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THE 1949 DURBAN 'RIOTS' -
A CASE-STUDY IN RACE AND CLASS

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This paper was written as a response to the somewhat abstract discussions that sometimes take place in university seminars on the relative weight of class, race and ethnicity in explaining human behaviour. It rests on the assumption that conceptual clarification has limited value, unless conceptual analysis is followed by a concrete historical or sociological analysis of a particular social situation. The Durban 'riots' of 1949 was chosen as a case-study because it has been widely used by 'separate development theorists' as an example of the inevitability of conflict between the races, without any attempt being made to relate this conflict to the political economy. This paper is an attempt to develop a theoretical framework that recognizes the embryonic and partial nature of class formation in a 'plural society' through the notion of class 'suppression', but nonetheless attempts to derive a meaningful frame of reference for explaining a class based act. In Part I I will introduce the theoretical framework. Part II, III and IV is an attempt to give a portrait of the participants in the riot, analysing their composition, motives and how activity was generated among them. Here a note of caution needs to be introduced. I am still at a tentative stage in my research in two crucial areas; firstly, on the 'consciousness' of the participants I have to date only had access to written material such as newspapers and reports. These sources are a partial perspective - this includes in particular, the official Government Inquiry into the riots. Hopefully I will have a fuller picture when I have extended my data-gathering to interviews of participants. Secondly, I realise that in a crucial area of my argument among the African traders I am still at an early stage of research. Part V tries to place the conflict in a wider perspective of the social structure.

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I

Classes emerge or form when an aggregate or collectivity of people who share the same relationship to the means of production become aware of their common interests and unite to promote them - in Marx's oft-quoted language, a transformation takes place from a class-in-itself to a class-for-itself. Preceding from the assumption that white and black workers shared a common class situation, early Marxists saw their task as making workers aware of their common interests in order to create a class in the full sense of that word (1). The failure of inter-racial class solidarity in 1922, was explained in terms of racial and cultural cleavages which, it was held, obscured and inhibited the perception of a potential for common class action. Racial and ethnic chauvinism were lumped together under the rubric of 'false consciousness' and the problem was defined in terms of consciousness rather than in a deeper analysis of the social structure and the mechanisms which produced, maintained and reinforced South African capitalism. I will call this dogmatic Marxism. Confronted by the fact that there appeared to be a greater affinity between members of different classes within ethnic or colour groups than between persons of the same class who belong to different colour groups, sociologists have responded in two ways. On the one hand, pluralists have argued that this demonstrates the limited value of class as an analytic tool in South Africa and have tried to develop a theory of South African society which recognizes race and ethnicity as the central organising principle.

Van den Berghe, for example, sees South African society as a form of pluralism. Societies, he says, are pluralistic 'insofar as they exhibit to a greater or lesser degree, two basic features: segmentation into corporate groups that frequently though not necessarily, have different cultures or subcultures; and a social structure compartmentalised into analogous, parallel, noncomplementary but distinguishable sets of institutions (2). Kuper, suggests that consciousness of class is contained within the colour-class and not experienced outside it. Where class divisions (objectively) coincide with antagonistic colour groups, it does not follow that there is merging of the two. They may coincide 'objectively' but the crucial subjective perception of class

(the necessary condition for class consciousness) is absent. He suggests that 'race and nation and differences in culture and institutional and constitutional rights are major determinants of political affiliation and ideology, and the Marxist theory cannot be applied without qualification'. He goes on to suggest 'racial pluralism' as an alternative approach. (3) It is being argued that in S.A. prior distinctions are made on the basis of non-economic criteria - ascritive criteria - and these criteria of colour and ethnicity lead to the differential incorporation of groups into the social structure. It has been suggested more recently, that "from an analytic point of view, marxism and pluralism need not be rivals except in the sense that marxism can be regarded not only as explanatory theory but also as a philosophy of action". The notion of differential incorporation is then used to explain the emergence of South Africa's form of inequality, largely with reference to pre-industrial South Africa. It is suggested that M.G. Smith's notion of 'corporate category' and 'corporate group' has greater explanatory value in South Africa than class. (4)

The central criticism of the pluralists has been their failure "to apply a perspective that truly integrates the analysis of cultural rivalries and segmentation with political economy. Ethnic conflicts are often viewed as being unrelated to questions of material well-being .... If one is not to presuppose inherent aggressive tendencies among members of different racial stock, then the struggle for scarce resources among segmented groups has to be seen as the decisive reason for ethnic strife". (5) A similar criticism has been made by Hudson: "Conflict is about something, it is a function of a conflict of interests. The concept of class specifies interest differences, whereas the concept race does not. As soon as one poses the questions in Kuper's terms one is implying, not that racial differences are related to interest differences, but that racial differences themselves might constitute a cause for conflict, that is, might constitute a 'conflict' of interest. One is also accepting a key element in the legitimating ideology of the colonists: the idea the races are necessarily anatagonistic to one another, and so have to be kept apart, or else kept in order by a dominant group .... One must ask not 'Are the antagonists differentiated by class or race?' but 'Why do 'racial' categories become salient in this particular class conflict?'." To ask as

Leftwich does, 'how do we express the conflicts and clashes of interest which have been manifested in strikes -- ?' is simply to beg the fundamental question: how else does one explain economically based conflict other than in class terms?

The second direction sociologists have taken is to attempt to develop Marxism in a South African idiom - using class as the central analytic tool it involves recognition of the colonial nature of South African society - a colonialism , it is held somewhat loosely, of a special type. John Rex, for instance, suggests that classes can be seen as "groups" of varying histories and ethnic origins who enter the modern society with varying degrees of rightlessness according to the kind of conquest and unfreedom which was imposed on them in an earlier period". He argues that the "relationship to the means of production of the native workers is quite different from that of the white working class. The latter have the means to defend their liberties and their job security as well as negotiating the price of their labour. The former have none of these things. Hence it is not sufficient to dismiss the differences between white settlers and native workers as status differences only. Both actually and potentially, as class-in-itself and class-for-itself, the native workers are distinct from working class settlers". (6) Hence it is argued that the colonizer-workers' access to political power is a crucial aspect of his position, defining it as antagonistic to that of the black worker. In essence the white worker constitutes an 'aristocracy of labour' because he shares with the owners of the means of production, the 'surplus' extracted from black labour. It is held that the South African state is not simply the instrument of the capitalist class (although it is primarily that) - it involves a coalition of classes which includes white workers as well as industrial, commercial and landed capitalists. This coalition of classes has used the state as a mechanism for the suppression of the collective bargaining power of the Black, particularly the African, working class. What has happened in South Africa is that race has been used in the wider conflict between labour and capital. The white worker, rather than identify himself with a working class overwhelmingly consisting of what he has been taught to believe is an 'inferior' race, has preferred the rather reluctant acceptance he has been given at the lower ranks of the ruling white society.

Within white society 'class conflict' has been substituted for class collaboration. (7)

In this paper I want to make a plea for what Robin Cohen has called "a minimalist definition of class; one that recognises the incomplete and embryonic character of class formation and development on the one hand, but that nonetheless attempts to derive a meaningful frame of reference for explaining a class-based act on the other". (8) This process of partial manifestation of class consciousness and incomplete class formation I wish to label class suppression. (9) Class suppression implies two things: firstly, that consciousness of class - the common awareness of a shared interest - is inhibited by ethnicity and race prejudice. This obscuring of 'objective' class interests can be 'explained' in two ways: it can be seen as the result of the deliberate manipulation of racial feelings by a group, usually the dominant group. This position is most clearly stated by Cox when he says "race prejudice is a social attitude propagated among the public by an exploiting class for the purpose of stigmatising some group as inferior so that the exploitation of either the group itself or its resources may be justified" (10). Racism is seen here as an ideology - a justificatory belief - that is the product of the needs of the capitalist system in the epoch of colonialism and imperialism. Alternatively, or in addition, this obscuring of 'objective' interests may be seen as the result of a belief system developing a force independent of material interests in the narrow sense. This seems to be the concept of social class that Genovese has when he says class subsumes both ideology and material interest. "To affirm, he says, the priority of a class interpretation need not lead us to underestimate the force of racism .... slavery in the Americas had a racial basis and therefore must be understood not simply as a class question, but as a class question with a profound racial dimension .... A class analysis in short, is not enough and can only serve as the basis for a much more complex analysis. But then, no one has ever seriously suggested that it could do more". (11) What seems to be suggested here is that a racist ideology can become so much part of the socialization process - the institutions of what Althusser has called ideological state apparatus (I.S.A.) - that it can be held even when it is not in one's immediate material interest.

