

MONTY NAICKER

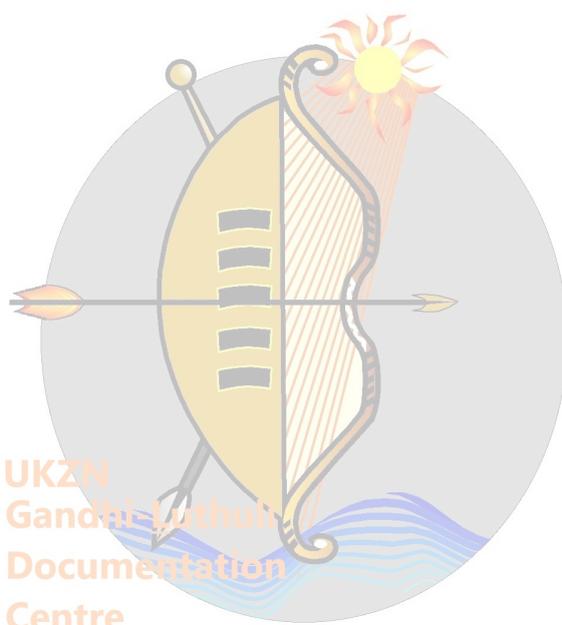
Between Reason and Treason

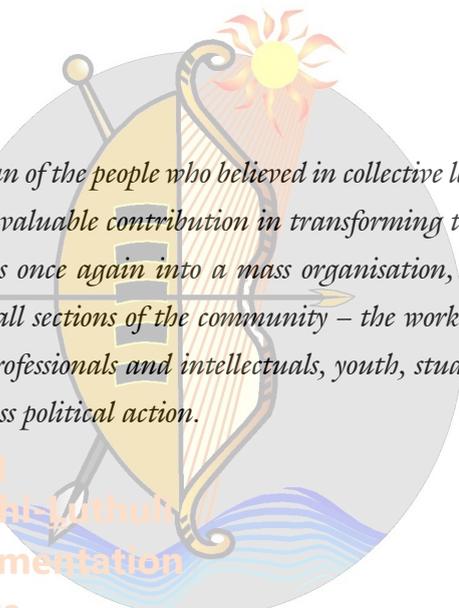
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ASHWIN DESAI

GOOLAM VAHED







Monty was a man of the people who believed in collective leadership and made an invaluable contribution in transforming the Natal Indian Congress once again into a mass organisation, unifying and mobilising all sections of the community – the working class, small traders, professionals and intellectuals, youth, students and women – for mass political action.

YUSUF DADOO

**UKZN
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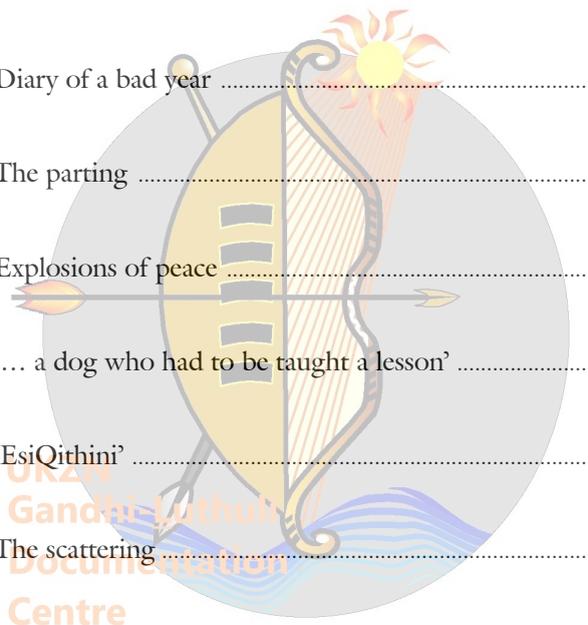
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Introduction

*'Aray chutiya, if I die who's going to write our story?'*¹

*All the shouting is over now, the memories are dim and the fires have long been doused with pragmatism. Who still remembers the struggles of the past? Who can recall the lifting of the voices?*²

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH

Born in Durban in 1910, the year the Union of South Africa united Boer and Brit in their quest to ensure white hegemony on the southern tip of Africa, Dr Gangathura Mohambry 'Monty' Naicker emerged as one of the most influential figures in South African politics by the middle decades of the twentieth century. His life provides a window into the times and turbulence of an evolving South Africa, and his story does more than reflect the history of South Africa in the making, for he was to play a role in shaping that history. From pivotal moments in the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) to decisive battles in the Congress Alliance that prompted a resurgence of mass struggles and non-racialism in the 1950s, Monty was a key player whose story provides an inside perspective on the ways in which the struggle for justice covertly developed in the heat of a revolutionary fever.

Pierra Nora described the rapid worldwide transformations of the last century as the 'acceleration of history.'³ Monty Naicker's youth and early adulthood were witness to momentous social transformations and extraordinary violence, both locally and globally. The age of British imperialism was beginning its decline as the early, insistent voices of Third World nationalism were raised across Asia and Africa. This was also the same time that the Western world descended into the barbarism of the First World War in which 40 million people perished. Indians in South Africa underwent a crucial leap of identity as they moved, under the guiding hand of Gandhi, from the politics of disparate identities of

caste, religion and region, to the politics of being “Indian South Africans”, who asserted their right to inclusion within South Africa as the equals of “Europeans”, although careful not to threaten the position of dominance that whites enjoyed. In Asia, another epochal event took place in the shape of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and this too later affected the way that Indians in South Africa defined themselves.

By the 1940s, just as all these new ideas were attracting the best minds among Indian South Africans, India gained independence from Britain. Changing economic and political circumstances in South Africa and “victory” in India were the spark for a second conceptual shift among many in the South African Indian intelligentsia, who began to urge a strategic reorientation towards collaborating with, and later being subsumed within, the maturing nationalist liberation struggle of Africans in the country. Thus as Monty’s life unfolded, so too did the contours of a new South Africa. As a young man studying at Marine College in Durban, he probably foresaw little of what lay ahead: the dispossession of African people, the herding of Indians into “coolie locations”, and the extension of white power and privilege. Afrikaner nationalism replaced the seemingly casual but nevertheless ruthless segregation of English colonial rule with the rigidly structured, openly ideological, and more callous racism of apartheid. The National Party (NP) created Bantustans so that Africans would have no rights except to labour in “white South Africa”, the last remnants of the franchise for the “coloured” people was removed, and the state sought to put Indians on ships destined for “some place else”. A string of laws hardened the boundaries of racial division and expanded the arsenal of repression against all who resisted, but no matter how harsh the laws of the apartheid state, resistance and rebellion were never completely snuffed out.

In narrating the biography of Monty, we tell the story of these changing times. It was not always clear that he would become one of the leaders who would revolutionise the politics of Indian South Africans and take it in a different direction, for as a young man his path seemed to be pointing another way. Monty’s father was a successful banana exporter and was insistent that his son pursue higher education abroad. In 1927, at the tender age of 17, he left

South Africa and travelled to the United Kingdom where he studied medicine at Edinburgh University. At Edinburgh he not only linked up with his shipmate and hometown girl Gonarathnam Naidoo, but also another South African, Yusuf Dadoo. Both were to form an integral part of his future.

