

https://dspace.org/

The "political economy" of Alexandra Township, 1905-1958

Tourikis, P. N.

2014-06-13
http://hdl.handle.net10539/14794

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

THE 'POLITICAL ECONOMY'
OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP: 1905 - 1958

P N TOURIKIS

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of the Witwatersrand in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Honours Degree in Industrial
Sociology.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr Belinda Bozzoli who supervized the writing of this dissertation.

PREFACE

Alexandra Township, also known as "Dark City" by some and "Slaagpaal" by others, and acknowledged by all to have been "Nobody's Baby", presents us as social scientists with the unique opportunity to pose and perhaps answer questions about one dimension of South Africa that continues to be as yet relatively under-researched, that of the so-called 'ghetto-situation'. Did classes exist in Alexandra Township ? And if they did, what classes were they and how did they relate to each other ? Were they "squashed together" into one homogeneous group, or were they locked into perennial class-struggles? And what would all this imply for their ideological and cultural practices ?

This study will attempt to answer precisely such questions by examining Alexandra Township's 'political economy' (a 'local structure') in its 'articulation' with the dominant mode of production (the 'global structure').

Chapter 1 examines the origins of the township, and the main problems encountered by those who tried to administer it. This leads us into the main body of the study - chapter 2 - which tries to develop a coherent picture of the township's own peculiar 'political economy'. The following chapter examines the township's 'local power centre' and the various subjects' access to or exclusion from that 'centre'. Making use of all the arguments developed in chapters 2 and 3, the final chapter attempts to draw some basic conclusions about the specific form that conflicts and cultures took in Alexandra Township.

CHAPTER 1

THE LAYING OUT AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

Alexandra Township is eight and a half miles from the centre of Johannesburg, and was named after King Edward VII's queen. Bordering on the Johannesburg municipal area to the North (near the Pretoria road), the township forms an enclave within three European townships. Alexandra Township, in fact, was and is a so-called isolated "black spot", bordering on some of Johannesburg's very 'fanciest' white suburbs.(1)

On March 31st, 1875, a portion of the quitrent farm "Cyferfontein" No 2 had been transferred by deed to a Gert Pieter Johannes Labuschagne. And in 1905, the portion known as Alexandra was transferred to the Alexandra Township Company Limited. Established in 1905, therefore, before the enactment of the "Proclamation of Townships Ordinance", 1905, and the Township Act of 1907, Alexandra Township was originally intended for exclusive occupation by Europeans. When the 1905 Townships Ordinance came into force shortly afterwards, the Company declared Alexandra Township a "Township" under that Ordinance and was thus allowed to legally throw the area open to Europeans as a white agricultural settlement. (2)

The township is 415 morgen, 479 square roods in extent (rood = quarter of an acre) and, as first surveyed, consisted of 338 lots, 2 parks and a square in addition to streets.

/2 ....

There was, however, no demand for lots on the part of Europeans, so the Township Company decided in 1912 to apply to have Alexandra made into a "Non-European" or "Native" Township. European purchasers were not interested in ground which seemed, at that time, so far from Johannesburg. "It is important to note", said a one time chairman of the Alexandra Health Committee (Falwasser, who served between 1933 and 1941), "that the Township was approved for occupation by natives after attempts to sell stands to Europeans had failed and at a time when it was regarded as so remote from Johannesburg as to be of no use for European occupation". The initial design for European occupation had failed for in those days even the furthest northern suburbs were miles away from the site - there was, therefore, not even a speculative incentive. There was no railway connection with Johannesburg, and the low-priced motor car had yet to be introduced in the early 1900's.(3)

The Company's 1912 application to have the township sanctioned as a "Non-European" Township was successful on condition that no "European" or "Asiatic" should either reside or trade there. So all stands were to be sold subject to ownership being restricted to "Natives" and "Coloureds". These restrictions were formally included in the title deeds and the general plan of the township was altered in the same year (1912). With the township's transformation into a "Non-European" Township, "Natives" and "Coloureds" began buying land, and, at first, it was the "Coloureds" who were in the majority. (4)

/3 ....

When the general plan was altered, the ground was relaid making 2,308 lots, 3 squares and one reserve. In 1916, a further amendment was made increasing the number of lots. By 1942, there were 2,541 stands of which 2,185 were 140 x 80 ft and 340 were 140 x 50 ft. Most of the stands, therefore, were approximately a quarter acre in size. (5)

Alexandra Township, we have stated, was declared a "Native Township" (it was not, therefore, a "camp", a "location", or a "temporary settlement") with no "Europeans" or "Asiatics" being allowed to own land, trade or reside there. The said land was to be held in freehold by the "Native" and "Coloured" buyers. Under the Native Trust and Land Act (1936), however, no further Townships of the type of Alexandra could be brought into existence. On the other hand, the Act gives full statutory recognition to all the rights of "Native Townships" which were already in existence before its enactment. Alexandra Township, more particularly, came into existence, not only long before the Native Trust and Land Act, but even before the first Native Land Act of 1913 - and so the township, having been laid out and approved for occupation by "Natives" and "Coloureds" prior to the passing of the Native Land Act No 27 of 1913, is exempt from the general provisions of that Act. As a document of the Department of Public Health (dated October 20, 1942) makes clear :

> "The continued acquisition by Natives of land in the township was safeguarded by the provisions of section 8(1)(i) of the Native Land Act of 1913, which exempted existing Native Townships from the operation of the prohibitive clauses of that Act". (my emphasis).

/4 ....

So, although ordinarily an African may not legally acquire land outside certain scheduled areas, this prohibition did not apply to Alexandra, which was established as a "Native Township" prior to the commencement of Act No 27 of 1913.(6)

It is important to note at this point that Alexandra Township grew as a result of the expansion of manufacturing industry during World War I; and the process of proletarianisation that continued apace with the expansion of secondary industry during World War II was to further contribute to the growth of the township.(7) Before World War II, the structure of the South African secondary industry was characterized by a "precocious development", which meant a generally low 'organic composition' of capital and a small turnover, an under-developed capital goods manufacturi sector, and the ownership of the larger, more efficient firms by 'foreign' capital. With the post-war period, we get an 'interpenetration' of 'foreign' capital with South Africa's own manufacturing industry, a dramatic increase in the number of establishments, and a sharp increase in capital stock per establishment. But the inefficiency of South Africa's secondary industry and the balance of payments deficit at the time meant that the 'organic composition' of capital had to be raised, and this had to be done by reducing the variable component of advanced total capital. This meant, in practical terms, that the wages of the African proletariat would have to be lowered through a deprivation of their political rights etc.(8) On the other hand, capital in general was expanding fast, and so we get an absolute increase in variable capital :

this was reflected in the escalating numbers of workers coming from the rural areas to the cities (whether as permanent urban dwellers, migrants, or as elements of an ever increasing 'industrial reserve army').(9) Because, as we shall see, the vast majority of Alexandra's residents were not econimically self-sufficient landlords but subtenants who sold their labour-power in Johannesburg, it is with this proletarianisation process that the history of Alexandra Township is organically linked. Daniel M Mogorosi of Alexandra Township wrote in 1948 that "the growth of Johannesburg meant the growth of Alexandra Township". (10)

From a variety of sources(11), the growth of population in Alexandra may most succintly be depicted as follows :

January 1913 : About 40 "Native" and "Coloured" families;

1916 : About 900 "Native" and "Coloured" persons;

1917 : About 1 200 "Native" and "Coloured" persons;

1924 : About 2 640 "Native" and "Coloured" persons;

1929 : About 7 200 "Native" and "Coloured" persons;

1936 : (Census): 16 763 (10 "Europeans", 15 945 "Native" and 808 "Coloured" persons);

1937 : 21 833 persons ;

1938 : (Urban areas census of Natives only) : 21 843; overall population given as 28 000, although according to the Urbanised Areas Administration Committee over 39 000 persons presented themselves for vaccination ;

1940 : No census of "Non-Europeans" taken;

1941 : " " " " " ;

/6 ....

1942 : By the Health Committee estimated at 41 000, by the Department of Native Affairs at approximately 50 000, and by a police report at 60 - 65 000.

Mid 50's : Nearly 100 000.

The township, situated to the north-east of Johannesburg on the east of the main road to Pretoria, is about one and a half miles beyond the Johannesburg Municipal boundary. This fact, amongst others, was to have important implications for the form that the administration of Alexandra was to take. Very simply, as we shall see, the Municipality was to refuse to have anything to do with the township and its problems.

In considering the administration of the township in this chapter, we will not be concerning ourselves with the changing structure of the township's local authority, the so-called "Health Committee". The history of the changing structure of the Committee is the history of the various classes' varying degrees of access to/exclusion from this 'local state apparatus'. This issue cannot be dealt with without a prior discussion of the township's own 'political economy' and the class stratification that was delineated by the prevalent 'global' and 'local' social structures. Here we will confine ourselves to answering two basic questions : firstly, why was something like a relatively autonomous, non-Municipal Health Committee set up ? ; and secondly how did that Health Committee fare in its administrative duties ?

The authority to establish a local administration in the township was granted in 1916, when the first Health Committee was established by the Administrator of the Transvaal. The Health Committee's structure was to undergo various changes in 1917, 1921, 1933, 1937, 1940 and 1941[12] - and by 1958 the Committee was dissolved and replaced by a local area committee, the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board. But, then, why was Alexandra Township granted a Health Committee to manage its own affairs ?

Alexandra, we have stated, was situated one and a half miles beyond the Johannesburg Municipal boundary, and thus did not fall within the Johannesburg municipal area of jurisdiction - although it was considered as being within the magisterial district.[13] This fact was to provide the Municipality with the excuse that it had no responsibility whatsoever for the area. But it was not only the Municipality that was openly unwilling to administer the township. We know that Alexandra, like Sophiatown, was a "free" township where Africans could acquire property. This "freedom", however, also meant that the central State itself and all its Government Departments - like the Municipality - simply felt no responsibility for the escalating problems (to be examined below) of the township : in effect, therefore, Alexandra Township was "no-body's baby".[14]

By 1916, however, the township had grown to an extent that necessitated the setting up of some form of control, and so the Health Committee was constituted that year. But whilst for a certain section of Alexandra's population (the tenants) this form of administration was no real (or adequate) form of administration at all (given the Health Committee's seriou

lack of resources, inadequate revenue and the lack of any assistance from Government Departments), another section - those that were to emerge as a relatively well-established standholding, shop-owning petty-bourgeosie - felt confident enough to actually demand an autonomous administrative authority for their township. According to a document of the Alexandra Standholders' Committee :

> "Since 1912 the inhabitants of Alexandra Township have been investing their meagre and hard earned wages in this Township because they believed that at last they had secured a home from which no Whiteman should drive them away. This feeling of security stimulated progress and broke down racial and Tribal differences to such an extent that when the inhabitants with the assistance of the Township Company claimed to be recognized as a Local Authority the Transvaal Provincial Administration did not hesitate to grant such recognition."(15)

It is the Local Government Ordinance that sets out in detail the specific stages to be followed in the progression of local government, and it was this Ordinance that the Administrator had decided to apply to Alexandra Township. Under the Local Government Ordinance, once a local authority has been appointed, it is usual for an area to develop in its earlier stages under a nominated Health Committee. As the administration and area expands, a second stage follows, whereby a partly-nominated and partly-elected Committee takes the place of the nominated Health Committee; later its status is raised to a Village Council, the members of which are all elected, this constituting the third stage in the progression of local government; and finally, if the area becomes sufficiently populate an elected Town Council or Municipality replaces the Village Council.

/9 ....

The different stages roughly follow the course of population growth.(16)

However, as Falwasser noted :

> "In the case of Alexandra, unfortunately the elected native and coloured members of the Health Committee, who were in the majority, showed so little sense of responsibility and ability to control the affairs of the Township that no increase of status was granted to the local authority but on the contrary in 1933 a purely nominated Health Committee again assumed control".(17)

Falwasser was referring here to the 1921-1932 Health Committee which was partly-nominated and partly-elected. This set-up, according to the Local Government Ordinance, is the second stage in the progression of local government. But at that time, the elected members controlled the Health Committee and managed the affairs of the township so badly that, as Falwasser states, in 1933 a purely nominated Health Committee once more took over. The first partly-elected Health Committee had failed, and the process as set out by the Local Government Ordinance had been disrupted in 1932.

The purely nominated Health Committee that was appointed in 1933 was to opera right up to 1941, when Alexandra was once again administered by a partly-nominated, partly-elected Health Committee. Of course, if Alexandra had followed the normal course as set out by the Ordinance, it would have long before the 1940's been administered by a Town Council.

/10 ....

The disruption of the process in 1932, however, was more or less inevitable. By the end of that year there were probably some 10 000 to 15 000 blacks (Africans and Coloureds) congregated in the township, or a population considerably larger than that of any rural town in the Union at the time. "It is little wonder, then," said Falwasser, "that the administration of the Township by the Committee left much to be desired." Furthermore, "both the Central and Provincial Administration seem to have been well aware of this but did nothing to improve the position". (18)

In 1929, the Administrator decided to appoint a Commission - with very wide terms of reference - to enquire into the administration of the township by its Health Committee, and to make recommendations for the future. The Young Commission of Enquiry duly reported to the Administrator but for some as yet unexplainable reason the report was never published nor were its contents made known even to the members of the Health Committee themselves, notwithstanding repeated applications by the latter to be furnished with a copy of the Commission's findings. The findings were that, subject to certain conditions and safeguards, the administration of the township by a Health Committee consisting of both "Natives" and "Europeans" should continue. It found, in other words, that the establishment of the Health Committee had been "justified", but pointed out the inadequacy of the revenue - for the year ended June 30th, 1928, this amounted to £1 775.

/11 ....

No change whatsoever was made in the constitution of the Health Committee until the end of 1932 - by that time, a set of circumstances had arisen which could simply not be overlooked. Firstly, a Provincial audit had disclosed embezzlement of funds by three successive African officials of the Health Committee; and secondly, the Union Department of Public Health had reported most unfavourably on general conditions in the township. In response, the Administrator dissolved, at the end of 1932, the Committee and substituted, by Administrator's Proclamation No 114 of 1932, the purely nominated Committee referred to above. That incident, in fact, closed the first chapter of Alexandra Township's history.

The partly-elected Committee of the 1921-1932 period was certainly guilty of 'maladministration', and the State was all too happy to explain this in terms of the "irresponsible" elected members of the local apparatus. The Johannesburg and Germiston Boundaries Commission (Feetham Commission) of 1936-37 made this clear :

> "(the) maladministration of the affairs of the Committee as previously constituted could be ascribed to the fact that the elected majority of the Committee members could outvote the minority in the latter's endeavours to effect improvements".(19)

With the disruption of the progression of local government in 1932, and the appointment of a purely nominated Committee by 1933, it was Falwasser who took over the chairmanship : he was to remain in office until 1941. Falwasser assumed the chairmanship of the Committee with no special qualifications

/12 ....

for the work, but he claimed that he had "a knowledge of natives" acquired in his thirty-two years of service in the Native Affairs Department. He had obtained "a useful insight into the affairs of the Township" as a member of the 1929 Young Committee. From the previous Health Committee, Falwasser "inherited a bank overdraft of £6.6.4 but practically no assets"; he found "a cemetry almost used up, a depositing site waterlogged and grossly fouled after continuous use for twenty years", etc(20)

But the main problem he was confronted with - the problem that had burdened the township from its birth right up to 1958, precisely because Alexandra was always "no-body's baby" - was that he was expected "to re-organize and finance without outside help the affairs of a Township occupied by some 20 000 primitive people ..." Falwasser struggled on for two years buying sanitary pails and other essential requirements, mostly on credit. He was, he says, gradually working towards a somewhat more stable financial position by increasing rates in the township. However, little in this direction was possible, not only because the 1930's was a period of serious depression, but primarily because (and we will hear more about this later) "the majority of the people was still saddled with heavy payments on properties bought on the hire purchase system". During that time, Falwasser attempted to acquire some ground for a cemetry, depositing site and other public services. Failing utterly in his attempts, he applied to the Provincial Administration for assistance in securing land, by expropriation or some other means, and for financial assitance towards the purchase of such land.(21)

/13 ....

The point here is to once more illustrate the fact that Alexandra was "no-body's baby" - because, as Falwasser himself relates, he received "no reply to these requests" but "eventually heard" that the Transvaal Administration had asked the Johannesburg Municipality to take over the township. The Municipality, of course, would not accept the "baby", and simply refused to take over Alexandra. Falwasser also "eventually heard" that, on the Municipality's refusal to abide by the Administrator's request, it had been decided to appoint a Commissioner to report to the Administrator as to what should be done about the township.(22)

But Falwasser himself had in fact come to grips with the central problem that had always acted as the perennial obstacle in the effective administration of Alexandra and the efficient management of the 'local state apparatus' that was the Health Committee. The problem was that Alexandra, being considered "no-body's baby" by all the relevant State apparatuses and local branches, was refused any "outside" financial and technical assistance, and Falwasser embarked on a 'campaign' to get that much-needed assistance. "It is not possible to deal fully," Falwasser said at the time, "with all the reasons that make it almost impossible for a thickly populated native area to develop its local government unaided on lines which modern practice deems necessary for public health, but I shall endeavour to give a few reasons why the task before the Local Authority is an almost impossible one without outside financial and technical assistance". (23)

/14 ....

First of all, Falwasser argued, the average "legitimate" income of each property owner is about £60 per annum : under such circumstances, the extent to which householders can be rated or taxed is limited.(24) Secondly, twenty years of neglect had left Alexandra Township's roads in a deplorable condition, and it would therefore take another twenty years of work to bring all the roads into a trafficable state. Maintenance costs, furthermore, would automatically increase as the road mileage to be maintained also increase. Thirdly, because several water courses have been eroded, in places to depths of over twenty feet, extensive canalization and bridging would be necessary. Fourthly, Falwasser pointed out that there was no communal water supply, and that the only permanent solution would be to connect up with the Rand Water Board supply at a cost of approximately £10 000. Fifthly, he pointed out that there was no street or house lighting and that no supply was possible except from either the Johannesburg Municipality or the Victoria Falls Power Company : the only alternative to one of these sources of supply would be the erection of an expensive power station and the maintenance of a skilled European staff for running and maintenance. Finally, Falwasser noted that the provision of any of the abovementioned amenities would have to be preceeded by reports and estimates prepared by trained technical advisers whom the Health Committee was in no position to employ. "No Reef Municipality", Falwasser concluded, "has been able to finance its locations and native villages out of native revenue .... It is, therefore, no discredit to the Alexandra Health Committee that it has been unable to finance major works". (25)

/15 ....

These were the problems that stared Falwasser's Health Committee in the face between 1933 and 1941. The fact was that Alexandra was pleading for some "outside" assistance. But what response did Falwasser's 'campaign' receive ? For the Provincial Administration, "once a local authority has been constituted, that body is expected to administer the area under its control without any assistance or advice from Government Departments." The progression of local government had been disrupted in 1932, not only because of the corruption and "irresponsibility" within the Health Committee, but also because "what virtually happened was that this Local Authority was created and left alone to work out its own salvation."(26) Falwasser's Health Committee was also left alone to work out, not only the salvation of itself, but also that of the "unwanted baby" that was Alexandra Township.

The Feetham Commission appointed in 1936 agreed with the finding of the earlier Young Committee that the establishment of the Health Committee had been 'justified ' - however, echoing Falwasser's appeals, it also laid stress on the difficulties being encountered by the Health Committee in its endeavours to effect improvements, arising out of the "serious inadequacy of funds" at its disposal. The Commission suggested that one of the most valuable forms in which assistance could be given would be by means of a "special loan" for the purpose of capital expenditure. Suggestions were also made by Feetham for assisting the Health Committee in its work in a practical way.(27) But none of those suggestions were acted upon : rather, what happened was that the Municipality and the Government Departments set about discussing the possible abolition of the township (an issue we shall examine closely in chapter 3)

/16 ....

Feetham also made it clear that it would be necessary "to advance very cautiously along the path of granting an increased measure of self-government" - he suggested that "it should be possible by degrees again to introduce an elected element into the Committee."

The Urbanised Areas Administration Committee of 1938-9, whilst remarking that some progress in effecting improvements from a public health point of view can be claimed by Falwasser's Committee, nonetheless, "the Health Committee, as at present constituted, cannot be expected to deal properly with slum conditions without much greater supervision and assistance than is possible under present circumstances."(28)

The Health Committee was reconstituted once again in 1941 and began operating under the chairmanship of Hoernlé from February, 1942. The structure and functions of this new partly-elected, partly-nominated Health Committee will be discussed in more detail when examining the question of the various classes' access to/exclusion from this local power apparatus. Suffice it to say here that, whilst for a well-known representative of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie, Daniel Mogorosi, a "Health Committee with an efficient African staff manages the affairs of the Township", (29) for another observer, "the Township is administered somewhat vaguely by a Health Committee "The management, it must be said," the observer continues, "leaves a good deal to be desired, though this is largely because the management is deprived of adequate funds ..." (30) And, for another resident of the township, writing in 1949, and representative of the "larger populace", the Health Committee needed to be "enlarged" - he writes :

/17 ....

> "In so far as a large section of the populace is concerned, Alexandra Township is known as the worst area for crime. Things might improve if the authorities could adopt the block system for the township. This would mean the establishment of an enlarged committee, each member of which should be allocated a block for supervision ..."(31)

What this resident was suggesting, amongst other things, was that access to the local power apparatus - the Health Committee - should not be limited to a certain "section" (which was in fact a 'class') of the Alexandra population.

CHAPTER 2

THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AFRICA ; THE 'POLITICAL ECONOMY' OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP ; AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AFRICAN PETTY-BOURGEOSIE AND WORKING-CLASS IN THE TOWNSHIP

In this chapter, I will try to show that, as a result of the 'political economy' of Alexandra Township, the relationship between the African petty-bourgeoisie and the African working-class involved the unity of two dialectically contradictory relationships - that is, I will attempt to show that these two classes were both united and stood in opposition to each other at the same time.

The organising idea of this chapter, therefore, will be that of the 'dialectic of unity and opposition'(1) that existed between African petty-bourgeoisie and African working-class in Alexandra Township ("dialectic" in the sense of "unity of opposites", or, more simply, in the sense of "two things at the same time").

I will argue that the dominant capitalist mode of production (CMP) in South Africa - within which Alexandra Township must of course be located - had the effect of uniting Alexandra's African petty-Bourgeoisie and working-class. On the other hand, I will suggest the (what I will identify as) 'class racketeering' that existed between standholder and tenant within the township had the counter-effect of dis-uniting the two classes.

/19 ....

The dominant CMP in South Africa had generated a particular mode of 'political oppression' and 'cultural domination'(2) that had the effect of inducing similar 'class experiences' within both the African petty-bourgeoisie and the working-class - such "experiences" were to result in "nationalistic" class practices on the part of both classes. On the other hand, the 'class racketeering' that the standholder perpetrated against the tenant within Alexandra Township, had the effect of generating contradictory class interests amongst the two classes, thus placing them in opposition to each other.