Secondly, class suppression involves the idea that the emergence of a class is 'stunted' through restrictions on its ability to organise or promote its collective interests either by statutory or non-statutory means. In the case of the working class it would mean the suppression or underdevelopment of working class social and political institutions, particularly among Africans, e.g. the trade unions and working class political parties. Or it may mean the limits placed on proletarianization contained within laws such as the Urban Areas Act which places obstacles in the way of Africans settling permanently in the urban areas. In the case of an entrepreneurial class it would mean restrictions on capital accumulation (12).

The changing mode of production introduced first through colonial conquest and later through the spread of industrial capitalism led to the embryonic formation of two broad social classes among blacks in urban areas - in the first instance a large relatively undifferentiated class of wage-labourers stratified broadly into an unskilled sub-proletariat of 'migrant' workers living in compounds and shacks, and a more settled semi-skilled manual work force. A small non-manual elite of clerks, nurses, interpreters and teachers existed within this wage labouring class. A second embryonic class can be seen emerging in the early stages of urbanisation of self-employed blacks, mostly traders. I will call them petty-bourgeois, although this term is somewhat of a sponge 'catch-all' concept. Because of the need to make distinctions within the colonized, a further sub-division can be made here between the Indian trading class or the secondary colonized petty bourgeois, and the small African traders or micro-traders, who could then be categorized as the colonized petty-bourgeois. Similar distinctions could be made within the working class between Indians and Africans.

The parameters of competition and conflict between these two broad classes are shaped by the colonial nature of South African society and white racism. Hence it is essential to analyse the effect of colonialism in the making of the social structure. In the first instance colonialism involves conquest with its concomitant of dis-possession, the introduction of a new mode of production and the imposition of a new status hierarchy involving differential treatment of the colonised groups.

I have tried to provide evidence of this process of differential incorporation into the social structure in the third part of the paper. Cox grasped this point clearly when he wrote of white racial prejudice that it 'functions as a regulator of minor racial prejudices. Whenever there are two or more races in the same racial situation with whites, the whites will implicitly or explicitly influence the relationship between these subordinate groups. In other words, the whole racial atmosphere tends to be determined by the dominant race ... and the competition among subordinate races for white favours. Thus more or less directly the dominant race controls the pattern of all dependant race prejudices' (13). Consequently within the colonised, ethnic and racial cleavages emerge which cut across common class interests and the process of class formation is inhibited by the dominant white group. The conflicts that emerge among the colonised I shall call non-fundamental as they do not contradict the basic assumption upon which the colonial relationship is founded. It is non-fundamental because conflicts between colonised groups do not threaten the basic structure of the society - they are in fact a deflection of African frustration onto a vulnerable minority group - what could be called 'displaced aggression'.

My task in this paper is to identify these cleaveges among the colonized and their manipulation by the colonized in order to facilitate our understanding of why a society, ridden with such sharp conflicts, continues to function. In this sense my contribution to this conference is a case-study in the problems of inter-racial class solidarity, rather than any clear development of a theme in the making of a working class.

PART II

"Members of the African mass are often pictured in labour gangs rhythmically breaking the crust of a road or off-loading cargo at a dock, or as domestic servants. Such representations reveal little beyond their cultivated good humour. Periodically the mass is represented in a riot when the facade of good humour is dropped, and the docker, the domestic and the road-maker combine and with crude implements of battle picked up from the rubble and dirt unleash what appears to be an unprovoked outburst of savage violence". Fatima Meer (14).

The Commission of Inquiry into the riots concluded that the outbreak was "unexpected" and "unforseen". "To suggest that the authorities are to blame for failing to prevent the initial outbreak is to reproach them with not having powers of divination". "We are satisfied that the police acted with promptitude and discretion, considering the unexpectedness of the situation which developed and the forces at their disposal". "Nothing has been placed before us to show that the police had, or should have had, reasonable grounds for believing that there was a likelihood of the Natives reverting to utter barbarism ..." (15). Tracing the immediate causes of the riot the Commission recorded that "The spark which caused this tragic explosion was almost ludicrous in its insignificance ... A Native boy, 14 years of age, had words with an Indian shop assistant 16 years of age and slapped the latter's face. The Indian youth lodged a complaint with his employer, also an Indian, who came out of the Indian market into Victoria Street and Assaulted the Native boy. In the tussle the Native's head accidentally crashed through glass of a shop window, and in withdrawing it the boy received cuts behind the ears, which caused the blood to flow. Unfortunately, this happened at a time when a mass of Natives and Indians had congregated in quest of conveyance to their homes. The Natives saw an adult Indian assaulting a Native child and they saw blood. That was enough. They went beserk and attacked every Indian within sight". The "spark" which precipitated "one of the most devastating outbreaks of mass violence in times of peace within a state subject to the Administration of peoples of western European origin" (16) took place on Thursday, January 13th, 1949, at 5 p.m. The riot quickly spread to the "locations" and it was only late that night that an uneasy order

was restored. Rioting began again at noon the following day and that night Durban experienced what became known as "the night of horror". The District Commandant of Police described it as follows: "Houses were now being burnt by the score, all in the vicinity of Booth Road. Almost all the Indians not evacuated from this area were either killed, burnt to death or left dying. While the men were clubbed to death, Indian women and young girls were raped by the infuriated Natives. This state of arson and looting continued throughout the night and when the military and naval reinforcements arrived many instances occurred where the forces had to resort to the use of firearms to protect life and property".

Rioting continued through most of the weekend, although the arrival of reinforcements had contained the worst excesses by Sunday. Clashes between Indians and Africans continued for some time after that weekend and intermittent clashes were reported in other parts of Natal during and in the weeks after the riots. The official estimate of the destruction of life and property was:

Deaths:	142 (1 European, 50 Indians, 87 Africans and 4 unidentified).
Injured:	1,087 (32 Europeans, 11 Coloureds, 541 Africans and 503 Indians).
Buildings Destroyed:	1 factory, 58 sotres, 247 houses.
Buildings damaged:	2 factories, 652 stores, 1,285 houses.

The response of the mainstream of institutional political opinion to the riot was predictable - white politics saw it as further evidence of the need for segregation of the races ("I say that if we want justification for our policy of apartheid we find it in the causes of these riots" - Nationalist M.P. in Parliament), black politics saw it as evidence of the need for non-racial solidarity especially among the oppressed "nationalities" in the struggle against white supremacy. However there were small oppositional currents in both positions - among white liberals and communists, concern was focussed on the appalling living conditions of the urban African; among blacks there was muted but deeply felt criticism of the African National Congress (ANC) - Natal Indian Congress (NIC) policy of non-racial cooperation.

This criticism came from two sources; on the one hand there were the not so muted attacks from a small group of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) members on what they saw as a premature tactic of non-racial political action; on the other hand, there were the attacks of the Africanists in the Youth League.

A careful analysis of Hansard showed that the riots were quoted widely in parliament with regard to two pieces of legislation. In the 1949 session an amendment was introduced by the Minister of Transport to the Motor Carrier Transportation Act - the need for the amendment, said the Minister, arose out of the riots, as the Africans were boycotting certain bus routes. In essence the amendment provided for the establishment of machinery for taking away the licenses of people who already had them - in this case to enable the Durban City Council to withdraw licences from established Indians and allow Africans to operate their own buses. The Minister said that "the principle of the bill is that Natives should be able to serve their own people and it will give an outlet to the more advanced type of Native who is seeking occupations of this kind in the Native urban locations ..... and great care will have to be taken to ensure that a service which is started by Natives remains in the hands of the Natives who started it and that it does not pass over to somebody else for whom the Natives are merely working". (This was clearly a reference to the possibility of Indian capitalists using Africans as dummy directors). Two points must be made here; firstly, Indians saw the amendment as an attempt to suppress their class, not simply to allow in theory for the emergence of the embryonic colonized trading class, but also because of traditional hostility of the European trader to Indian competition (17).