Monty's early departure from his racially cloistered home environment, and exposure to a cosmopolitan and politically eclectic Edinburgh society had a huge impact on his life. There he discussed the struggles against British imperialism with fellow students, especially those from India, and debated the most effective ways of challenging colonialism and white supremacy. He became receptive to new ideas and tolerance, even embracing, of persons of other cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds – a characteristic which distinguished him from his father's generation and even others in his own social circles. It was at Edinburgh, too, that his writing and leadership skills were recognised, and he was appointed editor of the Edinburgh Indian Association Rulebook (cum Yearbook) and roped in to joining several committees. His experiences in Edinburgh cut across racial boundaries and his fraternisation with those who were imbued with the ideals of anti-imperialism were packed, along with his medical degree, into the suitcase that he brought back to Durban.

The newly qualified doctors returned to South Africa by the mid-1930s. Their three lives were to intersect, not through their medical practices, but through the interstices of political confrontation. By 1946, Dadoo, Goonam, and Monty were brought together once more as leaders of the seminal Passive Resistance campaign of 1946-48. Through the tactics and organising of the campaign, Monty, and the new leadership of the NIC, left their mark on the struggle against discriminatory laws that restricted Indians to living and trading in certain parts of Durban. Monty and Dadoo would form the heart and soul of what was to become a radical movement of Indian South Africans fighting against all forms of discrimination from the late 1940s.

Monty was among the first resisters to occupy a small piece of land at the intersection of Umbilo and Gale Streets in Durban. Under threat of violence and hardship, they held strong and became a courageous catalyst for the mass mobilisations that would follow. Of the 17 resisters in Monty's group, six were

women, demonstrating the integration of women and men in the front lines of the Congress movement, something that was to become a feature of NIC politics under his leadership. His wife, Marie Apavoo, would also enter the fray and lead demonstrators during the passive resistance campaign of 1946, play an important role in supporting those on trial for treason in 1956 and even later lend her name and stature to the anti-South African Indian Council (SAIC) campaign of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Both Monty and his wife realised however, that the first struggle was within their own community, to get rid of those who were stalling change.⁴

Monty had already made an impression in local circles when he joined forces with younger radicals who opposed the moderate, almost apologetic, approach of the then leaders of the NIC, notably A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather. As the world went to war in 1939, so too did a group of young activists who began to weave their own struggles on the streets of Durban, which would culminate in a local ‘war minus the shooting.’⁵ Forming themselves into the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC), Monty and his fellow travellers took on the Kajee-Pather faction in battles that were marked by biting invective and much drama, which spread from public confrontations into court battles and then back again. The ASC prevailed in 1945 and this victory brought to the fore a new and younger leadership that contained a mixture of professionals like doctors and lawyers, as well as factory workers who had cut their teeth in the fledgling trade union movement. The latter grouping had limited access to formal education but their ranks were filled with great public orators and theoreticians. Their “schools” and “universities” were the organising of trade unions and the political education classes of the Communist Party (CP).

Curries Fountain was overflowing as Monty was elected President of the NIC in 1945. The exclusion of women was immediately addressed. Dr Goonam (Gonarathnam Naidoo), a doughty and incorrigible character in her own right, wrote that while there was a large turnout of women at Curries Fountain and she occupied centre stage, the constitution of the NIC prevented them from voting. This was quickly rectified at the first meeting of the new executive when women ‘were given full membership on equal basis with men. I then paid

my subscription fee of one shilling and went on a campaign to enlist women members of our Congress.’⁶

This new politics was to change the course of the NIC and that of Indians in South Africa, and Monty became the flag-bearer of this movement. More than a half a century has passed since the events recounted in this book, but its narrative continues to be captivating for its sheer boldness and courage, as Monty and his band resisted the ever-increasing outrages of apartheid under the umbrella of the non-racial Congress Alliance during the 1950s.

Their ‘boldness and courage’ stemmed not only from having to confront a brutal regime but equally in attempting to change the mindsets and long-held prejudices of Indians and Africans. As M.D. Naidoo, another prominent activist of the 1940s and 1950s, pointed out, ‘you couldn’t grow up in South Africa and not be infected by racism in some way, so there was that sensitivity awareness [among activists].’⁷ Africans and Indians created and nurtured stereotypes of each other, and even activists grew up with such prejudices. For people like M.D. Naidoo and Monty, however, the time for a cross-racial alliance had come. There was no time for lengthy educational programmes and workshops in multiculturalism. It was time simply to throw NIC activists into joint campaigns and through this experience hope to overcome prejudice and facilitate a non-racial consciousness.

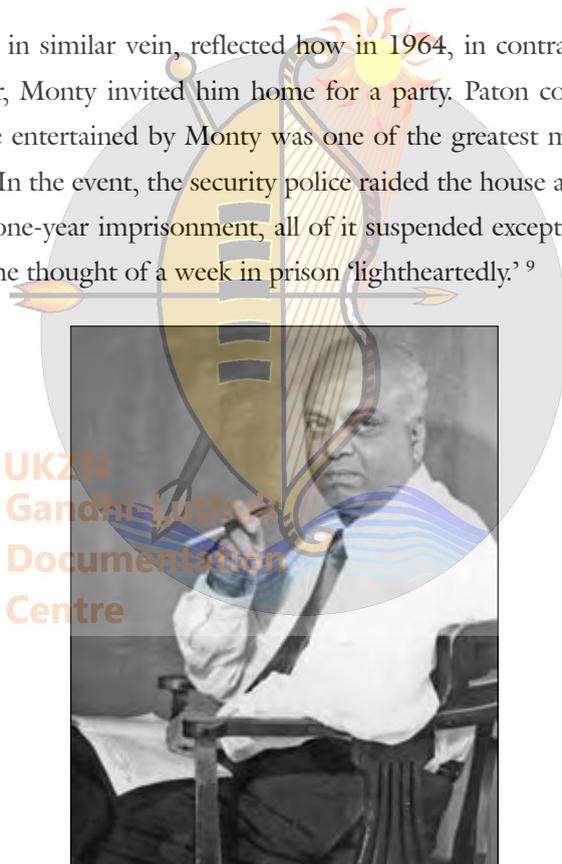
The histories of these movements are quickly disappearing, almost as fast as the ideas that inspired them. The lives of those who participated in these events are, sadly, rapidly coming to an end. We seek to penetrate the covers of the reading groups, trace the social collectives that were formed, and explain the ideological trends that animated discussions and captured the imagination of a set of leaders who would both begin, and inspire, the next half-century of struggles.