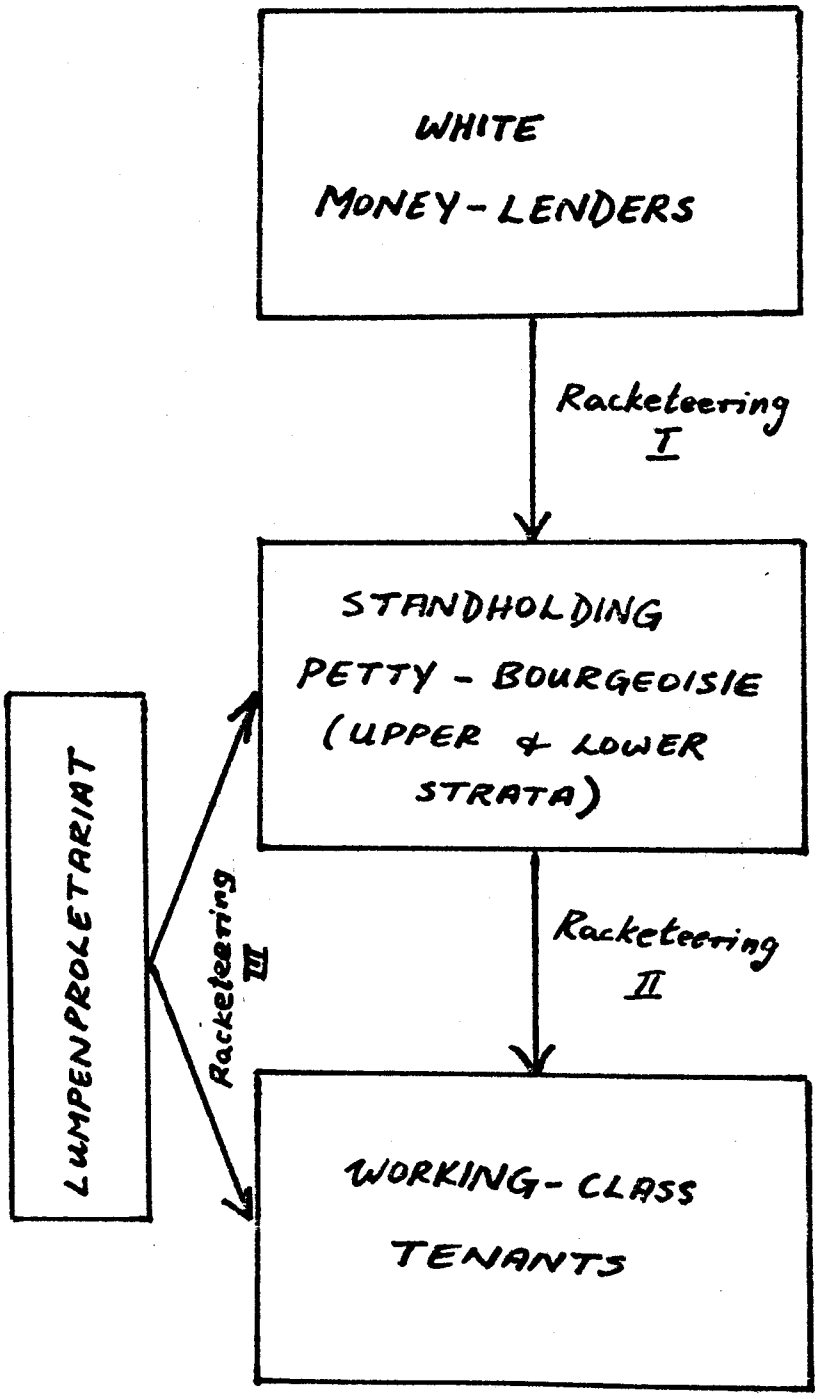
The African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class were united, I have said, in that both were experiencing a similar form of 'political oppression' and 'cultural domination' - this 'oppression' and 'domination' was materialized in the two classes' common exclusion from the (immediate) Central State Apparatus. Basically as a result of the 1913 Land Act, the black direct producers were only partially separated from the means of production (the land). It was as a result of this, Kaplan has argued,(3) that the South African State was able to acquire its 'racial character', ie. the exclusion of black subjects from State Structures. The 1913 Act, therefore, must be understood as a class strategy constituting a specific form of class domination (implemented to effect a particular form of economic 'exploitation'). And it was as a result of this Act above all else, that the African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class had found themselves similarly excluded from the immediate State Apparatus. Both were therefore confronted by a "racially exclusive, bourgeois democratic State". A "nationalistic" response on the part of the dominated 'popular classes' was natural, therefore.(4)

/20 ....

However, as I have said, within the 'global structure' of South Africa's CMP, Alexandra's own specific 'political economy' must be located. And this 'political economy' involved an efficient system of 'class-racketeering' of the African petty-bourgeoisie against the working-class. As a result, we will see that, whilst both petty-bourgeoisie and working-class were practicing "nationalist" idealogies and cultures, this "nationalism" of the two respective classes was of a <u>different quality</u>, given the contradictory class interests and aspirations that had emerged.

The 'class racketeering' of the petty-bourgeoisie against the working-class was a <u>necessary</u> relationship (ie. not a result of 'free choice') since the African petty-bourgeoisie themselves were the victims of a different type of 'racketeering' perpetrated at their expense by white money-lenders and building societies. So, as the latter were racketeering at the expense of the standholding petty-bourgeoisie, this petty-bourgeoisie was racketeering at the expense of the tenant and subtenant working-class. To exacerbate dramatically the ensuing class conflicts that resulted, we got in Alexandra at the time (1940's-50's) a <u>third</u> type of 'racketeering' perpetrated this time by the 'lumpenproletariat'[5] against both the African petty-bourgeoisie <u>and</u> the working-class. Class conflict amongst these three classes within Alexandra, therefore, was extremely <u>intense</u> - though, as I have stressed, this conflict merely constituted <u>one</u> dimension of the 'dialectic of unity and opposition'. This web of racketeering relationships between classes (all of which had <u>organised</u> themselves in some way or another) may be diagramatically depicted as follows :

/21 ....


WHITE
MONEY-LENDERS
Racketeering
I
STANDHOLDING
PETTY-BOURGEOISIE
(UPPER & LOWER
STRATA)
Racketeering
II
LUMPENPROLETARIAT
Racketeering
III
WORKING-CLASS
TENANTS

/ 22 ....

In showing that a dialectical relationship of unity and opposition existed between Alexandra's African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class, I will also be developing a critique of the idea that classes in Alexandra were "squashed together" - Couzens has argued, for example, that "in this microcosm (Alexandra Township - P T), classes get squashed together and lose their sharp edges of distinction. Interests fluctuate ...."(6)

1. THE 'POLITICAL ECONOMY' OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP : THE AFRICAN PETTY-BOURGEOISIE

After visiting Alexandra Township in the early 1950's, Basil Davidson was impressed by the fact that "many interesting people" resided there : "At the one end of the scale", he wrote, "you will find schoolmasters, students, people writing and people painting, members of the A N C, the men who would be leaders in the political and trade union life of the Africans if only such life was permitted them". Then, "you will find a great mass of ordinary people who are just going back and forth to work every day, rising early to queue for the skeleton bus service and returning late for the same reason." Finally, "you will find, at the other end of the scale, the bad hats, the 'tsotsi', the 'skokiaan queens' who brew strong liquor, the prostitutes and pimps and riff-raff."(7)

/23 ....

Davidson's superficial observations were not superficial at all, because he is here actually indicating the three different classes of people that made up the class structure of the township, ie., the petty-bourgeoisie, the working-class, and the lumpenproletariat. These three classes were locked together in a conflict over contradictory class interests generated by a web of systematic 'class racketeering'. But before we examine the form the different types of 'racketeering' took, we need to examine more closely each of these three classes in turn.(8) In this section, we will be examining the petty-bourgeoisie.

An agenda of the Johannesburg City Council dated January 26, 1943, notes :

> "Assuming that the average native family (in Alexandra Township - P T) consists of 6 persons, the owner/occupier population would amount to approximately 11 688. The balance of 33 312 constituting sub-tenants."(9)

It is to this group of "owner/occupiers" that Lt Col O J P Horak of the South African Police was referring when he said in October 1942 that "there is, however, a large number of respectable Natives living there".(10)

According to the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee, these "owners", "by scrimping and scraping and often denying themselves food, ... have managed to purchase their own Plots in Alexandra Township at high prices and to erect houses, shops, etc thereon".(11) Many were the times when these businessmen had competed ruthlessly even amongst each other to win some foothold in the township's 'social ladder'. Jerry Jass, Alexandra's famous golfer, was able to secure a lucrative business as an undertaker as a result of his neighbour's misfortunes :

> "Once, a business competitor (of Jass' - P T) failed to pay his rent and the landlord obtained a court order for the sale of his coffins. Jerry took a station wagon and a lorry to the courts. He gave an estate agent friend, Humphrey Mbere, some money and asked him to bid against him up to £7 for all the coffins. Jerry offered the highest bid of £8 and took all 25 coffins."(12)

And despite the fact that many of these standholding petty-bourgeoisie were - as we shall see below - heavily bonded to building societies and other money-lending individuals, many of them had been able to successfully branch-out into a variety of business fields - such as the running of shops, taxi-fleets, and even at times, buses. And in any case, as we shall discuss in more detail below, the income-producing aspect of their stands was to prove a major reason why all standholders steadfastly refused to let Alexandra be abolished or removed : standholding, very clearly, was an asset to them.

E A Cordell, a Native Welfare Officer from Salisbury reported in January 1940 that "at Alexandra Township, the purchaser of a site may build a shop or an Eating House, subject to the passing of plans and granting of licence. A number of shops were seen and were well-stocked. "Fish-and-chips" shops were plentiful." (13) Alexandra's shop-keepers had organised themselves into an association bent on eliminating all "unlicensed dealers" in the township. By 1943, according to the Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health in Alexandra, Dr A B Xuma, there were 422 shops and 248 stores in the township. These presumably belonged to Africans, Coloureds and - illegally - to Indians.

/25 ....

Of the 2 541 occupied stands in 1943, 260 were used for business purposes.(14) D Mogorosi wrote in 1948 that there were no less than 300 shops run entirely or exclusively by Africans.(15) African mannequins and models used to demonstrate to large crowds outside the successful Pan African Stores, which was trying to develop fashions in the township specifically modelled to the African's own "figure, colour and taste." A R Moatse, publicity expert for Pan African Stores, used to say that "our job is to try to find the best way in which we can bring to the African the fashions of the moment without necessarily apeing the European". (16)

One of the best-known businessmen in Alexandra Township was Shadrack Richard Matthews, who was shopkeeper, landlord and estate agent all at the same time. He owned four butcher shops and five properties. He also collected the rents in eighty properties belonging to other people,(17) and, in addition, offerred "legal aid" and even bonds to Alexandra residents.(18)

Ezekiel Mvubelo, father-in-law of trade unionist Lucy Mvubelo, was one of Alexandra's 'pioneers' and "a man of means". He had settled in Alexandra in 1913, and was one of the first Africans to acquire a number of houses there. Throughout his life, he was a member of the Alexandra Vigilance Association and the Standholders' Association. He ran a chain of stores and owned a number of properties in the township.(19)

/26 ....

We need to note here, however, that it was ~~only~~ not only owners of shops, taxis and buses that made up the petty-bourgeoisie. A certain class of witchdoctors did "good trade" in the township. A certain Mr Msimba, for example, together with his partner, "were among the most well-to-do of medicine men in Alexandra" - they had "fully modernized" their "business". Msimba ran a "surgery", which "enjoyed a corner site". As Davidson writes, "Mr Msimba was ... impeccably dressed in good European clothes, with collar and tie, watch-chain, button-hole, and everything complete." Mr Msimba, Davidson continues, "ranks as a doctor, and not in the least as a figure of fun or fear." As such, "Mr Msimba is a man of substance. As well as his 'surgery', he has his house and motor-car. He is much in demand from clients (even) outside Johannesburg ..." His ordinary consultation fees were "quite cheap", but for the treatment of more serious cases such as "mafufunyana" (a "state of nervous derangement") anything from 25s to £5 was charged.(20)

Shebeen queens - or a <u>certain class</u> of them - were also "very wealthy" - "some have find homes, <u>away</u> from their places of business. Their husbands drive large American cars and their children receive a good education."(21)

The vast majority of standholders did not sell their labour-power in the factories of Johannesburg ; many ran their own businesses in Alexandra - this is what made them a 'petty-bourgeoisie'. And even if they only owned stands and not shops, <u>they still did not work</u> : Salisbury's Native Welfare

/27 ....

Officer, E A Cordell, noted that, "for the most part, these landlords do not work but live on the considerable revenue derived from rentals."(22) Dikobe, writing about the Second World War years, tells us very clearly that Alexandra's standowner's "were not working most of them .... they were loafers, they were living on rental, even their sons were loafing about, not working." (23)

As this point, however, I would like to suggest that Alexandra's petty-bourgeois class may be said to have been subdivided into two rather distinct 'strata' : on the one hand, there were those who had definitely 'made it' in life, owned shops, taxis and buses, and 'lived like Europeans'. On the other hand, there was another, lower, stratum, that was 'aspiring' towards petty-bourgeois status and a total 'European-isation' of their life-styles. Both strata were united in common organisation – the Alexandra Standholders' Association for example - and both were racketeering in similar ways at the expense of their tenants and sub-tenants. But they did, nonetheless, occupy different economic positions in the class structure of the township. Couzens tells us of a "Mart Zulu, (who) was chairman of the (1942) busboycott committee ... Zulu thus took a strong stand against the busowners including Baloyi who owned six buses - the MIGHTY SIX ... Zulu was not a busowner : he was a standowner!"(24) Mart Zulu's stand against the busowners clearly represents the different 'strata' within the standowners themselves. Unlike the 'upper stratum' of standholders who had somehow managed to branch out into another business field, thus enabling themselves to overcome the white moneylenders' racketeering, the 'lower strutum' of standholders were the perennial victims of this money-lending racket : these latter owners, who had bought a stand at

/28 ....

some £200 (and been obliged to build on it) had little hope of paying off the debt in their lifetime, out of legitimate earnings at least. According to a 1942 Libertas article :

> "The desire for ownership is strong ... and unbelievable sacrifices are made. But ... arrears in instalments follow. The vendor shows no mercy : he exercises his legal rights, and presently the stand is in the market again, and usually snapped up. Many stands have been sold over and over again."(25)

But we need to contrast this type of struggling, 'aspiring', standholder to the "local plutocrats who can afford a car and sometimes even a chauffeur."(26) Alexandra's bus-owners, organised into a Bus-owners' Association, are a good example of this group of "local plutocrats". They were powerful enough to prevent any attempts on the part of the Health Committee to buy them out - Hoernlé, chairman of the 1942 Committee, wrote in 1942 to the Christian Eye Association that :

> "your suggestion concerning a special tax on the landowners in the Township for the purpose of creating a fund by means of which to start an independant bus service, run by the Health Committee, is ... quite impracticable ... Any attempt to buy out the present busowners would merely lead to their demanding so heavy a price that it would be unreasonable to expect landowners in the Township to pay it ..." (27)

When in 1944 Putco bought over the Alexandra bus route, which was then still run by the Alexandra Bus-owners' Association, Baloyi, who was head of the Association, earned £22 000 in the transaction.(28)

/29 ....

Before ending this section, I would also like to note that, apart from the significant number of Indians who illegally owned shops in the township - estimated at seventy in 1949[29] - there were also many Indians who traded just outside the township: by 1942 already, there were thirty-eight shops lining the Wynberg side of the street that divided Alexandra Township from the township of Wynberg.[30] These Indian traders, therefore, also formed part of the Alexandra petty-bourgeoisie - but the relationship between Alexandra's standholders and the Indian traders was extremely antagonistic, as we shall see in chapter 3.

2. THE 'POLITICAL ECONONY' OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP : THE AFRICAN WORKING-CLASS

Unlike Messrs Matthews, Mvubelo, Msimba, Zulu, Baloyi, etc - all of whom were people "of substance" and men "of means" - a Mrs R., interviewed by Davidson on his visit to Alexandra Township, was "not a woman of substance" - as Davidson writes : Mrs R. is not a woman "of substance" because "she inhabits one room of many that are built in the garden of a freehold house ..."[31] Mrs R., in other words, belonged to Alexandra Township's tenant-class.

And there were stark differences in class consciousness between persons "of substance" and those without such "substance" - Dikobe, a tenant who nonetheless had managed to avoid wage-labour by working as an independent hawker, illustrates this stark difference in consciousness. He tells us that, when hawking, he did not regard himself as a worker :

/30 ....

> "I was of another class ... I couldn't have the same sympathy as a worker (who) wakes up and complains of small wages and so on. I had to complain to myself that business was bad like any business man who says "business is bad" ...."(32)

But the above quotation can be confusing, because we need to stress here that the vast majority of tenants and sub-tenants were members of the working-class - there were, of course, exceptions to this rule (like Dikobe), but the crucial point is that theirs was an extremely "tenuous independence", which usually even that did not last for very long. Let us consider, for example Dikobe himself once again : from "tenuous independence" his status was in fact to change to "lowly employee" rather rapidly : this led him to "identify with the working class", and he went on to join a trade union, the National Union of Distributive Workers.(33)

The point I am trying to make here is that tenants simply could not afford their "own business" - at the very most, they ran "little side-lines" : Davidson writes that the above-mentioned Mrs R., "in common with many other single (she was widowed - P T) but respectable women of Alexandra, (runs) a profitable little side-line in 'beer' ...."(34) "Little side-lines" need to be distinguished from "private businesses" - the latter were the exclusive preoccupation of Alexandra's African petty-bourgeoisie.

/31 ....

We have stated above that there were 33 312 tenants in 1943 in Alexandra Township. This figure is based on the assumption that the average African family in Alexandra consisted of six persons, and thus includes women and children. According to a September 1950 report in Bantu World, Johannesburg drew at the time 25 000 workers from Alexandra Township.(35) The township's local industry had always been generally rather "sterile". According to a picture caption in Libertas :

> "This almost pleasant picture of a tailor working outdoors shows Alexandra in its least typical aspect. As a working centre, Alexandra is almost sterile. There is no primary production whatever except for a few fruit trees left, which are dying."(36)

As a result of this and other factors, Alexandra's tenant-class was forced to seek employment outside the township. A 1942 document of the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee suggests that "the vast majority of Alexandra Township natives consist of respectable, hardworking natives, employed mostly in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg ...."(37) On the other hand, the 1942 Libertas article says that "They (Alexandra's working-class - PT) by no means work only in Johannesburg, but also on the whole East Rand". (38)

Alexandra's working-class did have a 'skilled stratum', some of whom were involved in the township's local building industry, when such industry was of course in operation. Many were the workers who did all they could to attain building skills - a Paul Tshabalala of Alexandra Township wrote to The African Drum :

/32 ....

> "I am a builder, and when I saw the wide variety of subjects in the African Drum I felt that we should have a page on building so that we too may learn more in this trade."(39)

In October 1950, M A Muller, the Native Commissioner for Alexandra,(40) had made an urgent "plea" to the people of the township for "industrial training". He had said that :

> "Much could be achieved in the provision of industrial and commercial courses for Africans ... (and) was glad that in Alexandra, the dignity of labour was fully realized ... (The Commissioner) wanted to see boys taught carpentry and other vocations which would stand them in good stead; likewise sewing and domestic science for the girls ..."(41)

Alexandra's Native Commissioner was clearly speaking here in the interests of secondary industry's labour demands - a sector which constantly pleaded for a more 'efficient' labour force. Kaplan notes that "migrant labour was condemned time and again as 'inefficient' by industry's spokesmen".(42) Hoernlé's collection of papers(43) includes a 1942 Memorandum "by a group of young Economists, Univ. of the Witwatersrand", which complained that "far too large a proportion of Native urban labour is casual". Industrialists in the 1950's were condemning the migrant labour system as applied to industrial labour and were demanding a more "settled labour force".(44) It is in this context that the "plea" by Alexandra's Native Commissioner msut be understood.

I would like to conclude this section by noting certain features of Alexandra's working-class which were to have important implications for its cultural practices. According to a 1943 document of the Alexandra

/33 ....

Township Health Committee :

> "a considerable proportion of the tenant class consists of Africans whose acquaintance with life under urban conditions is as yet of short duration ...."(45)

Alexandra's working-class, therefore, had strong links with the reserves, a factor that was to determine the 'idiomatic style' of its cultural practices (as we shall see below). This strong link with the reserves is confirmed by the annual exodus of Alexandra's families from the township every Christmas season to celebrate with family and friends in the reserves.(46)

The proletarianisation process was continuing apace :"In 1951, 27 per cent of the African population lived in towns, as against 10 per cent at the turn of the century."(47) However, despite this fact, a 1948 Bantu World article quotes a Dr C C P Anning as saying that :

> "Many of the Alexandra residents had come, within this generation from country homes where under tribal conditions, kraal life meant a full family life with its strict discipline, its happy sharing of hardships and pleasure, its customary attention to the simple rules of feeding, of sexual habits, of cleanliness, and so on. People now moved to town ... This change ... was hard for the Bantu people ..."(48)

/34 ....

On the other hand, Davidson, writing in 1952, says :

> "Perhaps half a million Africans inhabit settlements adjacent to Johannesburg .... They form a community which, while conserving many of the customs and superstitutions of tribal life (though usually in a debased form), has become more or less completely 'detribalized' ...." (49)

Davidson also notes elsewhere that :

> "About 80 000 Africans . or more or less, for nobody can say exactly how many - inhabited Alexandra in 1952. Many of them have lived in Alexandra all their lives ..." (50)

Perhaps the discrepancies in the above quotations may be explained by the fact that Alexandra's population was constantly changing, or was constantly in a state of flux, but the fact remains - as will be demonstrated in our examination of Alexandra Township working-class culture - that the links with the reserves (whether "spiritual"/ "cultural" or "material") were strong.

3. THE 'POLITICAL ECONOMY' OF ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP : CLASS ORGANISATIONS.

Alexandra Township's three classes - the petty-bourgeoisie, the working-class and the lumpenproletariat - had all organised themselves into a number of different class organisations. Poulantzas has argued that classes, whilst defined at the level of the relations of production, nonetheless exist in certain specific organisational forms. It is these organisational forms (whether political, idealogical, cultural etc) that materialize the "powers" of the various classes.(51)

/35 ....

In this section, I will briefly note the various class organisations that operated in Alexandra Township in the 1940's and 1950's. A more detailed analysis of their functions will be undertaken later on.

The township's petty-bourgeoisie had organised itself in apparatuses such as the Alexandra Standholders' Association (led by people such as S Molefe, a Mr Twanzi, a Mr C Ramashu, and others in the course of the organisation's history), the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee, and the Alexandra Traders' Association.(52) We have also seen above that the 'higher stratum', bus-owning petty-bourgeois individuals had organised themselves in the powerful Alexandra Bus-Owners' Association. I will also argue below that the local branch of the A N C was, for a time, under the standholders' control, with R G Baloyi, C S Ramohanoe, and others, as their leaders.

The Coloured petty-bourgeoisie, whilst fully co-operating with and participating in the African petty-bourgeois organisations mentioned above, had themselves set up the Alexandra Coloured Associated Associations (A C A A).(53) According to a Memorandum submitted to the City Boundaries Commission in 1938, the A C A A comprised of the following organisations:

a. the Alexandra Branch of the African Peoples' Organisation;

b. the Alexandra Branch of the Coloured Ex-Service Men's Association;

c. the Alexandra Coloured Helping Hand and Burial Society;

/36 ....

d. the Alexandra Coloured Arbeiders Burial Society;(54)

e. the Ebenezer Congregational Church, Alexandra Township;

f. the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Alexandra Township;

g. the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Alexandra Township;

h. the Evangelist (Seventh Day Adventist) Church, Alexandra Township.

An important leader of the A C A A was a certain J Maart.(55)

Alexandra's working-class had organised itself in, amongst others, the Alexandra Tenants' Association, and the Alexandra Workers' Union. It is interesting to note here that, within the former organisation, Advocate Abraham Fischer, also member of the 1942 Health Committee and later leader of the South African Communist Party, played an extremely important leadership role.(56) The Alexandra Workers' Union - an interesting example of a community-based working-class organisation - had been led by people such as S L Tsele and a Mr Mogoai in the 1940's.(57) Mr K Letsoalo had acted as Secretary of the Union. By the 1950's, however, he had become a prosperous taxi-owner, and seems to have lost any interest in the Union.(58)

Concerning the lumpenproletariat, I will attempt to show in some detail below that their extensive organisation into criminal gangs was systematic, ordered and extremely well-planned, with some "central brain" monitoring all racketeering operations undertaken. The gangs had "offices" of their own, and held regular "conferences", as we shall see. All gangsters also adhered to a specific type of life-style, constituting a complex system of cultural practices.

/37 ....