Meer writes: "Within days the Durban City Council, which had up to then grossly neglected non-white transport, placed 210 vehicles at its service and the state opened food depots to cater for 20,000 Africans. The officials in charge made such statements as 'There is a strong feeling among the Natives that they will never use Indian buses again', 'that there is a firm and definite desire on the part of Natives to patronise our depot and to boycott Indian traders". (18). The second point to be made is that while an attempt was being made to shackle the Indian trading class in the name of the emerging

African trading class, the African trader was being given only a toe-hold in commerce as he was still heavily circumscribed as a trader so long as he was, and still is, officially regarded as a "temporary sojourner" in the urban areas (19). Thus we find considerable disappointment among colonized traders with their modest gains out of government policy. This can best be demonstrated by quoting from a memo submitted in 1954 by the Zulu Hlanganini Association of Cato Manor to the Governor-General which reads: " ... the above area to our knowledge (Cato Manor) is proclaimed Bantu Area. The trading facilities are the heritage of the Bantu people. To our surprise trading facilities are in the hands of the Indians ..." They go on at some length to complain of the continued existence of Indian traders in African locations. In the field of buses Africans had no success and by 1960 there were no buses being operated by Africans in the Durban area. The boycott with the help of government legislation, had destroyed the Indian monopoly but had not created a strong alternative African trading class. I will return to the broader implications of this discrepancy between government rhetoric and government practice in the final section.

The second piece of legislation the riots influenced was the Group Areas Act. The Minister of the Interior, introducing the Group Areas Bill in the 1950 session said that "The dangers of residential juxtaposition between members of different races is not a newly discovered danger... The Durban riots of last year constitute a case in point, and show the dangers of residential juxtaposition for the peace and quiet of the country. Consequently the solution of separate areas for different races, compulsorily enforced if necessary, is not a novel solution ...." (20). Indeed Durban played an important role in the whole question of racial zoning and Kuper has observed that "Of all major cities in the Union, Durban, through its City Council, has shown the greatest enthusiasm for compulsory segregation, and has contributed to the planning of Group Areas legislation for the country as a whole". (21). Of course the riots did not cause the Act to be passed, as compulsory segregation for Indians had been introduced in 1946 - what is being argued is that the government felt that the riot gave it further ammunition and if no riot had taken place the Act would nevertheless have been passed. In the words of the Minister, it was the cornerstone of apartheid. Fatima Meer saw the Act as a

direct attack on the Indian trading class: "There is little doubt that one of the prime purposes of the Group Areas Act is to eliminate, or at least reduce to a minimum, Indian commerce, and it is succeeding in doing so ... Whole communities of traders have been uprooted, not only from their homes but also from their businesses, without any compensation for loss of goodwill or depreciation in stock". (22).

The United Party responded to the riot in an ambiguous way and two contradictory voices could be heard. Smuts, the Leader of the Opposition, tried to make political capital out of the riot by implying that it could not have happened under his government. Some United Party (U.P.) members responded with a call for more police and greater segregation. Sullivan, for example, deplored the lack of segregation and appealed for more social segregation, economic segregation, a stricter enforcement of the Urban Areas Act through the Pass Laws, and the extension of the Immorality Act to liaisons between Africans and Indians (23). Others, such as Hopewell, condemned the Commissions Report for not making far-reaching recommendations to remove the source of economic discontent that he believed caused the riot; but few other party members seem to have shared his view. Besides this small section of the U.P., those who gave "considered evidence to the Commission dissented from the dominant white attitude to the riot - this category included men such as Brookes, Webb and Kirkwood representing the Institute of Race Relations, the Churches, the Indo-European Council and the Economics Department of the University of Natal. Webb summed up the evidence of these men in the following words: "They regarded the riots as a serious and tragic sign of social disease, and continued to analyse the situation, pointing to poverty, lack of homes and houses, inadequate transport, lack of opportunity for the satisfaction of ambition, as the underlying causes of serious social unrest. Some also pointed to the prevailing anti-Asiatic attitude of the European population as expressed in the speeches of Ministers and others as likely causes of the deep dissatisfactions felt by Natives being turned against Indians". However the bulk of white South Africans treated the riot with undisguised satisfaction; the "coolies" had been taught a lesson and the need for segregation had been dramatically demonstrated. Of the press reports that I read, the following comment on the Commission's Report is a typical example of this attitude: "The

second (cause of the riot) is that the Indians form an element from which there is really no place in South African society. They are animated with an attitude to life which sees in every individual a victim of their urge for large trading profits - to the extent that, as the Commission testifies, 70% of the Indians are exploited by the other 30% ... An element which cannot be fitted into society must be taken out of it. Although the Report doesn't go into it, it is nevertheless very clear that future difficulties between the Natives and the Indians and also other sections of the population can only be solved by the repatriation of Indians". (24).

Throughout the history of African nationalism in South Africa two contradictory trends have been contained within it - Carter has labelled the one South Africanism, as it upheld the goal of common citizenship, and the other Africanist, as it gives primary emphasis to efforts to stimulte a sense of African self-confidence and self-reliance. Kuper draws a similar distinction but uses the labels inclusive and exclusive - nationalism (25). This contradiction within African nationalism has manifested itself in an ambivalence towards the Indian community - Indians could be seen either as part of the white power structure or as potential allies. This ambivalence was reflected in the Indian response too, which was dualistic as Indians alternated between accommodation of whites and resistance with Africans. The riots coincided with a period when the leadership of both the African and Indian Congresses had officially agreed to look upon each other as potential allies and to resist together white supremacy. The inclusive nationalists responded to the riot with a sense of urgency as it demonstrated the vital need for black unity to resist government policy. The ANC President came down from Johannesburg that weekend and, with the leaders of the Natal Indian Congress toured the areas of destruction and attempted to stop the violence - and on a number of occasions Africans risked their lives to protect Indians (26). At the end of his short visit Xhuma, with the NIC, issued a short statement condemning the riots and calling for closer cooperation between the two communities. Now in one sense this was a perfectly consistent attitude for the ANC to take - it was consistent with the decision to cooperate with Indians that had formed the basis of the widely publicised Xuma-Naicker-Dadoo Pact of 1947. It was also consistent

with changes that had taken place within the Indian Congresses since 1945 whereby the younger members had increasingly come to realise that as the smallest of the oppressed nationalities they could not hope to attain rights by themselves and that their strength lay in co-operation with other oppressed groups, particularly Africans. But in another sense Xuma's approach proved most contentious, as can best be illustrated by quoting from a Durban Correspondent who wrote a letter complaining about Xuma's attitude to the Bantu World. He wrote: "Xuma came to Durban and, without consulting the Natal ANC, issued a statement on behalf of the ANC to co-operate with Indians after meeting in camera for a few hours". The correspondent felt that there should have been consultation as the Africans had real grievances. "Today there is talk everywhere that the leaders are under the thumb of Indian politicians, who with money available, have called the tune and our leaders have danced to it". With regard to the first allegation it may well have been true that Xuma by-passed the Natal ANC as it was believed, as Benson records, that the Natal leadership of Champion, Msimang and Luthuli felt strongly against co-operation with Indians. However the differences may only have been over questions of timing as both Champion and Msimang agreed to sit on the Joint Committee that was set up three weeks later. These tensions and contradictions within the official policy were contained, at least on the public level. The ANC and NIC agreed to work together to prepare a brief to the Commission on the causes of the riots - in the event they withdrew as they were not permitted to cross-examine witnesses. At a meeting three weeks after the riots a Joint Committee was set up and the following statement made: " ... this Meeting is convinced that the fundamental and basic causes of the disturbances are traceable to the political, economic and social structure of this country, based on differential treatment of the various racial groups and the preaching in high places of racial hatred and intolerance. Any disturbances such as the recent riots are, therefore, the fruits and results of such a policy as well as the responsibility of those who create and maintain such an artificial framework". The meeting called for greater understanding and cooperation through their national organisations and "to stand together in their fight for national liberation." The Joint Committee was to consist of representatives of the Natal ANC and the NIC as well as national representatives. This meeting

was an important milestone in laying the foundations of the Joint Planning Council of the ANC and SAIC which was set up in November 1951 to organise the 1951/1952 Passive Resistance Campaign. But the ambiguity within the ANC continued as Luthuli records: "At Bloemfontein we had endorsed the earlier decision to undertake the Defiance Campaign in conjunction with the Indian Congress movement ... But among Natal Africans there was a degree of anti-Indian feeling, and it was not difficult for those who opposed the Campaign for other resons to exploit this form of racialism. Malcontents represented the policy of co-operation (with Indians) as the invention of the new leaders in Durban". (27).