Monty was a man for whom jailings, bannings, court appearances and being “on the run” became a regular diet from the 1940s, but he did not seem to bear this as contemporary history makes out, as a martyr. Wonderful photographs of him dressed as a Muslim priest complete with false beard, and smiling at the camera, reveal a man who, while living one step ahead of the police, could

laugh, joke and place at ease those who were giving him sanctuary. Monty was very likely not much at ease himself during those years, but he tried to enjoy life, a point made by his long-time comrade and friend Dr Goonam at the time of his death:

There were moments when his inimitable smile and accompanying laughter would disarm us completely and it was impossible to get cross with him. He was naughty, but we were helpless against his many antics ... Whenever Monty arrived at a party the sedateness of the atmosphere would immediately disappear as young and old would suddenly liven up.⁸

Alan Paton, in similar vein, reflected how in 1964, in contravention of his banning order, Monty invited him home for a party. Paton could not refuse because 'to be entertained by Monty was one of the greatest minor pleasures of my life ...' In the event, the security police raided the house and Monty was sentenced to one-year imprisonment, all of it suspended except for one week. Monty took the thought of a week in prison 'lightheartedly.'⁹



© Kreesen Naicker

Hassim Seedat, a young attorney cutting his teeth in opposition politics and who had contact with Monty through his time in the NIC, described him as

an ‘imposing figure in the best sense of the word’. ‘He was tall,’ Hassim recalls, ‘and cut an imposing figure ... the kind of person who, when he walked into his surgery, his patients already began to feel better. And he exuded authority and command as he smoked his cigarette through a filter at an angle to add that little bit of pizzazz.’ Others remembered his direct gaze and the fact that he was ‘handsome, but in the sort of way you only noticed after the third meeting, once his humour and dependability rubbed off.’ Billy Nair remembered his immaculate nails. Could this have been the doctor in him? ‘He’d study his nails and, just when you thought he wasn’t listening to you, he’d sum up what you’d just been saying with that toothy smile of his.’

But great love for life and ability to take afflictions in his stride were married to a steely determination, great organisational ability and a principled belief in non-violence, which placed him at odds with many of his own comrades who had turned towards armed struggle during the difficult 1960s. Monty stood fast to his Gandhian principles.

Monty also played a crucial role in developing the international campaign against discrimination in South Africa. He was aware of the importance of independent India in the struggle to focus attention on South Africa and in 1947, at the height of the passive resistance campaign, made a trip to India that was both significant in developing his political outlook and garnering the support of India in opening up new fronts against apartheid in the United Nations (UN).

The visit to India deepened Monty’s conviction of the need for uniting the struggle of Indians with Africans. It was a memorable experience for him, and he captured with childlike reverence and wonder his meeting with Gandhi: ‘Never before was my soul so wrapped in joy ... To be with Mahatma Gandhi was like the vision of a dream. I was not going to meet a stranger. His teachings had become part and parcel of my life. His autobiography had been my Bible ... We will never forget the warm smile which lighted upon both of us [he was accompanied by Yusuf Dadoo] – the smile of the hero we had loved and admired for thirty years.’

But while Monty embraced Gandhi’s central message of non-violent resistance,

he took the struggle well beyond the boundaries defined during Gandhi's South African years. He was already developing close working relationships and friendships with Africans, and in 1947, he was a signatory to the historic Xuma-Naicker-Dadoo pact of cooperation between the ANC and the Indian Congresses. He also called for a 'United Democratic Front' in 1948 when addressing a mass meeting to celebrate his release from prison:

Our struggle has lit fire in the hearts of other oppressed people and unshackled their bonds to unite with all oppressed people of South Africa. We have reached a stage when we can no longer think in terms of the Indian people alone. We must form a United Democratic Front and challenge any force that will lead the land of our birth to the fate of fascist Germany or Japan.¹⁰

Monty and Yusuf Dadoo had an abiding friendship. However, while they shared a great deal in common, including a veneration of Gandhi, Edinburgh, their medical background, and the need to build a non-racial struggle, unlike Dadoo, Monty did not become a member of the CP. This did not noticeably diminish their friendship and political synergy, and in a way this symbolised Monty. While the Congress movement was sometimes sharply critical of the Liberal Party of which Alan Paton was a central figure, Paton and Monty clearly shared a warm relationship. Some might argue that this was a result of Monty's ideological fuzziness, while others would contend that it attests to his remarkable ability to draw people together and keep the goal of defeating apartheid sharply in focus. Rather than settling this debate, we invite you to keep it in your thoughts as we make our way through Monty's life.

In wanting to cement the growing unity between Indians and Africans, Monty was a prime mover in the Defiance Campaign of 1952. He led the first batch of Natal resisters and was jailed for a month. These developments were momentous, marking the first time that Indians and Africans joined together in a political campaign in large numbers and went to jail together. As apartheid hardened the racial divisions, so were these melted in the furnace of defiance. Monty was not just leading the NIC, he was taking it in new directions, and while he might not have always carried the Indian masses with him, symbolically he

was signalling a new path. He was one of the 156 activists arrested in December 1956 and was a defendant in the subsequent long drawn-out Treason Trial.

Monty's activism came at tremendous personal cost. Ironically, his greatest personal pain probably resulted from the Group Areas Act which literally re-designed the urban geography of Durban. It forced him out of his beloved home in Percy Osborne Road, a home that was the source of much joy and vibrancy, as poignantly captured by a frequent visitor, Dr Goonam:

The garden was beautifully laid out and some of us would disappear into it for a few minutes quiet as the din inside grew loud. It was a mardi gras for all of us who went back to our adolescent days with Monty taking the leading part. The two children Vasugee and Kreesen got used to the noise and slept undisturbed through it all. That huge fellow [from] the canine world Rinty (Rangasamy) would be sprawled across near the doorway and it was hop, skip and jump as guests went out for a breath of fresh air ... It was a meeting place for us – where there was fun and laughter and even an emergency meeting now and then. ¹¹

As Vasugee, Monty's daughter, would recall, 'these were very stressful times where we were harassed by the Special Branch. We had people from all racial and religious backgrounds as visitors at home, which was the unofficial residence of the Indian High Commission and some ANC members. I still remember that one of them [Joe Matthews] played the piano beautifully.' Imprisoned within the confines of the home by banning orders, Paton described how 'the beautiful and spacious white house' was replaced by a dark and gloomy one. 'We [Paton and his wife Dorrie] went to see him there and that was permissible according to the law, provided that Monty saw us one at a time. It was clear that some joy had gone out of him and it would never return.' ¹²

Monty and Marie spent much of this decade without their children. Vasugee only qualified and returned from overseas in the mid-1960s, while Kreesen went overseas in 1961, completed his schooling and proceeded to Bombay University where he qualified as a medical doctor in 1971. The 1960s were especially chilling in South Africa as the iron fist of John Vorster's repressive state machine, encompassing crude torturers through to petty, pliant judges,

began to impose itself. When activists were banned, family, friends and comrades often avoided contact because they were apprehensive that “guilt by association” may lead to their own banning or incarceration. Many were even afraid of phoning because of the perception that calls were tapped. Marie lived an especially lonely life, emotionally and psychologically, as her closest family was in the Eastern Cape.



Marie, Rinty, Monty and Vasugee.

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However, even if it was mainly at leadership level, the seeds of breaking the prism of “Indian” politics were germinating. Monty’s relationship with Albert

Luthuli grew and he became a key organiser, not just of the NIC, but of the Congress Alliance, an alliance of democrats from the four racially-defined progressive organisations of the day, each aspiring to mobilise support within their “own” communities for a non-racial democratic political order. It says much about Monty’s healthy respect for Chief Luthuli that the first sight that would greet anyone visiting his home was a large portrait of Luthuli dominating the lounge. While Dadoo was Monty’s great friend over the years, Luthuli was arguably his political beacon.