4. "CLASS RACKETEERING" : ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP'S "UNCERTAIN FUTURE" AND OTHER FACTORS

What I have done so far in this chapter is to 'describe' Alexandra Township's classes and their organisations. But classes are 'historical actors' that need a 'stage'. In fact, classes can only be understood as classes when placed on this historical stage. Social classes hold "class powers" that are an expression of the relations of production; classes only exist as classes when involved in class struggles.(59)

Whilst it is class struggles that 'move' history, it is the articulation of 'global' and 'local' structures that determine these struggles.(60) I have already said above that the 'global' structure within which Alexandra Township was located (ie, the form that the CMP had taken in South Africa) had the effect of uniting the African petty-bourgeoisie with the working-class. But, it was the 'local' structure, the 'political economy' of Alexandra Township, that generated contradictory class interests between these two classes, and thus had the effect of disuniting them. This 'political economy' I have called a 'web of class racketeerings'. It is to this 'web' that we must now turn. In this way, furthermore, my above 'description' of two classes 'suspended in space' will be brought down to earth.

The 'class racketeering' of the petty-bourgeoisie at the expense of the working-class was a necessary relationship and not at all one of 'free choice'. This is so because the African petty-bourgeoisie were themselves

the victims of a different type of racketeering perpetrated at their expense by white money-lenders and building societies. The more intense became the racketeering between white money-lenders and African petty-bourgeoisie, the more intense also became the racketeering between African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class. The central question that confronts us at this stage is this : why was it that Alexandra's standholders became the victims of white money-lenders ? The answer to this question would reveal also Alexandra Township's rather unique position in the Union at the time.

In November 1942, Prof. Hoernlé, chairman of the 1942 Health Committee, wrote to J D de Jager, Inspector of Native Education :

> "As I had expected, I have had a letter from Mr D L Smit (the Secretary for Native Affairs at the time - P T), saying that in view of the recent conference about Alexandra Township, and the uncertainty concerning the future of the Township, he does not feel that he could commit his department at the moment to any expenditure, either for new school buildings or additional equipment. He has also suspended his promised grant to the Children's Aid Society of £3 000 for a new crèche. Whether the Government is further cancelling its contribution to the proposed new clinic and Health Centre Building, I have not heard. Anyhow, it is just as I have feared; The present agitation which is nothing but a political stunt, has created such uncertainty, that all active development is being held up for an indefinite period." (61)

As we see in this missive, Hoernlé was concerned about the suspension of grants to Alexandra Township, about the fact that all development was being held up, etc. Hoernlé is also saying in the letter that all these problems had cropped up simply because of the recent conference which had taken place on whether Alexandra should be abolished, which had created such "uncertainty" about the township's future.

/39 ....

It was certainly true that, as Hoernlé had written to D L Smit a few months earlier :

> "... Mr Ballenden, the Manager of the Johannesburg Municipal Non-European Affairs Department, is very keen to shift the whole of Alexandra Township away from its present site ... (and) I understand that Mr Ballenden has induced our City Council to send a deputation on this matter down to Cape Town to interview the Johannesburg M P's ..."(62)

But this threat to move Alexandra Township, which had created such an "uncertainty" about its future, did not merely make it difficult for the Health Committee to proceed with schemes for the improvement of the township - much more than that, it had the effect of attracting only small building societies to invest in the township. As solicitors Sachs and Berman - who represented the Alexandra Protection and Vigilance Standholders' Association - wrote to Prof. Hoernlé :

> "The United Building Society, Johannesburg Building Society, S A Permanent Mutual Building and Investment Society and other large Building Societies will not advance one penny in Alexandra Township (because of "some talk about Alexandra Township being abolished", as these Societies themselves have said) ... The result is - the solicitors continued - that the competition for investments in Alexandra is not nearly what it is in European Townships or even in Native townships such as Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare where money is being advanced by these societies at 5 1/2%". (63)

Alexandra Township's Africans, therefore, had to obtain their loans, "either from the smaller Building Societies, or private investors, who, owing to the risks involved, are only prepared to lend at 7% to 10%".(64)

/40 ....

The nett result was that, although there may have been many people who were prepared to lend in Alexandra Township, the number of would-be investors was not nearly so enormous as in the three townships mentioned above, so that competition was simply not acute enough to bring down the rate of interest to, say, 6 1/2% per annum, which was considered - by the solicitors - a "reasonable rate" for Alexandra Township at that time.

As we shall see in the next section, it was the unusually high interest rates charged on township bonds that constituted the 'racketeering' of the smaller building societies and the private investors at the expense of Alexandra's standholders. That these white money-lenders were able to indulge in such racketeering we have explained in terms of the township's "uncertain future", which prevented the more reputable building societies from entering the field.

Hoernlé, however, in a letter to the abovementioned solicitors, suggested that perhaps Alexandra's "uncertainty" may not be the chief factor that facilitated the racketeering - he wrote them :

> "(you suggest) that the main obstacle to getting "large Building Societies" to lend money on properties in Alexandra Township is the "continual uncertainty as to the position of the Township in the last few years". I had hitherto been under the impression that the chief obstacle on the side of Building Societies is that, with ownership of stands restricted to Coloureds and Natives, it is impossible for Building Societies to take over themselves properties of defaulters. Please confirm whether this is correct or not." (65)

I would like to suggest here that, whilst at that particular time - in the 1940's - Alexandra's "uncertain future" certainly did play a major role in facilitating the 'racketeering' of white money-lenders, there were

nonetheless also a variety of other important factors that, combined with the one of "uncertainty", made Alexandra a unique field for 'exploitation' and 'racketeering'.

When the firm of solicitors Sachs and Berman first entered into the African Mortgage field in about 1936, the minimum rate of interest for "Native Townships" was 12%. At that time, none of the Building Societies would entertain "Native Bonds" and Africans desirous of building were obliged to obtain loans only from certain Trust Companies and private individuals who would then entertain this form of investment. The majority of private investors and Trust Companies at that time fought shy of these investments as they considered them a very bad risk.

Now, according to a document sent by solicitors Sachs and Berman to the Controller of Building Materials in July 1942, "there were various reasons for this attitude of disinterestedness on the part of Building Societies, Trust Companies and Investment Companies ....", the chief of which the solicitors summarised as follows :

> "(a) Europeans would not visualize natives with their very low incomes being able to manage to repay loans or owning and maintaining for themselves immovable property.
>
> (b) The average European regarded the Native as a dishonest and unreliable person and a man of straw. They could not visualize the native being capable of saving money and accumulating properties.
>
> (c) The slummy nature of the buildings put up by the natives out of their own money, or from small building loans which they managed to obtain, consisted mainly of Adobe or wood and iron buildings.

/42 ....

(d) The fact that a European could not buy in a property in the event of the Bond being called up as can be done in the case of European Bonds, the reason for this being that such Townships as Alexandra Township contain restrictions in their Title Deeds prohibiting Europeans from either residing or carrying on business or owning properties in the Township." (66)

I have said that the 'class racketeering' of the petty-bourgeoisie at the expense of the working-class was a necessary relationship - similarly, the 'racketeering' of the white money-lenders, whilst not entirely 'necessary', was quite 'understandable'; at the very least, as the solicitors themselves acknowledged : "(the investors are, for the reasons given above,) not entirely to blame for the high rate of interest prevailing at the moment ..."(67)

5. "CLASS RACKETEERING" : "TOWNSHIP BONDS"

Having looked at the various factors that facilitated (or even caused) the racketeering of the money-lenders against the African petty-bourgeoisie, we may now go on to examine in more detail the form this racketeering took (and the conflicts that arose around it). This is an important undertaking, for it is this racketeering in "Township Bonds" that will also allow us to understand, in the forthcoming section, the petty-bourgeoisie's racketeering (in high rentals) against the working-class.

/43 ....

The first point we need to make here is that Alexandra Township's Africans who wanted to erect buildings had to borrow money from white money-lenders whether they wanted to or not, mainly because the price of stands in Alexandra was (for a number of reasons) very high. It is true that, at the very beginning, Africans were obliged to erect their houses and shops "entirely on their own capital, as a result of which thousands of raw brick, iron and slummy structures sprang up."(68) "Nevertheless", notes a document of the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Committee,

> "in spite of this initial set-back, Alexandra Township has from the very beginning steadily made progress, and in the last 5 or 6 years (writing in 1942 - P T) helped by loans from Building Societies and other investors, the face of the Township has practically changed ..." (69)

Originally, stands had been sold at prices ranging from £40 to £200 - however, as Falwasser noted in the late 1930's : "of recent years the demand for stands has been so insistent that some have changed hands at even higher figures".(70) E A Cordell, Salisbury's Native Welfare Officer, noted in 1940 that :

> "In Alexandra Township, sites are purchased outright, the average plot being one-eighth of an acre in size. Property sells at approximately £200 per acre". (71)

G Hibbert, chairman of the North Eastern Districts Protection League, said in a 1942 address to the Rotary Club that :

> "The average price per stand is £100 but up to £300 has been paid ..." (72)

And a Senator Jones had quoted sales at up to £1 500 an acre. (73)

According to the 1942 Libertas article :

/44 ....

> "Today land-values in necessitous and life-denying Alexandra are fantastic. They are higher than in swagger Houghton. A stand is cheap at £200. An acre can fetch as much as £1 000. An acre in the contiguous European township of Kew can be had for £150." (74)

Daniel Mogorosi wrote in 1948 in the Bantu World that :

> "Land values are soaring high and one seldom finds a vacant plot auctioned for less than £900 to day." (75)

But Basil Davidson, writing in 1952, gave a slightly more modest figure :

> "In Alexandra, 'erven' of 140 feet by 80 feet have been sold for £500 ..." (76)

As is implied in some of the above quotations (and ~~we~~ as we shall further see below), the "soaring prices" of ground in the township was a direct result of overcrowding. This point was also made by the Native Laws Commission of 1948 (more commonly known as the Fagan Commission). The aspiring petty-bourgeoisie, confronted with these "fantastic" land-values, was forced to borrow money from white money-lenders. This fact need not necessarily have resulted in any kind of 'racketeering' - but, as noted in the above section, it was only the small money-lender who "risked" his money and invested in Alexandra Township. As the Health Committee noted rather despairingly in 1943,

> "If reputable Building Societies had been willing --- to enter this field and provide loans at a low, but not "uneconomic" rate of interest, this money-lending racket need never have developed." (77)

/45 ....

The "money-lending racket" did develop. And this is clearly evident, for one thing, in the financial terms of the loans. In a meeting of the Health Committee in October 1942, the chairman, Prof Hoernlé, stated that the Building Controller had informed him that he had before him a considerable number of applications to build in Alexandra Township. However, continued the chairman, the Building Controller

> "was disturbed by the financial terms and conditions of bonds which landholders had to take up to finance these buildings and was (for that reason) reluctant to grant permits without being shown good cause thereof." (78)

The Controller of Building Materials, in fact, had himself conducted investigations which had indicated that "the rates of interest, raising fees, etc., in connection with the bonds raised by these natives are of a very unfavourable nature to the natives." (79)

What, precisely, were these financial terms of the "Township Bonds"? Dr A B Xuma, in his 1941 Medical Officer's Report, wrote :

> "Improvement on, or building of property is an expensive affair for Non-Europeans as bond-holders and money-lenders usually charge about 10% interest with charges so that such loans are often the first step to one losing the property." (80)

In June 1942, Hoernlé wrote to the Minister of the Interior, J H Hofmeyer :

> "I know, of course, that many of the Standholders are in debt to European individuals and financial bodies under extremely onerous conditions. The rates of interest charged are very high, ranging from 8-10%, and frequently at the higher figure, not to mention stiff raising fees and every other kind of charge which can plausibly be put on to the borrower." (81)

/46 ....

And in his above-mentioned 1942 speech to the Rotary Club, Hibbert stated :

> "Advances for building, etc. are made by firms in Johannesburg and Pretoria at up to 12 1/2% interest, plus 2 1/2 to 3% raising fees, with additional fees of one to two guineas for inspections, visits, interviews, stamps, which in effect raise the interest to as high as 17%." (82)

Whilst the money-lenders' 'racketeering' is 'understandable' in terms of the various factors we have discussed above, such as Alexandra's "uncertainty", etc., the bond-raisers' own (smaller-scale) brand of racketeering was 'excusable' because of the unusually difficult job such people had to perform in raising "Native Bonds". Solicitors Sachs and Berman, the apparently very dedicated representatives of Alexandra's standholders, wrote to the Controller of Building Materials in 1942 that their raising fee of 5% "would at first sight appear to be high"; however, one needed to consider-they continued - the following facts :

> "(a) The vast majority of Bonds granted to Natives are from £150 to £450.0.0 In each case the party who raises the Bond has ... more difficulty in raising small natives Bonds, than he would have in the case of a European Bond, which latter bond is very seldom less than £1000.0.0 .....
>
> (b) For the 5% Raising Fee it is customary for the agent or attorney dealing with the Native Bond to do a number of other things which he does not usually have to do in the case of a European Bond ... In the case of a Native Building Bond once the Bond is raised the real work of the attorney or agent begins and amongst the things that it is essential for him to do are the following :

/47 ....

(i) See to it that the plans are properly drawn and passed ;
(ii) See to it that a reliable Native Builder is engaged ;
(iii) Pay the wages for the Native Builder each week as he is totally unable to finance himself owing to lack of funds ...;
(iv) Check up on the materials and see to it that such materials are all obtained from a reliable firm of Timber merchants at current prices ;
(v) In many cases where building materials are unobtainable from one firm to find another firm which is able and willing to supply such materials ;
(vi) To carry out representations and make applications for Permits to the various Controllers appointed by the Government;
(vii) To finance the owner for the purpose of paying for the labour and materials during the period between each draw ...(etc,etc,etc).

Sachs and Berman assured the Building Controller that, "from our experience Native Mortgagors receive a square deal and adequate protection and assistance when they obtain their loans from a firm of attorneys ..." (83)

The high interest on "Native Bonds", plus the high raising fees and other additional expenses, meant that Alexandra's standholders were finding it very difficult to actually repay the loans. "It is almost impossible for Africans", wrote Dr Xuma in July 1941, "not only to be able to build suitable, desirable homes for themselves, but also to be able to repay loans."(8 But we need to point out here that, as discussed above, Alexandra's standholding class was divided into an "upper" and "lower" stratum : whilst the latter might have been perennially burdened by debts (which only meant that their racketeering on high rentals against the working-class was intensified), the former, who had managed to branch-out into various business fields, were less vulnerable to money-lenders.

/48 ....

But, in any case, the general relationship between white bond-holders and African standholders was an 'exploitative' one, consituting a systematic 'racket'.

> "The greatest weakness of the Township, - wrote Hoernlé in October 1942 - apart from the poverty of the inhabitants, is the exploitation of many of its standholders by European individuals and organisations, who hold bonds on terms so onerous that they constitute a "racket" - and a very profitable one to this kind of bond-holder." (85)

A 1943 document of the Alexandra Health Committee noted that this bondholder-standholder relationship constituted nothing more nor less than "slumlandlordism" :

> "Undoubtedly, the "slum" character of Alexandra Township presents the gravest problem to those who propose to improve the Township where it stands. "Slum-landlordism" is a hateful thing, whether the owner of the slum be Black or White, and it is not less hateful when, as all too often in Alexandra Township, the ostensible landlord is an African, but the real landlord behind him is a European." (86)

And the 1942 Libertas article, although possibly exaggerating the position, nonetheless makes the point that

> "Some seventy-five per cent (of stands) have been deeded to African or European owners - of these, however, eighty-five per cent are owners only in name. Their property is bonded to moneylenders and financial institutions." (87)

Davidson was told in 1952 that the bonds were held by about fifty individuals and building societies, most of these being white men; some bondholders, however, were black, but are said to have been "controlled" by white men themselves. (88)

/49 ....

But whatever the odds against them, the standholding petty-bourgeoisie struggled to survive. As Hoernlé wrote :

> "The Controller of Building Materials informs me that he has before him a large number of applications for permission to build in Alexandra Township. As few ... of the residents have the financial resources to undertake extensive building operations, this clearly indicates that there are plenty of people willing to risk their money in the Township - of course, at a high rate of interest." (89)

Of course, whilst some were struggling for survival, others were 'struggling' to expand their various business operations. There at three hundred shops (apart from other 'stores', taxi-fleets and bus-fleets) were owned by Africans alone in 1948, testifies to this.

The standholders' representatives, Sachs and Berman, were at first experiencing tremendous difficulties in getting investors to lend even at 10% interest rates in Alexandra Township. Berman himself had for years endeavoured to bring down the rate of interest in Alexandra and other "Native Townships" - it seems that it was partly as a result of his own continual efforts that two of the largest Building Societies in South Africa began advancing money to Africans in Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale at 5 1/2% per annum. However, things were very different with Alexandra Township. Sachs and Berman wrote in 1942 :

> "We experienced the utmost difficulty in getting investors even when lending their money at 10% interest, and in fact when one approached one's clients with a view to investing their money in Alexandra Township ..., the clients frankly became incredulous and would not even listen." (90)

/50 ...

The solicitors felt that the 10% interest was in itself "excessive" and "unfair". Berman could not understand, in spite of all the difficulties in regard to "Native Bonds", why the rate of interest (which was, during the early 1940's, 6 ~~1~~½% to 7% for Europeans) should not have been - at the very most - 8% for Africans. But according to the firm's own records, Berman was to continue with his efforts to interest his investing clients and certain Building Societies persistently, with the result that Sachs and Berman were the first firm in Johannesburg to bring down the rate of interest in Alexandra from 12% to 8% per annum. The 8% figure was of course still high - as the solicitors themselves acknowledged - but there was nothing they could do about this, as Alexandra's "uncertainty" was to continue throughout the 1940's and large Building Societies were to continue to avoid the township as an investment field. In any case, Berman had been indirectly responsible in getting one specific "very large" Pretoria Trust Company, which would formerly not even look at investments in Alexandra, to lend in the township. However, even this "very large" Company had refused to lend at below the 8% figure. According to the solicitors, interest rates in Alexandra needed to be lowered to about 6 1/2% - 7%.

But, for this to happen, many large Building Societies (not just one) had to be attracted to the township. Alexandra's standholders - through their representatives the solicitors - Sachs and Berman - struggled tenaciously to attract large companies and to lower interest rates. The strategy they adopted to achieve these ends was simple : they attempted to induce the Government to "enter the field" and compete with private investors, in the same manner as the Government had done

/51 ....

in the case of farmers through the Land Bank. With the Government as a competitor, interest rates were expected to come down. Writing to the Controller of Building Materials, the solicitors argued that

> "Room there certainly is for grandiose, futuristic sub-economic housing schemes for Natives, but these schemes may take years and it will certainly not be practical to commence with (them) until after the War ... (Our suggestion is) that Private Native Owners of ground should be encouraged and helped to provide dwellings for themselves and for prospective native tenants." (91)

How should the Government "encourage" and "help" the standholders ? The solicitors continued that "the following action on the part of the Government ... is essential" :

> "(a) The relevant Government Department should immediately offer to lend money to Native Owners of Property to build, interest to be say, 6% and under this scheme sums from £200 to £1 000 should be advanced to Natives ... When small sums of from £50 to £200 only were advanced years ago by private investors the result was the erection of slummy buildings. Now that Natives are getting sums from £200 to £800 fine buildings are taking the place of mud structures.
>
> (b) Remove the disabilities in regard to investors not being able to buy in the properties in the case of Sales of Execution.
>
> (c) Give private investors more confidence in Native Bonds by scouting all rumours and talk of expropriation of Alexandra Township ..." (92)

For the solicitors and their clients (the standholders), the above course of action would have had the effect of bringing the rate of interest down for "Native Bonds" in Alexandra. The solicitors were also eager to point out to the Building Controller that cases where African properties were actually sold in execution were considerably less than in the case of whites.

"There were various reasons for this", the solicitors continued, but the main one was that, "although Natives form 80% of the Union's population, they are by our undemocratic laws restricted to a few urban areas where they can actually hold property in their own right in Freehold". As such, the African will "treasure his freehold property in an Urban area more than a European and will use every endeavour to retain such property". (93)

It is important to state here that certain large Building Societies did in fact make attempts to "enter the field" in Alexandra. Hoernlé had written in 1942 to the Minister of the Interior, J H Hofmeyer, informing him of this :

> "I had an interview ... with the Board of Directors of the Johannesburg Building Society. They are considering the possibility of entering the Native field, by offering building loans to Natives resident in the Municipal area, including for this purpose, Alexandra Township". (94)

The Board of Directors had intended to lay their scheme before the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Native Affairs, Col. Deneys Reitz. Their purpose was to use the approval of these two Ministers as a "talking point" in their publicity. They were very much concerned, however, about the kind of security that Alexandra's African borrowers would be able to offer. Normally, of course, a Building Society considers that it has adequate security if, in the event of the borrower's default, it can take over the property. We know that in Alexandra Township this was impossible, because the title deeds limited both possession and occupation of land and house to "Natives" and "Coloureds".

/53 ....

Before the Board of Directors were able to meet the two Ministers, Hoernlé had warned the latter that

> "proposals to be laid before you will include a suggestion for an alteration of the law, by which the existing title deeds can be so amended that the (Building) Society can take possession of the land and buildings of a defaulting Native or Coloured borrower." (95)

As Chairman of the Alexandra Health Committee, Hoernlé said that he was concerned that "the interests of the non-Europeans in the Township should be fully safeguarded". He expressed the wish, furthermore, to break the "ring of European exploiters", and felt that "the entry into the field of a reputable Building Society, or, preferably, of more than one reputable building society, is all to the good, provided, however, that the hold of the Native or Coloured on the land and buildings is safeguarded as much as possible." For Hoernlé

> "If the title deeds have to be altered, in order to make it possible for a reputable Building Society to offer loans at lower rates of interest and in general on less onerous conditions, I do want to urge that the Building Society shall be obliged to re-sell any property which it may take over only to Native and Coloured purchasers, so that the present character of the Township may be maintained. It would be disastrous if properties were allowed to fall into the hands of European owners, who would naturally not wish to live there themselves, but would simply try to extort the highest possible rents from some non-European tenant." (96)

Hoernlé certainly knew what he was talking about. African and Coloured "defaulters" had for too long been the easy victims of money-lending 'tricksters', who had gotten around the difficulty of the clause in the title deeds (which excluded whites and Indians from ownership, etc) by buying in the property of defaulters through an African or Coloured "dummy", who was then exploited by the money-lenders in turn. Hoernlé also told Hofmeyer that

/54 ....

> "I am gradually collecting information about the way in which these European money-lenders get individual standholders into their clutches. A typical method, not to say trick, is, when a standholder finds difficulty in maintaining his payments, to suggest to him an additional loan for the purpose of building additional rooms on his property, from the rent of which, so it is represented to him, he will find it easier to pay the interest and redemption charges on higher loan ..." (97)

The Health Committee itself, in its capacity as local authority of Alexandra Township, had always probed the various possibilities of getting cheaper money on "Township Bonds". It had itself tried to obtain money from the Government at economic rates, by which to break the hold of the money-lenders on the standholders.

> "The whole economic position in the Township would be greatly eased - said Hoernlé - if the burden of debt were to be removed from the standholders. For, then they could reduce the rent of their tenants ..." (98)

This last sentence is the next link in the chain of argument I have been developing so far. Because my argument is that the standholders, in order to be able to pay the interest on the purchase price of their stands, and in order to be able to pay the interest on their "Township Bonds", resorted to the building of many little rooms over the whole area of their rather spacious 'gardens', which they then let at extremely high rentals to the working-class. This constituted the 'class racketeering' - in high rentals - of the standholders against the tenants. The greater the standholders' "burden of debt", that is, the greater their 'exploitation' by white money-lending racketeers, the greater was the 'exploitation' of working-class tenants by the standholders. (By 'exploitation', of course, I mean here racketeering in rentals, and not the type of 'exploitation' we get in the factory, where 'unpaid labour-time' is extracted).

/55 ....