Among the blacks there were two types of criticisms of the dominant ANC-NIC approach to non-racial co-operation, although it is difficult to distinguish clearly between them. Firstly there were those, best illustrated by a very small group in Durban of the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), who argued that inter-racial political action was premature and those who supported it were "using the liberatory struggle only to bargain with the ruling class in their essential role of collaboration and deception of the people". (28). Elements of this position were held by some ANC Youth League members although they were more concerned with the stunting effect such "premature action" would have on the development of a popular and self-confident nationalism. In a general sense Meer has made this point: "African nationalism became confused with racialism and African leaders were prematurely pushed by non-African democrats into making a choice between the rational, liberal nationalism which had emerged in France, England and America in the eighteenth century and which had developed into international humanism, and the parochial nationalism based on the idea that each group has its own permanently distinct historical tradition, which the world had combined to destroy as Fascism and Nazism with their implied racialism. The new-generation leaders were never given an opportunity to work out their own intermediate nationalism and through it to reach out to the other groups as indeed the French, Americans, and English had done .... (instead) they thoroughly discredited African nationalism as Herrenvolkism. There was a premature insistence on international, interracial co-operation - a superficial sharing of platforms and a disproportionate representation

of non-African democrats on bodies which planned essentially African political action ... at a stage when many real and very large chasms existed between the life chances of Africans and those of the other 'races' to whom Africans were expected to extend equality in the future". (29). Secondly, there are those who opposed co-operation because the Indians were to them the stumbling block to their immediate advancement - this was essentially the aspiring African trading class. It is difficult to establish the part played by the African traders in the riot (I will return to this in the next section), but it is sufficient to note here that its members were quick to take advantage of the vacuum created by the flight of Indian traders from locations like Cato Manor. Champion was a prominent trader at the time and perhaps expresses their position when he says that they felt Indian traders were deliberately thwarting their attempts to establish themselves in business. At present my evidence is somewhat impressionistic and I am trying to locate more systematic evidence on African traders. (30).

What is striking about the response of almost all sides of the political spectrum is the tendency to conduct the debate about the riots in political and ideological terms in order to demonstrate a political point for or against segregation - the participants in the riot are treated as a disembodied abstract thing usually referred to as a mob who unforseen and unexpectedly went on "an insane outburst of savage violence" that weekend. In the next two sections I want to put the rioters under sociological scrutiny. My observations on the participants in the riots are still very tentative and incomplete as my research in the area is still at an early stage.

PART III

Of what groups were the rioters composed? The participants in the riots were drawn mainly from the African sub-proletariat who lived in the compounds and shack-locations that had emerged in a makeshift way in and around Durban to house this semi-settled labour force which emerged in this period of rapid urbanisation of Africans. A glance at a map of Durban in 1950 will show that Africans were being housed in compounds throughout the white and Indian parts of the City, as well as in locations on the outskirts of the City. It is hardly surprising that the rioters should come from the shacks and compounds if we look at their living conditions. The Commission described the shack-locations as "a disgrace to any community that calls itself civilised ... In these human rabbit-warrens something like 23,000 Natives live under most sordid conditions. The shack areas are difficult of access, roads are non-existent, bad or indifferent, and there is no lighting. Consequently it is difficult, if not impossible, properly to police these areas. They attract and harbour lawless elements. During weekends Native workers from elsewhere go to these areas for an outing; to obtain illicit liquor, to gamble and to meet prostitutes. It is not remarkable, therefore, that during the riots the most shocking excesses were committed on the outskirts of these areas". Similarly living conditions in the compounds contributed to its inmates participating in the riot. The Commission observed that "The fact that numbers of male Natives are herded together in compounds also seems to have a bearing on the riots. Such congregations of men are ready tinder to any spark, and it is clear that the compounds dwellers took part in the excesses". The living conditions in these compounds were known to be over-crowded as the 1943/1944 City Corporation Housing Survey had provided detailed evidence of the appalling conditions in the shack-locations of Cato Manor, Baumanville and Jacobs location. A further survey, held a year after the riots, found one compound, authorised to house 4,456, with 13,000 men. It commented as follows: "Because of the serious over-crowding, it is difficult to store food, clothes and other personal belongings, although there are cloak-rooms where possessions may be left overnight. Food is usually kept in soap or cardboard boxes, clothes are usually hung from the walls. Cooking facilities, perhaps adequate for the authorised number of occupants, are insufficient to meet the needs of the number now being

accommodated, with the result that men often prepare their food on paraffin stoves in the dormitories". They concluded that "data relating to the post-war period which have been made available by the Department of Native Affairs suggests that overcrowding is now more serious than it was at the time of the 1943/1944 survey". (31).

Social services in the black areas were largely ignored for the simple reason that white ratepayers alone were enfranchised as, according to the prevailing ideology of Stallardism, all Africans were 'temporary sojourners' in the white man's city, and, that small groups of Indian municipal voters that had existed had been disenfranchised in 1924. Stallard had led a Commission which reported in 1922 that the towns were the white man's preserve and that "the Native should only be allowed to enter the urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister". In theory Government policy has remained unchanged since Stallard and the ideal pattern of African labour remained that of single male contract workers who work for specified periods of up to one year and then return to the reserves. In practice the Government policy is ambiguous and ever since the Smit and Fagan reports in the 1940's, the Government has in fact accepted a large permanent African population in the towns providing townships to house them. In fact as late as 1948 a Corporation Commission under Justice Broome had reported on the appalling conditions in the locations and had recommended the immediate rehousing of 23,000 shack-dwellers as a matter of "social urgency". The Corporation chose to ignore this clear signal of social tension, but their laissez faire approach had its own rationality-rehousing would have been enormously expensive and Durban's ratepayers would certainly not be prepared to pay the cost. Provided the locations and compounds still produced docile cheap labour, they were fulfilling their purpose. Besides, although the Corporation had assumed formal control of these locations in 1931 when the municipal boundaries had been extended, they had never established any kind of de facto control and these locations had developed their own sub-systems to exercise social control. Thus when order did break down that weekend it was a case of the police and army establishing control in these areas for

the first time rather than a case of their attempting to re-establish their authority.

While the bulk of the rioters seem to have been drawn from normally law-abiding workers we can also identify a group of professional petty criminals who took advantage of the temporary breakdown of order to loot. This category are usually referred to as tsotsis and they were organised into gangs who made a living by petty thieving or by exacting 'protection money'. Giving evidence at the Inquiry an African compound manager observed that: "I am of the opinion that our more educated unemployed young men (tsotsis) saw their chance and took a hand in the matter (and looted)".

What are the implications of the existence of criminal gangs for the contention that the riot was popular and spontaneous? Is there any other evidence of what Rude, writing on riots in eighteenth century England and France, calls the mob -i.e. the hired bands operating on behalf of external interests? In spite of the existence of criminal gangs who looted, the majority of looters seem capable of sociological explanation in terms of theories of collective behaviour in riot situations. It has been suggested that looting can be seen as a rather violent beginning to a process of collective bargaining concerning rights and responsibilities of certain communities. Looting, they argue, is an index of social chance, it is also an instrument of societal change. They suggest that the pattern of looting passes through roughly three stages in a rioting situation. Firstly there is primarily symbolic looting stage where destruction rather than plunder appears to be the intention. Then a stage of conscious and deliberate looting begins. Finally there is a stage when plundering becomes the normal socially supportive thing to do and property rights are redefined to achieve some kind of transfer of material goods (32). If we return to our African witness we can see a similar pattern revealed in his evidence. There were two distinct gangs, he said, "the ordinary African fought and smashed the stores" - this would coincide with the first stage outlined when looting is purely destructive. He then says "After them came a gang which looted, and where possible, set fire to the properties" - this would coincide with stage two when deliberate looting begins, although it would seem that the two stages run into

each other. However the most widespread form of looting seems to have been during stage three when it became the normal socially supportive thing to do. There is impressionistic evidence that looting was socially acceptable at the time of the riots but more systematic evidence is needed to sustain this contention. It also could be argued that the riots were the rather 'violent beginning to a process of 'collective bargaining'concerning rights and responsibilities of certain communities', as the emerging African trading class in these locations quickly took advantage of the temporary absence of the Indian traders and using some of the anti-Indian language of the rioters to initiate a process of 'collective bargaining' with the Corporation. Allegations at the time went much further as they alleged that African trading interests had actually organised the riots. The Leader, an Indian paper, wrote shortly after the riot that "The origin of the racial disturbances in Durban seems to be an Organised move by certain native trading interests". Champion at one point alleged that the leaders were hiding in Cato Manor. However he later dismissed the claim by the Natal Indian Organisation (conservative Indian body) that pamphlets had been distributed by an African organisation calling on the Africans to attack the Indians. I have found no evidence of such a pamphlet and when Champion called on the NIC to produce it they failed to do so.