After five months on the run in the early 1960s, Monty emerged from hiding and immersed himself in the struggle, only to be served with successive banning orders from 1963 that were to extend into the next decade. Once the bannings ended, he gradually slid back into struggle. One of his last acts was to head the anti-SAIC Committee that was set up in 1977. Sadly, he died within months of taking up the cudgels of leadership one more time.

In painting Monty onto a national canvas, we try not to foreground his politics to the extent that the person vanishes into “the struggle” or that he emerges as one-dimensional. We want Monty’s individuality, his personality, especially when it stood at odds with “the national”, to come to the fore. To this end, we have harvested an array of materials, including some amazing photographs, contemporary newspaper reports, memoirs, private letters, Monty’s speeches, confidential Security Branch files, court records, and Monty’s address books and personal diaries. The real tragedy of this story is that only three diaries survived the multiple police raids. Monty was a compulsive diarist, according to his son Kreesen, and boxes of material were seized over the years, never to be returned. We have buttressed these sources with interviews with those who lived during the seminal period of the 1940s and 1950s, and the families and friends of those who have passed on, when the ethos and ideals of the liberation movement were being experimented with and worked through. This includes many rank and file members who were not constrained by presenting “the party line”.

We explore also that critical period when those with Gandhian ideals of non-violent resistance came up against those who were gravitating towards armed

struggle. Many who opted for armed struggle were to suffer intensely. Billy Nair, Mac Maharaj, Ebrahim Ebrahim, Nattoo Babenia, Kader Hassim and others spent considerable time on Robben Island. We seek to capture their struggles too. And then there were the likes of Phyllis Naidoo and George Ponnen who were forced from the land of their birth. Exile, too, was painful and some, like H.A. Naidoo, never recovered from the sense of isolation and distance from everyday resistance and organising in South Africa.

Monty died on 12 January 1978. Dr Goonam wrote a moving farewell to “her” Monty, with whom she shared five decades of comradeship: ‘Monty the lovable Krishna came to life for us to love and cherish his ideals.’¹³

We hope in this book to bring Monty back to life, and were inspired by the words of Ranji S. Nowbath, best remembered for his biting and humourous weekly articles as ‘The Fakir’ in *The Leader*. Nowbath wrote to Zuleikha Mayat, president of the Women’s Cultural Group, on 24 February 1980, shortly after the death of her husband, Dr Mahomed Mayat, imploring her to write his history.

Time is against you and the Indian community ... I have given my spare time to a study of the history of emigration from India and the rise, growth and development of the Indian population of different parts of the world ... In the course of my research I have found a disturbing failure by our people to state their point of view and to place on record their work for and their contribution to the struggle of the community. I did find a wealth of material and historical data from the “official” side but no real interpretative statement from the Indian side by those who made the history of their people and we now find that we do not know much of those who played important parts in the lives of our people. Shortly after my return from India in 1952, where I had spent two and a half years researching the history of emigration from India and the founding of Indian settlements outside of India, I tried to persuade the old Indian leaders to record their memoirs. I wrote, among others, to Mr Sorabjee Rustomjee, Mr P.R. Pather, Mr Albert Christopher and Mr S.R. Naidoo, asking them to get together their papers and documents and to compile a biographical account of their lives and works. Unfortunately, none of them got down to it.

Now I write to you and the mission is the same. You must compile a biographical

account of the life and work of Mahomed. [He], like everyone is, was the result of his heritage [and] did not grow up and become what he was in a vacuum. He was a totality of things ... The canvas is vast and magnificently kaleidoscopic. The material is there, the challenges are there ... The end result could be a significant contribution ... We must not look at whether the work will be completed or not. It is sufficient that the task is begun and that each day sees its furtherance. ¹⁴

In some ways this is a challenge that we have sought to take up in this study. Our canvas is wide and we discuss not just Monty, but the “Full Monty”, the wider cast of characters who were active during these years. And it was some cast! While we now have a fuller account of this period, the record remains far from complete and the challenge remains to both tell the stories and critically interrogate existing interpretations. We need, in other words, to record the many perspectives of the past to ‘enrich what it meant to live in this period ... [and] reduce the dangers of oversimplifying the past ...’

But even as we take up the challenge and strive to expand our understanding of these important decades in our history, we are fully aware of the limits of what we can achieve. Archives, official and unofficial, written and oral, shape our histories in crucial ways. During the course of our research we requested Special Branch records of Monty from the National Archives. We received the documents in September 2008 after a delay of almost six months. To our consternation every name on every document was systematically blocked out. The image in our minds of an archivist sitting in a dark and dingy corner somewhere in that spartan building in Pretoria, armed with a black marker, and arbitrarily undertaking this task in routine fashion, is almost surreal.

It is especially disturbing and worrisome because so much is at stake. This blatant censorship will influence what is known and what remains hidden in our narrative. It also means that some who contributed to the downfall of apartheid will remain anonymous, as will those who informed on their colleagues. This blurs the boundaries between those who stood firm in their commitment to the defeat of apartheid, and those who have this reputation and who affected this mien throughout their lives but were in fact agents of the apartheid state.

At the same time, this book emphasises that binaries like “collaborators”/“non-

collaborators”; “violent”/“non-violent” are too simplistic a way to tell this story. The times were complex and required activists, many of whom were barely out of their teens and mostly unprepared for the punishment meted out by the state, to make critical decisions on the spur of the moment.

There has been a profusion of anti-apartheid writing over the past decade. Much of this, understandably, has been hagiographic, and often reads as an inexorable and clear road to freedom. In compiling this story, we tried to add complexity to this burgeoning historiography by dealing with the challenging questions. Monty’s life spanned almost three-quarters of the twentieth century. His life started with the Union, saw the end of indenture, the urbanisation of Indians, the era of the Agent-Generals and the dominance of politics by moderates, the growth of trade unions and emergence of a radical politics, passive resistance, apartheid, 1949, cross-racial defiance campaigns, the Freedom Charter, the Treason Trial, the Republic, bannings, Black Consciousness, and the Soweto uprising. It was an era of both excitement and danger, as the liberation movements experimented with a myriad of resistance strategies as the vision of a free South Africa was being fashioned.

Monty’s life cannot be viewed in isolation from these unfolding events. Skinner *et al.* point to the existence of ‘persons in history and history in persons,’ suggesting that in presenting life histories we need to ‘search for the interface between personal trajectories and larger structures within which they struggle to constitute themselves as actors and persons vis-à-vis others within and against powerful socio-political and cultural worlds.’¹⁵ In examining Monty’s life against this background we hope both to challenge existing perspectives, and to bring fresh ideas to the transformations that South Africa underwent during these critical decades.

We hope that the result is not simply a triumphalist narrative of good conquering evil, but a nuanced study of a life lived in the heat of the very first resistances against apartheid rule.

