in a swirling eddy of forces, partly induced by the war, but also created by the pace of capitalist development.

Alexandra was threatened more directly by a plan to remove it. The City Council had during the thirties appointed a commission headed by Judge Feetham to investigate the possibility of removing the township. Feetham had recommended against removal, but in July, 1938, the Council had resolved that a conference should be held to consider "ways and means of dealing with Alexandra Township". [47] In 1943, the Council decided to support a report which recommended the "complete abolition of Alexandra"; the expropriation of all stands (land-holders were to be offered stands in another area and compensation for improvements; tenants were to be removed to municipally controlled locations or made to "depart from the area.") [48] The removal of Alexandra surfaced as an issue during the 1944 boycott [49] though it had much earlier provided the occasion for resistance; like the extrusion of the African entrepreneurs from the transport industry, it provided an area of collaboration between the black petty-bourgeoisie and the working class.

By early wartime, Alexandra was becoming not only much larger, but also composed in such a way that one can speak of an ensemble of quite different and distinctive interes groups which could provide a constituency for community political action. An African community was assembling on the peripheries of the major cities in a form which could not be predicted from the constitution of the labour force qua labour force. Aside from the petty-bourgeoise element, the working class had assumed a complexity which at once made its administration more difficult to the authorities, and also enabled the community to act with a greater range of resources than were available in simpler communities. The presence of large numbers of work-seekers, the influx of people from both rural areas and areas nearer the city; the employment of women in areas outside of domestic service, and not least the importance of transportation in the manifold activities of the household increased both the resources and the demands which the community made on transport and other services, and solutions to transport problems became more difficult to achieve unilaterally by administrative fiat.

The importance of women in the boycotts can scarcely be exagerated. They were increasingly being employed in factories, which means that a flexible and efficient transport system became crucial in the domestic economy of Alexandra. The special

needs of women working in factories and running homes were prominent in the complaints about the transport system. Moreover, many women employed in domestic service were living with their families and doing piecework washing directly affected their earning capacity. For these, the overcrowding on the buses, the long delays, and the "no-stages" system hit at incomes and physical well-being. Many worked in the middle-class suburbs mid-way between Alexandra and the City; not only did they have to pay a full fare to Orange Grove or Houghton, but, because of the struggle to get onto the buses, they would have to take a bus to the city in the afternoon in order to be assured of a seat on the journey home.[50]

And where women were living-in domestic servants, the bus service was important in maintaining some sort of viable family life; hence the resentments against the higher fares charged over weekends -/"the super fat yielding days".[51]

Alexandra was politically and administratively bursting out of the framework of formal administrative divisions and structures. The township was nominally administered by the Alexandra Health Committee, itself something of an administrative anomaly. The Committee was an agency of the Transvaal Province which however, had as its chairman Abram Fischer, recently recruited to the Communist Party, and as its part-time medical officer of health the president-general of the African National Congress - as well as an array of African land-holders and other interest groups represented on it. In effect, Alexandra governed itself. Both the complexity of the community and the inadequacy of outside control must be taken into account in understanding the capacity of the township to make the initiatives that surfaced in the boycotts; they are as important as the grinding poverty and the wretched living conditions in accounting for the power of the boycott movements.

II

The boycott movement in Alexandra proceeded quite slowly at first. The seven operators on the Johannesburg-Alexandra route increased fares from 4d. to 5d. late in 1939,[52] and this fare was accepted by commuters until August, 1940, when they boycotted the services with such effect that the 4d. fare was restored. The delay raises problems in understanding the evolution of the boycott organisations. Xuma records that after the increase was granted

> Further representations were made without success. Protest meetings were organised and eventually a bus boycott took place on 4th August, 1940. The boycott was successful and 4d. was again charged and the levy to bus owners was reduced once more to 2/6 per bus per day.[53]

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This seems to suggest that committees interested in transport problems attempted to negotiate issues before resorting to boycotts. During the previous year, a deputation from the Transport Action Committee which inluded Gaur Radebe and C.S. Ramohanoe had met the Johannesburg City Council's Tramways and Lighting Committee to complain about the municipal transport system. 54

The 1940 boycott was not reported in the press, and passing references to it in official reports are very brief. But the fact that it generated no "news" would seem to indicate that it passed without incident, lasted a short time, and was highly successful: the four-penny fare was restored and held for two years. It is not certain whether the boycott assumed the form of later boycotts, i.e. the refusal to use the buses combined with action against would-be commuters. In later boycotts there was some experimentation with different methods before the common form was established.

The next episode in Alexandra followed an increase in the fare on October 15, 1942. This time there do not seem to have been any preliminary negotiations. Commuters refused to pay the extra fare. The police were called in; passengers on one bus paid up. There were reports of "minor disturbances" arising from attempts to prevent people from using buses; three policemen were slightly injured and five buses were damaged. A conference was held between the bus owners and "residents." The bus owners brushed the incident aside as the work of "agitators". However they announced that the 4d. fare would be restored, but that the route would be shortened. 55

The boycotts demonstrated the effectiveness of popular action in holding the fares down, though the victory of 1942 was achieved at some cost to the commuters. (It seems that the route was restored to its previous length by the time the 1943 boycott began.) Neither displayed the full power either of the boycotters nor the opposing forces of the transport companies. They were not sufficiently protracted to involve the intervention of the state nor the complex array of political groups, including white liberal and left-wing groups, which were later to mobilise "public opinion" into postures - sometimes alternating postures - of sympathy and hostility towards the urban working classes.