The evidence of how the African traders 'bargained collectively' and advanced their position generally, is easier to evaluate. Kuper interviewed a clear example of the type who took advantage of the vacuum created by the riots, in order to establish themselves. "We started selling things after the 1949 riots because the people here had nowhere to buy groceries ... We used to see Indians from Isipingo coming with lorries full of their groceries and we felt that they were making a lot of money and so we turned one of our rooms into a shop where we could sell to the people some of the things they required". (33). Again Kuper described the background to the trade rivalry and how Africans took advantage of it thus illustrating the 'process of collective bargaining'. "African pressure for trading rights had been building up in Durban prior to the riots. In 1948 the Native Affairs Department reported that sites were at a premium and that many were waiting to undertake the risks of private enterprise. As the demand for trading rights grew and was blocked by municipal

control and Indian competition, there developed a force ready to erupt whenever the barriers showed signs of weakening. The riots effected a breach as the result of the destruction of Indian shops and the temporary disruption of African-Indian trade. Through this breach, illegal African traders emerged in the African areas of Durban, and more particularly in Cato Manor, where houses and stores had been burned, Indian men killed and women violated. Before the riots, there were 22 licensed Indian traders and 11 licensed African traders. In 1953 the illegal traders in the Cato Manor area numbered 105. Kuper concludes that it " ... is difficult to say whether rivalry for trade and bus transport was a factor in the riots. Certainly the African community was quick to exploit the consequences of the riots and the disruption of Indian trade. On the week following a mass meeting of Africans in Durban resolved to support an Indian boycott movement, and instructed the ANC and Durban Location Advisory Boards inter alia to:

"impress on the Indians that African development is such that African economic progress can no longer be delayed or obstrcuted; ensure that whenever the African expresses willingness to take over the services at present in Indian hands in predominantly African areas, the Indian should give proof of his good-will by disposing of these to the African at a reasonable price and that the African be given every facility to trade from African areas; ensure that where Indian buses run or shops are established, and where these do not come under African management, African drivers and conductors and salesmen be employed". (34).

Finally, in our attempt at identifying the composition of the riot, we must mention briefly those rioters who were actively incited and aided by Europeans. The Commission stated that "it is established that when the rioting was in progress certain Europeans actively incited the Natives ..." A distinction must be drawn between two types of encouragement: direct and indirect, (I will deal with the latter in the next section). There is evidence of some direct encouragement of Africans but it is unclear how widespread it was. It was established in court that Europeans had transported Africans to the scene of the riot so that they could participate. A European male

was arrested for inciting natives to set fire to an Indian store. A European witness said he saw police giving petrol and sticks to Africans to aid them in the riot. Senator Petterson was alleged at the Inquiry by Detective Sergeant Palmer to have tried to prevent Palmer from arresting Africans who were destroying Indian shops.

Having gained an impression of the composition of the rioters we must now explore how activity was generated among the rioters - how were they informed of the riot, how and where were they recruited? We know that the riot began at a congested bus terminus, but equally important is the fact that the bus terminus is next to a "Native Eating House" and a municipal Beerhall. It is not difficult to imagine what happened - a brawl breaks out between an Indian and African and a small crowd gathers; at this point rumours begin to spread among the by-standers to the Africans in the Beerhall and, aided by the hostile stereotypes that are held by Africans of Indians, and the distortion that inevitably follows in this type of oral communication, angry men, possibly slightly drunk, emerge onto the street ready for a brawl. Calpin describes how the riot then developed: "The crash of splintered glass gave an opportunity to another type of rioter, the looter, who joined the initial brawlers ... the Natives now smashed shops for the purpose of loot ..." (26). In the strict sense of being unplanned the riot can be said to have been spontaneous; but in the sense that every participant tended to hold a stereotype of "the Indian" in collective and symbolic terms as an alien exploiter before the riot actually began implies, I want to argue, that the riot was structurally predetermined because the social structure incorporated ethnic and racial groups at different levels and the Indians were perceived to benefit by this differential incorporation. That night in the compounds and locations of Durban a kind of collective conspiracy took place and an attack on the Indians of Durban was planned for the next day. Giving evidence to the Commission an African compound manager said: "Friday's riots were planned. Word went round that there would be a united attack on the Indians in the afternoon. Most compounds got the message". Numerous African witnesses at the Inquiry confirmed that it was generally known that an attack was to take place at noon on Friday - the rumours were that Indians had been killing Africans in the Indian Quarter. The rumours spread enormously quickly and we have evidence

that within twenty hours of the riot rumours were rife in the rural areas of Northern Natal that the Indians had killed all the Africans in Durban. Clearly these rumours found fertile ground because of the structurally determined stereotypes held by the communities of each other. In plural societies the perception of people tends to be in stereotyped racial categories, but systematic evidence of these stereotypes is circumstantial during the period of the riots. A decade later van den Berghe undertook a survey of racial attitudes in Durban, where he found strong antithetical stereotypes held by Africans and Indians of each other. Africans described Indians as 'dishonest' and 'exploitative'; Indians described Africans as 'violent' and 'uncultured' (35).

If rumours were the method of communication who were the carriers? Did any particular groups of people emerge as leaders during the riots? Is it possible that the informal drinking clubs or Ngoma dance groups provided the network of communication for the rumours? Alternatively, the tsotsis gangs could have assumed a leadership role. Clearly further research is necessary into the informal groups that emerged in the early period of African urbanisation if answers are to be given to these questions. If it was widely known among Africans that an attack was planned for the next day, why was it not known by the police? If it was known to the police - which is more likely - why was preemptive action not taken? The Commission gave this answer to the latter question: "If Major Bestford had employed his non-European police actively in quelling the riots, they would in all probability have taken sides promptly and aggravated the disorders. He wisely determined to utilise these men only for guard duty on broken premises and for guarding shops ..." The African police, it was assumed, would be partial in the conflict. It was assumed by all those involved that conflict would focus along predictable structurally determined stereotypes. But the assumption that the white police were somehow impartial was misleading - besides, the consequences of the police not taking preemptive action was that they were "permitting" the riot to take place!

PART IV

Chairman of the Inquiry: "If the Natives were incensed by bus drivers and traders, why did they pick on waiters, laundrymen and others of that sort".

African witness who participated in the riots: "If word goes round that a certain nation is being attacked, one does not discriminate".

In our attempt at presenting a portrait of the rioters we must now examine their 'motives' - a task which will involve us in an attempt at description of the popular attitudes and opinions of Durban's African. To facilitate our analysis I have grouped the 'motives' round roughly three headings:

(a) Indian and Africans tended to interact with each other in situations where roles were defined in competitive or conflict-laden terms.

A process which seemed to give daily confirmation of the African stereotype of 'the Indian' in hostile terms. This interaction took place in four main areas; firstly most shopkeepers in the black areas were Indians and during the riots the Indian shops were the focal point of attack, while African stores were left untouched. Much was made of the fact that Indians were believed to be overcharging. Palmer, for instance, wrote that "Prices were rising and the Africans found that the Indian storekeepers with whom they dealt were demanding greatly increased prices for the flour, mealie meal, sugar, condensed milk, etc., which was so important in their diet" (36). Of course, as with all marginal trading groups in search of profit, 'over-charging' takes place, especially when there is a commodity shortage. In 1948, 64 Europeans, 162 Indians, 21 Natives and 3 Chinese were convicted under the Price Control Regulations Act. While the attacks on Indian shops were obviously 'anti-Indian' their response was more complicated than such a simple explanation would indicate. In the first instance, as the Economics Department at Natal University concluded in a Survey, "The Native usually patronises the Indian store in preference to the European store. In the former he feels at home and he also finds the goods often lower in quality and

price. He can also indulge more readily in bargaining". (37). Furthermore accusations of exploitation have to be seen against the background of the rising cost of living and relatively static wages.