6. "CLASS RACKETEERING" : RENTING OF SINGLE ROOMS

We have seen how the African standholding petty-bourgeoisie in Alexandra Township had fallen victims to the racketeering of small, disreputable bondholders. The only way out for them was to erect income-producing single rooms on their backyards; or even, at times, to let some of the rooms in the main house itself. Because of the racketeering in "Township Bonds", wrote Dr Xuma,

> "most of the houses must be wholly or partially rented out as a means of raising funds to repay the capital and interests." (99)

On the other hand, to complement this state of affairs,

> "the tenants themselves with their families ... can only afford single rooms ..." (100)

The result was overcrowding, "with neither privacy nor amenities ... you have here and there rooms teeming with humanity with very little sleeping space much less real living space. In this way a slum environment and atmosphere is created". (101)

Now, this situation needs to be contrasted to an area like, for instance, Sophiatown, where, as we have seen above, money was advanced by lenders at interests rates as low as 5 1/2%. Unlike Alexandra's standholders - who could only borrow, at best, at 8% interest rates - those in Sophiatown were simply not forced to intensify their racketeering in rentals to the extent that Alexandra's landowners were. In Alexandra Township, therefore, class conflict between petty-bourgeoisie and working-class was more intense, more conscious and more organised (as we shall see below). Cultural practices in Alexandra also diverged starkly between the two classes.(102)

/56 ....

Even an outsider, Salisbury's Native Welfare Officer, could not miss the fundamental feature about Alexandra Township :

> "Owing to the heavy outlay involved in purchasing the stand and building on it, the system of sub-letting continues, as an effort on the part of the owner to make the stand and the dwelling pay for itself ..." (103)

"How is the bonded African owner to get the money to pay off his bond ?", asked the 1942 Libertas article : "the obvious course, and the one followed in the majority of cases, is overbuilding and letting ..." (104) It was this urgent need to let as many rooms as possible, that led to "overbuilding", which was to become a special class-interest of the petty-bourgeoisie (to be discussed in greater detail later on).

A natural consequence of this need to constantly overbuild was that the Controller of Building Materials was always flooded with applications "in respect of additional rooms to be erected adjacent to existing houses for the apparent purpose of letting." (105)

In fact, as a 1943 Agenda of the Johannesburg City Council noted,

> "there are very few houses in which there are no sub-tenants ..." (106)

Cordell observed that,

> "In this Township, there has developed a body of African landlords who purchased land and erected a row of shanties and let these to tenants." (107)

In August 1942, the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee wrote to the Controller of Building Materials that it had become quite "customary" to erect rooms for letting :

/57 ....

> " ... it has been customary for some time now for Native Owners of Stands to erect dwelling rooms on their stands, some of which are occupied by the Native Owners themselves, and others are let to other natives working in Johannesburg." (108)

The rooms that were built for letting usually crowded behind the main house - it was here that, as we shall see, 'backyard', 'syncretistic' working-class culture was to thrive.

G Ballenden of the Johannesburg City Council estimated that there were about 35 000 to 40 000 sub-tenants living in Alexandra Township in the early 1940's. These were all people who, according to Dr Xuma, were able to neither hire nor buy adequate accommodation for themselves. "I say that the people must be given an opportunity to buy their houses and not have to crowd in one room", pleaded Dr Xuma at a 1942 Conference in Pretoria.(109) "It is these sub-tenants", stated the Johannesburg Cith Council in 1943, "who present the gravest difficulties in regard to health, sanitation and law and order."(110)

7. "CLASS RACKETEERING" : HIGH RENTALS

We have so far shown that the moneylenders' racketeering in "Township Bonds" had forced Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie to build rooms for the purpose of letting. We need now to examine the 'class racketeering' that this letting constituted, ie., the extremely high rentals that standholders demanded, and got, from tenants and sub-tenants.

/58 ....

We need to reiterate, first of all, that the high rentals were the means by which standholders tried to pay their bonds. As a rent-collector told the Bantu World in 1948 :

> "most landlords have taken big bonds for building, and these they repay through the high rentals charged the tenants." (111)

The 1948 Fagan Commission also stated that "the purchasers borrow the money, often at high rates of interest, and then in order to be able to find the interest on the purchase price, build rooms over the whole area of the 'erven' and let these rooms at high rentals". (112)

In 1940, Salisbury's Native Welfare Officer was informed that the average rental for a room was 17/6 per month. But, of course, rental varied substantially according to the structure of the room let, the privacy it provided, its facilities, and so forth. Hibbert was saying in 1942 that tenements are let at anything from 10/- to 30/- per month.

In Alexandra Township, it had been impossible to fix rents in relation to the estimated cost of the building (as approved by the Controller of Building), which was the system usually applied by the Rent Board. For one thing, Alexandra did not fall within the Board's area; and furthermore, standholders continually and violently resisted any "interference" by the Rent Board in "their township". They had even organised protest demonstrations against such attempted "interference", and even went so far as to actually establish their own "Rent Board".

/59 ....

Any "interference" by the official Rent Board would have meant some form of rent-control, which would inevitably have put an end to their intense 'class racketeering' in high rentals. By 1948, people were paying £1-5-0 or £1-15-0 per month for a room. A 1948 Bantu World report confirms that rents charged at Alexandra were substantially higher than those charged by landlords in Sophiatown. (113)

Hoernlé, writing to Col Holdgate, the Deputy-Building Controller, in November 1942, felt that letting rates constituted a "racket" :

> "... housing the houseless poor, is, in fact, a racket from which small (Native) sharks draw small profits and large (White) sharks draw large profits". (114)

Davidson himself couldn't escape the fact that Africans were "exploiting" Africans. (115) Dikobe tells us that the Second World War years were "very hard years", and

> "to ask anybody to pay even five shillings more a month would have been too much ... and the standowners were taking, they saw a chance in raising rents because everything was soaring ... they couldn't claim the houses were new and they were spending more but it was, you know, what we call racketeering ..." (116)

In the 1942 Pretoria Conference that discussed the possible removal of Alexandra Township, G Ballenden of the Johannesburg City Council made it clear that if Alexandra's standholders were to be expropriated, they would never again be allowed to indulge in rent-racketeering :

> "The people should receive title but should not be allowed to build up their stands. The City Council cannot permit slum landlords to spring up (again)." (117)

/60 ....

But if slum landlordism was to be prevented, its cause had to be eliminated : the interest rates on bonds would have to be controlled :

> "Compensation (to landlords expropriated) should be generous subject to a limit being placed on interest on bonds. They should be offered stand for stand then house for house. Bonds should be taken over by the Government and the Government would have to take care of bondholders." (118)

Absentee landlordism was also a characteristic feature of Alexandra Township in the 1940's and 1950's. An Alexandra Township Health Committee document (dated 1943) states that

> "their interests (ie., those of the tenants - PT) are by no means in every respect identical with those of the standholders, some of whom are not even any longer resident in the Township, but merely draw rents, as absentee landlords, from the tenants on their properties." (119)

The threat of eviction constantly hung over the head of each and every Alexandra tenant. A picture caption in the 1942 Libertas article reads :

> "Evicted. Native family and their few sticks of furniture put on the street for non-payment of rent for this mud-hut. Conditions in Alexandra make for the savagery of the rat-pit in money-matters." (120)

Alexandra residents, in fact, were the "infamously exploited" people of the Union :

> "... Alexandra is by no means merely a city of criminals .... underneath the thick criminal scum, ... there is to be found another town, a town of hard-working, infamously exploited, terrorised, desperately poor people, trying heroically to live some sort of decent life under degrading conditions and under the tense agony of continually encroaching debt." (121)

The "poverty and debt and fear" that was to make Alexandra Township a "problem township" in 1942 was to continue right through the 1950's.

/61 ....

"Rents press hard in Alexandra", stated a Bantu World headline in 1948. A Bantu World representative toured the area with a rent-collecting agent in September of that year :

> "... tenants hit by hardship offered tales of woe and beseeched the rent-collector to call at a later date." (122)

Notices were posted on the counter rails at the township's rent-collecting office warning tenants of a penalty in the event of failing to pay rent on the seventh day of the month. The rent collector said that month after month he listened to "litanies" from tenants simply unable to meet their rent dues. He added, however, that "reputable rent collecting agencies generally adopted a sympathetic attitude towards Africans whom they shield against ejectment".(123) It was the "sympathy" of "reputable" agencies that "shielded" Alexandra's working-class from the "savagery of the rat pit." But, when such "sympathy" was confronted with the exigencies of class-interest, "reputable" rent-collecting agencies found themselves in no moral dilemmas : eviction was the weapon of a class (the petty bourgeoisie) that had itself fallen victim to other classes (white money-lenders) with class-powers expressed in "Township Bonds".

8. "CLASS RACKETEERING" AND OVERCROWDING IN ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

There was one specific factor in Alexandra Township that facilitated the petty-bourgeoisie's racketeering in high rentals : this factor was a feature of the township that was to prevail right up to 1958, when the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board took over from the Health Committee. This factor was overcrowding.

/62 ....

Overcrowding caused a chronic lack of accommodation, despite the petty-bourgeoisie's feverish activity in "speculative building" and "overbuilding". It was this chronic lack of accommodation that enabled the petty-bourgeoisie to racketeer in high rentals, as accommodation was always in great demand. On the other hand, this racketeering in high rentals itself perpetuated the lack of accommodation, in the sense that many working-class families simply could not afford to pay such rentals. This racketeering, furthermore, which could only have been perpetuated through constant "overbuilding", perpetuated overcrowding itself, in that rooms that were up for letting, and springing up all the time, attracted newcomers to the area. These newcomers frequently did let the newly-built rooms; however, it did not take them too long to fall behind in their rent dues, and very suddenly they found themselves evicted. It was a vicious circle. The Health Committee wrote in 1943 that

> "the standholders at Alexandra Township could not, for lack of capital, have erected the tenant-rooms for the accommodation of the influx of newcomers, if European money-lenders, both firms and individuals, had not seen a glorious chance of making a lucrative profit by financing the necessary buildings on terms which gave them an extremely handsome return on a negligible risk." (124)

The main point to grasp here is that urban congestion and overcrowding were crucial factors facilitating profiteering for both African petty-bourgeoisie and white money-lender. Why, we may ask, did the original idea of housing one family per stand in the township not work out? "There can be only one answer to that", suggested Libertas, that being "the incentive of profit" -

/63 ....

> "the profit that urban congestion invariably brings to certain favoured persons under the ruling system; profit in the first place to the original holders of the land, secondly to buyers of stands, thirdly to moneylenders, fourthly to speculative builders, fifthly to the providers of the necessary transport link with the working centre...,sixthly, to the traders." (125)

Overcrowding had caused the price of ground to "soare to the skies" (Fagan) - this in itself facilitated the racketeering of money-lenders, because, as argued above, Africans needed loans to buy these expensive stands. On the other hand, letting and sub-letting on high rentals would have been impossible if the demand for accommodation was not there : the demand was there as a result of this overcrowding.

We need to examine here in some detail the forms this overcrowding took. In May 1940, the Registrar of Deeds supplied the following information to the Native Commissioner of Johannesburg in regard to Alexandra Township :(126)

Lots available for occupation	2 541
Lots registered in the name of -	
(a) Township Company	910
(b) Natives and Coloured persons	1 589
(c) Others	42
Lots held by natives and/or coloureds under mortgage	546

A Memorandum of the Department of Public Health, dated October 20, 1942, gives its own version with regard to the allocation of stands : (127)

/64 ....

Natives	1 689
Europeans	2
Other races ...	151
Government	1
Churches	39
Health Committee ...	5
Vacant stands belonging to the Township Company	701
	2 588

In his 1943 Annual Report, Medical Officer of Health for the township, Dr Xuma, gave the following statistics :

> "There are 1 579 houses, composed of 5 959 rooms, with other 'tenement' houses composed of 10 221 rooms, making a total of 16 180 'habitable' rooms ..." (128)

A survey undertaken by the Johannesburg City Council in 1943 disclosed that there were 2 541 occupied stands and 179 vacant ones - of the occupied stands, 1 948 were being used for residential purposes. On the basis that there were 1 948 stands occupied exclusively for residential purposes, and that the estimated population at the time was 45 000 the City Council could conclude that :

> "the population density per stand averages 22 persons. It is well known, however, that on many stands this number is considerably exceeded." (129)

The Johannesburg City Council also noted that its survey had revealed that :

> "there is almost a complete absense of kitchens, bathrooms and places for the storage of food. The families sleep, work and eat in the rooms in which they live." (130)

And taking Dr Xuma's figures in regard to the number of rooms in the township, ie., 16 000, the Johannesburg City Council found that the average occupation per room is in the neighbourhood of 3 persons.

/65 ....

Between 1940 and 1941, 1 072 additional rooms had been built in the township. In July 1941, Dr Xuma was reporting that

> "It is ... well known to most of us that while few rooms may accommodate one person many may house more than two..." (131)

For the year 1941, furthermore, Dr Xuma was already pointing out that, whilst for standowners and their families the accommodation in the township was "adequate", there was "pressure for accommodation from workers", and there were "signs of overcrowding here and there in the Township ..." (132)

In his report for the year ended 30 th June, 1942, Dr Xuma reported that :

> "There are stands that show evidence of overcrowding in that at times one finds families occupying a single room with difficulties of separation of the sexes. This affects particularly Africans." (133)

And Libertas reported in 1942 that :

> "The comparatively good impression that these new rows of brick rooms make at first glance, lasts only until one finds out that one room sometimes houses more than one family." (134)

Hibbert, also speaking for the year 1942, said that 'tenements' (by which he meant rooms) are from 12 x 15 ft to 10 x 15 ft and "up to twelve people living in one tenement ... have been found." He also said that the number of tenements per stand varies from 12 to 22, although, under amended regulations which had been "absolutely ignored," 15 rooms only could be built on a stand. But, continued Hibbert,

/66 ....

> "these figures are already out of date as building has been progressing at an alarming rate and natives have been canvassed by certain firms and individuals urging them to take transfer of their deeds and to pass a mortgage for advances to erect tenements ..." (135)

According to Hibbert's sources, furthermore, a stand often had from 50 to 80 people living upon it. Such figures may well have been a deliberate distortion on Hibbert's part; on the other hand, they could have been a reflection of the real as opposed to the official statistics. A Mr R Bell, M P, himself stated in 1942 that "85% of the houses are slums and in some cases 60-80 souls live on one piece of ground." (136)

In any case, whilst Hibbert, who as leader of the North Eastern Districts Protection League, wanted the abolition of Alexandra Township, was saying that 12 to 22 rooms may be found on a single stand, the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee, whose purpose was to fight all talk of abolition, was itself saying to the Building Controller that the number of "dwelling rooms" built on stands does not usually exceed six. The latter party conceded, however, that each "dwelling room" consisted

> "merely of four walls, a corrugated iron roof, concrete floors, doors and windows and in some cases ceilings. There is no electric light, sewerage or water laid on the premises." (137)

The Health Committee reported in 1943 that

> "...The "slum" character of Alexandra is undeniable, if by a "slum" is meant any human settlement in which the majority of families occupy only one room each." (138)

/67 ....

And the Standholders' Committee wrote to the Deputy-Building Controller in 1943 that

> "... for every room available in Alexandra Township, there are at least three native families desiring such accommodation ..." (139)

Dr C C P Anning said in July 1948 that

> "... no thoughtful man can ever come to Alexandra without remembering several grim things about your Township. That the 80 000 of you living here are crowded to an average perhaps of thirty-two people per stand ..." (140)

In May the following year, the Administer of the Transvaal at the time, Dr W Nicol expressed his utter dismay at conditions in Alexandra :

> "what a pathetic state of affairs reigns in Alexandra; few stands, but here people are crowded in thousands ..." (141)

Alexandra Township accommodated, by the mid 1950's, approximately 100 000 people. Up to 160 huddled on one stand, 140 ft by 80 ft. The average for the township was 40 to a site.(142) For an area not more than one square mile - for that is the size of Alexandra - such figures meant two things : profiteering for those who had rooms to let on the one hand, and an urgent desire to get out of the vicious circle for those who had little or no money to pay the rental, on the other. These contradictions were not to remain dormant for too long.

An important question emerges at this point, however : how, we may ask, are we to explain this tremendous overcrowding that was to characterize the history of Alexandra Township? Dr Xuma noted in 1941 that accommodation in the township was becoming inadequate mainly because of the influx of workers into Alexandra. (143) Hoernlé, writing to the Deputy-Controller of Building, Col Holdgate, in 1942, was more specific :

/68 ....

> "The demand (for accommodation) ... comes not merely from Native families which have already been in the Johannesburg area for some time, but also from an unregulated influx of rural Natives from the Northern Transvaal." (144)

In the 1940's at least, it was "impossible to control the weekly or even the daily influx" of Africans into the township, as Hibbert stated at a conference.(145)

Alexandra Township was a relatively "uncontrolled" area in the Union, it being outside the municipality's area of jurisdiction. Those going in the township (although, as we shall see, not those going out seeking for work) went in relatively freely. At the Pretoria Conference on Alexandra's future held in 1942, Lt Col O J P Horak of the South African Police, said :

> "Due to the fact that the Township is outside the municipality, large numbers of Natives, including prohibited immigrants such as Rhodesian Natives, flock there where they are not subject to control." (146)

And the Lt Col Horak appealed at the Conference that, if the residents are not to be removed from Alexandra, then at least control would have to be urgently introduced. "Owing to the uncontrolled influx of Natives," Lt Col Horak said, "conditions in the Township are the worst on the Reef".(147) Basil Davidson, in his short, rather superficial 1952 report on Alexandra Township, nonetheless comes to the correct conclusion that "Africans flocked to Alexandra ... because there the controls upon their daily and domestic lives were less severe." (148)

The lack of control, however, was not the only cause of Alexandra's overcrowding. The Alexandra Health Committee stated in 1943 that

> "the present large increase in population (in the township) is a very recent one, caused by the City slum clearances, which drove many Native families, unwilling to live behind the high wire fences that encircle Locations as if they were human cages, to seek the comparative freedom of Alexandra Township ..." (149)

So, even in this instance, it seems that Alexandra's "freedom" was a factor that attracted Africans to it. On the other hand, however, we need to stress that the Health Committee's statement seems to be erroneously confusing here Alexandra's "uncontrolled" state with an apparent "freedom". My argument is that the 'web of class racketeerings' that riddled the social and economic life of Alexandra, itself constituted a "human cage", albeit maybe a purely economic one. This point will be further substantiated below when I shall indicate voluntary attempts on the part of working-class elements in Alexandra to actually move out of the Township.

Hoernlé stated in the 1942 Pretoria Conference that

> "the real development of slum property in Alexandra Township began about 1935 when the slum properties in the municipal area were cleared out and gave rise to a movement of population to areas such as Alexandra Township." (150)

At that same conference, however, the Johannesburg City Council's Mr G Ballenden expressed disagreement with Prof Hoernlé's remarks :

> "Before we clear one single area - Ballenden said - we have houses ready." (151)

But the 1942 Libertas article asserted that

/70 ....

> "...some of the Johannesburg's slum-clearance schemes in recent years have contributed materially to the congestion in Alexandra - which once more demonstrates the folly of partial planning, and in particular the folly of clearing a congested area without making timely and adequate provision for the cleared inhabitants ..." (152)

Another, third, factor that contributed to Alexandra's overcrowding was the overall lack of sufficient accommodation in the municipal area itself.

We also need to note, as a 1943 Agenda of the Johannesburg City Council itself stated, that the position of Alexandra's overcrowding was being aggravated by the abnormal influx of Africans from rural areas into Johannesburg. And this migration of Africans to urban areas, much discussed by writers on South African Historiography, was due to a variety of complex factors, including the "congestion and poverty in the reserves", as even a Bantu World article stated in January 1947.(153) The contradictions within the pre-capitalist mode of production, its "dissolution" by the capitalist mode of production, and the labour requirements of secondary industry, and a conglomeration of other factors, all enter here to explain this 'urban migration'.(154) Migration to the urban areas, finally - and the ensuing overcrowding within Alexandra Township amongst other places - was also a result of the conditions of work in European-owned farms. (155)

/71 ....

9. THE 'CLASS RACKETEERING' OF THE LUMPENPROLETARIAT - TOWARDS AN EXPLANATION

We have so far examined the racketeering of white money-lenders at the expense of the African petty-bourgeoisie, and the racketeering of the latter at the expense of the African working-class. We have also examined the conditions that facilitated such racketeerings.

However, I would now like to suggest that the contradictions and conflicts that were generated by these two types of racketeerings were to be thoroughly exacerbated by the entry of a third type of class racketeering perpetrated this time by the lumpenproletariat, against both the African petty-bourgeoisie and the working class.

Before we examine the form - or rather forms - that the lumpenproletariat's racketeering took, we need to explain it : why, we need to ask, did a 'lumpenproletariat' class exist, and why did it indulge in a ruthless form of racketeering that was to terrorize Alexandra Township right through the 1950's ?

At a very high level of theoretical abstraction, Marx has argued(156) that capitalist accumulation takes place according to a "general law", whereby an 'industrial reserve army' of labour is produced. If we are to assume, he argues, that the 'organic composition' of capital remains the same, then the accumulation of capital would imply the multiplication of the proletariat and also an increase in their wages.

/72 ....

However, accumulation creates competition, and competition itself causes further accumulation. Accumulation here has two sources : one of them is the "concentration" of capital (ie., where the capitalist re-invests his profits, amassing capital over time); the other is the "centralization" of capital (ie., where the capitalist borrows and merges). Concentration and centralization both reflect a growing productivity of labour, which in practical terms means the introduction of machines and hence a rise in the 'organic composition' of capital. But, then, this would result in a diminution (relative) of the mass of labour. Accumulation, therefore, is equivalent to the progressive production of an 'industrial reserve army' of labour, which can take a "floating" (urban), "latent" (rural) or "stagnant" form. This surplus population, furthermore, can take an absolute form (as in capitalist agriculture) or a relative form (as in modern industry).

Now, the 'lumpenproletariat' that existed in Alexandra Township must be understood as an element of the relative surplus population that existed in South Africa's urban areas since at least the 1940's. Marx has argued that :

> "the lowest sediment of the relative surplus population dwells in the sphere of pauperism. Apart from vagabonds, criminals (of special interest to us here - P T), prostitutes, in short the actual lumpenproletariat, this social stratum consists of three categories. First, those able to work ... Second, orphans and pauper children... Third, the demoralized, ragged and those unable to work ..." (157)

As we will see below, the lumpenproletariat's racketeering was a direct result of a restriction on the granting of work permits to Alexandra residents, and due to "influx control" measures, which prevented many residents from working in Johannesburg's factories. But we must understand here that these restrictions

on work permits and these "influx control" regulations were implemented by the State precisely so as to control (amongst others) the 'industrial reserve army' of labour, which is an inevitable feature of capital accumulation. "Influx control", in other words, must be understood in terms of the realities of "structural" unemployment; and it must be understood in terms of the processes of capital accumulation, and the form that this accumulation took in South Africa. Hindson has argued,(158) for instance, that, with the post-World War II period, the process of proletarianisation had become more rapid. But, by the mid-1950's, South Africa experienced a dramatic decline in production, and hence we get the rapid growth of a surplus population. At this point, Hindson argues, the old "disciplining" system (that used to operate in the pre-war period through the Pass Offices) withered away, and the Labour Bureaux emerged, which became mechanisms of management and control, providing labour placement and selection facilities, and "endorsing out" workers not employed in the urban areas.

It is within this context - both theoretical (Marx's) and historical (Hindson's, for instance) - that we must understand the existence of a lumpenproletariat in Alexandra Township (and the actual practices of this class in the Township).

But the case of Alexandra Township, however, was rather special, which made contradictions within it rather more intense. We have seen above how influx into Alexandra Township had been relatively "uncontrolled"; on the other hand, we will see that the granting of work permits for work in Johannesburg was "controlled" (or "restricted") - contradictions, therefore could only have been exacerbated : this, I would argue, explains the intense class racketeering of Alexandra's lumpenproletariat.

/74 ....

Unemployment in the 1940's was rife amongst Alexandra's residents.