These two episodes, like many others which continue down to the present, exhibited the form of riots with a specific focus rather than the more elaborate processes which came to be involved in the boycotts of 1943, 1944 and 1957 in Alexandra and similar movements elsewhere. Yet they should not be viewed simply as preludes to these larger movements. In a "statistical" sense they are less impressive than the great set-piece boycotts of later years. But it should be recognised that they exemplify more accurately than these more celebrated episodes the thousands

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of occasions on which black men have attempted to intervene actively in the direction of their lives, and that they constituted the forces which were indispensable in providing these larger movements with their momentum.

At the same time, they illustrate the problems intrinsic to direct community-based popular action, even when such action achieves a tangible objective; they won no structural alteration in the situation of the community, nor even a significant expansion in the political power of the community over decisions affecting it.

The very successes of the boycotts attest to their weakness; the temporary retreat of the bus owners over the issue of fares did not jeopardise their control over transport, which remained unassailed, though the damage to the buses posed the threat of destroying the capital investments of bus owners, and the boycotts demonstrated their importance as a threat to profits. Both threats delivered the capacity to peg fares, but it was a limited power which could not in itself precipitate more far-reaching changes.

The boycotts which took place during the next few years brought larger forces into play on both sides. The power of the bus operators was consolidated by the intervention of the state, and the movement set in train for the concentration of control in the industry with the state as a major partner. To anticipate a little, the alliances through which broader and more concerted boycott action became mobilised took the direction of boycotts out of the hands of the boycotters; the groups which acted on behalf of the boycotters in the complicated negotiations involving local authorities, government departments and even the cabinet were increasingly remote from the boycott communities. It will be suggested that the effect of this change may have been to steer the boycotts away from some directions which they might otherwise have taken.

The boycotts became a problem, a resource, an issue which reverberated in the political transactions of the African National Congress, left-wing groups, white liberal associations and various fractions of the state. But the base was always the precarious and fragile one of men and women who were prepared to walk to and from work each day. True, outside intervention provided supports for the boycotters which were crucial to sustaining their effort; nonetheless, their intervention took the initiative away from those immediately involved. It is with these problems in mind that the boycotts of 1943 and 1944 will be considered.

The 1943 boycott began on August 3 following an increase in fares to 5d. Meetings were held the previous day, both in the township and in the city. Lapel badges stating "We Pay 4d." were printed and distributed. J.B. Marks, later a member of the Emergency Transport Committee addressed a meeting at the Noord Street bus terminus, and asked for "justice"; he had kept books for bus owners for five years, he declared, and these showed "surplus profits." 56 Lorentz, the coordinato

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of the bus companies, said he had been approached by "spokesmen", but that the matter had been "thrashed out." 57

In a statement to the press the following day, A.E.P. Fish of the Alexandra Worker: Union, declared that either the fares should remain at 4d. or else the service should be operated by the Alexandra Health Committee for the benefit of the residents; the profits could be used for the improvement of the service. The Committee, he said, was prepared to take it over. Fish drew attention to low wages; to the "no stage" system; to over-crowding on the buses, and said that economies could be introduced, for instance by employing black inspectors. 58

By the 4th a ferry service had begun transporting boycotters. Senator Basner, Margaret and William Ballinger, Ellen Hellman, Hilda Kuper and Colin Legum appealed to the public to provide a ferry service, and the Star published a telephone number and other information necessary to give effect to the appeal. The City Council asked employers to be "reasonable" towards employees coming late to work. 59

On the following day, 2,000 boycotters got lifts; the Emergency Transport Committee, formed under Basner's chairmanship, mobilised fifty cars and set about applying for petrol rations. Vincent Swart, later associated with the Trotskyite Movement for Democracy of Content, raised £100 to hire carts and horses. On August 3, 3,000 boycotters were lifted to work. 60 The police issued a statement to the effect that the boycott had caused no disorder, and the next day Basner returned the compliment: "They [the police] have been perfectly marvellous and their tact has helped avoid any trouble." 61 The traffic department overlooked contraventions of regulations against over-crowding in motor cars. Many firms provided transport for black workers or loaned them bicycles. By the 6th, some workers had lost their jobs. 62 The Department of Native Affairs asked employers to reinstate them, an appeal to which P. van der Bijl, Minister of Native Affairs, added his authority. 63 The Rand Daily Mail fervently endorsed the appeal "in the confidence that employers will not make their natives suffer...." 64

In this atmosphere of amity, negotiations between the parties to the dispute slowly bogged down. The companies maintained that the service was cheap ... the "lowest fare in the Union" declared its spokesman, but offered to retain the 4d. fare if the route were shortened by a mile. 65 Basner proposed that the state - either central or local authorities - should subsidise transport. 66 The Johannesburg City Council was not interested in providing cheap transport to Alexandra; it wanted Alexandra removed altogether, though as an immediate measure, it decided to provide a service to those commuters who were prepared to wait until 7.30 p.m. when buses from the Sophiatown route would be made available. 67 The Labour group in the Council proposed that a municipal service should be installed between Bramley (over a mile from Alexandra) and Yeoville (three miles from the City) and