The second area of interaction between Indians and Africans was at bus stops and on buses. Next to Indian shops, Indian buses were the focal point of attack during the riots. Owing to Municipal neglect, Indians were well established in Black areas in Durban at the time of the riots - 58% of all the buses in Durban catering for 86% of Black transport. During the riots extensive damage was done to buses and many were totally destroyed. Buses became a target - as they had in the bus boycott on the Rand in 1944 - for the frustration of the urban African; the buses were overcrowded, there were no bus-shelters and they seemed to have to spend an inordinate length of time in them as most of them lived far our of town. In its annual report, the Durban Local Transport Board described the main non-white terminus as follows: "The main non-European bus rank in Durban is situated in Victoria Street. Thousands of Indians and Native passengers congregate there daily to board buses; 274 buses operate to and from the rank on an uneven patch of ground where there are no facilities for passengers such as shelters ..." (38). Is it surprising that the riots had their beginning near this rank at its busiest time on a hot afternoon? The Commission reported that "There is a widespread feeling among Natives that they are being badly treated in the Indian owned buses; that Indian passengers are given preference in regard to seats; that Native passengers are robbed by conductors who withhold their change; that Natives are bundled or thrown out of moving buses when they dare complain; that Natives are frequently assaulted by Indian officials on the buses".

The third area of interaction between Indians and Africans was landlord-tenant role at the locations where much of the land on which the shacks had been built was Indian owned and Indians were perceived as exploiting landlords. In the Native Housing Survey in 1950 it was reported that about half of Durban's Native population were illegally housed in shack slums on Indian-owned ground. Nearly one quarter lived in the Booth Road area of Cato Manor - 10,500 Africans living in 2,660 rooms. (39).

Again the existence of these slums is the result of municipal neglect, and, given the fact that there was a demand for land and shacks which happened to be Indian owned because they were there first and were permitted to own land, it is not surprising that some Indians found it more profitable to become 'shack farmers rather than banana farmers'. And, of course, the conditions were appalling as the Natal Housing Board found in a Survey conducted in 1947 when it reported that some 8,000 families lived as sub-tennants or in temporary shacks, of which 4,820 should be condemned (40). The Indian who owned the land and lived in a relatively comfortable house at the end of the property was the obvious scapegoat when frustrations were allowed to come to the surface that weekend. However, it should be made clear here that the major conflict over residential land was between Indians and Whites as Whites were trying to restrict the purchase of land by Indians. (See Part V).

Fourthly, Indians and Africans interacted and competed for jobs in their work situations. During the 1930's and 1940's there had been a rapid drift of Africans and Indians into secondary industry in Durban and it was in the manufacturing industries where the main and significant arena of competition between the different racial groups was found.

The main area of African employment was unskilled manual labour where it was believed they were better suited because of greater strength and stamina for heavy work.

The following table gives a few examples of industries in which African labour predominated:

	Percentage of Total Employees	
	African	Indian
Building	60	1
Chemical	55	12
Heat, Light and Power	64	8

Because Indians tended to be more 'westernized' and had developed better skills due to continuous wage employment in industry, they tended to dominate in the skilled and supervisory jobs - a further factor that could confirm hostile stereotypes. What seemed to be happening

was that with the development of opportunities in the better paid semi-skilled occupations, and the growing competition from Africans in the field of unskilled labour, there had been a shift of Indian employment away from heavy unskilled labour toward skilled and supervisory jobs. In a sense there was preferential treatment given to the Indian as a 'colonial stereotype' often operated whereby it was automatically assumed that the African was only capable of manual work and that the Indian was better at clerical or the supervisory jobs. This would create resentment among the African workers who saw an Indian being arbitarily given the better job even when Africans may have been working at the manual job for years. One African witness expressed this preferential treatment in these terms: "I am employed by a certain concern. Then an Indian comes along and does the same work; but it does not take long before he is appointed a foreman over me at a greater salary". Of course, there may have been good reasons for the Indian being promoted but it is nevertheless assumed that the Indian was preferred <u>because he was an Indian</u>.

(b) <u>Indians were envied because it was popularly believed that they received preferential treatment</u>.

Indians received preferential statutory treatment in four areas: they could own land in Durban, although this privilege had been severely restricted since 1943 and more comprehensively since 1946. African land ownership was, except for a few exempted areas, restricted to the Reserves in terms of the 1913 Land Act. They were able to purchase 'European liquor', while Africans were restricted to the legal purchase of 'kaffir beer' or the clandestine consumption of liquor in the shebeens. Indians were thus exempted from the liquor raids that created such bitter resentment among Africans - it was, it may be recalled, the liquor raids, that precipitated the killing of nine policemen in 1959 in Cato Manor. Thirdly, Indians were exempt from the pass laws as the Urban Areas Act applied to Africans only. Resentment against the pass laws is deep-seated, as numerous examples of African protest would demonstrate. Moreover, the monthly registration of African workers in Durban was further discrimination against one racial group of workers.

Finally the Industrial Conciliation Act favours the Indian worker

by allowing him to register trade unions while debarring the African from doing so. Hence industrial legislation places the Indian on a little better footing than the African. This piece of discriminating legislation becomes more irksome as more Africans become permanent industrial workers.

Since the late 1930's unionization of Indians had proceeded rapidly and by 1949 this constituted 30% of trade union members in Natal. In three of the registered unions (Garment Workers, Furniture, Liquor and Catering) Indians constituted at least 80% of the members. Although Africans constituted almost as high a proportion of trade union membership their unions could not be registered and they were unable to benefit from formal collective bargaining. (I've moved too quickly over this important area as I am at present investigating unions in this period in Durban and my evidence is still incomplete).

Indians were also believed to receive preferential treatment in the issue of trading and transport licences. The Commission argued that emerging African trading class felt that their advancement was blocked by Indians because whenever they applied for a licence the application would be opposed by an Indian. Clearly those Indians who were already established would be keen to protect their position from competition and when an African applied for a trading licence nearby, the Indian storekeeper would oppose it - the African being invariably new at trade would often be operating from "unhygienic" premises, a technical legal objection, and his application would be refused. In the words of the Commission: "When the Indian storekeeper - usually through counsel - very naturally, raises objections on this ground (that the shop is unhygienic) to the acquisition of trading rights by his potential competitor, the Native regards this as further evidence of the Indian's callidity and obstructive tactics". In the case of transport licences the Motor Carrier Transportation Act tended to operate in favour of those who were already established in business as the law lays down that no new licence may be granted if transportation facilities are already in existence in that area. The law was designed to protect the state-owned railways from competition from private owned buses and it was quickly amended after the riots to allow licences to be removed if it was in the 'public interest'. To quote

from the Commission: "when a Native applicant desires to make an inroad into an area which is already served by an Indian service... the Indian protects the rights vested in him by Statute by protesting to the Board concerned against the issue of a certificate to the Native applicant. The Native does not understand the policy of the law. All that he understands is that he is obstructed by the Indian, and his blood pressure goes up. His impression is that the Boards - or the Government - gives the Indian preferential treatment, and that the Indian secures this by bribery and corruption". The explanation of why Indians were well established in Durban as traders is largely an historical and cultural one. Many of the wealthier Indians in Durban were the descendants of the Passenger Indians who arrived with capital and played the role of a kind of secondary colonialized, pioneering trading activities in Black areas at a time when most Africans were still subsistence farmers. However most Indians had come to South Africa as indentured labourers in conditions not far removed from slavery but had secured higher paid employment when their contracts expired. Having no land in the Reserves they were forced to adapt permanently to the competitive life of the city or to enter small commercial farming as market gardeners. Thus an explanation of the structurally superior position of many Indians must be analysed over time if the differential response to urbanization is to be understood.