Passage to Edinburgh

It is small wonder that Monty embraced politics later on in his life – his beginnings were coloured by it. Monty's father Gangathura Papiah Naicker was a well-known figure in the Indian community by the early 1920s. His involvement in business as a banana exporter and holder of Stall No. 67 at the Victoria Street Indian Market, and in politics through numerous organisations of colonial-born Indians and cultural groups, connected him into the networks of Indian life in the city. Monty's mother, Dhanam Pillay, like Papiah was a colonial-born descendant of migrants who had arrived in Natal from Mauritius in the 1880s. Dhanam and Gangathura married on 30 October 1909 at the Naicker family home in May Street, Durban. They had four children. Mohambry (Monty), the eldest, was born on 30 September 1910, followed by Karpagaville, Yoganayagee, and Loganathan.

As Papiah's businesses flourished through the 1920s, he purchased a double-storey building in Leopold Street, which had warehouses on the ground floor and flats on the first floor where he resided. A description of the family home in the 1940s speaks of four bedrooms, a drawing room, kitchen, pantry, breakfast room, and lounge. The kitchen had an electric stove, "meat safe", table, and drawing board. The pantry housed Dhanam's sewing machine, crockery, and linen, while the breakfast room had a writing bureau and large dining table with six chairs. Visitors were entertained in the drawing room, which was carpeted and housed several arm chairs, a book case, palm stand, sideboard, a glass-topped dining table, and an imposing engraved wooden ornamental standing clock. The bedrooms had twin beds and two piece suite couches. One of Papiah's nieces remembers that the family lived "British Raj" style, with starched embroidered table linen and silver cutlery. ¹

Papiah's middle-class status and lifestyle stood in contrast to the majority of Indians. One step out of indenture, these new arrivals in the urban environment

often lived in rudimentary shelters on the margins of the city. Despite his personal success, Papiah was aware that the position of Indians was tenuous. The white ruling class had signalled its antagonism by seeking to speed up the repatriation of Indians and passing discriminatory legislation which curtailed opportunities to trade. The situation became increasingly acute as the years wore on. For Papiah and Dhanam, the safety net for their children lay not in making the transition into business, but education. Prospects for secondary education in Durban were limited, and non-existent at university level.

*Papiah, Yoga, Kay,
Mrs Parnell (Adrians'
mother)
L to R)*

© John Parnell Collection

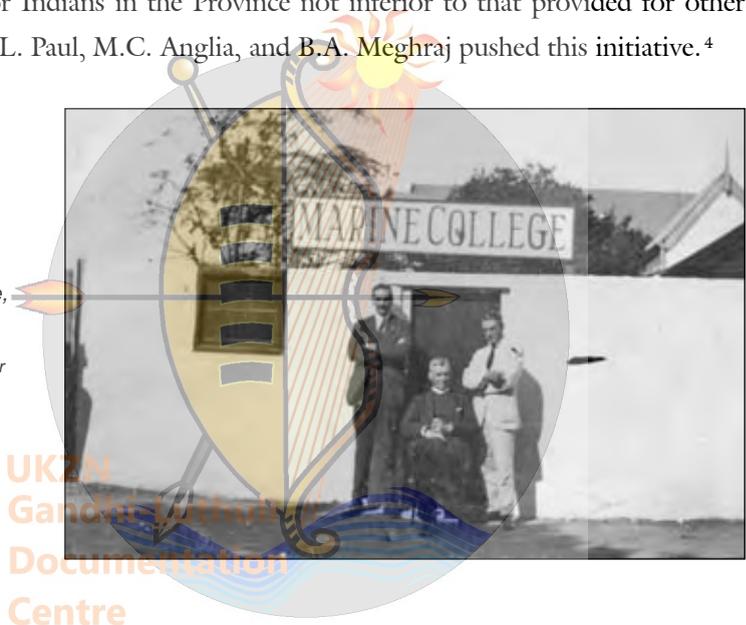


Papiah looked overseas, and eventually all four children were sent to Edinburgh. The sending of girls was unusual and indicates the Naickers' determination to see them access an education denied to them in South Africa. While Monty qualified as a medical doctor, Loganathan became ill in Scotland and returned without completing his studies. Karpagaville (Kay) and Yoganayagee (Yoga) did finish their degrees, but both chose to settle in Scotland. Kay died of pneumonia in Dundee in early 1954. Yoga, who died in 1982, married Scotsman Adrian Parnell, who was a professor in the Arts Department at Edinburgh. Yoga's son and Monty's nephew, John Parnell, is currently a Professor of Botany at Trinity College, Dublin. From their first leaving to Scotland, neither Yoga nor Kay ever set foot in the land of their birth again.

Monty was fortunate with regard to his schooling. The Natal Education Commission reported in 1909 that the Government was ‘seriously lagging’ in providing schools for Indians whose ‘contributions to the revenue entitle them as our fellow subjects to elementary education at least.’² Many Indian merchants and professionals were troubled by the lack of opportunities for young Indians and in August 1911 a group of them led by H.L. Paul formed the Durban Indian Educational Institute to prepare students for the Cape University Junior Certificate examination.³ This was succeeded by the Durban and District Indian Educational Committee in 1918, which had the more ambitious aim of ‘securing education for Indians in the Province not inferior to that provided for other sections.’ H.L. Paul, M.C. Anglia, and B.A. Meghraj pushed this initiative.⁴

*Marine College,
Leopold Street*

© Kreesen Naicker
Collection



Monty attended the Carlisle Street Boys School from 1917 to 1922, where he completed his junior school certificate, and he proceeded to Marine College in Leopold Street where he studied until 1927. The timing was fortuitous as Marine College was a short-lived but important institution, opened in the very year that Monty became eligible for entry into secondary school. There were no high schools for Indian children in South Africa until then. It was founded by J.L. Papert in 1923 and its graduates included the likes of V. Sirkhari Naidoo and Ashwin Choudree, both of whom would play important roles in the Indian community and K.M. Mistry, who qualified as a medical doctor at Edinburgh.

After the opening of Sastri College, Marine College was closed in 1929. Monty left the school with a testimonial dated 1 March 1928, signed by Registrar D. Gifford:

This is to certify that G. Mohambry Naicker has been a student of the Marine College, Durban, South Africa, since its inception five years ago, that he entered as a candidate for the Matriculation Exam of the South African University in December 1927 – and passed in Mathematics and Book-keeping and that he sat for the remaining subjects last month (February) and that the results are awaited. The conduct of G.M. Naicker has been most exemplary and the very best wishes are expressed all round that he will be worthy of his excellent father who is one of the most respected members of the Indian Community of Durban.