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that the Prime Minister should use war-time emergency regulations to restore the service at the old fare. 68

By August 8, there was deadlock. The settlement proposed by the bus owners was rejected; they retaliated by returning the buses to service despite an appeal by Basner that this should not be done until the issue had been resolved. 69 A mass meeting was held in Alexandra on the 9th, and a procession of more than 10,000 people, including many women and children, marched in a column more than 2 miles long to the Noord Street terminus, where oranges and pamphlets were distributed by members of the emergency committee. 70 The procession marked the end of the boycott. On the 11th, the Government announced that a commission of inquiry was to be held, and that fares were to be pegged at 4d. pending its findings. Xuma described the "settlement" as a "great victory", declaring that the "exemplary behaviour of the residents had won great sympathy." 71

The description was not merely premature; it legitimised the removal of the issue to an official arena of debate, out of reach of direct action. With its third boycott in three years, Alexandra had attracted the attention of the state and African political organisations, and had begun to involve white liberal and radical groups. While some of the ideas for a "solution" to the problems of transport were rehearsed during the boycott (including the one eventually adopted - Basner's proposal that the state should subsidise the companies) none of the positio taken up in later boycotts were clearly defined. It is not even very clear how far the 1943 episode assumed the form characteristic of later boycotts, the walk to and from work. While many people must have walked in 1943, there are no reports of the columns of marchers which were the remarkable feature of later boycotts. It is possible that the procession of the 9th may have suggested the form which boycotts later assumed.

The Commission created the settings in which the transport problems of urban blacks became officially defined. These settings disposed of a resolution of the "transport problem" in ways which vitiated the possibility of the boycott movement generating radical action within African communities. The announcement of the Commission signalled the beginning of a search for a consensus between the state, the transport industry, Johannesburg industry and African and liberal political organisations. As Xuma's statement suggested, the A.N.C. leadership was as interested in a settlement as the official bodies and capitalist interests. From the A.N.C.'s point of view, a "settlement" won by orderly and punctually terminated protest could serve to legitimise African participation in government.

As they became processed through the machinery of the Commission, the "transport problems" of the township became abstracted from the political struggles of the community. What is interesting is not that the hypostatisation of this issue should have been attempted by the state and white economic interests, but that this framework should have been accepted with little disagreement by organisations

like the A.N.C., the liberals and most groups on the left.

The immediate effect of the establishment of the Commission was to foreclose the possibility that the agitation in Alexandra might spread to other areas where the transport situation was as bad if not worse; significantly the terms of reference of the Commission covered the whole of the Witwatersrand, Pretoria and Vereeniging region. 72 The Commission transferred the conflict into a setting in which popular action was by definition excluded; and the readiness of African political organisations to testify before it legitimised this removal. On the other hand, real problems were raised, then as later, about the limitations of the boycott as a weapon in community political struggles which suggests that Xuma may have been right to grasp whatever occasions became available to negotiate piecemeal improvements.

The Commission was directed to inquiry whether fares, routes, and conditions of service on the Witwatersrand, Pretoria and Vereeniging, were "fair and reasonable", and whether fares were "within the means of passengers." 73 The Commission was thus precluded from an inquiry into the effects of segregation on the position of the African working class; from an inquiry into the structure of the transport industry and from investigating the possibility of alternative methods of organising the transport industry. In addition to these impediments to a broad-ranging inquiry, the Commission adopted a protective posture towards the transport industry and towards the Road Transportation Board which assisted in the preparation of the report. 74 While collecting valuable and important information about the conditions of the black working class, the Commission lent its authority to a conservative resolution of the issue which deeply influenced both the reorganisation of the industry (though it did not make explicit recommendations in this respect) and affected the nature of future boycotts.

The Commission protected the bus owners in several ways. When the bus owners declined to place their books before the Commission in public session, its chairman decided not to compel them to do so, despite reservations about the value of the evidence voluntarily submitted. 75 After some initial reluctance, the Commission permitted counsel to represent different interests but decided to hear evidence on the financial position of the companies in camera, whereupon counsel representing African groups withdrew. 76 The Commission considered the records of the companies inadequate to form an opinion about their financial viability, and made a recommendation to the effect that the Road Transportation Board should attach a condition to certificates that "accurate accounts be kept of revenue and expenditure." 77 Yet on the basis of evidence which it regarded as unsatisfactory, the Commission recommended fare increases on the Alexandra route over week-ends, on the Pretoria-Atteridgeville route for both week-ends and week-days, and sanctioned the increase of week-end fares on other routes in the Pretoria area. 78

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Perhaps the most important outcome of the Commission's deliberations was its acceptance of the legitimacy of a return of 15 per cent on capital plus managerial remuneration to each operator of £1,000 per annum.[79] In effect the Commission was conceding to the bus owners the right to determine the level of profits under monopolistic conditions.