One contentious 'explanatory' point suggested by the Commission was that the political activities of NIC and particularly the Defiance Campaign of 1946-48 had 'set a bad example' to the African in Durban.

But the implication that the Campaign was a contributing cause to the riot because it set the Africans a 'bad example' seems unlikely. However, it was true that Indians were in a special position as they had access to the Indian Government through its representative in South Africa. This was a period of great enthusiasm and political optimism as the treatment of Indians in South Africa had been raised at the first Assembly of the newly formed United Nations. The treatment of Indians had become a matter of both national and international debate and although South African whites had responded to Indian trade boycott of South Africa by reviving the boycotts of Indian stores in the platteland of the Transvaal and parts of the Cape, the Indian

people became more confident that their grievances would be alleviated. At the same time as the U.N. Assembly annually debated the question of Indian South Africans, the struggle for Indian independence was reaching a climax.

Finally, the Commissioners made much of the alleged resentment by Africans of miscegenation between Indian men and African women. The Commission recorded the resentment in these words: "the Indians have motor-cars and money; we, on the other hand, are poor. With his blandishments, motor rides and offers of finery and money, the Indian seduces our women, who give birth to Indian children. The seducer usually denies paternity and the duty of maintaining the duped girl as well as the bastard falls upon her family". It is extremely difficult to speak accurately about inter-racial sex as the subject is surrounded with fantasies and there are no statistics of Indo-African children. Impressionistic accounts record that liaisons did take place and that marriage was rare, so that the offspring would certainly create a 'social problem' especially in such a race conscious society. Of course the objective facts are less important when looking at motives than the subjective perception - and clearly some witnesses appeared to feel very strongly about a situation where they felt Indian men were taking advantage of their "privileged position" (41). How representative of African feeling these witnesses were or, indeed, why they chose to give evidence to the Inquiry at all, is not yet clear to me.

(c) <u>A belief was widespread at the time of the riots that because of the Indian vulnerable position and the openly hostile attitude taken by Europeans to Indians, that the Indians could be attacked with impunity - they had, in effect, become licenced scapegoats.</u>

Brookes said: "I honestly believe the impression has been created among the Natives that the government would be glad to have the Indians driven away, and that they would not be seriously interferred with if they attacked them ... I am sure this impression was prevalent among the Natives, and that many of them were surprised when they discovered that the police and the troops meant business". Government speeches and actions created the framework for the Indian to be perceived as a licensed scapegoat. Campaigning for the general election of 1948, Dr.

Malan, soon to become Prime Minister, stated that "The party holds the view that Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is unassimable. They can never become part of the country and must, therefore, be treated as an immigrant community. The party accepts as a basis of its policy the repatriation of as many Indians as possible and proposes a proper investigation into the practicality of such a policy on a larger scale in co-operation with India and other countries". (42) Official speeches are not, of course, read by the participants in the riots, but official attitudes filter through into popular consciousness and set the limits within which men feel permitted to act. Lowen described it as follows: "Statements made during the recent campaigning for elections to the Senate had created the strained relations. The withdrawal of family allowances and pensions of Indians and the continued and deliberate stigmatising of Indians by such allegations that they were an undesirable element and that they should be repatriated had created conditions which led to the attack. The boycott movement against the Indians in the Transvaal had only one intention - to breed hatred against the Indians. Speeches by Government Ministers such as Schoemann, Swart, Jansen and Malan propagated hatred against the Indians by the Europeans and the Native and greatly enhanced the likelihood of such an explosion" (43). The United Party M.P. Stuart put it equally bluntly: "When you spend the whole of the last year talking about going to deport all the Indians, and how the Indian is going to be eliminated, how he is going to be wiped out ... the impression must necessarily arise among the less educated that as the Indian is going to be wiped out it is a pleasure to help wherever the opportunity occurs. That is the first fruits of loose talking on race relations".

PART V

Race and ethnicity became salient in South African society because the process of class formation and its dialectical opposite, class suppression, takes place within the process of differential incorporation of ascriptive groups into the social structure. This is why class conflict in South Africa is manifested in a racial and ethnic idiom. This is the dynamic inter-relationship between class, race and ethnicity in South Africa. Ethnicity and race are not necessarily varieties of false consciousness; they can be aids to class consciousness. Sklar has identified a more dynamic approach to race and ethnic consciousness in situations of conflict by suggesting that ethnic and racial feeling may be created and instigated to action by the new men in furtherance of their own special interests which are constitutive interests of emerging social classes. (44). Observing the process diachronically we can identify the embryonic formation of an African trading class whose advancement was blocked by the existence of an established Indian trading counter-class. Clearly it was in the interests of such a class to create and instigate anti-Indian feelings and the emergence of the Zulu Hlangani Association is an institutional expression of this.

It is now necessary to spell out more clearly this process of partial class formation and class suppression. I have suggested that under the process of urbanisation one saw the emergence of an embryonic african trading class or petty bourgeousie. This emerging class found its aspirations stunted by the Indian trading class, who resisted this challenge by opposing applications for african trading licences and generally using the weapons they had at their disposal to defend the status quo. Eventually the Africans were able to achieve their objective of removing the Indian traders by taking advantage of the temporary absence of Indian traders during the riots, and by appealing to official government policy to operationalise the policy of giving trading preference among 'their own people'.

However the process was more complicated than simply giving way to an emerging African trading class; the white classes were also furthering their interests as the riot provided them with an opportunity

and a pretext for suppressing, or at least curtailing, the Indian trading class. Rivalry between white and Indian traders in Natal and Transvaal was a long-standing one. The general pattern was for politicians to succumb to white pressure by appointing a Commission to investigate the allegations of 'unfair trading' by Indians. The Commission would hear detailed evidence and most of the 'allegations' would be found to be untrue. The Commission's report would be published and the government would propose some restrictive legislation against Indian traders that would partially satisfy the whitetraders until anti-Indian prejudice would emerge again in the public debate and the pattern would repeat itself. The first of these Commissions was the Coollie Commission in 1872, followed by the Wragge Commission in 1885. In 1921 a further report was set up to investigate the 'asiatic menace' known as the Lange Commission. I will quote three paragraphs from the Report:

'Many of the witnesses candidly stated that they had no objection to the presence of the Indian so long as he remains a labourer and does not embark on commercial or other pursuits'.

'The Natal Agricultural Union passed resolutions at their conference in 1920 that restrictions should be placed on land ownership among Asiatics'.

'Evidence of a Licensing Officer: we do what we can to restrict further Indian licences ... 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'.

In the decade preceding the riots four so-called Penetration Commissions had been set up to investigate the 'penetration' of European areas by socially mobile Indians who wished to buy property in the 'better residential areas in Durban'. The result of these Commissions was that the purchase of land in Durban by Indians was restricted first in 1943 and then more comprehensively in 1946. Thus against the background of African-Indian trade rivalry, was a much longer standing conflict between whites and Indian traders which constituted a much more serious threat to white hegemony. As described

in Part I the boycott of Indian buses immediately after the riots enabled the corporation to gain entry for its municipal buses into the profitable field of black transport. When this encroachment into established Indian transport was challenged in court as ultra vires in terms of the Motor Carrier Transportation Act, parliament rushed through an amendment which enabled the Local Transportation Board to grant licences to applicants where regular bus routes were already established if it was believed that a further license was in 'the public interest'. This enabled the Corporation to encroach legally on established Indian transport. The Group Areas Act was used in a similar way to muzzle and sometimes suppress the Indian traders. Thus the riots not only raised the status of a small group of African traders on the lower level of the racial hierarchy, it also helped to contain the threat to white hegemony by containing the power of the Indian trader.