Monty was a teenager when he left the shores of Durban to fulfil his calling to study medicine; an opportunity denied him in the land of his birth. His diaries reveal a young man full of the exuberance of youth. The tedium of the long journey by sea was broken, in equal measure it seems, by practical jokes, and his attempts to attract the attention of a girl whose smile, he would record, apparently ‘cut [him] to the bone.’ Monty was not alone on that journey, as a family friend, Gonarathnam Naidoo, was also embarking on a career in medicine. Both lived in the “Indian Quarter” of central Durban and through sheer coincidence ended up on the same ship to Scotland. Dr Goonam described the day of their departure, 8 March 1928, in her autobiography *Coolie Doctor*:

The *Edinburgh Castle* stood majestically in the docks. We found another family on the docks, that of Monty Naicker’s. I discovered only then that he too was bound for Edinburgh for a medical career ... Monty Naicker, Thumbie [Dr. Goonam’s brother who accompanied her to Cape Town] and I were the only black passengers on board. We were given a separate table. It embarrassed us, but we made no objections. The whites couldn’t make up their minds whether they should talk to us, or not. It wasn’t the done thing to fraternise with black people. We too were hesitant to approach them for fear of a brush off. There was also a class barrier on board the ship, between first and the second and third class passengers, and the latter were friendlier and I almost wished I had been

travelling with them. I was a bit nauseous during the first day or two and Monty made much of it. 'Go feed the fishes,' he teased as he disappeared into the dining room and left me on the deck leaning against the rails.⁵

The journey was a remarkable one for Goonam to undertake, given the cloistered environment in which women were nurtured. But where Indians were concerned, it is important to remember that they were forced to seek opportunities abroad because of the institutionalising of a racial order that limited life options for those who were not white. As far as Indians were concerned, government policy was to ship them off to India or any other colony willing to accept them. Monty was born in 1910, the year in which the Union of South Africa came into being. Indenture still had a year to run and Port Natal was witness to human cargo being unloaded and distributed all over the Province. There were around 150 000 Indians in South Africa in 1911. The majority were concentrated in Natal (133 000) and just over 40 percent (64 000) were born in South Africa.⁶

we forget the stares that burned through our skins
the shattered moments
that came with shattered windows.⁷

SADHU BINNING (1994)

The atmosphere in Natal was filled with virulent white anti-Indian racism. Monty was just two when Gopal Krishna Gokhale, described in the *Cape Times* as 'one of the most cultured and high bred of Indian gentlemen [and] ... one of the eminent British Indians,'⁸ visited South Africa on a whistle-stop tour during October and November 1912, and, albeit unintentionally, roused Indians to unprecedented levels of nationalist fervour. A year later thousands of Indians, including Monty's father and uncle, who were intimately involved in the politics of the so-called 'colonial-born' Indians, brought the Natal economy to a standstill during the Great Strike of 1913. This strike was the making of one Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who left the shores of South Africa in July 1914 with these words of farewell from Smuts: 'The saint has left our shores; I sincerely hope forever.'⁹

World War One broke out shortly afterwards. Although discriminated against, most Indians continued to see themselves as part of the British Empire, and a mass meeting in Durban ‘declared its loyalty to the King-Emperor, and its readiness to serve the Crown and to co-operate with the government in defense of the country.’¹⁰ Around seven hundred Indian stretcher-bearers served in East Africa under Albert Christopher, including Monty’s paternal uncle, Mariemuthoo, whose son M.P. Naicker would be a key figure in radical Indian politics from the late 1940s.

The expectation of people like Papiah and Mariemuthoo that participation in the Great War would yield just rewards was shattered by renewed anti-Indian agitation once the Empire had been secured. An Indian Corp member who lost a leg on the battlefield and could not climb to the top of the tramcar where a few rows were reserved for “Coolies”, was prohibited from sitting at the bottom because it was against the by-laws. For *Indian Opinion*, ‘if this is the way men who have all but met their deaths for the sake of the Empire’s cause are treated by our Town Council, what treatment are we to expect for other Indians?’¹¹ The answer was soon clear. While the Town Council erected a Roll of Honour in 1921 for white municipal employees killed in the war,¹² Indian appeals for a memorial were ignored.¹³ The years after 1918 would show that the English in Natal provided a template for the racist practices of their Afrikaner counterparts after 1948.

Instead of redress, the political, economic, and social screws were tightened against Indians. The South African League, which had been formed in 1919 to rally against the “Asiatic Menace”, regarded Indians as a ‘serious moral, economic and political menace’ and demanded their repatriation ‘as speedily as possible’ because they caused unemployment and lower living standards among whites. Indians should be segregated in reserves and banned from employment in ‘positions of responsibility.’¹⁴ The League’s invective was openly hostile:

Go to Umzinto; one white store only, but scores of coolie shanties extending on both sides of the long street. Tongaat, Stanger, Glencoe, Waschbank, not a white store there. Danhauser, a city of coolie shacks and shanties. Natal swamped in

every quarter with unwanted Asiatics ... The time for direct and forceful action has arrived.¹⁵

The government appointed an Asiatic Inquiry Commission in 1920, a victory of sorts for the League. Although the Commission found that the “Asiatic menace” was a myth, it recommended voluntary segregation and firmer immigration laws.¹⁶ The all-white Durban City Council (DCC) took the cue and began to restrict Indian trade and voting rights. From 1922 the Council could stop the sale of municipal land to Indians, and when a councillor suggested that Indians were in need of land, Councillor H. Kemp replied that there was plenty in India.¹⁷ Indians were deprived of the municipal franchise in 1924.

But Natal and South Africa were not alone in these feelings – Monty’s formative years should also be seen in a wider international context. The African-American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois, who prophesied in 1903 that ‘the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line,’ wrote in 1925 that General Smuts was ‘the world’s greatest protagonist of the white race ... He expresses bluntly ... what a powerful host of white folk believe but do not plainly say in Melbourne, New Orleans, San Francisco, Hong Kong, Berlin and London.’¹⁸ Across the ocean, Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points of 1917, the idealistic basis of the League of Nations, created optimism that imperialism and racial oppression were at an end. Despite Wilson’s public pronouncements, however, he barred African-Americans from enrolling at Princeton.

When the creation of a League of Nations was mooted in 1919, the Japanese called for an “equality clause” to end international racial discrimination. The Americans balked at this demand for they would have had to repeal their own anti-Asian legislation and the racial equality clause was excluded from the League’s Charter.¹⁹ The outcome at Versailles was a blow to black peoples across the globe. Future ANC Treasurer-General Dr S.M. Molema, who qualified as a medical doctor in Glasgow in 1920, wrote in his book *The Bantu* (1920) that the ‘hollowness’ of Western liberalism ‘surprised the outside thinking world when after four years of hard struggle side by side ... and victory, the Western world ... made a blot by making a fine distinction between the East and the West.’²⁰

Versailles marked the moment, Du Bois observed, when ‘the “new religion” of whiteness showed no signs of losing its sway.’²¹ It was during these meetings that General Jan Christian Smuts, Monty’s future foe, moulded his reputation as an international statesman. He was a key figure in drafting the pamphlet, *The League of Nations*, which became a bestseller. Wilson’s delegation was so impressed that they even mooted for him to become the next British ambassador to the United States.²² At the Imperial Conference in London in 1921, Smuts alone ‘stood out against the policy of granting equal rights to Indian immigrant communities across the Empire.’²³ He was emphatic that South Africa’s political system ‘rests on inequality and recognising the fundamental differences which exist in the structure of our population.’ Shortly before the Imperial Conference of 1923, Smuts reiterated that the binary politics of whiteness drew ‘a clearly marked line you can follow ... the coloured line which is in existence today.’²⁴

This “colour line” shaped people’s lives in Natal. Both the law and private institutions like businesses, schools, and trade unions, determined where people could live, whom they could socialise with, what education they could access, and what kinds of work they could do. Unless you were white, you were treated like a second- or even third-class citizen based on the belief of many whites that they were superior, and that giving access to Blacks would drive down their standard of living. Like the Spanish Influenza of 1918, racism and its degradation and stigmatising of those not white, was a virus that few could escape.