Again, it is not surprising that this concession should have been made, but it is remarkable that the submissions of most of the parties which gave evidence to the Commission should have prefigured such a conclusion. Most of the evidence reported in the press lay stress on the poverty of the African urban community, without pursuing any analysis of the structural bases of the transport industry or the position of the working class within the political economy. The stalwart of the Fourth International (Johannesburg branch), H. Jaffee, submitted an interesting critique of working class transport and housing, though his recommendations would have required a revolution to turn out very differently from the solutions later preferred by the Federated Chamber of Industries. (Both wanted nationalisation of transport.)[80]

Mr. Fish did not give evidence, and no one else took up the idea he had voiced earlier of community control over transport. Nor did Radebe of the Transport Action Committee give evidence. Only Baloyi, who wore his interests on his sleeve, suggested that the keen edge of African competition would cut fares down.[81]

On November 15, seven months after the Commission reported, the fares on the Alexandra route were raised by a penny. The fare increase was supposed to be carried by employers; on the 10th, the Government had issued a proclamation to this effect under war emergency regulations.[82] Despite this divisive ploy, protest meetings held in locations and townships around Johannesburg decided that even those not affected by the increase would take part in the boycotts - casual labourers and especially washerwomen would find it difficult to claim the subsidy, and in any case the unemployed and school-children would not be eligible to claim.[83] The boycott was not viewed simply as a form of pressure on the companies; Xuma explained that it was intended to "bring to public notice the deplorable conditions under which the Natives live"[84] and Basner issued a statement about the cost of living to blacks.[85]

The boycott was more clearly premeditated, more openly publicised, and more coherently organised than the earlier movements,[86] and the spirit of amity which had characterise the boycott of 1943 was absent from the beginning. The police laid down an opening barrage by arresting many "native vagrants" on the eve of the boycott, and lorry-loads of policement arrived in Alexandra at 3 a.m. on the 15th to discourage the boycott.[87] The boycotters had announced their intention of marching in procession to the city; the police read a proclamation prohibiting "gatherings or processions" of more than 20 persons, whereupon the boycotters broke up into smaller parties. At

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a meeting to organise a sympathy boycott in Orlando, Paul Mosaka, Kumalo, and Self Mpuru were arrested. 88 Despite these discouragements something like 10,000 people took part in the boycott from the beginning. (There were also providential discouragements - it rained on 20 days that November, and there was at least one severe hailstorm.) 89

A lift scheme by sympathetic whites organised by the Emergency Transport Committee began operating on November 18th; by the 21st, lifters were being stopped and questioned by Road Transportation Board officials, and a week later many received letters alleging contraventions of the Transportation Act. 90 By mid-December, the bus owners were concerned with the conveyance of boycotters in lorries; instructions were issued on the 19th to prosecute such persons and stop supplying them with petrol; the Transportation Board also withdrew certificates from 15 black owners of lorries and cars who were charged with having conveyed boycotters for profit. 91 The drivers alleged intimidation. In response to this threat the Emergency Transport Committee replaced motor vehicles with horse-drawn trolleys (not subject to the provisions of the Act) hired for £1 a day from Alexandra residents. 92

The boycott set off a series of debates, negotiations, proposals, and deputations which continued throughout November and December. The Johannesburg City Council debated the matter on November 25. 93 The provincial executive of the Labour Party protested against the actions of the Native Affairs Department and the Transportation Board, and arranged a deputation to meet the Board. 94 The Campaign for Rights and Justice, a body affiliated to 140 organisations, set up to "fight against attacks upon Democracy and for removal of all disabilities which at present militate against the full use of the human resources of the country", which had helped motorists prosecuted by the Board with legal aid, tried unsuccessfully to meet the Minister of Transport, F. Sturrock. 95

Sturrock said the Government was investigating the boycott, and on December 4, declared that the Government refused to subsidise transport for blacks. Most employers would pay the increase. It would be impossible to confine a subsidy to Alexandra.

> It is also not understood why casual workers and washerwomen are not also able to recover this increased charge since they are usually daily paid workers, and this operation should, therefore, be easier than those on a weekly or monthly basis. 96

The Council for Rights and Justice replied that there was no proof that the bus service was running at a loss. 97 At a meeting between the Minister of Native Affairs The Alexandra Health Committee and the bus proprietors, the proposal was made that the increased fare should be introduced during peak hours; Basner rejected it as nonsensical. 98 On December 8, Rheinault-Jones, who had sat on the Bus Commission, suggested that the Government or the City Council should subsidise coupons; 99 and on the

11th the General Purposes Committee of the Council decided to recommend subsidisi the services to the tune of £10,000, sufficient to absorb the increase for three months. [100] The Labour Party objected in principle to subsidies for private companies. [101]

The Cabinet considered the boycott on the 12th, and there were expectations both of a solution and the end of the boycott. [102] But the Cabinet decided against a subsidy and asked the City not to intervene in a matter outside of its jurisdicti The Workers' Transport Action Committee announced that the boycott would continue Members of the City Council criticised the Government's rejection of its offer and urged that "bold action" was needed to restore the "faith of the Natives in the administration." [105] On the 19th . . a motion was passed by the Council that the City should buy the buses and apply for certificates, and that a railway to Alexandra should be built. [106]

A mass meeting held in Alexandra on the 20th resolved to hold a sit-down strike. [10] This new development induced alarm among significant interests, and a hardening of opinion. The Transvaal Chamber of Industries declared that the "natives would be placing their jobs in jeopardy." [108] The WTAC invited trade unions to help with the organisation of the strike, and deputations from the Committee interviewed the Council of Native Trade Unions and the Labour Party, but the next day the strike was postponed till the New Year. [109]