The Standholders' Committee wrote in 1942 that

> "Thousands of natives have in the past few months been discharged by European Building Contractors, wholesale houses, shops and other firms owing to the shortage of goods. Thousands of these natives cannot be absorbed by the Army, nor is there any other organisation created by the Government to absorb such unemployed natives. In consequence thereof thousands of these natives are starving and are a menace not only to themselves, but to other natives and to Europeans. It is a fact, the greater the amount of native unemployment, the greater is the incidence of crime, as many natives become absolutely desperate and resort to the only available alternative to eke out an existence, viz. crime ..." (159)

Hibbert said in 1942 that there were "some 30 000 unemployed and unemployable Natives in the Township." (160) And according to evidence advanced in 1942 before the Committee of Investigation into the crime wave in Johannesburg and on the Witwatersrand by a resident of Alexandra Township :

> "There were many Rhodesian natives in the township ... They were not allowed to work here in competition with Union natives, and consequently most of them were out of work." (161)

The Alexandra witness also told the Committee that

> "The people who attack us say that they want money because they are hungry. The Government must send these people away where they can get work and money so that they can buy food." (162)

As Marx himself said, however, the surplus population's lumpenproletariat also consists of "the demoralized, ragged, and those unable to work..." Alexandra certainly had plenty of these as well : some were so "demoralized", that they had openly declared themselves "won't works". The witness to the above-mentioned Committee said that

/75 ....

> "There was an increasing number of native youths, ... wholly undisciplined and out-of-hand, who would not take employment if it was found for them. Some compulsion was necessary to bring these youths under rehabilitative influences." (163)

A 1945 report in the Sunday Times refers to a considerable increase in the number of "Native vagrants" in Johannesburg :

> "They exist on gambling and robbery, and live in backyards ... They have no desire to work - dishonesty pays them better." (164)

And the Star talks of "gaol-birds" who are

> "in their element within prison walls. They know that in gaol, they will... have three meals a day, no taxes to pay, and they will have a roof over their heads ..." (165)

By 1945, in fact, a well-defined "criminal class" had crystallised, as the Star reported at the time. (166)

Alexandra Township's unemployed were a necessary product of capitalist accumulation. That their numbers were unusually large was due to the fact that entry into Alexandra had been, as we have seen uncontrolled. In contrast, an unusual degree of control had been applied by the authorities to prevent Alexandra Township's unemployed from getting jobs in Johannesburg's factories. This was the case especially by 1949, when a Native Commissioner's court had been established by Government Proclamation No 150.

African residents of Alexandra had at first welcomed the establishment of the court, wrote Muriel Horrell to Ms Rheinallt Jones, Honourary Secretary of the Southern Transvaal Regional Committee, in August 1949. However, Horrell continued, Africans "now consider that they are being penalised as far as employment is concerned". The usual position with regard to employment for Alexandra residents was as follows :

/76 ....

> "In terms of Proclamation 61 of 1947, an Alexandra resident who wanted work in Johannesburg visited the Municipal Labour office in town. If he had lived at Alexandra for two years before the 1947 Proclamation was published, or if he had been employed in Johannesburg for at least 6 months, he was treated on exactly the same basis as a resident of a Municipal township. If he could not fulfil these conditions, his application was treated on its merits on the same basis as where applications from anywhere else in the country outside the Johannesburg municipal area." (167)

However, since the appointment of a Native Commissioner at Alexandra, the Municipal Non-Euopean Affairs Department proceeded to establish a "sub-labour office" within the township, and began ignoring the above-mentioned Proclamation 61 of 1947, "preference always being given (henceforth) to residents of Municipal locations when jobs became available.", as Horrell wrote. Horrell relates the case of an African in Alexandra who could comply with the provisions of the Proclamation, but who nonetheless remained a member of the 'reserve army' of labour :

> "Recently, in fact, an African who was offered employment in Johannesburg and could comply with the provisions of the Proclamation was not permitted by the sub-labour office to take up the employment because he resides at Alexandra." (168)

Horrell concluded :

> "In effect, then, Alexandra Township is now treated on the same basis as a rural area or area under another local authority so far as permits to seek work are concerned; and an Alexandra resident who loses his job may find it difficult to obtain another." (169)

By September 1949, the Bantu World was reporting that

> "a recent judgement in the Witwatersrand Division of the Supreme Court establishes the right of Alexandra residents who have work in the City to enter the Johannesburg Municipal area of jurisdiction..."(170)

/77 ....

However, Alexandra residents continued to voice their dissatisfaction over the fact that "Africans in search of work in the City may not do so freely." (171) This, of course, was the crux of the matter.

According to the Bantu World report, there were three specific conditions that had to be satisfied if an African was to enter an urban area legally - these were :

> "(1) That the African has been engaged for employment in the area, and is on his way to take up this employment.
>
> (2) That he satisfies the officer appointed by the urban local authority that he is on a bona fide temporary visit, and
>
> (3) That the local authority, in view of labour conditions then existing under his control, should allow the African to seek work in the area." (172)

A certain Mr S T Molefe, however, who was a member of the Alexandra Health Committee, said at the time that

> "... Alexandra people seeking work in the City area have been debarred from doing so." (173)

And Molefe stressed that this was "a new development" :

> "Adding that he could quote a number of cases where Alexandra residents had been so debarred entry into the City for work, he referred to the unhappy position this new development had occasioned among the township's residents." (174)

Advancing the view that the operation of influx control regulations had hit the township's residents especially hard, residents interviewed by Bantu World stressed "Alexandra's claims for special consideration by the Johannesburg Municipality." These "claims" were based on the following facts :

/78 ....

> "(firstly), that Alexandra houses a large labour force for which the Municipality has not been able to give accommodation. Next, that apart from being a source of labour supply for the City, Alexandra residents, by shopping in town, contribute their share towards the City's economic advancement." (175)

L I Venables, however, Manager of the Johannesburg Municipal Non-European Affairs Department, replied to these "claims" by saying that the object of his Department was to protect those Africans resident within the municipal boundaries. "These people", the Manager said,

> "had to live at an urban standard and therefore needed higher wages than the rural African who came to look for work but left his family at home." (176)

Considering the fact that Venables was here replying to the claims of Alexandra residents, Horrell was not far out when she stated that Alexandra Township was now being treated "on the same basis as a rural area." Venables, presumably, was assuming that most Africans who came from Alexandra to the city looking for work were newly-arrived "rural Africans". In any case, the Manager continued (in his reply to Alexandra's "claims") that there was a serious trade recession at the time which had caused unemployment in certain industries - as a result, thousands of Africans resident in the Johannesburg area were looking for work, and it was their interests that had to be considered first.

> "In regard to Alexandra residents, they were entitled to special consideration, but their claims must come second to those who lived in Sophiatown, Orlando or Eastern and Western Native Townships." (177)

"On the Reef the crook starts young", reported The African Drum in 1951. What were the 'ingredients' that made up a 'tsotsi'?

/79 ....

> "No education, no work, or no pass - that means that a young man must live by night and not by day - and that makes criminals." (178)

Such "criminals", furthermore, soon discovered that to racketeer at the expense of their neighbours was far more lucrative than to sell (if they were allowed to) their labour-power :

> "A tsotsi may earn as much as £5 a day; how else could he earn such money?" (179)

It is to the form - or rather forms - that this 'class racketeering' took that we will now turn.

10. THE 'CLASS RACKETEERING' OF THE LUMPENPROLETARIAT : THE 'HOLD-UP RACKET' ; THE 'PROTECTION RACKET'; AND THE 'GOLD-DIGGING RACKET'

The Crime Committee Report referred to above had concluded by January 1943 that

> "The existence of gangs of experienced African criminals must, unfortunately, be regarded as proved." (180)

Even before 1918, there were the 'Ninehvites', who had inhabited "native settlements" around the Johannesburg area. It is said that these people used for their weapons thin sharpened strips of wire, which they pushed between the ribs of their victims. And after the 'Ninehvites', there came the 'Amalaitas', whose numbers were greater and their methods "less refined" than those of their predecessors. Unlike the 'Ninehvites', furthermore, the 'Amalaitas' do not seem to have been really suppressed at all : they are said to have persisted right through the 'twenties and 'thirties, and, by the 1940's, they actually merged with the 'Tsotsis' (or 'narrow-trouser boys') of contemporary Johannesburg. (181)

/80 ....

In Alexandra Township, especially in the 1940's and 1950's, the 'Tsotsi' element "ruled" the area like "kings" : a certain gang amongst them, in fact, openly called themselves "Kings of Alexandra".(182) A significant number of girls of the 'Dark City' also took to the life of organized crime : whilst the boys were called 'Tsotsies', the girls were known as 'Noasisas'. 'Noasisas' specializing in shop-lifting were known as 'Watchers', and the women decoys in Alexandra's shebeens were called 'Spinners'. (183)

By the early 1950's, there were in Alexandra Township at least six major gangs. Drum reported in May 1953 that "most of them (ie., the members of these gangs - P T) do not work but roam the streets during the day, sizing up possible victims for burglary." (184) Alexandra's gangs, their class practices, their racketeerings, and even their coherent class cultures (or "sub-cultures") all went up to constitute "an era" that had yet to end by the late 1950's.

Alexandra's lumpenproletariat perpetrated three distinct forms of 'class racketeering' at the expense of both petty-bourgeoisie and 'working-class'. These forms were, firstly, the 'hold-up racket'; secondly, the 'protection racket'; and thirdly, the 'gold-digging racket'. I shall deal with each in turn.

i. THE 'HOLD-UP RACKET'

The Crime Committee Report stated in 1943 that :

> "Robberies by Africans on Africans continue to be numerous; and common theft, especially from motor cars and of women's handbags in the streets, has increased alarmingly." (185)

/81 ....

And by 1951, The African Drum was reporting that :

> "Now they (the 'Tsotsies') are so numerous that they divide locations into slices, with a gang in each." (186)

Tsotsies perpetrated their 'hold-up racket' in a systematic and planned manner :

> "... being young and familiar with the places where they live, (Tsotsies) can study their victims carefully, and take care to catch them off their guard, their thefts are often carefully planned for weeks ahead." (187)

They worked mostly at week-ends, when their "prey" may be both "rich" and also drunk; or at the end of the month, when all their richer victims got paid. All the gangs had their own habits and favourite setting for their crimes : "every location", wrote The African Drum, "has its Murder Street". (188)

Alexandra Township was, and had been called by the Minister of Native Affairs in 1942, the "centre of criminals".(189) Alexandra had been the breeding swamp of gangsters for a long time. Drum reported in October 1956 that

> "In the early, roaring 'forties Alexandra was already notorious all over the Reef for its brazen show of violence and killings. Thus Alexandra became christened with the unholy name of "Slagpaal" (abattoir) " (190)

The "illegitimate child" of the gangs which operated in the early 1940's in Alexandra Township proved to be "the most vicious and heartless thugs" that ever terrorized a township - these were the 'Spoilers'. "For over five years", reported Drum in 1956, "the mere mention of that name struck mortal fear into the hearts of the people of Alexandra." (191)

/82 ....

Like most gangsters, the 'Spoilers' started off as a group of young delinquents who molested and forced themselves upon school-going girls. Any girl who did not fall in with their suggestions was beaten up. But then they began operating on a larger scale and on a more serious level : they initiated a 'hold-up racket' against the workers of Alexandra : stabbing them if they encountered any resistance, they systematically relieved working people of their pay-envelopes.

Then, they began "spoiling" parties[192] held by both petty-bourgeoisie and working-class elements in the township : this they did by interfering with the women; shooting out the lights, and robbing all the guests. The 'Spoilers' also hung around the Alexandra bus rank waiting for "customers" to be 'held-up'. Their favourite "trick" in the 'hold-up racket' was the "three-card game" : when a likely victim came along, members of the gang started arguing among themselves about the cards and proceeded to ask the victim to be judge. "Those who know," wrote Drum, "don't stop; and those who don't know do - and lose their money so fast that they don't know how it happened."[193]

The residents of Alexandra kept silent for fear of being attacked if they "rattled" on them. But it was a silence which, as Drum reported, "in itself at once gave greater momentum to the ugly and fast-turning wheel of crime"[194] : this "greater momentum" was to transform the 'hold-up racket' into something even more systematic and sophisticated, ie., the 'protection racket' (to be discussed below).

/83 ....

By 1953, however, other gangs had emerged in the township, and they started challenging the 'Spoilers' ' monopoly of "the right to rob". Gang-warfare ensued and Alexandra was labelled the "Terror Township".(195) Eventually, six major gangs had emerged and they proceeded to divide Alexandra into armed camps.

Apart from the 'Spoilers', the other major gangs that had been formed by 1953 were the 'Young Americans', the 'Berlins', the 'Stone Breakers', the 'Black Koreans' and the 'Mau-Maus'. The biggest amongst these five organisations were the 'Young Americans'. They were associated with the notorious 'Americans' of Sophiatown and Western Native Township. The 'Americans' had helped the 'Young Americans' at the beginning, sending car-loads of their members to Alexandra to threaten and beat up anybody offering resistance. The plan was, reports Drum, to establish 'Americans' in all Reef locations, and thus form the biggest and toughest gang on the Rand - in effect, "a gang to end all gangs". (196)

The 'Young Americans' of Alexandra teamed up with another gang living in the same area of the township - between First and Sixth Avenues - the 'Berlins'. This teaming-up triggered open warfare amongst the gangs : the 'Black Koreans' raided the territory of the 'Young Americans' and 'Berlins'. The unwritten law then came into operation that no person living in the "Upper Town", the 'Young Americans'-'Berlins' area, can move freely in the "Lower Town" or vice-versa. Alexandra had been divided into two armed camps. And whilst these gangs were fighting amongst themselves, the 'Spoilers' remained unbroken. Two of the other gangs mentioned above, the 'Stone Breakers' and the 'Mau Maus', were the result of a clash within the 'Black Korean' group.

/ 84 ...

The central point we need to make here is that the challenge to the 'Spoilers', and the ensuing gang-warfare amongst the various gangs, all had one object - as Drum magazine explained:

> "Between these gangs' wars they all concentrate on one business - for whose monopoly they are fighting : robbing the large numbers of domestic servants and visitors to the township over the week-ends (etc.) They don't just take the money : they strip their victims to get everything." (197)

The 'Spoilers' were only to be decisively beaten by a new gang that was to emerge round about 1956 - they called themselves the 'Msomis' and were led by businessman Shadrack Matthews (see section above on the African petty-bourgeoisie). The 'Msomis' were also involved in the 'hold-up racket'. At their trial at the Johannesburg Magistrate's Court in 1959, a witness testified that Matthews had offered him a job :

> "He told me my duties would be to go about the township and rob people. During my probationary period of a month I would be armed with an axe and a knife, and after that with a gun. My wages would be £3 a week. If I murdered somebody I would get £5 commission ..." (198)

Another gang that involved itself extensively in the 'hold-up racket' was 'Zorro's Fighting Legion', which seems to have emerged as a powerful organisation by 1955. Drum reported in that same year that the 'Legion's' 'hold-up racket' was "operated with split-second timing and accuracy":

> "A victim comes strolling down some dark street whereupon a man springs up from nowhere and asks for a match. The victim will stop for one moment. Suddenly he is seized from all sides and then the party begins. The jacket is taken off, the trousers, shirt, hat, watch, shoes are taken and with luck the passes are handed back. A little resitance earns for the victim a thorough working over and stab wounds, and those who die are thrown into the ditch. Even these days an average of two bodies a month get fished out of the ditches." (199)

/85 ....

The 'hold-up racket' naturally developed into the 'protection racket', as robbing led to the need for some form of protection on the part of the victims. Such protection was not going to come from the South African Police, and this for two reasons : firstly, there was no police station in Alexandra Township - and only eight European and seven African policemen of the Wynberg police station had been detailed for work in Alexandra Township. This number was totally inadequate.(200) Secondly, as a resident of Alexandra Township wrote to Ms M V Ballinger in 1957 :

> "... nearly every junior member of the Force at Wynberg is an indirectly paid informer of gangster-groups in the Township. We therefore appeal to you Madam, as our long standing representative in the House of Assembly, to bring up this matter and if possible to get a commission of inquiry appointed". (201)

From the Wynberg police station, wrote Arnold Benjamin in Africa South, constant raids went on as always for liquor and passes. However :

> "complaints against the Msomis - complaints of robbery and brutal assault and murder - never seemed to produce any result. People said the police were afraid of them; then it became persistent talk in the township that they were in league with the Msomis and even supplying them with arms --- people who lodged complaints against the Msomis found that their names got uncannily back to the gangsters ..." (202)

The 'hold-up racket', I have said, naturally developed into the 'protection racket' - it was the corruption of the Wynberg police (amongst other things) that facilitated this latter racket.

/ 86 ....

ii. THE 'PROTECTION RACKET'

The name Chanki Mahangwe did not mean anything to the residents of Alexandra Township. However, the alias that this young man had adopted - that of "Zorro" - was a household name in the township in the 1950's. It was a name, furthermore, that was uttered only in whispers. The racy language of Drum captures the feelings of the Alexandra residents about this name :

> "'Zorro!' Like a bush fire, this name spread flaming terror over the entire area of Alexandra Township .... Zorro! Decent law-abiding folks shuddered at the mere mention of the word : Mothers feared for their daughters, and fathers feared for their wages. All of "Dark City" sweltered in the grip of this monster ..." (203)

'Zorro' and his gang, 'Zorro's Fighting Legion', were "a law unto themselves", and the 'protection racket' was their "profession". The shop-keeping petty-bourgeoisie, especially, "were drained dry in "protection" fees". 'Zorro' made use of a variety of weapons to operate his racket, and one of them was his ability to create a psychology of fear amongst his fellow-residents. The working-class had also fallen victims to 'Zorro's' racketeering :

> "... Each day the exploits of Zorro (and his gang) were whispered ... Friday and Saturday nights, workers looked on while their pockets were emptied and their money taken. Those who were clever enough to collect their pay on Mondays were severely beaten up for not having money. They were marked and told to bring ten shillings a week for protection" (204)

Shopkeepers were continually "squeezed" for money, and "those who fell off with their payment went up against big trouble", reported Drum in 1955. Operators of taxi-fleets also found themselves victims of 'Zorro's' gang. (205)

/87 ....

As usually happened, other gangsters began to "muscle-in" on 'Zorro's' "territory". Gang members from Orlando, Pimville and Sophiatown started "working" Alexandra's Noord Street. The competition angered 'Zorro's Fighting Legion' and soon it was decided to get rid of them. The Orlando and Pimville gangsters were thrown out, whilst the Sophiatown gang under 'Picannin' was tolerated for a while because of their matchless "skill" in pick-pocketing and robbery. Robbery, of course, had to continue unabated if the 'protection racket' was to remain viable.

When 'Zorro' and some of the other leaders of the 'Legion' were arrested, Drum wrote :

> "... Officially Zorro's empire of crime is destroyed ... (although) remnants of the gang are scattered about, still committing minor crimes and waiting for their leader." (206)

In fact, another issue of Drum wrote that

> "Although Zorro is now in gaol, 'Zorro's Fighting Legion' is still very active. They share the area between 17th Avenue and the New Stand close to the Jukskei river with the 'Vultures' (another smaller gang - P T), and are responsibile for most of the murders in that area." (207)

It is interesting to note here that, for 'Zorro' and his colleagues, going to jail was seen as "an occupational hazard", as Drum reported. Furthermore :

> "... the jail was another territory for them to conquer ... In the "cooler" he ('Zorro') has more money than a warden earns in three months, and enough tobacco to supply all the prisoners inside." (208)

/88 ....

But, as I have indicated above, Alexandra Township was really in the hands of the 'Spoilers' : they comprised "real grown-up gangsters", and their methods were more "systematic" in the perpetuation of their 'protection racket'. Concentrating initially on the 'hold-up racket', they then began extorting "protection money" from the public. They had, as we have seen, been "gate-crashing" into parties and robbing all the guests. But they gradually realized that the 'protection racket' could be infinitely more lucrative : if you do not want your party "spoiled", the gangsters told residents, then you would have to pay a "protection fee".

"Growing powerful", wrote Drum magazine, "they extended their activities into the streets, the homes of prominent people and shopkeepers, always demanding, always beating up reluctant victims". The 'Spoilers' were the "slick, well-dressed men, with no visible means of support" who were "rolling through the streets in very visible American cars..."(209)

Their 'protection racket' constituted mass extortion :

> "The shebeen queen, the taxi-man, the butcher, the grocer - all paid a weekly sum of money into the blood-stained coffers of the Spoilers or got beaten up. Everybody paid to protect his business." (210)

Africa South reports that the 'Spoilers' were demanding "protection money" - or what they sometimes called "cost of living money" - not only from shopkeepers and taximen, but "even (from) ordinary wage earners".(211) "Protection money" was, simply, the price of being left unmolested. But the 'Spoilers' racketeering spread, and so did the inevitable violence.

/89 ....

By the late 1950's, reaction had set in. A significant number of residents organised themselves into a Vigilance Committee to protect their lives and their property. A certain group amongst the vigilantes - who were themselves 'lumpens' in social status but were led by businessman Shadrack Matthews - took on the name of 'Msomis' (after Natal's notorious axe-killer, Elifasi Msomi) and, as noted above, began to successfully turn the tide against the 'Spoilers'. Many of the latter were sent to jail; others fled to Kroonstad, Bloemfontein, Maritzburg and Durban.

Essentially, the struggle between the 'Msomis' and the 'Spoilers' was one of "out-and-out warfare for the control of organised thuggery in Alexandra."(212) When the 'Spoilers' had been dispersed, the 'Msomis' began "ruling" the township "with their own brand of savagery". (213) It was this group that claimed itself to be the "Kings of Alexandra".

A witness at the 'Msomis' ' 1959 trial testified :

> "...Two men came into my shop ... They said I would ... have to pay them £15 protection fee. I paid the money ... I bought my own life with it ... I was afraid to go to the police because I knew they would tell the Msomi gang I had reported to them." (214)

Another witness at the 1959 trial had testified that

> "I paid Alex Dube (a member of the Msomis - PT) £1 for a note that would keep tsotsis out of my shop. He gave it to me saying I should not worry any more. It read : 'From Alex Dube. See that you keep out that shop, you hear what I said. Get out and mind you boys. Signed, Alex, 99 11th Avenue ...' "(215)

/90 ....

Shadrack Matthews, alleged leader of the gang, was accused No 1 at the trial, and was pointed out by witnesses as the "brains" of the 'Msomis'. As Arnold Benjamin wrote in 1959 :

> "It was he ... who ran the "Msomi Office" in Twelth Avenue - under the thin facade of a rent collection agency; here people came to pay their protection fees, and gang members held their regular meetings - received instructions and weapons and brought back the spoils." (216)

The World reported in 1958 that :

> "The Msomis had their own "court", which met in Alexandra and held the power of life and death over the residents. The "judge" wore a scarlet robe. This "court" did not hesitate to pronounce sentence of death over its victims. Residents say that when the "court" met at midnight, it was a sign that the death "sentence" would be pronounced. Death sentences were carried out by a (special) murder squad ... In lesser cases, a fine would be imposed. This had to be paid by the following day - "or else". The court (also) acted as a debt collector, taking its "rake off" from the money collected. On payment of a couple of guineas, a resident could get the court to "collect" the money owing to him." (217)

Anne Welsh of the Department of Economics, University of the Witwatersrand, had written in 1959 that :

> "Crime has become a recognized profession in African townships. One of the most important contributory causes is the income-expenditure gap - not a luxury gap but a bread gap - which must somehow be filled." (218)

"The people of Alexandra Township today live in terror and are hopelessly and painfully pinned down under the iron heel of the gangsters and can run to nowhere for redress or protection", wrote an Alexandra resident in 1957. The resident continued :

/91 ....