Amidst all the anti-Indian agitation and sense of foreboding as Monty was growing up, there were times of inspiration. For Monty and Goonam the visit of a distinguished poetess was particularly captivating. Sarojini Naidu took South Africa by storm during her visit in February 1924. Unlike other Indian dignitaries ‘The Nightingale of India’ upset whites by speaking her mind freely. One legend has it that when she was asked why she did not confine herself to “women’s issues” she retorted, ‘What will the poor men do then?’²⁵

Like Gokhale a decade earlier, Sarojini Naidu bowled locals over; unlike Gokhale, however, she did not couch her views in diplomatic niceties. At the Wanderers Hall in Johannesburg on 28 February 1924, she told the capacity

Indian audience that the attitude of the British was, ‘we conquer, we rule, we trample down, we make graveyards where there were gardens, we rule with the iron heel, we flash the sword and daze the eyes of those who would look us in the face.’ Her message for South African Indians was emphatic:

Europeans and Indians can only live in this country on equal terms. The land belongs to neither. It is the land of the ... African ... The Englishman came to trade, because those dear little islands were not big enough. My brothers came ... to give food and raiment, as miners and sappers for the white settlers, and now it is said: “Go now, thou pig, to thy pigsty.” ... I have come to ask for justice, not concessions. I scorn concessions. I want no favour.²⁶

She urged Indians to refuse ‘a position of inferiority.’ Gandhi, she reminded them, ‘left passive resistance as a legacy and warning to the European people. I earnestly hope that it is not necessary to remind the people of the lessons of passive resistance.’ The *Cape Times* described her remarks as ‘outrageous’ as she gave ‘free rein to her very considerable gifts of oratory ... she has come to agitate and to do nothing but agitate.’ Outraged by her comments, the Mayor of Johannesburg refused to attend a reception in her honour or allow the Town Hall²⁶ to be used for the occasion. From Johannesburg, Sarojini Naidu made her way to Durban. I.C. Meer recalled the train passing through Waschbank:

[We] had assembled four hours ahead of time. Our hearts swelled in expectation. We had practised our hurrahs to perfection. The train drew nearer, it slowed down and proceeded at snail’s pace. We saw Mrs Naidu seated at the window; we waited for our signal. Our cheerleader, Desai Chacha, had to say ‘Hip! Hip!’ before we could say ‘Hurrah!’ But Desai Chacha was so overcome by the history of the moment that the ‘Hip! Hip!’ got stuck in his throat. We saw Mrs Naidu smile at us, expecting some greeting. Nothing came...As the train disappeared ... we heard a limp squeak, ‘Hip! Hip!’²⁷

In Durban, Sarojini Naidu visited young Goonam’s home; Goonam, in turn, had listened to Naidu ‘tongue-tied in admiration, when she had addressed the huge meeting at the City Hall.’²⁸ The South African Indian Congress (SAIC)

elected her as president, which was ironic given the absence of women in that organisation. Sarojini Naidu was to become one of Gandhi's closest allies. Blessed with a wicked sense of humour, her closeness to Gandhi did not prevent her from using her wit to poke fun at his expense. In response to the generous donations from Indian industrialists to keep the Sabarmati Ashram going, she quipped that 'it cost a great deal of money to keep the Mahatma living in poverty.'²⁹ With the independence of India on 15 August 1947, she became the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, India's first woman governor. She died in office two years later in March 1949. At the time of her death, an editorial in the local *Indian Opinion* recalled:

Her visit to South Africa was met with open hostility by the Europeans. But the more hostility, the more she enjoyed ... We remember the occasion when she addressed a packed gathering of Indians and Europeans at the City Hall at Pietermaritzburg. The Gallery was filled with European hooligans who had especially come to break up the meeting. When Mrs Naidu rose to speak pandemonium was let loose. But [her] voice rose above the din and she needed only a few words of reproach ... when every hooligan quietly slipped away.³⁰

But in 1924, her brilliant oratorical skills had little effect on white policymakers. As an editorial in *The Friend* pointed out, the visit 'renewed agitations and undermined the foundations of European civilisation.'³¹ Pressure for segregation intensified. Despite Smuts losing the 1924 election, the government introduced the Areas Reservation Bill in Parliament in 1925. There was overwhelming support in Durban for 'this legislation ... and a great deal more than the Bill would achieve.'³¹ According to one official report in 1926, the Durban City Council wanted to 'create an atmosphere in favour of the compulsory repatriation of Asiatics, whether born in South Africa or not' because whites objected to being 'ousted by a less civilised race.'³²

Monty's father would in all probability have been involved in events leading up to the meeting of Indian leaders in Cape Town in January 1919 to discuss anti-Indian agitation, both because of his connections with colonial-born politics and because the agitation was directed against people like him who sought

to exploit markets for trade in the city centres. Durban was represented by a number of merchants in their individual capacities as the NIC had disintegrated in 1915.³³ Little was achieved. The NIC, revived in May 1921, pushed for national unity which was finally achieved in May 1923 when the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) was formed.

This was followed by a Round Table conference in December-January 1926-27 involving South Africa and India, around the time that Monty was entering his final year of schooling. South Africa hoped to solicit India's help in repatriating Indians, while the Indian government attempted to placate Indian public opinion which was angered by discrimination against Indians in the Empire. The Indian government expected little and chose its delegates carefully. According to one official, 'it will be wise to rope in one or two leaders who will command popular support ... and will take a sober and reasonable view when they are under the guidance of a competent chairman.'³⁴ Sir Muhammad Habibullah, was chosen to placate Muslim opinion in South Africa even though 'he is not endowed with many brains ... However, he is a Muhammadan, and suitable Muhammadans do not grow on every mulberry bush.'³⁵ V.S. Srinivas Sastri was deemed to be 'very desirable from the angle of Indian opinion ... and he is on friendly terms with both Corbett and Paddison, who will have no difficulty in keeping him straight.'³⁶ Young Monty met Sastri in Durban and their paths would cross again under different circumstances at Edinburgh.

The Indian Government accepted the voluntary repatriation of Indians while the Union Government promised to "uplift" the social and economic position of those who remained, and an Agent was appointed by the Indian government to monitor the workings of the Agreement. It was through the Agent that the Indian government hoped to keep a check on Indian South African politics and facilitate contact with sympathetic whites to make public opinion more favourable towards Indians.³⁷

Given the polarised political context and deeply entrenched anti-Indianism and demeaning racist stereotypes, the social gulf that Monty felt on board the *Edinburgh Castle*, and which was described so clearly by Goonam, comes as no surprise. Monty grew up in a period when the politics of moderation defined the

Indian response, with his own father a key figure in colonial-born associations. Monty could not have anticipated the profound effect life in Edinburgh would have on him, as it was there that he would rub shoulders with anti-imperialist fighters from India, fostering a transnational Indian belonging and resistance. It was there, too, that his internationalism would grow, as his diary indicates, through a wide range of friendships that spanned the globe. And it was also in Edinburgh that his sense of fun, dancing, a glass (or two) of wine, cigars, and Scottish women were nurtured.