The victory of the African trader was a pseudo victory for although the Indian trader was removed from the locations eventually - it took a further riot in 1953 before he was removed - the African was only given a toe-hold in commerce in Durban. Because separate development holds that all Africans are temporary sojourners in the urban areas, the African trader is heavily restricted in his ability to accumulate capital. The African may not own land in Durban - except in certain exempted areas so is not able to negotiate a loan on a morgated property. He may only trade in the townships where africans tend to buy the local groceries. When a trader does begin to show success, his licenses are restricted and he is told to expand his interests in the Reserves. The Minister of B.A.D. is reported as saying: "When a bantu trader in a location has sufficient capital to establish a large business, he must move his business to his bantu area, where the necessary facilities exist, among them theestablishment of bantu towns. Another bantu trader must then replace him" (45). The aspiring African capitalist is told that his future is limitless if only he will work among 'his own people'. In theory there are no barriers to African advancement in the reserves as all capitalists from non-African groups will be removed - a society where the ceiling has been blocked by other racial groups has been substituted for a system of vertical stratification. In practice the trader finds that while his advancement is restricted in the city, his 'limitless opportunities' prove largely

illusory in the reserves - the basis for autonomous growth are absent - there is no infrastructure and the purchasing power of the inhabitants is largely limited. Of course opportunities do exist for limited class formation for what could be called a bureaucratic-capitalist i.e. one whose business activities are dependent on the granting of monopolistic privileges by the bureaucracy.

The 1949 'race riots' are a case for what John Rex has called a 'race relations situation', in as much as the problem is subjectively defined as a problem of race and 'sociology being the kind of discipline it is any attempt to define its field without taking into account the actor's own subjective definition of the situation must be seriously inadequate' (46). However, the sociologists understanding of a 'race relation situation' will remain incomplete so long as the 'meaning' of race is not related to the political economy in order to demonstrate its entanglement with the social structure through the process of class formation and class suppress mediated through the differential incorporation of groups. Appeals to Indo-African unity as took place before and after the 1949 riots are rhetorical statements, laudable in their intention, but will remain sociologically inadequate so long as they are not predicated on a careful analysis of the relationship between class and ethnicity and the conflicts of interest of a class nature within the Black society. Grievances however 'non-fundamental', existed in the Black society and the riots can be seen in part as a popular - perhaps 'populist' - manifestation of this. To gloss over them in the interest of 'non-racial solidarity' is to ignore the extent to which race had become part of the "meaning" system of the participants through its entanglement with the social structure. Yet to speak of this conflict as a 'race riot' is to deal with the surface phenomenon only; these 'riots' are manifestations of economically based class conflict with a profound racial dimension.

FOOTNOTES

1. Webster. The Making of a Labour Aristocracy, Unpublished Seminar Paper. University of Natal, 1973.

2. Van den Berghe. Pluralism and the Polity in Kuper and Smith Pluralism in Africa, p. 67.

3. Kuper. 'Class and Colour' Race, 1971.

4. Leftwich. 'The Constitution and Continuity of South African Inequality' in Leftwich Economic Growth and Political Change

5. Adam. Modernizing Racial Domination p. 21 - 22.

6. Rex. Pluralism: The South African Case. Race 1971.

7. Webster. 'Class Collaboration and Class Suppression - a theoretical background to collective bargaining in South Africa'. Unpublished paper. University of Natal 1973.

8. Cohen. 'Class in Africa' in Socialist Register, 1972.

9. I am indebted to Laggasick and Trapido for this concept first developed in Notes towards a Political Economy of South African Racism.

10. Cox. Class, Caste and Race.

11. Genovese. The World the Slaveholders Made, p. 103 and 113.

12. Bundy. The Rise and Decline of a South African peasantry. African Affairs 1971.

13. Cox. Ibid.

14. Meer. Portrait of Indian South Africans. p. 33.

15. Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Riots in Durban. U.G.36.

16. Kirkwood and Webb. The Durban Riots and After. p. 20.

17. I will describe this hostility in Part 5.

18. Meer. Ibid. p. 36.

19. The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development is reported as saying: 'When a Bantu trader in a location has sufficient capital to establish a large business, he must move his business to his Bantu area, where the necessary facilities exist, among them the establishment of Bantu towns. Another Bantu trader must then replace him'. A circular issued to local authorities by the Department of B.A.D. in February 1963 stated that trading by Africans in urban townships was 'not an inherent primary opportunity' for them. It laid down the conditions that were to govern

urban trading. It was stated that no business that does not confine itself to the provision of daily essential domestic necessities must be established. New licences for dry cleaners, garages and filling stations, for example, should not be granted. Persons already holding such licences could continue to operate until 'the opportunity arises to close' the concerns or to persuade the owner to move to his 'homeland'. Welsh. The Oxford History of South Africa, Volume 2.

20. Hansard. Col. 7442, 1950.

21. Kuper, Watts and Davies. Durban: A Study in Racial Ecology, p.30.

22. Meer. Ibid. p. 37.

23. Hansard. Col. 1949.

24. Die Transvaler. 23rd July, 1949.

25. Carter. Concepts of African Nationalism, in Adams Sociological Perspectives, Kuper, p. 424-425, Oxford History, Ibid.

26. Ngubane, *An African Explains Apartheid*. p. 115.

27. Luthuli. Let my people go. p. 103.

28. Simons. Class and Colour in South Africa. p. 559.

29. Meer. Some Inhibiting Factors in African Nationalism, in Adams, Sociological Perspectives.

30. Something of Mr. Champion's ambiguity emerges in this recorded interview with him in December, 1973:

Webster: Did you support the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker Pact of 1947?

Champion: I had two minds but I supported it because it was supported by the ANC. (Champion was President of the Natal branch of the ANC.) -- in 1949 the Indians deserved to be assaulted. They had become too big for their shoes. They were too proud. They looked upon us as nothing except as labourer and kaffir.

Webster: Why do you think they deserved to be attacked?

Champion: They had become too big for their boots. They were too proud. They were controlling all business. Don't you know that it was at this time that we were trying to get certificates for buses and licences to trade?

Webster: Why were you in two minds about the Pact?

Champion: I was advised that Nehru had sent a big sum of money to the ANC but it was sent through the Indian Congress. What the Indian Congress did was to advise us but the control of money was kept by them. I claimed to be senior and money sent to the Congress should be controlled by me. I was not successful --- I was not

satisfied --- I doubted the union between us and them. They are more clever than us. They are more business minded than us. The majority of us know very little about finance. (Commenting on the decision not to give evidence before the Commission) --- not giving evidence before the Commission helped me a great deal because I was going to suffer being cross-examined.

Webster: Why?

Champion: Because I would have told the truth.

Webster: What was the truth?

Champion: We are not friends with Indians. I was not sorry. I was glad when they were assaulted. It taught them a very good lesson.

31. The Durban Housing Survey.

32. Quarantelli and Dynes. Looting in Civil Disorders. In Masotti and Bowen. Riots and Rebellion.

33. Kuper. An African Bourgeousie p. 296.

34. Ibid. p. 302.

35. Van den Berghe. Race Attitudes in Durban. Journal of Social Psychology, 1962.

36. Palmer. The History of the Indians in Natal, p. 156. The only reference to actual prices that I was able to find was in Calpins book - cited in footnote 29 - where he mentions that the price of calico increased from 5d. to 2/5d. per yard between 1939 and 1949.

37. Quoted in the Leader, 12th February, 1949.

38. Annual Report of the Durban Local Transport Board.

39. Durban Housing Survey, p. 136.

40. Ibid.

41. Kuper discusses the importance of race in conflict situations in theories of Revolution and Race Relations in Comparative History and Society, 1971.

42. Michael Scott, who took part in the Passive Resistance Campaign and actively lobbied for the Indian cause both within and outside South Africa, records in his book 'A Time to Speak' how he visited an Afrikaans farmer to try to dissuade him from boycotting Indian stores. The farmer told Scott that the 'coolies' were alien and that it wasn't right that they should have all the trade with the white people in his district. He said the Farmers Coop. was the proper trading organisation for the farmers to patronise. He would like to see all the 'coolies' sent back to India. The Natives and whites would get on better. Scott records that meetings were held in the locations in which anti-Indian propaganda was spread by Europeans and the Africans were urged to boycott Indian stores.

Whites picketed Indian shops and loudspeakers on vans drove through the streets calling out the names of Europeans who were buying from Indian shops. Boycott meetings were sometimes opened by Dutch Reformed Church Ministers.

43. Quoted by Kirkwood and Webb as evidence to the Inquiry.

44. Sklar. Political Science and National Integration - A Radical Approach, Journal of Modern African Studies (1967).

45. Welsh. 'Growth of Towns' in the Oxford History of South Africa, Vol. II.

46. Rex. Race Relations in Sociological Theory. p. 161.