> "Gangsters are running Alexandra Township today; in so-much-so they have imposed their own levies on the residents. Businessmen pay a levy of £2, to £3, or even more per week or per month as the case may be. Bus Drivers and Taxi-men £1, mid-week and £1-10, or £2, on week-ends. Other rank and file anything they happen to have on them, when accosted and ordered to do so anyday and anytime of the week, except on week-ends when they are required to give more or forfeit their lives." (219)

In various places in the township, notices had been stuck on walls warning the public to have money on their persons as a safeguard to their lives. A familiar notice warned : "Carry money with you for the sake of your own safety". (220)

After a person had been robbed, furthermore, he was given a "special pass" which, as the Bantu World reported,

> "gives him freedom from further attacks ahead. When he meets another gang of hooligans, he is asked to produce money; if he produces this "special pass" he is allowed to pass". (221)

We have seen how both landlords and tenants were victims of this 'protection racket' - however, unlike the tenants, a number of landlords had found ways of effectively protecting themselves from the gangs. A welfare officer in Alexandra said in 1958 that :

> "...Landlords and tenants can no longer afford the ever-rising protection fees demanded by gangs ... (as a result,) several landlords have gone. They live at Evaton, Orlando, and even as far afield as Winterveld in the Pretoria district. They come into the township in daylight to collect their rents and leave before dark." (222)

/ 92 ....

iii. THE 'GOLD-DIGGING RACKET'

This racket was perpetrated by female members of the lumpenproletariat at the expense of the male working-class and even the petty-bourgeoisie.

According to an article in Africa ! :

> "... a gold-digger is a dame that gives you the glad-eye so long as you smell of plenty dough ..." (223)

'Gold-diggers' were not exactly prostitutes as such. Their "technique" was less vulgar and more lucrative than that of a normal prostitute. And they were not, furthermore, prone to using tactics normally associated with the 'Noasisas', who actually stole from their victims :

> "The trouble with gold-diggers is that they don't 'steal' your dough. They don't pick your pockets when you ain't looking, or something cheap like that. They make you dole out the smackaroos yourself. And you like it! ... Also they don't stick you up and take your purse. They just make you feel that you'd like to pay the sweet child's rent and build up her ward-robe ..." (224)

But behind these 'gold-diggers', there were always men who controlled their activities, shared the profits, and offered, in return, protection to the women. Each man involved in such a racket had a considerable number of women working for him. Every month, he would go round his 'gold-diggers' in the township, collect the money due to him, and make sure that everything was in order.

'Gold-diggers' did excellent business in Alexandra Township, where the so-called "Nice-Time Parties" proliferated, especially over the week-ends. It was in such "Nice-Time dens" that 'gold-diggers' mined their 'gold'.(225)

/93 ....

Lower in the social scale of the 'gold-digging' practice were women who made themselves available - in more direct fashion - to migrants living in compounds :

> "If you hang around any compound by knock-off time on pay-day you'll see a lot of scruffy dames killing time. These do not even try to dress fancy. They know the tastes of the fish they're after are quite simple." (226)

I would like to conclude this section by noting that, as in the case of the white money-lenders' racketeering in "Township Bonds", and the African petty-bourgeoisie's racketeering in high rentals, it was once more Alexandra Township's serious overcrowding that facilitated the racketeerings of the lumpenproletariat. Libertas wrote in 1942 :

> "...Congestion in the uncontrolled township bounded by the Union's highest concentration of money (given the 'web of class racketeerings' -PT) became more and more profitable to the vested interests of crime". (227)

And according to an Africa South article written in 1959 :

> "Today it (Alexandra Township) has 95 000 people - or 115 000, or 145 000 - nobody is quite sure - living roughly in one square mile. So there are all the standard conditions for crime to flourish in ..." (228)

CHAPTER 3

CONTRADICTORY CLASS INTERESTS IN ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP, AND ACCESS TO/EXCLUSION FROM THE TOWNSHIP'S 'LOCAL STATE APPARATUS', THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

The 'web of class racketeerings' within which both African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class were entangled, had had the effect of generating contradictory class interests between these two classes. Now, Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie, given its economic power acquired from its class racketeering,(1) had been able to attain a certain access to the 'local State apparatus'. In so doing, it was able to effectively use this apparatus to serve its economic and political interests, and to stifle those of the working-class. The latter, in fact, had been totally excluded from the deliberations of the Health Committee. This respective access to/exclusion from the 'local State apparatus' complemented, therefore, the 'class racketeering' that the African petty-bourgeoisie perpetrated in its relation to the working-class.

However, before we proceed any further, I need to make two important points with respect to the above passage. Firstly, I am implying above that the Health Committee will be examined as a State apparatus : I must stress here that the term "State" will be used in the wider sense as developed in the theoretical works of Poulantzas, ie., as a complex structure of contradictory and conflicting institutions.(2) The second point I want to make is that, in the above passage, I seem to be reducing the Health Committee to a mere 'object' which was used (as an instrument) by certain classes against other classes - the passage thus seems to be 'guilty' of an 'instrumentalist' approach to the State.

/95 ....

To avoid such misconceptions, the Health Committee would also have to be examined, not only as a simple instrument of a class or classes, but also as a "power centre", with a "relative autonomy" and a "structural specificity" all of its own. To show this latter point we would have to examine the Health Committee's actual functions : some of these functions were directly in the interests of those who had access to the Health Committee (the African petty-bourgeoisie); others were aimed at 'winning the confidence' of those who were excluded from the apparatus, and thus constituted genuine material concessions to the working-class; others still, were in the interests of no specific class, but simply the effects of the "structural specificity" of a "power centre" with its own internal contradictions.

1. CONTRADICTORY CLASS INTERESTS

In 1939, the North-Eastern Districts Protection League had been formed, with the one and only object of securing the "early abolition" of Alexandra Township. The League was suggesting that, with the abolition of the "problem township", the tenants should be accommodated in "decent houses" in Orlando, whilst the standholders should be transferred to a new Township where each would receive an equivalent freehold plot.(3)

Alexandra Township's survival was in the interests of the standholding petty-bourgeoisie - Alexandra's working-class, on the other hand, faced more of a "dilemma" about the issue, as we shall see.

/96 ....

The Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee issued a statement in 1942 making it absolutely clear that it was strongly opposed to any suggestions concerning abolition :

> "We" - stated the Standholders' Committee - "note with grave concern the fresh agitation by the North-Eastern Districts Protection League for the removal of Alexandra Township..."(4)

The Committee also said that it was

> "driven to the belief that their attitude is prompted by self-interest arising out of the fact that the removal of Alexandra Township would open up possibilities for landowners making much money from the sale of ground for European settlement." (5)

Like all classes struggling to secure their specific interests, Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie adopted the ideological stance that its interests were the 'universal' interests of all within the township :

> "The proposal to remove the inhabitants ... is not only costly, impracticable and onerous to the native landowners in Alexandra Township and their tenants, but a gross travesty of justice, freedom and the rights of the common man ..." (6)

A statement issued by the Alexandra Health Committee in 1943, however, ackowledged that it is only "the comparatively small group of owners who have, as the saying goes, a stake in the township." (7)

In fact, the statement continued, the interests of the tenants

> "are by no means in every respect identical with those of the standholders, some of whom are not even any longer resident in the Township, but merely draw rents, as absentee landlords, from the tenants on their properties." (8)

The Feetham Commission of 1936-37 stated rather bluntly that it was opposed to the abolition of the township,

/97 ....

> "in view of --- the special advantages which render it attractive to Natives of a good class ...." (9)

What were these "special advantages"? The above-mentioned 1943 statement of the Health Committee stated openly that standholders were against abolition because, in the new area to which they would be taken, there would simply be no tenants to exploit :

> "...Many standholders(property-owners), moreover, are convinced that the terms (for expropriation) offered, however fair-seeming, are in one important respect to their serious disadvantage. To receive a freehold plot of equal size and be compensated, according to a valuation, for the buildings and improvements on their Alexandra holdings still in their view will leave them losers. For, in the new location to which they are to be transferred, they will not be allowed to have tenants. In other words, they will lose a large part - in the case of some ..., the whole - of their income." (10)

"Even a liberal valuation of the houses and rooms on the Alexandra plots," the statement continued, would simply "not be anywhere near the income-producing value of their property." (11) Here, surely, is the crux of the matter : the abolition of Alexandra Township would be the abolition of the African petty-bourgeoisie's racketeering in high rentals. The petty-bourgeoisie's 'rooms' that were built around the 'main house' were 'income-producing', and there were no terms for expropriation that could have seemed "fair" to those who pocketed the income.

The Health Committee statement offered a practical example :

> "Any owner ... of twelve rooms, built at an average cost of £50 each, and let at a rental of, say, £1 per month each, has a gross income of £144 per annum from his investment of £600. Even after deducting his rates and taxes and other charges, he will still have a much larger income than the £18 or £22 which the same capital sum would yield invested at 3% or 4% per annum." (12)

/98 ....

The Health Committee, furthermore, was happy to accept that "a gross return of £144 per annum on £600 is "slumlandlordism", and deserves no sympathy" - however :

> "this does not alter the fact that a fair-sized group of Africans ... will experience both a severe loss of actual income, and an effective depreciation of their capital assets." (13)

So, the Health Committee concluded, "no one can blame the African standholders, if they resent and resist the destruction of their investments, without adequate compensation for income lost, as utterly unjust..."(14)

We need to note at this point, however, that the above statement of the Health Committee was a private statement that had been submitted to the Minister for Public Health for consideration. Publicly, the Health Committee's stance was rather more contradictory, or even at times more dishonest. At the 1942 Pretoria Conference, Hoernlé said :

> "The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants is unequivocally opposed to abolition in any shape or form ..."

A few moments later, he stated :

> "I would accept abolition only if the standholders themselves were to consent to it." (15)

At the same conference, he said that he "was not against abolition if it can be done with the consent of the Natives". Having said this, the Conference was adjourned for luncheon from 12.45 pm to 2 pm. Prof Hoernlé then resumed his speech : he said he was

> "prepared to consider abolition ... provided that the terms be presented to the inhabitants and that they be given time to consider them, so that if a change is brought about it can be done with the consent of the inhabitants, ie. the registered standholders." (16)

99/ ....

By equating "inhabitants" and "Natives" to "registered standholders", Hoernlé was of course confusing his audience - but the message of his 1942 address is clear : it was the exclusive interest of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie that the township not be abolished or removed.

But where, then, did the working-class stand ? What were <u>its</u> interests ? In a sense, the tenant working-class was faced with a vicious dilemma, and this the Health Committee picked up : it suggested in its statement to the Minister for Public Health that

> "... the large tenant-class of Alexandra Township is no less opposed to being transferred to a Location of the Orlando type ... (because) Location-life is not popular among the majority of Africans. They feel that the Locations have been created to "control" them ... For better or for worse, many Africans seek to avoid, or escape from, this system. Whether as owners or as tenants in Alexandra Township, they feel they are ... less interfered with ..." (17)

On the other hand, the Health Committee statement made the perceptive point that :

> "At best, the benefits (of removal) offered to them (ie., the tenant-class) are of a <u>material kind</u> ..." (18)

So, it seems that the majority of the tenant working-class was faced with a kind of 'paradox' over the question of being transferred : on the one hand, they wanted to avoid the "controls" and "interference" of "Location-life"; but on the other hand, removal meant benefits of a "material kind", such as a decent home for their families, and an escape from the 'economic clutches' of the 'racketeering web'.

/100 ....

It seems, furthermore, that the "material benefits" were to ultimately predominate in the minds of the tenant-class. When in the 1960's the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board began removing residents from the township, the Star reported :

> "...Those who have already gone have no regrets. To take one example of hundreds. Mr W D Nkhahle, father of three children, used to pay R5 a month for one backyard room for his whole family in Alexandra. He was one of the first volunteers to go to Diepkloof. There he has a home of four rooms with enough garden for him and enough backyard for his children ..."I like this place. I'm quite happy," he said." (19)

And Unterhalter writes :

> "...Of course for those who had lived in the dreadful slum conditions of the backyards, the moves improved their living conditions and I suppose many were grateful to have the modest homes to which they came." (20)

But whatever the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board was doing in the 1960's, the important fact remains that, by mid-1958, people were voluntarily leaving the township:

> "A stream of refugees is leaving the Dark City, because they are unable to stand the conditions any longer. For the first time in many years, there are empty rooms to let in this once congested township ... In spite of the winter cold, there is a big rush to the site-and-service schemes of the southern townships. Some of those who are leaving have lived in Alexandra for many years ..." (21)

Perhaps the ultimate indication of the tenants' stance towards the issue of removing Alexandra Township may be seen in the post-war squatters' movement that had swept, not only Alexandra, but the whole of the Reef, as a protest against the chronic housing shortage. In January 1947, 6 000 Alexandra residents led by S Baduza, squatted in Squares 2 and 3 in the centre of the township. They were to be later removed to No 49 Klip Spruit by the City Council.(22) Their struggles to move out of the township need to be contrasted to the struggles of the Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee to maintain the survival

of the township, and the survival of their 'income-producing' property.

And it is in this context that the African petty-bourgeoisie's special class interest in "speculative building" must be seen. The Alexandra Vigilance and Protection Standholders' Committee had been struggling for years to get the Controller of Building Materials to grant them permits for the erection of additional rooms for letting on their stands. And they had for years been taking advantage of the fact that no permit was required for small building enterprises less than £100 : as a result, a "gradual accumulation of cheap rooms" had taken place.(23) In December 1947, the Health Committee's announcement that "building restrictions were being relaxed" was "well-received by the standholders", as the Bantu World reported.(24)

2. THE HEALTH COMMITTEE : ACCESS TO/EXCLUSION FROM THE 'LOCAL STATE APPARATUS'

The history of the Alexandra Health Committee, ie., the changing structure of that apparatus, is the history of the various classes' changing degree of access to/exclusion from this 'local power centre'.

The first Health Committee which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, was established by the Administrator of the Transvaal in 1916, comprised of five nominated members : "one represented the Native Affairs Department, 2 represented the Township Company and 2 the Native and Coloured residents."(25) The standholders in the township had yet to emerge as a well-established petty-bourgeois class with specific 'class powers'. The following year, in 1917, the number of representatives of the "Natives" and "Coloureds" was increased from two to four - and these were chosen by "informal election".

/102 ....

By 1921, the number of representatives of the "Natives" and "Coloureds" was increased again from 4 to 8, and all of these were elected. In January 1933, a new Health Committee was constituted consisting of 7 nominated members (voting was thus done away with).
These 7 members comprised 4 Europeans (of whom 2 represented the Township Company), 2 "Natives", and one "Coloured" person. As from October 1937, the 3 "non-European" members were once again elected by the residents. Then, the Administrator's Proclamation No 181 of October 2, 1940, provided for the reconstitution of the Health Committee so as to comprise 3 members appointed by the Administrator (including the Chairman).(26)

And finally, in 1941, in terms of the Administrator's Proclamation No 162, the Committee was reconstituted to provide for 6 members, 4 of whom were to be Europeans appointed by the Administrator, and 2 (one "Native" and one "Coloured") to be elected by the registered standholders, who could also recommend one of the Europeans, although the Administrator, J J Pienaar, was not bound to appoint the European recommended.(27)

The Chairman of the Committee, it is important to note, was to be appointed by the Administrator. The European members would hold office for a period not exceeding three years, but they were eligible for reappointment. The "native" member was to be elected by "natives" and the "coloured" by "coloured" persons.(28)

The crucial passage in the Aministrator's Proclamation that established the petty-bourgeoisie's accessibility to the 'local power centre', was the following :

/ 103 ....

> "Qualification of Voters - only a male or female native or coloured person of 21 years or upwards who is the registered owner of a stand in the township of Alexandra at the date of the framing of the voters' lists shall ... be entitled to be enrolled on the voters' lists. For the purposes of this section the term "registered owner" shall mean the person in whose name the stand is registered in the Deeds Office." (29)

The Proclamation added, furthermore, that "only a person, male or female, enrolled as a voter in accordance with the provisions of this Proclamation shall be qualified for election as a member of the Committee ..." (30)

The members of the Alexandra Health Committee, as it operated in 1942, were Prof Hoernlé (Chairman), and Messrs Adv. Abraham Fischer, A Lynn Saffery, C A Heald, J K Mrupe and A Lingeveldt. Saffery was the European whom the voters had nominated and the Administrator accepted to appoint. Mrupe represented the African standholders and Lingeveldt the Coloured standholders.

The Health Committee openly stated that :

> "the population actively concerned in the government and administration of the Township, through the right to elect its own representatives on the Health Committe, consists only of the rate-payers in good standing, ie., of the comparatively small group of owners ..." (31)

On the other hand, the tenant-class, "much larger in number","have no vote in the local affairs of the Township." (32) Their exclusion from the 'local State apparatus' was total, and it 'reflected' their economic position within the 'web of class racketeerings' in the township.(33)

/ 104 ....

3. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE : IN THE "INTERESTS" OF THE "COMMUNITY" AS A WHOLE

The Health Committee was a "power centre" that, whilst functioning in the interests of those who had access to it, nonetheless had to 'win the confidence' of those whose interests it purported to represent. To 'win their confidence", the Health Committee made genuine material concessions to the working-class of Alexandra, and in that sense actually functioned in the "interests" of the "community" as a whole.

According to the Official Gazette of the Transvaal, dated February 15, 1933, the Committee had been empowered, "from its revenue", "to make, repair, maintain, and drain streets and roads within its area of jurisdiction", and "to light squares and such streets and roads and to erect and maintain lamps for that purpose." (34) The maintenance of roads and the lighting of streets, of course, was not a concession to the working-class 'per se' - but it was nonetheless in the interests of the "community" generally. In any case, the Health Committee struggled throughout the '30's and '40's and '50's to fulfil such "general provisions" as set out by the Gazette. Lighting of streets, however, was only to be introduced in 1958, when the Peri-Urban Areas Health Board took over.

The Committee, in co-operation with a private company represented by a Mr Harris, attempted - successfully this time - to erect the first cinema in the township. The cinema was built on Lot 91, Second Avenue, in 1942, and the Municipality brought an electric cable to the cinema site.(35)

/105 ....

The Health Committee was also successful in organising in 1942 a Civilian Protective Service for the township. Stirrup pumps, Trailer pumps, ambulances, medical equipment and other accessories were purchased by the Health Committee. A Sub-Committee was appointed to establish the organisation, and to appoint an Area Commandant and a Chief Warden.(36)

Another example of the "community services" offered by the Committee was the establishment of a milk distribution depot. It is interesting to note here that Adv. Fischer reported to the Committee in July 1942 that the people of Alexandra were "suspicious" of the milk scheme, and "thought it was some new form of exploitation". (37) Perhaps this reveals what the disfranchised section of the "community" thought about all the "community services" of an apparatus that was not really meant to serve the "community" as a whole.

4. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE : IN THE INTERESTS OF THE STANDHOLDING PETTY-BOURGEOISIE

Hoernlé wrote to the Secretary for Native Affairs, D L Smit, in 1942, that

> "I am very glad to hear that you approve of the experiment which I am making at Alexandra Township by holding monthly meetings of the local standholders." (38)

We must understandy therefore, that "access" to the 'local power apparatus' was not only through the petty-bourgeoisie's representatives, Messrs Mrupe and Lingeveldt, but also took the more direct form of monthly mass meetings between standholders and Health Committee officials.

/ 106 ....

At the 10th Meeting of the Health Committee, held on September 15, 1942, it was announced that the Health Committee would fight for the survival of Alexandra Township - something which, as we have seen above, was in the direct interests of the petty-bourgeoisie. Again, at the Committee's 15th Meeting, a resolution taken by the Standholders' Anti-Expropriation Committee was tabled and noted, and

> "it was decided that if the Committee mentioned sent a deputation to parliament, the Alexandra Health Committee would support it ... It was (also) unanimously resolved : that it be put on record that the Alexandra Health Committee is strenuously opposed to any plan for expropriation of the Alexandra Township, as proposed by the Johannesburg Municipality, and is in favour of the improvement of the Township where it now stands ..." (39)

Mrupe, in fact, was to later accompany the Anti-Expropriation Committee's deputation that had gone to present their case to parliament in Cape Town.

The Health Committee openly supported the "speculative building" of the standholders, on the pretext that such building, though resulting in a 'racket' in high rentals, nonetheless "housed the houseless". It was precisely for the purpose of perpetuating this "speculative building" of the petty-bourgeoisie, that the Health Committee attempted - unsuccessfully, given the Administrator's reservations - to attain "discretionary powers" with respect to Building Regulations in 1942. (40)

Mrupe, of course, was of the opinion that building of rooms "should go on until the limit allowed by the existing regulations was reached." Furthermore, Mrupe had stated that,

/107 ....

> "in the event of the Committee's being able to acquire land and sub-economic money for housing, his policy would still be to fill the existing Township to capacity prior to opening up new ground." (41)

The Health Committee also openly struggled to secure and promote the interests of the shop-keeping petty bourgeois elements. At the 16th Meeting of the Committee in March 1943, for instance,

> "A complaint from the Alexandra Traders' Association was tabled, stating that unlicenced hawkers and pedlars were trading openly in the Township and asking the Committee to go into the matter. --- The Secretary was instructed to write to the Wynberg Police drawing attention to the evil and soliciting their co-operation in remedying it." (42)

5. LOCAL A N C BRANCH : UNDER PETTY-BOURGEOIS CONTROL

Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie, we have seen, was internally stratified between those who had 'made it', and those who were still 'aspiring'. I would here like to suggest, however, that there were different political practices that cut across this stratification. What I am saying is that Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie was divided into three different 'political camps' that - as far as my research allowed me to see - were in no way related to the socio-economic status of those who adhered to these 'camps'.

I have argued above that the 'political economy' of Alexandra Township (mode of domination, on the one hand, and 'class racketeerings' on the other) meant that the objective relationship between the African petty-bourgeoisie and the African working-class was one of both unity and opposition at the same time. Each and every member of the African

/108 ....

petty-bourgeoisie related to the African working-class in a 'dialetical' relationship of unity and opposition: they were all united with the working-class in the sense that they were racially dominated by the Central State; they were all dis-united in that they were entangled in a 'web of class racketeerings.' However, certain elements of the African petty-bourgeoisie had chosen to put more emphasis on the "unity"-dimension of the 'dialectical' relationship, whilst others had chosen to put more emphasis on the "opposition" - dimension. This was a matter of choice, ie., it constituted a subjective relationship between classes, and did not affect the ever-present objective relationship of unity and opposition. The stay-aways and certain bus boycotts that the two classes were to participate in, demonstrate the "unity" - dimension of this 'dialectical relationship'. In this relationship, it was the "Charterist" element of the A N C that united with the working-class (this would be the first 'political camp' amongst the petty-bourgeoisie). On the other hand, a certain section of the Alexandra petty-bourgeoisie (Baloyi and company), who were unusually 'reactionary' and 'anti-working-class'/anti-Sactu, had chosen to emphasize the "opposition" - dimension of this dialectical relationship. The Baloyøis and company posed as "Africanists" and "anti-Charterists" (they would be the second 'political camp' amongst the petty-bourgeoisie). Finally, carried to its logical conclusion, this latter dimension of the 'dialectic' could have led the Alexandra petty-bourgeoisie to 'fascistic' tendencies.(43) The interesting thing is that a section of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie did choose such a path. Together with other wealthy Africans in Pretoria, a not insignificant number of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie had formed the Bantu National Socialist Party (B N S P) on October 10, 1951. They held regular rallies at Alexandra Township, and proceedings

/109 ....

consisted of harangues by their 'Supreme Chief' (a certain Mr Ezekiel Ngcobo), "composed mainly of obscene abuse of Indians, Jews and Englishmen." The three basic aims of the B N S P were :

> "1. Unity of the indigenous nations of South Africa, both Black and White, against the alien exploiter;
>
> 2. Separate development of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, both Black and White, in such a way as to give full expression to the racial genius of each of them;
>
> 3. Replacement of the alien parliamentary system by a system of government in accordance with the organic will of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, both Black and White." (44)

This 'fascistic' tendency in Alexandra would constitute the third 'political camp' of the Alexandra petty-bourgeoisie.

Now, the point here is that it was the second 'political camp' indicated above - that led by Baloyi and company - that controlled, for some time, the local A N C branch. Whilst Baloyi's 'political camp' stood in a hostile relationship to that of the 'Charterists', the fact remains that, insofar as it was an element of the petty-bourgeoisie that controlled the local A N C branch - and not working-class elements - we find that this had the effect of complementing the petty-bourgeoisie's access to the 'local power centre', the Health Committee, thus further entrenching petty-bourgeois 'hegemony' within the township. This petty-bourgeois control of the local A N C may be contrasted to the case of Port Elizabeth - as Lodge writes :

> "while Congress in other centres was led by a professional elite, in Port Elizabeth, because of the relative strength of trade unionism, working class leaders dominated African politics". (45)

/110 ....