The Council's coupon scheme was put to a mass meeting in Alexandra and was rejecte The Council for Rights and Justice placed a petition calling for a solution to the problem was placed in St. Mary's cathedral; "so many queued up to sign that the number of forms was inadequate and slips of paper had to be used." [111] J.A.Fotheringham said that Alexandra was unwise to reject the coupon scheme: "There are influences at work which will thwart any endeavour we make to end this dispute." He said that the boycott had gone on long enough and "if the Natives agreed to the new fare he would ask the bus owners to operate at 4d. until the coupons could be printed." Radebe said the matter would have to be considered by the WTAC and accepted by a mass meeting. [112] Substantially the same proposal was put to a meeti of a sub-committee of the City Council at which representatives of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and deputations from the Alexandra Emergency Transport Committee and the WTAC were present. The scheme proposed a 4d. fare on week-days, 6d. on Saturday afternoons and 7d. on Sundays and public holidays. [113]

Although Basner was sceptical about the scheme being accepted by Alexandra, his committee agreed to recommend acceptance to a mass meeting on New Year's day. It is not clear whether he spoke on behalf of the WTAC or whether the latter dissented, but they must have realised that there was little alternative. A boycott would be difficult to keep going with one of its objectives in effect secured, if only temporarily. A strike would be even more difficult to organise

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and sustain than a boycott. Moreover, with the threat of a strike, the levers c white opinion were being pushed against the boycotters, and this opinion had been critical for the maintenance of the boycott. In the meantime, the wheels were in motion to concentrate control over the industry. Fotheringham announced the intention of forming a public utility corporation. 114

The city fathers clearly disliked negotiating with groups, like the WTAC, which regarded themselves as delegates. The mayor lectured the deputation to the effect that a "robot had been created at Alexandra over which none had any contro representatives should have the power to accept proposals and stand by them. If Alexandra residents did not use the buses, "they would have lost the sympathy of the Johannesburg public for ever." 115

The boycott was at an end. The mass meeting called in Alexandra on New Year's Day, 1945, accepted the proposals for a coupon system subsidised by the City Council. The buses started running again on the 4th; women of the Emergency Transport Committee helped to regulate the queues.116 In its editorial on the morning of the 3rd, The Rand Daily Mail quoted with approval the opinion of the Council for Rights and Justice that the solution to the dispute was a "triumph of local initiative over the disorderly consequences of laissez faire and lack of planning" and added its own view that

> the Natives were wise to accept the Council's proposals. All through the boycott, opinion has been on its side; had they rejected this very reasonable plan it would have definitely turned against them. And in that case they could have achieved nothing, however long the boycott might have continued. 117

Other triumphs over disorderly forces were in train. As early as December 8, a meeting had been held between a Council sub-committee and the bus owners to disc the sale of the bus service to the Council.118 The owners wanted £250,000, an offe which the sub-committee were "not disposed to recommend"119 and on the 19th, the General Purposes Committee recommended that there was nothing further to be done. Energised by the threat of a strike, the Council applied for certificates on the 23rd, but the local Transportation Board turned down the application. 120

In the meantime, the owners had initiated discussions with Barregar of the Indust and Commercial Holdings group which bought the services for £175,000: on March 23, 1945, Barregar announced that a "public utility corporation" had been registered./ The substantive changes on the transport industry effected by the boycott was the concentration in control over it; subsequent boycotts may have further entrenched the concentration of control over black transportation.

But the political effects on the community cannot be so neatly measured, for thereafter, with the example of Alexandra before them, more and more communities took up the transport boycott as a weapon in the political struggle. The 1944

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boycott, fought on a smaller scale than many of the subsequent movements, raises fundamental questions about the potentiality of the transport boycott in mobilisir action in urban black communities. The issues were discussed by Edward Roux in a short essay which stands as the most intelligent contemporary analysis of the affair. Roux saw the second world war as a period of quiescence compared with the political activity among Africans during the first world war:

> Alexandra therefore stands out all the more sharply, for it revealed a fervour, solidarity and grim determination of which any suppressed and struggling people might well be proud. 122

He saw the 1943 boycott (and presumably the two earlier ones) as a "spontaneous mass movement unprepared and owing little or nothing to political leadership." The second "strike" was "well-prepared and had the support of a large committee representing numerous African and pro-African organisations." Roux identified three political groups in the 1944 boycott: the Communist party, the African Democratic Party and a trotskyite off-shoot of the A.D.P.; these constituted respectively a "right", a "centre" and a "left" in movement. During the strike there was an attempt to widen the strike by mobilising Orlando and Eastern and Western townships. The attempt failed, partly because of police action, and partly because Orlando residents had already bought their monthly railway tickets. There were also divisions among political groups over the practicality of attempting to widen the area, and conflicts over whether to accept the Council's coupon scheme.

The conflict eventually came down to a split between those (the Communist"right") who thought the boycott should end once some tangible benefit had been achieved and those who felt it should continue until some larger changes had been achieved.