R G Baloyi - and his comrades in the Alexandra local branch of the A N C - was openly pro-Nationalist Party. In 1949, the Alexandra "ex-bus king" had canvassed for the nomination of Nationalist, Mr J H van Rensburg, as Senator representing Africans in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. (46) The A N C was, however, boycotting those elections, and so Baloyi was dismissed from his position as Treasurer-General of the movement by the Transvaal Provincial branch.

Solomon Modise and Dan Gumede, also leaders of the Alexandra Congress branch, were expelled as well, because they too had supported Baloyi's actions. This was to lead to perenially hostile relations between the Alexandra local branch and the Transvaal Provincial branch.

Such hostile relations were symptomatic of the overall political divergencies of the two apparatuses. Whilst the Transvaal Provincial branch was pro-'Charterist', and willing to co-operate with organisations such as the South African Communist Party, the Congress of Democrats and Sactu, the Alexandra local branch was violently anti-C P and anti-working-class.

At the 1947 Krugersdorp Conference of the Transvaal Congress branch, the Alexandra branch urged that :

> "no member of any political party shall hold office in the A N C either in the Provincial body or its branches." (47)

/111 ....

J B Marks had reacted to this resolution by calling it "dangerous". The intention of the Alexandra delegates, of course, was to remove C P elements from A N C ranks. The resolution was rejected at the Conference by 32 votes to 30.(48)

Baloyi and his supporters were giving their "moral support" to the "National-minded block", or the so-called "Africanists".(49) In so doing, they were able to skillfully "manipulate" the chairman of the Alexandra local branch, Josiah Madzunya, whose "Africanism" was so extreme that he was to be "repudiated" by the newly-formed Pan-Africanist Congress in 1959, which called him a "semi-articulate wildman". (50)

Madzunya had rejected the April 1958 stay-at-home because "it has been called by workers and should not be called a national strike." He told The World, furthermore, that

> "the A N C was being used by other organisations for their own ends ... (ie., by a) workers' organisation." (51)

Madzunya, of course, was here referring to Sactu, and to the National Workers' Conference that had in fact taken the decision to launch the April 1958 stay-at-home.

It came as no surprise, therefore, that the Alexandra local branch was to split into two rival branches by the mid-1950's. Albert B Nzo was a prominent member of the 'Charterists' faction, and led the struggle against the Baloyi-Madzunya "Africanists".

/112 ....

But ideological and political 'hegemony' seems to have been well secured by the anti-working-class petty bourgeois faction led by Baloyi. The Alexandra Women's branch of the A N C, which had the largest number of women adherents in the Transvaal, was chaired by Mrs Baloyi.(53) The Alexandra Youth branch, furthermore, was led by D Mogorosi who, like Baloyi, was violently anti-working-class and anti-Indian. The Alexandra African Traders' Association, led by Mogorosi, had been battling to put an end to the "infiltration" of Indian traders into the township.(54) Interestingly enough, a special feature of the anti-Charterist Alexandra local branch was its insistence that there could be no unity with Indians.(55)

CHAPTER 4

CLASS STRUGGLES AND CULTURAL PRACTICES IN ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

The 'political economy' of Alexandra Township which we have examined above had a determining effect on the specific nature that class struggles took in that township. And these class struggles, furthermore - like all class struggles - were expressed in class ideologies and class cultural practices.(1) Such ideologies and cultural practices themselves took on a specific nature in Alexandra Township, again given the 'political economy' of the township.

1 CLASS STRUGGLES

Our examination of the 'political economy' of Alexandra Township has shown us that the objective relationship between the African petty-bourgeoisie and the African working-class was one of simultaneous unity and opposition. This objective relationship between the two classes expressed itself in the form of different types of class struggles : at times, struggles in Alexandra occurred between petty-bourgeoisie and working-class; at other times, an alliance of these two classes (constituting "the people") challenged (indirectly) the "power bloc".(2)

It was in October 1939, that the bus companies then operating to Alexandra first proposed a rise in the week-day fare from 4d to 5d. A significant number of these companies were owned by members of the 'upper-stratum' of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie. The working-class, the vast majority of which travelled to Johannesburg by bus, formed a committee which campaigned for eight months against the fare increase. It presented its case to the

/114

Road Transportation Board and negotiated with the bus companies. The Board finally turned down the bus companies' application.(3) But this event - a kind of "skirmish" between African petty-bourgeois elements and the working-class - was to signal the emergence of greater struggles to come between these two parties in later years (over the same issue, ie. attempted increases in bus fares).

By October 1942, the Alexandra Bus Owners' Association - led by R G Baloyi - had once again issued a circular introducing an increase in bus fares, the increase being one penny on the fare of 4d charged on every unbroken journey per passenger. The news was received with "great alarm" by Alexandra's working-class, the result being a refusal on their part to pay the 5d, while they continued to use the buses as usual. The bus-owners then shortened the route, by starting the journey from 2nd Avenue, Wynberg, instead of 9th Avenue, Alexandra Township. The workers responded by totally refusing to use the buses. After this contention, the buses were again started at the original point. An appeal was lodged with the Central Road Transportation Board against the increase in fares. The appeal came off on July 5, 1943, the Board's judgement being that, as from August 1, 1943, the fare shall rise to 5d.(4)

Dikobe notes that in this 1942/3 bus fare dispute, the black bus-owning petty-bourgeoisie had united with white bus owners in their attempts to effect an increase in fares.(5) The appeal to the Road Transportation Board against the fare increase had been lodged, interestingly enough, by the Alexandra Workers' Union. When the appeal had failed, 15 000 people walked for ten days to work. The Alexandra bus owners finally

/115 ....

gave in, and the fare was once more reduced to 4d.(6) In boycotting the buses, the Alexandra working-class were also fighting the standholders 'per se' : Dikobe writes that the tenants had congregated in 1942 outside a hall where the standholders were holding a meeting on the bus-fare dispute - the tenants were saying amongst themselves :

> "The Stand-owners are discussing us. We are bearing the brunt of the increase. Very soon they will also, like bus-owners, demand increase in rental. Their rooms are leaking. The walls and floors are damp. The stand-owners treat us like non sensible lot (sic)." (7)

The Government's Commission into non-European bus services that had been appointed in January, 1944, made its findings known in November of that year, concluding that the people could not afford higher fares. But before these findings were made public, the Alexandra bus owners were again putting forward claims for increased fares.(8) When they raised fares to 5d, the people refused for six weeks to use the buses.(9) Once again, the bus-owning petty-bourgeoisie were locked in struggle with the African working-class. This 1944 boycott resulted in the formation of P U T C O, which bought over the Alexandra bus route. The Alexandra Bus Owners' Association, of which Baloyi was head, was disbanded. As mentioned above, Baloyi alone was to receive £22 000 in the transaction.(10)

The struggles of the tenant-class against the standholding petty-bourgeoisie as a whole were basically over the question of high rentals. The so-called "housing question" in Alexandra Township (ie, the sub-letting, the 'soaring' rentals, and the overcrowding,etc) was the question of the class struggle that ensued between African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class. "Few years after the bus boycott", Dikobe writes, "Alexandra Township is again in dispute. This time it is tenants against the stand-owners. The quarrel is on high rental." (11)

/116

The struggles between African petty-bourgeosie and working-class were determined by the structural relationships in the township that we have identified above, ie, the 'web of class racketeerings' :

> "..."We are forced to raise rental", says a spokesman of the stand-owners. "We are heavily indebted to building societies". ...."(12)

Dikobe writes that in the 1940's

> "Alexandra Township is a ramshackle. Dwellings are falling about. Corrugated iron sheds are replacing the devastated mud built dwellings. Rental is soaring. Eviction is common. The medical officer fears empidemic breaking out. And the inspectors report two thousand dwellings in dilapidated state or completely destroyed ..." (13)

In the midst of these conditions, Dikobe continues, the standholders were "exploiting shortage of accommodation by raising rental". The tenant-class responded to this in 1946 by holding protest meetings and ultimately by organising themselves into a tenants' organisation. 'Schreiner', their leader,

> "plunged into organising men to form tenants organisation. He was aware of opposition and hostility from powerful group of stand owners. The possibility of being thrown out of Alexandra Township. The task of convincing tenants to work out of township if the landlords persist on high rentals ...(etc)" (14)

The standholders on the other hand, were concerned, above all, to avoid the "interference" of the Rent Board in the township's affairs. Led by Baloyi himself, they even held a protest demonstration against the Board. Baloyi assured the assembled standholders that

> "Your land lord association is seeing to your interest. We intend to establish our rent board in conjunction with the Health Committee. We are seeking to register our association with registrar." (15)

/117 ....

The Rent Board, in fact, finally withdrew its attempts to introduce inspectors in the township. As a result, wrote Dikobe :

> "It is a straight fight between tenants and stand-owners." (16)

The 1947 squatters' movement in Alexandra Township must also be seen as a response, not only to the shortage of accommodation 'per se', but also to the high rentals that ordinary members of the African working-class could not afford, or simply did not want to pay for a single ramshackle room. Squatting, therefore, must also be seen as a direct response to the 'class racketeering' of the standholders. The squatters' leadership said of those few who had decided to opt out of the movement :

> "Let the half-hearted ~~to~~ go back and say to (their) landlord : I've sinned against you." (17)

The struggles between petty-bourgeoisie and working-class were to continue so long as the 'web of class racketeerings' was to remain the characteristic feature of Alexandra Township's 'political economy'. But we must not forget that both African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class were commonly excluded from the Central State, and so the "unity" - dimension of the 'dialectical' relationship between these two classes was to manifest itself in a number of important struggles wherein "the people" (the petty-bourgeoisie allied with the working-class) challenged (albeit indirectly) the "power bloc".

By mid-1955, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 had "arrived", not only in Alexandra Township, but throughout the Union of South Africa. The Act, a "signal example" of the trend towards the delegation of power from the legislature to the executive, recognized only three types of schools for the "Bantu" :

/118

> "(a) Bantu Community schools under the control of a Bantu Authority of some kind;
>
> (b) Government Bantu Schools either taken over from the Provinces or brought into existence by the Government;
>
> (c) State-aided Bantu schools." (18)

Furthermore no school whatsoever was to be established by anyone unless it was registered; and registration was at the discretion of the Minister of Native Affairs.(19)

"Bantu Education", in effect, meant that the kind of schooling offered to "Bantus" was to be henceforth controlled by the Central State; and that secondly, the education offered them was to make them realise "from childhood ... that equality with Europeans is not for them", as the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr H F Verwoerd, himself said.(20)

The Bantu Education Act, therefore, was aimed at (amongst other things) perpetuating the 'political domination' and 'cultural oppression' of all people of "non-white" skin pigmentation. In response to such plans on the part of the Central State, "the people" of Alexandra Township(21) (petty-bourgeoisie allied with working-class) initiated a boycott against the new onslaught :

> "Masses of parents, under the banner of the A N C, ... went on boycott from the fatal day of April 1 (1955) by withdrawing their children from schools".(22)

A number of teachers working in Alexandra Township's schools - themselves members of the petty-bourgeois class in the township - were sacked from their posts as a result of the boycott. This affected particularly the Alexandra Senior School, the Alexandra Methodist School, and the Ikage

Central Junior School. All children who did not turn up for school by April 25 were banned from schooling anywhere in the Union.(23)

"The people" of the township then responded by setting up a number of "illegal schools", which moved from place to place, and ran under "uncomfortable conditions." (24) Another important refuge for Alexandra children banned from State schools was the Alexandra Haile Selassie Ethiopian Private School, which held sessions in three different parts of the township. Since the imposition of the ban on the "rebel" schoolchildren, this as yet unregistered school had become so overcrowded that classes were held in backyards.(25)

The A N C set up a National Education Council to inquire into and plan a possible system of alternative education.(26) The so-called "Cultural Clubs" then emerged in Alexandra Township and other places :

> "People from various political organisations, educationists, church denominations, private individuals of different opinions, have joined to form the National Education Movement. The function of this movement is to draw up "lectures" and programmes of activities aimed at giving the "rebel" children a wide range of general knowledge, to organise number and word games, and to raise funds ..." (27)

Helen Joseph, amongst others, was actively involved in the organisation of 'Cultural Clubs' in Alexandra.(28)

Yet another event where Alexandra's African petty-bourgeoisie co-operated with the working-class was the 1957 bus-boycott. By 1957, given the increased running costs and the increased wages of its employees, Putco was finding it impossible to continue operating the bus service to

/120 ....

Alexandra without increasing fares.(29) On January 7 of that year, the fares were increased by 25%.(30)

In response to this sudden fare increase, thousands of Africans from Alexandra began their famous "Azikhwelwa!" ("we shall not ride!") campaign. Within two days, the boycott had become 100% effective.(31) The buses began travelling totally empty; and they were later withdrawn altogether. This total effectivity of the 1957 bus boycott is demonstrative of the "unity" - dimension of the relationship that existed between Alexandra's African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class. On the other hand, certain events occurred during the boycott that also demonstrated the ever-present "opposition"-dimension. For instance, one evening during the boycott a meeting was convened - Drum reports :

> "This was not really a meeting to consolidate the boycott so much. The question was what to do about the taxis who charged 2s to town. Some taximen suggested they might consider reducing to 1s 6d. Some people yelled, "What, one-and-six! We want fourpence, man!" The taxis appealed, and the deal was settled at 1s." (32)

Lambert has also stated that, during the very first days of the campaign, 20% of the passengers did in fact board the buses. He argues that

> "this 20%, who in the initial stages alienated themselves from the boycott movement, may represent petty-bourgeois elements ..." (33)

In any case, petty-bourgeoisie and working-class did ultimately unite in this campaign, thus giving it the form of a "people" versus "power-bloc" conflict. And it was precisely because the 1957 boycott had taken on such a form - ie a challenge, this time not to the Baloyis of the township, but to the "power bloc" itself (albeit indirectly) - that the Central State was determined to break it at all costs, and actually saw it as a political challenge. Ruth First writes :

> "After the first few weeks of the boycott Putco, had it been a free agent independent of Government pressure, would have returned to the old scale of fares. Only the Government blocked the way to a settlement. It did more than that. It threw the might of the State against the 60 000 walkers in a desperate bid to smash the boycott." (34)

The police force was used to crush the campaign. Furthermore, First continues :

> "Minister Schoeman prevailed on Putco to issue an ultimatum that if the boycott was not ended by the end of February, the buses would be withdrawn and the routes abandoned. And in case any other company had the notion that it could operate at lower costs, the Minister announced a new Bill prohibiting any company from operating on the routes from which Putco was withdrawing. It had become a matter of Government prestige that Africans should be compelled to pay the higher fare, even if there could be a lower one." (35)

The Government denounced the boycott as "political" and, according to First, "the bus boycott did, undoubtedly, develop into a political campaign." (36) Stanley Trapido, writing in Africa South in 1959, tells us that

> "The Nationalists had hastened to change an economic boycott into a political show of strength ..."

However,

> "in the end the boycotters won, and Parliament voted a subsidy for the bus company." (37)

2 CULTURAL PRACTICES

The organising theme of this study has been that the relationship between Alexandra's African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class was one of both unity and opposition. What implications did this relationship have for cultural practices in the township? The implications are that both classes in Alexandra Township were practicing "nationalist" cultures (given their unity), but that this "nationalism" of the two respective classes was of a different quality, (given their opposition) :ie, that of the working-class was "syncretistic",

/122 ....

whilst that of the petty-bourgeoisie was tinted by an aspiration to (or imitation of) "European" values.(38)

To illustrate this point I will examine here very briefly the operation of the Independent African Churches in Alexandra Township. We need to note, first of all, that the first Independent African Church - calling itself the "Ethiopian" church - was founded on the Witwatersrand in 1892. In the course of the 1900's, the so-called "Ethiopian movement" grew very rapidly throughout the country.(39) This movement expressed, it seems, the cultural practices of a people who were still in the process of being proletarianized ; and it is important to stress that, initially, it had not developed any internal differentiations based on petty-bourgeois and working-class experiences. The movement represented, nonetheless, a religious "nationalism", mainly because it was the response of a people who were experiencing a racist form of domination (which was itself a product of the form the CMP had taken in South Africa).(40)

In Alexandra Township, according to an Annual Report compiled by Dr Xuma, there were in 1940 37 church buildings. These had increased to 39 by 1942.(41) According to Libertas, "all denominations are represented (in the township), including several exclusively African."(42) In fact, by 1944, there were in Alexandra more than eighty Independent African Churches, represented through their superintendents, bishops and local evangelists. There were also by that time fifteen Mission Churches.(43)

Now, my argument is that in Alexandra, where class conflicts and contradictory class interests between petty-bourgeoisie and working-class had been especially intense as a result of the 'web of class racketeerings',

/123 ....

the Independent African Church movement had in fact developed a class-based internal differentiation in its religious-cum-cultural practices. Independent churches in Alexandra - and perhaps in certain other areas as well - could be distinguished in terms of their petty-bourgeois-based "Ethiopianist" orientation and their working-class-based "Zionistic" orientation."(44) This distinction was beginning to take shape by at least the early 1940's

i. PETTY-BOURGEOIS "ETHIOPIANIST" NATIONALISM IN ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

To demonstrate my point that the religious nationalism of Alexandra's petty-bourgeoisie was essentially imitative, I will consider here the "Constitution" of one "Ethiopianist" - type church that operated in Alexandra. Led by the Rev I Senyane in the township, the 'Ethiopian Catholic Church of South Africa' openly states in its printed "Constitution" that, insofar as "teaching" is concerned,

> "It receives and maintains the teaching of the Prayer Book of the Church of England ..." (45)

The very structure of the Church followed very closely the pattern of the Mission Church from which it had seceded :

> "There are three degrees of the Ministry in this Church : Bishop, Priests, and Deacons." (46)

The Archbishop was the head of the Church, and his functions were very similar to White Mission Churches :

> "His duty is to supervise all other Bishops, and to ordain Ministers according to the usages of the Book of the Common Prayer of the Catholic Church ... and (he has) all the powers known and conferred to a Bishop of the Catholic Church at large." (47)

/124 ....

Church organisation and Bible interpretation were 'carbon copies' of the Mission Church, and all the "legalistic niceties" of White Mission Churches enveloped the atmosphere of the "business" of the Ethiopian Church's annual conferences :

> "The procedure of the Conference will be : (a) to open and close with a hymn and prayer. (b) During the Conference the Communion or Eucharist will be daily performed. (c) The first day of the Conference will be the meeting of the Ministers only, ie, the Holy Conference. (d) All meetings will be daily opened with the Litany (e) The meeting consisting of all Ministers and delegates will commence on the second day, and the Bishop or his representative will deliver his address as the Head ... Having opened the Conference with hymn and prayer, the daily proceedings will be thus :
>
> (a) The roll of members present or absent. (b) Scrutiny of delegates. (c) Reading and confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting. (d) Motions. (e) Reading of letters received, if any, (f) Committee's Reports (g) Appointment of Committees. (h) General business ...(etc)".(48

The most important "Ethiopianist" - type church that operated in Alexandra Township and which was the 'social centre' of the township's petty-bourgeoisie, was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, situated at 10th Avenue.[49] Coloured standholders also belonged to this Church.[50] Another important petty-bourgeois Church that operated in Alexandra was the Bantu Methodist Church, of which R G Baloyi was a "prominent member".[51] It is rather ironical that in September 1947, right at the time when Alexandra's squatters were struggling to find some form of accommodation for their families,

> "Mr and Mrs M Mutlaneng of Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, entertained over 200 guests on the occasion of the opening of their beautiful new residence, "Mahlaseli" ...,"

/125 ....

It comes as no surprise that the Rev T Tawana of the Bantu Methodist Church was there, and said a "short prayer" at the opening of this "beautiful new residence." (52)

ii WORKING-CLASS "ZIONIST" NATIONALISM IN ALEXANDRA TOWNSHIP

One of the most important leaders of the "Zionist" movement was the Rev Paulo Mabilitsa, who was based in Alexandra Township and headed the Christian Apostolic Church in Zion (1920).(53) He had played a major role in building the Alexandra Central School, which was in fact erected on his own stand.

Mabilitsa's "Zionism", like that of Bishop Morupa's (who led the Jerusalem Sabbath Church in Alexandra), constituted a totally new, 'syncretistic' type of religious practice, which Sundkler has identified as the "Bethesda" type of Church.(54) Its religious-cum-cultural practices centred round the healing activities in the "sacred pond". And since this pond was usually located in the reserves, many Alexandra residents belonging to, say, Morupa's Church, frequently went there as the Bishop's "patients" to heal their various ailments.

Working-class links with the reserves, as a result, were very strong.

Blending 'pagan' and 'Christian' practices and beliefs, as Isaac Mathe wrote in the Star in 1963,(55) the 'syncretistic' practices of the "Zionists" constituted - at least in Alexandra - a new type of Church that not only refused to imitate the practices of the Mission Churches, but even violently denounced them. The form that this new type of religious

/126 ....

practice had taken had been directly determined by the needs of those who practised it. It was Alexandra's working-class who practiced it,(56) and its needs were centred around health problems.

Venereal Disease, Enteric Fever and, above all, Tuberculosis, were the main diseases that plagued Alexandra Township in the 1940's and 1950's.(57) The Alexandra Anti-T B Association stated in October 1950, that :

> "Alexandra Township, where 82 000 people live in one and three quarter square miles area, is ... a hot-bed of infection. Last year, 257 new cases of T B were reported ..." (58)

And in November of that same year, Adv. Fischer stated that

> "the biggest scourge in South Africa to-day (is) T B.(There was) a time when many people migrated to this country because there was no T B, but today it has the highest rate." (59)

A Dr F A Donnolly had told the Alexandra Family Welfare Centre in 1949 that

> "all were worried about its (ie T B's) rise and seriousness, especially among the Non-European industrial workers." (60)

"No country," continued Dr Donnolly, "can stand for long the strain on its man-power resources of approximately 20 000 T B deaths a year." (61)

But the important point here is that health services in Alexandra Township were extremely limited in scale :

> "Pointing to difficulties in the establishment of government anti-TB institutions, he (Dr C C P Anning) said that it was up to the people themselves to establish clinics, hospitals and treatment centres for those scourged by this disease under-mining the whole of the urban social structure." (62)

/127 ....

Being "up to the people themselves", the latter resorted to the 'healing powers' of the Zionist 'prophets'. The religious-cum-cultural practices they had resorted to, were practices meant for physical survival.

The cultural practices of Alexandra's classes were a reflection of their class struggles, class interests and needs. And these struggles, interests and needs were the product of Alexandra Township's own 'political economy', as it articulated with the 'global structure' of the social formation within which it was located.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

1 Africa South, vol 3, no 3, April-June 1959, p 31; Libertas, August 1942, p 2.
2 South African Institute of Race Relations papers, in Witwatersrand University Library, Church of the Province of South Africa Archives (hereafter referred to as SAIRR papers); Bantu World, July 3, 1948; Reality, July 1978, p 11
3 SAIRR papers; Libertas, op cit, p 4
4 SAIRR papers; Libertas, ibid
5 SAIRR papers
6 SAIRR papers; Davidson B, "The Urban African", chpt 5 in Report on Southern Africa, Jonathan Cape, 1952; Reality, op cit
7 Davidson, op cit
8 Kaplan, D, Class Conflict Capital Accumulation and the State, Doctoral Thesis, Univ of Sussex, (1979), Chpt 8
9 Lambert, R V, Black Working Class Consciousness and Resistance in South Africa : 1950-61 (Sept 1978), Chpt 2
10 Bantu World July 3 1948
11 All of them drawn from different papers, documents and memoranda in ~~teh~~ the SAIRR files
12 SAIRR papers
13 Africa South, op cit, p 38-9
14 ibid p 31; cf Couzens T, "Nobody's Baby : Modikwe Dikobe and Alexandra 1942 - 1946", in Bozzoli B, (ed.), Labour Townships and Protest, Ravan Press, JHB April 1979
15 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
16 ibid
17 ibid
18 ibid (my emphasis)
19 ibid
20 ibid
21 ibid (my emphasis)
22 ibid (my emphasis)
23 ibid (my emphasis)
24 Falwasser explained here that he had no means of assessing to what extent incomes were irregularly increased by sale of liquor etc.
25 ibid
26 ibid
27 ibid
28 ibid (my emphasis)
29 Bantu World, op cit (my emphasis)
30 Davidson, op cit (my emphasis)
31 Bantu World, June 4, 1949, (my emphasis)

/2 ....