> There seems little doubt in my mind that this (acceptance of the 4d. coupon) was the correct line to take. Leftists urged that the people should go on walking, that they should demand a municipal or state-owned bus service. They declared that the masses in Alexandra had become so politically developed that they would stop at nothing less. No doubt many in Alexandra did realise the need for socialised transport, but to go on walking after the raison d'etre of the strike, the return of the 4d. fare, had been decided, would be a counsel of perfection. Revolutionary intransigence may declare that every struggle must be carried to its ultimate limits, but the African people who have suffered so many defeats and disappointments do well to take and hold what they have won. A movement cannot live and grow without an occasional foretaste of ultimate victory. 123

Perceptive as it was, written so soon after the boycott, Roux's account suggests a false distinction. The alternatives suggested in Roux's account (even after making allowances for the optimistic diagnosis of nationalisation then fashionable on the left) seem less important that the potentialities which different methods,

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mobilising different constituencies, offered for political action.

The distinctions which seem to be important in the context of township politics lay between those methods which reinforced communal political autonomy and those which dissipated the capacity of communities like Alexandra to achieve forms of political organisation which could be taken up on future occasions. Where Roux detected the alternatives to lie between small but immediately tangible victories and larger but more remote ones, the distinction which is being made here suggest that the important advances available to the boycott movements lay in the directi which enhanced the capacity of community organisations to make and to make good, the decisions they reached.

In these terms, the boycotts in Alexandra were by no means negligible, for the community retained the capacity to continue to mount boycotts throughout the forties and fifties. Yet the trajectory which the boycotts followed during this period, and into the fifties (in Alexandra at least - other areas may have demonstrated a different pattern) was to remove the boycott communities from effective control over the boycotts.

The settlement which ended the 1944 boycott was reached between committees; true, the boycott communities were represented on these committees, and the settlement was accepted by a mass meeting as the only feasible course of action. But by th stage, no other outcome could have been predicted of a movement in which committees debated "solutions" with the state and private interests on the basis of a resource so precarious as the readiness of the community to walk to work each day

During the 1944 boycott, it was though each group of participants - the committees on the one hand, the boycotters on the other - became fixed in a ritual: the committees moving to higher and higher levels in the governmental structure witho generating any base independent of the boycotters; the latter marching armed with the dogged faith that some result must come of their determination.

Several moments in the history of the boycotts of this period were decisive in steering them on this trajectory; the collapse of the 1943 boycott with the announcement of the Bus Commission, and its acceptance by significant groups in and on the fringes of African politics as a victory; the failure of Orlando to launch a sympathy boycott in 1944; the retreat from the decision to hold a strike in December. But were alternative trajectories available, or were the limits to popular action structurally determined by the situation of weakness of black organisation, and by the position of the black working classes in the political economy?

These questions are difficult to answer, but some understanding of the issue may be possible if the earlier boycotts are regarded, not as brief preludes to the later ones, but as truer models of community political action which worked for a time, and from which the later ones departed. This is not to say that the boyco

movements could have developed significantly by an endless repetition of the meth of the earlier ones, nor that such repetition would have been feasible; the 1944 boycott was from the beginning played on a larger stage. In fact, the boycotter did go on repeating formulae which had been successful in earlier years in gettir the bus companies to retreat. Their repetition of these formulae was a symptom of ossification in the movements.

The early boycotts were successful, not because they discovered a method of actic which could be used over and over, but because they revealed a constituency - the community - which could be united over issues which bore vitally on the interests of the most important classes, which could be mobilised to act together for specific purposes. But were other possibilities available for community action which were foreclosed by the direction which the boycotts assumed and which were feasible within the severe constraints which operated on the community?

Poor peoples' movements are severely constrained; the crises which stimulate dire action do not permit a "choice" of issues or weapons. Moreover, the issues are likely to involve activity of an intensely practical kind and to become symbols o inspiration towards the achievement of long-term objectives. Finally, the peopl involved in the protest tend to be excluded from the negotiations and resolutions which the state and established interests attempt to use to divert protests. Ye it was not only the state and the dominant interests which acted to put a brake upon the protest, but many involved in the protest as sympathetic outsiders. Th liberals clearly had ambiguous feelings about the boycott, and sometimes spoke as though their intention was to end the boycotts. But even on the left, there were some who seemed to be sheep in wolves' clothing, mounting conservative resolutions on the basis of radical principles. This is not intended to denigrate the efforts of the courageous and dedicated individuals who behaved in this way, but is meant to underscore the constraints which operated on them.

Given these problems, what alternatives were available? That the boycotts held other possibilities is evident from the alacrity with which wider political group moved in, and the importance which was attached to the boycotts by the various agencies of the state and entrenched interests. Above all, alternatives were implicit in the worries which boycotts evoked in white Johannesburg, including it liberals. Paul Guenault of the Institute of Race Relations expressed the fear that the "orderly protest" would become a "violent one" and that the possibility of a sit-down strike indicated a "drift towards desparate action."[124] Imminck's metaphor of the "robot at Alexandra" revealed the fears which civic powers had of a community which took its own decisions and held its spokesmen to be delegates, not representatives. It is interesting that in both cases, the crisis was reache with the threat of a sit-down strike.

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In part the fears of whites may be understood to reflect their anxiety that labou would be withdrawn from industry. Whether or not this was a serious possibility in the circumstances is difficult to gauge in the absence of any clear informatio about the transactions between the WTAC, the trade unions and the Labour Party. But it is likely that the early abortion of the sit-down strike movement followed an appreciation by these parties of the difficulties involved in sustaining a strike. More broadly, the fears of civic powers and liberal groups expressed the disturbing possibility that the community was taking the matter beyond the specific issue of transport and was seeking to explore ways of acting over the range of structures in which it was encapsulated in the political economy.