CHAPTER 2

1 This 'organising idea', I need to note, was not borrowed from some theoretical text and then applied to Alexandra : rather, the empirical history of the township, allowed to enter into 'dialogue' with historical materialist concepts, gave birth to this 'organising idea'

2. cf Wolpe H, "The theory of internal colonialism : the South African case", in Oxaal, Barnett and Booth, Beyond the Sociology of Development 1975.

3 Kaplan, D, "The South African State : The Origins of a Racially Exclusive Democracy", in Insurgent Sociologist, vol 10, No 9, 1980. Kaplan has developed his argument in greater detail in his Doctoral Thesis, op cit.H Wolpe, however, in his article "Towards an Analysis of the South African State", International Journal of the Sociology of Law, vol 8, 1980, has offered a brief critique of Kaplan's thesis.

4 The alliance of the African petty-bourgeoisie and working class is most aptly demonstrated in the 'popular-democratic' struggles in South Africa in the 1950's, which were "historical phenomena" generated by "historical necessity" from the "social relations". These struggles, in the form of 'stay-aways', were the result of a society "where no attempt had been made to institutionally separate industrial issues from political and community conflicts" - see Webster, E, "Stay-aways and the Black Working Class", in Labour, Capital and Society, April 1981. But this does not mean to say that an alliance between the African petty-bourgeoisie and working-class is objectively possible or even subjectively desirable all of the time - this would be determined by the "specific conjuncture", as opposed to the "general characterization of a social formation" - see Wolpe, H, "The Changing Class Structure of South African Society - The African Petit-Bourgeoisie", Nov 1976 unpublished mimeo.

5 I shall be using the term "lumpenproletariat" to describe that class of unemployed (or at times even unemployable) Africans who had organised themselves extensively into criminal gangs in the township. "Parasitical class" might be a more appropriate term to apply to them, especially if we consider their different types of 'racketeerings' perpetrated at the expense of the whole township. I have, however, opted for the term "lumpenproletariat", for two reasons :
i) A Proctor (in his article "Class Struggle, Segregation and the City : a history of Sophiatown 1905-40", in Bozzoli op cit) also makes use of the term "lumpenproletariat" to refer to a similar group of people;
ii) "lumpenproletariat" does serve to remind us that the unemployment of these persons is 'structurally' explainable

6 Couzens op cit

7 Davidson op cit

/3 ....

8 The lumpenproletariat will not be examined at all at this stage - we will focus on them in our later attempt to explain their form of racketeering (as we shall see, the issues of work permits, influx control, etc., will be crucial in such an attempt).

9 SAIRR papers

10 ibid

11 ibid

12 Drum, March 1954, vol 4, No 3 p 55. This quotation also serves to illustrate the fact that not all 'businessmen' were necessarily 'standholders'. Dikobe was another example of a tenant who nonetheless 'did his own thing' as a hawker. As we shall see, however, such instances were very exceptional.

13 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
14 ibid
15 Bantu World July 3 1948
16 ibid,March 6, 1948
17 The World September 13, 1958
18 ibid, September 20, 1958
19 ibid, November 8, 1958
20 Davidson, op cit
21 Drum, November 1952, Vol 2, No ~~22~~ 11 p 6
22 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
23 Couzens, op cit
24 ibid
25 Libertas, op cit p 11
26 ibid
27 SAIRR papers
28 Drum, July 1952, vol 2, No 7, p 33
29 Bantu World, April 9, 1949
30 Libertas, op cit p 4
31 Davidson, op cit
32 Couzens, op cit
33 ibid
34 Davidson, op cit
35 Bantu World, September 23, 1950
36 Libertas, op cit p 15
37 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
38 Libertas, op cit p 11 (my emphasis)
39 The African Drum, May 1951,vol1[redacted] No 3, p 50
40 A Native Commissioners' Court for Alexandra Township had been proclaimed in July 1949. The establishment of the Native Commissioners office in the township was the first of its kind, catering exclusively for an African township. We also need to note here that, in their relations to Africans, 'Magistrates' were known as 'Native Commissioners' and were officials of the Native Affairs Dept.

41 Bantu World, October 28, 1950
42 Kaplan, D, Doctoral Thesis, op cit p 313
43 In the SAIRR papers
44 Kaplan op cit
45 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
46 Star, January 7 1965
47 Africa South , Vol 3 No 2 Jan-March 1959
48 Bantu World, July 3, 1948 (my emphasis)
49 Davidson, op cit
50 ibid (my emphasis)
51 Poulantzas, N State, Power, Socialism, N L B, London 1978, chpt 1; cf also Wolpe (1980) op cit
52 SAIRR papers
53 That this organisation was petty-bourgeois, will become evident when we examine some of its activities in Chpt 3.
54 Interesting to note here that the Coloured Labourers' Burial Society was under the control of a petty-bourgeois 'umbrella organisation'
55 SAIRR papers
56 ibid
57 ibid
58 The African Drum, March 1951, vol 1, No 1, p 36
59 Poulantzas, op cit, chpt 1
60 Althusser, L and Balibar, E, Reading Capital, N L B, London 1977 cf Althusser, E, "Reply to John Lewis" in Essays in Self Criticism N L B 1975
61 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
62 ibid
63 ibid (my emphasis)
64 ibid "
65 ibid "
66 ibid "
67 ibid
68 ibid "
69 ibid "
70 ibid "
71 ibid "
72 ibid. The North Eastern Districts Protection League was the organisation that had been formed to campaign for the abolition of Alexandra Township, as we shall see below.
73 ibid
74 ibid
75 Bantu World, July 3, 1948
76 Davidson, op cit
77 SAIRR papers (my emphasis)
78 ibid (my emphasis)
79 ibid
80 ibid "
81 ibid "
82 ibid "
83 ibid
84 ibid
85 ibid "
86 ibid

87 Libertas, op cit pp 11-12
88 Davidson, op cit
89 SAIRR papers, (my emphasis)
90 ibid, (my emphasis)
91 ibid, (my emphasis)
92 ibid
93 ibid, (my emphasis)
94 ibid
95 ibid, (my emphasis)
96 ibid
97 ibid
98 ibid, (my emphasis)
99 ibid
100 ibid, (my emphasis)
101 ibid
102 We need to here remind ourselves, however, that all this was just one side of the 'dialectic of unity and opposition' that existed between the two classes.
103 SAIRR papers, (my emphasis)
104 Libertas, op cit, p 12
105 SAIRR papers
106 ibid, (my emphasis
107 ibid
108 ibid
109 ibid
110 ibid
111 Bantu World, September 25, 1948, (my emphasis)
112 cf Davidson, op cit., (my emphasis)
113 Bantu World, September 18, 1948
114 SAIRR papers
115 Davidson, op cit
116 Couzens, op cit, (my emphasis)
117 SAIRR papers
118 ibid, (my emphasis)
119 ibid
120 Libertas, op cit, p 3
121 ibid, p 4
122 Bantu World, op cit
123 ibid, September 25, 1948
124 SAIRR papers
125 Libertas, op cit, p 5
126 SAIRR papers
127 ibid
128 ibid
129 ibid, (my emphasis)
130 ibid
131 ibid
132 ibid
133 ibid, (my emphasis)
134 Libertas, op cit, p 11 (my emphasis)
135 SAIRR papers, (my emphasis)
136 ibid
137 ibid
138 ibid, (my emphasis)
139 ibid, (my emphasis)

/6 ....

140 Bantu World, July 3, 1948, (my emphasis)
141 Bantu World, May 7, 1949
142 Star, October 8, 1964
143 SAIRR papers
144 ibid, (my emphasis)
145 ibid
146 ibid, (my emphasis)
147 ibid
148 Davidson, op cit
149 SAIRR papers
150 ibid
151 ibid
152 Libertas, op cit, p 5
153 Bantu World, January 25, 1947
154 cf, for instance, Wolpe, H., "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in S A : From Segregation to Apartheid", in Economy and Society, Vol 1, 1972, O'Meara, D., "The 1946 Mineworkers' Strike and the Political Economy of S A", in Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, vol XIII, No 2, July 1975.
155 cf, Morris, M, The State and the Development of Capitalist Social Relations in the S A Countryside : A Process of Class Struggle, Doctoral Thesis, Univ of Sussex, 1980.
156 Marx, K, Capital, vol 1, Penguin Books, 1976, chpt 25.
157 ibid, p 797
158
159 SAIRR papers
160 ibid
161 Rand Daily Mail, February 6, 1942
162 ibid
163 ibid, (my emphasis)
164 Sunday Times, October 7, 1945, (my emphasis)
165 The Star, October 1, 1945
166 ibid
167 SAIRR papers
168 ibid, (my emphasis)
169 ibid, (my emphasis)
170 Bantu World, September 3, 1949
171 ibid, (my emphasis)
172 ibid
173 ibid, (my emphasis)
174 ibid
175 ibid
176 ibid
177 ibid, (my emphasis)
178 The African Drum, November 1951, vol 1, No 8, p 8
179 ibid
180 Umteteli, January 30, 1943
181 Davidson, op cit
182 Africa South, vol 3, no 2, Jan-March 1959, p 33
183 The African Drum, op cit, p 9
184 Drum, May 1953, vol 3, no 5, p 41
185 Umteteli, op cit

186 The African Drum, October 1951, vol 1, no 7, p 7
187 ibid, (my emphasis)
188 ibid, p 8
189 SAIRR papers
190 Drum, October 1956, vol 5, no 10, p 27
191 ibid
192 Hence their name, "Spoilers"
193 Drum, May 1953, vol 3, No 5, p 40
194 ibid, October 1956, vol 5, no 10, p 27
195 ibid, May, 1953, vol 3, no 5, p 39
196 ibid, p 40
197 ibid, p 41
198 Africa South, vol 3, no 3, April-June 1959, p 33
199 Drum, September 1955, vol 4, No 9, pp 59-61
200 SAIRR papers; Libertas, op cit p 9
201 Ballinger papers
202 Africa South, op cit, p 32
203 Drum, August 1955, vol 4 no 8, p 27
204 ibid
205 ibid, September 1955, vol 4, no 9, p 59
206 ibid, p 61
207 ibid, December 1955, vol 4, no 12, p 33
208 ibid, October 1955, vol 4, no 10, p 67
209 ibid, January 1959, No 95, pp 32-3, (my emphasis)
210 ibid, October 1956, vol 5, no 10, pp 28-9 (my emphasis)
211 Africa South, vol 3, no 2, January-March 1959, p 31
212 ibid
213 Drum, January 1959, no 95, pp 32-3
214 Africa South, op cit, p 29
215 ibid, p 30
216 ibid, (my emphasis)
217 The World, September 20, 1958, (my emphasis)
218 Africa South, vol 3, no 2, Jan - March 1959, p 58, (my emphasis)
219 Ballinger papers
220 Bantu World, September 20, 1947
221 ibid
222 The World, ~~September 20, 1947~~ July 19, 1958.
223 Africa!, vol 1, no 7, September 1954, p 62
224 ibid
225 ibid, vol 1, no 4, June 1954, pp 61-2
226 ibid, vol 1, no 7, September 1954, p 63
227 Libertas, op cit, p 5
228 Africa South, vol 3, no 3, April - June 1959, p 31

CHAPTER 3

1 And given also the Central State's interest in co-opting potentially 'influential' strata of the dominated classes. (We would need to refer here to the Godley Commission, which, in contrast to the 'Stallardist' line, had urged the creation of an African urban petty-bourgeoisie)
2 Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism, op cit
3 SAIRR papers
4 ibid
5 ibid
6 ibid, (my emphasis)
7 ibid
8 ibid, (my emphasis)
9 ibid, (my emphasis)
10 ibid, (my emphasis)
11 ibid, (my emphasis)
12 ibid
13 ibid
14 ibid
15 ibid, (my emphasis)
16 ibid, (my emphasis)
17 ibid
18 ibid, (my emphasis)
19 The Star, October 8, 1964, (my emphasis)
20 Reality, op cit, p 12 (my emphasis)
21 The World, July 19, 1958
22 Bantu World, January 18, 1947; ibid January 25, 1947; ibid March 22 1947 ibid, April 9, 1947; ibid, April 26, 1947; ibid, June 28, 1947. See also Stadler, A W, "Birds in the Cornfield : Squatter Movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947", in Journal of Southern African Studies, vol 6 no 1, Oct 1979
23 SAIRR papers
24 Bantu World, December 6, 1947
25 SAIRR papers
26 ibid
27 ibid
28 ibid
29 ibid, (my emphasis)
30 ibid, (my emphasis)
31 ibid
32 ibid, (my emphasis)
33 By this I definitely do not mean to imply that the 'class powers' of all classes are constituted only at the level of economic relationships (whether at the 'level of production' or at levels beyond it, such as what I have termed 'class racketeerings'), and that then the dominant classes deploy State apparatuses to give effect to such economic interests as they may have. This would constitute vulgar 'economism' as Poulantzas (1978), op cit, and Wolpe (1980), op cit, have shown. On the other hand, empirical research on Alexandra Township shows us very clearly that the 'web of class racketeerings' in the township did play a determining role in so far as political power (accessibility to the Health Committee) was concerned.

34 SAIRR papers
35 ibid
36 ibid
37 ibid, (my emphasis)
38 ibid, (my emphasis)
39 ibid, (my emphasis)
40 ibid
41 ibid
42 ibid
43 The term 'fascistic' is here used in the specific sense developed by Laclau, E, "Fascism and Idealogy", in his book, Capitalism, Fascism, Populism , N L B, London, 1979
44 Africa South, vol 1, no 3, April - June 1957, pp 89-93. By "White indigenous nations" the B N S P meant "Afrikaners", who were contrasted to all the other "Uitlanders", ie, the English, Indians and Jews.
45 Lodge, T, "The Creation of a Mass Movement : Strikes and Defiance, 1950-1952", African Studies Seminar Paper, presented on August 10, 1981
46 Drum, March 1953, vol 3, no 3, p 10
47 Bantu World, October 25, 1947
48 ibid, November 29, 1947
49 Drum, op cit
50 Africa South, vol 3, no 4, July-September, 1959, p 53
51 The World, April 12, 1958
52 ibid, March 29, 1958
53 Bantu World, October 25, 1947
54 ibid, August 20, 1949
55 ibid, April 23, 1949

CHAPTER 4

1 This is so because, as Althusser has argued, men's 'lived' relation to the world is ideology itself : all men can only 'live' their relation to the world through some ideology. Further, it is ideology that constitutes 'bearers' of structures' into 'subjects' of history. And this ideology, this set of 'lived' cultural objects, is 'materialiazed' in organisational structures. Class struggle, therefore, must be seen as the 'lived' reality of classes 'materialized' in structures. So class struggle can only but be the materialization of an oppositional ideology/culture in some type of organizational structure. See Althusser, L "Marxism and Humanism", pp 231-236, in his For Marx, Verso Edition, London, 1979 ; also Poulantzas, State, Power, Socialism op cit, chpt 1

2 cf Laclau (1979), op cit. I say that "the people" only indirectly challenged the "power bloc" because only "immediate demands", "immediate interests" and "immediate objects" concerned them - cf Charles van Onselen's suggestion that the 1976 Soweto riots followed a particular "ghetto pattern", whereby "immediate anger is directed at immediate objects" (Couzens, op cit). I must also add here that, in considering the "people/power bloc" struggles in this section, I will not be concerning myself with the problem of which class in the 'popular-democratic' alliance was 'hegemonic'. This problem has been adequately dealt with by Lambert, op cit.

3 Africa South, vol 1, no 4, July-September, 1957, p 59
4 SAIRR papers
5 Couzens, op cit
6 SAIRR papers
7 Couzens, op cit
8 Africa South, op cit
9 ibid, vol 3, no 4, July-September, 1959, p 20
10 Drum, July 1952, vol 2, no 7, p 33
11 Couzens, op cit
12 ibid
13 ibid, (my emphasis)
14 ibid
15 ibid, (my emphasis)
16 ibid
17 ibid
18 Africa South, vol 1, no 1, Oct - Dec 1956, p 36
19 ibid
20 ibid, vol 3, no 2, Jan-March 1959, p 54; and see also ibid, vol 1, no 1 Oct-Dec 1956, p 43
21 And other areas, of course
22 Drum, June 1955, vol 4, no 6, p 20
23 ibid
24 ibid
25 ibid, p 22
26 ibid, p 21
27 ibid, November 1955, vol 4, no 11, p 19

/11 ....

28 This information was given to me by M Roussos
29 Drum, March 1957, no 73, p 24
30 Africa South, vol 1, no 4, July-September 1957, p 56
31 ibid, vol 1, no 3, April-June 1957, p 16
32 Drum, op cit, pp24-7
33 Lambert, op cit, chpt 4
34 Africa South, vol 1, no 4, July-September 1957, p 62
35 ibid, (my emphasis)
36 ibid, pp 61-3
37 ibid, vol 3, no 4, July-September 1959, p 20
38 "In The Marabi Dance Dikobe contrasted two alternative forms of culture - the petty-bourgeois Europeanised concerts and ballroom dancing of the B M S C and Inchcape Hall over against the Shebeen marabi music", writes Couzens, op cit.
39 Sundkler, B G, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, O U P, London, 1961, pp 38-9, and p 66.
40 Concerning this "nationalism", see Bantu World, November 1, 1947; The Friend, November 17, 1949; and the R D M, September 9, 1961
41 SAIRR papers
42 Libertas, op cit, p 9
43 Sunday Express, September 25, 1949; and Sundkler, op cit p 81
44 That such a class-based distinction did in fact operate within the Independent African Church movement is indicated by Sundkler, op cit pp 53-4, especially p 86; and p 191. "Zionistic" tendencies and "Ethiopionistic" tendencies cross-cut the formal set-up of the Independent African Churches in South Africa : it would be more wise therefore, to generally disregard the labels that the various Churches chose to attach to themselves, and to categorise them rather in terms of their actual practices and class-composition.
45 Ballinger papers (my emphasis)
46 ibid
47 ibid, (my emphasis)
48 ibid
49 SAIRR papers; see also Sundkler, op cit p 86
50 SAIRR papers
51 Drum, March 1953, vol 3, no 3 p 10
52 Bantu World, September 20, 1947
53 The African Drum, September 1951, vol 1,no 6, p 28; see also Sundkler op cit, p 49
54 Sundkler, op cit, p 109 and p 151
55 The Star, August 1, 1963
56 See footnotes 44 and 49 of this chpt
57 SAIRR papers
58 Bantu World, October 14, 1950 (my emphasis)
59 ibid, November 11, 1950 (my emphasis)
60 ibid, July 2, 1949, (my emphasis)
61 ibid, (my emphasis)
62 ibid, June 10, 1950, (my emphasis)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1 UNPUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

Most of the archival material used in this study was drawn from the South African Institute of Race Relations papers and the Ballinger papers, both of which are in the Witwatersrand University Library, Church of the Province of South Africa Archives. All quotations and information drawn from these papers can be traced to their specific box and file by referring to Mrs A Cunningham's Indexes to both the SAIRR papers and the Ballinger papers.

a. SAIRR papers

AD 843, B74 (1) : Alexandra Township Health Committee Regulations

AD 843, B74 (2) : Alexandra Township Health Committee - Minutes of Meetings

AD 843, B74 (3) : Alexandra Township Reports

AD 843, B74.4 (file 2) : Alexandra Health Committee Correspondence, 1942.

AD 843, B74.4 (file 3) : Alexandra Health Committee Correspondence, 1943-1949

AD 843, B74 (5) : Alexandra Township Memoranda

AD 843, B14.7.2-4 : Bantu Lads' Hostels - Apprentices; Bantu Youth

AD 843, B67.6 : Liquor

AD 843, B45.1 : Miscellaneous

AD 843, B26.8 : Locations and Housing

AD 843, B57.1 : Coloured Affairs

/13 ....

b. Ballinger papers :

A410, B2.14.6 : Correspondence on Native Affairs and the Ethopian Catholic Church.

A410, E2, (file 1) : Miscellaneous Memoranda

2 PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

a Africa ! (1954-55)

b African Drum (all issues)

c Africa South (1956-59)

d Bantu World (1946-50)

e Drum (all issues up to 1959)

f Libertas, August 1942

g SAIRR press cuttings

h South African Outlook (1950)

i World (1958)

3 SECONDARY SOURCES

Althusser, L , "Reply to John Lewis", in Essays in Self-Criticism, N L B , London, 1975

Althusser, L, For Marx, Verso, London, 1979

Althusser, L and Balibar, E , Reading Capital, N L B , London, 1977

Bozzoli, B, Labour, Townships and Protest, Ravan Press, Johannesburg, 1979

Davidson, B, Report on Southern Africa, Johanthan Cape, London, 1952

Goldberg, M, "Worker Consciousness : A Formulation and a Critique", unpublished History Workshop paper, February 1981

Kaplan, D, Class Conflict, Capital Accumulation and the State, Doctoral Thesis, University of Sussex, 1979

/14 ....

Kaplan, D, "The South African State : The Origins of a Racially Exclusive Democracy", in Insurgent Sociologist, vol 10, no 9, 1980

Koch, E, "Without Visible Means of Subsistence : Slumyard Culture in Johannesburg, 1918-1940", unpublished History Workshop paper, February 1981.

Laclau, E, Capitalism, Fascism, Populism, N L B , London, 1979

Lambert, R V, Black Working Class Consciousness and Resistance in South Africa : 1950-61, M A thesis , 1978

Legassick, M and Wolpe H, "The Bantustans and Capital Accumulation", in Review of African Political Economy, no 7, 1976

Lodge, T, "The Creation of a Mass Movement : Strikes and Defiance, 1950-52", unpublished African Studies Seminar Paper, August 1981.

Luckhardt, K and Wall, B, Organise ... or Starve ! , Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1980.

Marx, K, Capital, vol 1, Penguin Books, London, 1976

Morris, M, The State and the Development of Capitalist Social Relations in the South African Countryside : A Process of Class Struggle, Doctoral Thesis, University of Sussex, 1980.

O'Meara, D, "The 1946 Mineworkers' Strike and the Political Economy of South Africa", in Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, vol XIII, no 2, July, 1975.

Poulantzas, N, State, Power, Socialism, N L B, London, 1978

Roux, E, Time Longer than Rope : The Black Man's Struggle for Freedom in South Africa, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1978

Stadler, A W, "Birds in the Cornfield : Squatter Movements in Johannesburg 1944 - 1947", in Journal of Southern African Studies, vol 6, no 1, Oct 1979

/15 ....

Sundkler, B G, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, O U P , London, 1961

Unterhalter, J, "The Dark City - Alexandra Township", in Reality, July 1978, pp 11-12

Webster, E, "Stay-aways and the Black Working Class", in Labour, Capital and Society, 14/1, April 1981

Webster, E, "A Note on the Roots of Wiehahn and Riekert - Popular Struggle and Reform, 1958-1959," in Africa Perspective, No 18, 1981

Wolpe, H, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa : From Segregation to Apartheid", in Economy and Society, vol 1, No 4, 1972.

Wolpe, H, "The Theory of Internal Colonialism : the South African case", in Oxaal, Barnett and Booth, Beyond the Sociology of Development, 1975

Wolpe, H, "The Changing Class Structure of South African Society - The African Petit-Bourgeoisie", November 1976, unpublished mimeo.

Wolpe, H, "Towards an Analysis of the South African State", International Journal of the Sociology of Law, vol 8, 1980

==========