Any conclusion about the nature and possibilities of popular protest which may be drawn from these sketches must necessarily be tentative, but it would suggest that to the extent that protests could be institutionalised - perhaps simply insof as they could be "named" as boycotts, strikes, or whatever - they could be contro because they assumed a finite shape. Conversely, insofar as their purposes and structure remained diffuse and inchoate, they could retain an open-ended capacity which lay beyond the ability of political powers to control short of using systematic and ruthless repression. The origins of popular political protests are diffuse and generalised, yet in order to mobilise action, they need to coagul around some specific issue; in this case increases in transport costs.

Insofar as these issues affected different elements in the community they could sustain diverse and diffuse objectives and purposes. In the case of Alexandra, diffusion was developed by the interest in transport of two distinct, yet inter-penetrating class formations - the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. During the third boycott, the state achieved a strategic victory by defining the issue in terms which transformed the problem into a technical-administrative one; this victory was assisted by the perhaps unconscious collusion in the constructio of the problem by liberal and left-wing white groups and by African nationalist organisations. The boycott that ended in 1944 promised during its dying days to reverse these tendencies, to set the boycotts on a new direction which would involve the community in its role as work-force.

A theory of popular protest would ... need to do three things: to state the conditions under which specific issues are capable of "spreading"; to state the capacity of the state and cognate institutions to specify and define the problem in terms which could lead to a specific set of administrative and technical solutions to it, including the development of co-optative structures which might incorporate elements of the protest movement; and to state the conditions under which these "solutions" might in turn be undermined by a redefinition of the issues.

A.W. Stadler

1 Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the operation of Bus Services for Non-Europeans on the Witwatersrand and in the districts of Pretoria and Vereeniging, U.G. 31 of 1944 (hereafter Bus Commission), pp. 19-20.

2 Ibid, p. 1; evidence of G.G. de Kock, Road Transport Board inspector to Bus Commission, Rand Daily Mail, September 4, 1943.

3 Interview with Schreiner Baduza, 1978.

4 Act 39 of 1930.

5 Xuma Papers, ABX 430711c. I must thank the Librarian of the University of the Witwatersrand for permission to quote from these papers, and the staff of the Department of Historical and Literary Papers in the University Library for their help and advice. The referencing system is the one used by T.R.H. Davenport. The reference in this footnote, for instance, would be the third document dated July 11, 1943.

6 House of Assembly, Debates, vol. 15, May 5, 1930, cols. 3668-70.

7 Act 39 of 1930, section 5.

8 Central Road Transport Board (hereafter CRTB) Report for 1932-33, U.G. 20 of 1933, p.8.

9 Ibid, Report for 1930-32, U.G. 21 of 1932, p. 108.

10 Ibid, Report for 1932-33, U.G. 20 of 1933, p. 27.

11 Ibid, Report for 1933-34, U.G. of 1934, p. 8.

12 Ibid, Report for 1930-32, U.G. 21 of 1932, p. 24.

13 Ibid, Report for 1935-36, U.G. 43 of 1936, p. 28.

14 CRTB Report for 1934-35, U.G. 40 of 1935, p. 19.

15 Ibid, Report for 1937-38, U.G. 35 of 1938, p. 28.

16 Ibid, Report for 1940-41, U.G. 33 of 1941, p. 14, repeated in substance in Report for 1943-44, An. 305 of 1945, p. 17.

17 Ibid Report for 1933-34, U.G. 30 of 1934, p. 8.

18 Cf, for instance, speech by C.J. Krige, M.P. for Caledon, House of Assembly Debates, May 5, 1930, col. 3706.

19 CRTB Report for 1937-38, p. 28.

20 Cf. Star, August 3, 1943, for a statement by the controller of the service, T. Lorenz, to the effect that boycotts against individual operators were misdirected as "the service was now run under a coordinated agreement."

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21 CRTB Report for 1940-41, U.G. 33 of 1941, p. 14.

22 Ibid, p. 7.

23 Act 15 of 1941, section 4.

24 Ibid section 8.

25 Rand Daily Mail, August 11, 1942; CRTB Report for 1942-43, An. 85 of 1944, pp. 6-7.

26 Bus Commission, op. cit. Annexures 2-14 summarises increases in operating costs and passenger usage between 1939 and 1943. For African complaints of over-crowding, cf. "Memorandum representing the residents of Alexandra township, Johannesburg, in the dispute on the matter of increased fares: between The City-Alexandra Bus Owners and themselves", Xuma Papers, ABX 430711a; and "Features of the grievances regarding the passenger transport operating between Alexandra township and the city; compiled by the Alexandra Women's League, specially presenting the Women's Case", Xuma Papers, ABX 430711b.

27 Bus Commission, op cit, annexures 2-7.

28 Sunday Times, August 15, 1943.

29 Bus Commission, op cit. p. 8.

30 Johannesburg City Council Minutes, 706th meeting, January 30, 1945, p. 58, and 708th meeting, March 27, 1945, pp. 295-7.

31 Bus Commission, op. cit. pp. 7 and 8.

32 Ibid, p. 2.

33 Xuma Papers, ABX, 400122a.

34 Ibid, ABX 400210a.

35 Ibid. ABX 411003a.

36 His name appears as an applicant for a certificate in the Transvaal Province Official Gazette, 1935.

37 Xuma Papers, ABX 451127e and ABX 451207.

38 Rand Daily Mail, October 6, 1943.

39 Rand Daily Mail, December 14, 1944.

40 Xuma Papers, ABX 40022b.

41 Notes for a speech, ibid, ABX 381207.

42 Cf. for instance, South African Outlook, July, 1941, p. 139 for a report of a study undertaken by P.H. Guenault. Cf. also Bus Commission, op.cit. tables XVII - XXIv.

43 Statement by T. Lorenz, Star, August 3, 1943.

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44 Bus Commission, op. cit. pp. 7-8 and 22.

45 Bus Commission, Annexure 39, compares rentals in different African locations.

46 Johannesburg Council Minutes, 282nd meeting, January 26, 1943, p.46.

47 Ibid, 628th meeting, July 26, 1938, pp. 998-9 and 282nd meeting, January 26, 1943, p. 45.

48 Ibid, 282nd meeting, January 26, 1943, p. 51.

49 A. Fish of the Alexandra Workers' Union, apparently published a pamphlet to the effect that Alexandra was to be removed. (Rand Daily Mail, December 30, 1944.) I have not been able to trace the pamphlet.

50 Memorandum representing the residents of Alexandra township... Xuma Papers, op.cit, ABX 430711a, p. 3.

Ibid.

52 Bus Commission, op.cit. p. 2.

53 Xuma Papers, op. cit, ABX 430711d.

54 Rand Daily Mail, June 7, 1939.

55 Rand Daily Mail, October 16, 1942; Star, October 17 and 20, 1942.

56 Rand Daily Mail, August 3, 1943.

57 Ibid.

58 Star. August 3, 1943.

59 Star, August 4, 1943.

60 Rand Daily Mail, August 5, 1943.

61 Star, August 5, 1943.

62 Star, August 6, 1943.

63 Rand Daily Mail, August 7, 1943.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid and Star, August 6, 1943.

66 Star ibid.

67 Rand Daily Mail, August 7, 1943.

68 Rand Daily Mail, August 10, 1943.

69 Rand Daily Mail, August 7, 1943.

70 Star, August 9, 1943.

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71 Rand Daily Mail, August 11, 1943.

72 Bus Commission, op. cit. p. 1 (para 1).

73 Loc. cit.

74 Ibid, p. 21 (para 264).

75 Ibid, p. 3 (paras 59 and 60.)

76 Ibid, p. 1 (paras 1, 3 and 6.)

77 Ibid, p. 21. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations, 2 - 14.

78 Ibid, p. 21. Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations, 9 - 12.

79 Ibid, p. 8, para 141 (h.)

80 A statement submitted, inter alia, to the Bus Commission which followed the Alexandra Bus Boycott of August 1943 by The Fourth International, Johannesburg Branch, South Africa, September 22, 1943. Report of Commission of Inquiry into Road Motor Transportation, U.G. 46 of 1947, p. 41.

81 Rand Daily Mail, October, 6, 1943.

82 Government Gazette, Notice 1914 of November 10, 1944.

83 Rand Daily Mail, November 15, 1944.

84 Ibid, November 21, 1944.

85 Ibid, November 16, 1944.

86 Ibid, November 14, 1944, gives a statement of the boycott plan.

87 Ibid, November 16, 1944.

88 Ibid.

89 Star, December 1, 1944.

90 Rand Daily Mail, November 21, 1944, and November 29, 1944.

91 Ibid, December 19, 1944; December 22, 1944.

92 Ibid, December 22, 1944.

93 Ibid, November 25, 1944.

94 Ibid, November 27, 1944.

95 Loc. cit.

96 Ibid, December 4, 1944.

97 Ibid, December 5, 1944.

98 Ibid, December 6, 1944.

99 Ibid, December 8, 1944.

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100 Ibid, December 11, 1944.

101 Loc. cit.

102 Ibid, December 12, 1944.

103 Ibid, December 13, 1944.

104 Ibid, December 14, 1944.

105 Ibid, December 15, 1944.

106 Ibid, December 20, 1944.

107 Ibid, December 22, 1944.

108 Ibid, December 23, 1944.

109 Ibid, December 28 and 29, 1944.

110 Ibid, December 12, 1944. There is a copy of the petition in the Xuma Papers, ABX 441223.

111 Rand Daily Mail, December 27, 1944.

112 Ibid, December 30, 1944.

113 Loc. cit.

114 Ibid, Rand Daily Mail, January 1, 1945.

115 Loc. cit.

116 Ibid, January 3, 1945.

117 Ibid, January 3, 1945.

118 Johannesburg Council Minutes, 706th meeting, January 30, 1945, p. 58.

119 Ibid, p. 56.

120 Rand Daily Mail, December 23, 1944; Johannesburg Council Minutes, 706th meeting, January 30, 1945, p. 57.

121 Johannesburg Council Minutes, 296th, 708th meeting, March 27, 1945.

122 Edward Roux, "The Alexandra Bus Strike", Trek, September 21, 1945, p. 12.

123 Loc. cit.

124 Paul H. Guenault, "The Alexandra Bus Boycott", The South African Treasurer, February, 1945, p. 39.