Although by no means bereft of politics, Edinburgh would be the last city in which Monty would enjoy a relatively carefree existence. When he returned to Durban, he would step into a cauldron of bubbling political tensions that would soon enough thrust him, in part because his qualification made him “respectable” and somebody to be “listened to”, and in part because of his deep commitment to social and political justice, onto the centre stage of South African history.

Monty kept a diary of his unfolding life as his ship made its way along the coast of South Africa and then stretched into the Atlantic and headed to Europe.

1928

9 March 1928: Landed at East London. Stayed at A.M. Chetty’s place. Sailed from East London at 9:30 pm.

10 March: Arrived at P.E. at 7:00 am. Seen Snake Park and other interesting places. Left town at 3:00 pm.

11 March 1928: Arrived at Mossel Bay at about 10:00 am. A very small place.

12 March: Arrived in Cape Town at 11:30 am. Ten hours late because of the heavy mist. Met by Miss Gool.

The journey from Durban to Cape Town was eventful. This was Monty’s first trip away from Durban, and word got round to friends and family in East London and Port Elizabeth. He and Goonam were treated like royalty. ‘There was a motorcade, sightseeing, feast, presents and baskets of fruit’ in East London. In Port Elizabeth, too, they were met by friends, and their short stopover included tea, dinner, and sightseeing, including the Snake Park. In

Cape Town, Monty met the Gools and Dr Abdurahman, who were key players in Cape politics and whose links with Natal went back to the Gandhi years. He met Dr A.H. Gool and his brother Dr G.H. Gool and their sisters, Beida, Janub, Amina, Fatima (Timmie) and Minnie who lived in Beutensingle Street, which was renamed “Beauty Singles Street” after them. When Goonam saw the gorgeous girls, she ‘realised why the Durban boys did not return from Cape Town.’³⁸

Monty and Goonam also met Dr A.H. Gool’s wife Zaibunissa ‘Cissy’ Gool (1900-1963) and heard her give a speech. ‘I was impressed with her fearlessness and joined the hundreds who had gathered in enthusiastic applause,’ was Goonam’s recollection. Cissy was the daughter of Dr Abdurahman (1872–1940) and Scotswoman Helen (Nellie) Potter James. A grandson of slaves, Abdurahman studied medicine in Glasgow from 1888-1893 and became Cape Town’s first non-European city councillor in 1904. Cissy, too, would be elected to the Council. The four days in Cape Town were exciting for young Monty, crowned on the last night by a dinner party at Dr A.H. Gool’s home, which was attended by authors and academics from the University of Cape Town. Monty’s and Cissy’s paths would cross again in the late 1930s; by then Monty would be much more confident and Cissy at the height of her political activism, as she arrived in Durban to advance the cause of the Non-European United Front (NEUF).

The Journey continues

13 March: Visited various places.

16 March: Left Cape Town at 4:00 pm.

17 March: Spent time reading book. Introduced to Dr C.C. Elliot of Cape Town.

18 March: Introduced to Dr J.E. Jaggs of Cape Town.

19 March: Sea a bit rough.

22 March: Rainstorm and heavy gale.

25 March: Seen the north star – nothing very peculiar.

26 March: Change of weather. Bit chilly.

28 March: Started to be cold.

29 March: Landed at Madeira at 6:00 am and sailed at 11:30 am.

2 April: Arrived Southampton at 5:00. Left for Waterloo at 9:00. Arrived there at 12:00. Met by Miss Gifford and conducted to Hotel Empire after lunch. Went to Cooks, Gools, and Polak's places. Had dinner at Indian Hostel.

Monty reached England just as winter was ending. Coming from humid, sweltering Durban, whose winters barely needed a jersey, it came as a huge shock. As Goonam would recollect, they 'searched the sky in vain for a patch of blue and were confronted by depressing grimness ... Monty had been a tease at times, but generally considerate throughout the trip.'³⁹ On arrival they parted ways, Monty's was charted clearly, Goonam's less so.

The Miss Gifford in Monty's diary was a relative of D.G. Gifford, the Registrar at Marine College, and lived in Notting Hill, London. Goonam was to have stayed with H.L. Polak at Danes Inn House in London, but instead she was met by Polak's secretary and dropped off at the Young Women's Christian Association. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise for she met the four Ali sisters from India who took her over 'as their fifth sister and secured my first crucial twelve months in Britain...We became inseparables.' Though Goonam had intended to study at the London School of Medicine, she accompanied the Ali sisters to Edinburgh, where she met up with Monty again.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Monty was having a busy time:

3 April: Westminster Abbey. Marble Arch. Hyde Park. Buckingham Palace.

4 April: Had long drive.

5 April: Miss Gifford's took to Towers, etc.

6 April: Visited the zoo and also Crystal Palace with some friends.

7 April: Left for Edinburgh at 10:00 am and arrived at Edinburgh at 6:00 pm. Met by Miss Lamont and Macken.

8 April: Visited Braids Hill.

9 April: Visited places of interest.

11 April: Reverend Lamont and Miss Lamont had a long conversation regarding studies, etc.

14 April: Shifted to No. 18.

16 April: Had tea at Rev. Lamont place.

17 April: Met Mr Lightbody at Mr Taylor the banker.

19 April: Commenced classes at 11:00 am [Skerry's Tutorial College].

20 April: Usual:

Breakfast 9:30 am

Study till 10:45 am

Classes 11:00 am-12:00

Lunch 1:00 pm-2:00 pm

Study 2:00 pm-5:00 pm

Rest/Supper 5:00 pm-9:00 pm

Study 9:00 pm-11:00 pm.

22 April: Visited Arthurs. A very beautiful place. A big hill. Good scenery from same.

23 April: Usual.

The remainder of Monty's diary, almost 50 pages, has a summary of the *Bhagavad Gita* in his handwriting. The *Gita*, translated commonly as 'Song of the Lord,' was Gandhi's favourite book. Gandhi once said that 'when disappointment stares me in the face and all alone I see not one ray of light, I go back to the *Gita*. I find a verse here and a verse there, and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming tragedies.'⁴¹ According to Monty's daughter, Vasugee, the *Gita* was also an inspiration for Monty. Gandhi saw the dialogue on the warfront between the princely warrior Arjuna and the god Krishna as an allegory that represented the psychological battle between good and evil within individuals, and interpreted the *Gita* as imploring individuals to free themselves from enmity to all creatures, and to do good to all beings, in order to achieve inner peace and moral righteousness. It was a template for nonviolence,⁴² which is not to be confused with cowardice or non-action. Monty identified strongly with a Hindusim in which he constantly applied one of the central lessons of the *Gita*: 'Freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action. Nobody can become perfect by merely ceasing to act.'⁴³ He was to draw inspiration from the *Gita* as much as from Gandhi to reinforce

his commitment to non-violence, a belief that was to be severely tested in the decades ahead.

Like Gandhi, Monty's commitment to non-violence was matched to acting with courage and leading from the front. Gandhi put his body on the line because he saw non-violence as 'the supreme value of the brave ... the virtue of the manly.' As he stated during World War One, 'You cannot teach non-violence to a man who cannot kill.'⁴⁴ In *Churchill and Gandhi*, Arthur Herman explicates this point: 'Gandhi was obsessed with standards of manliness and masculinity ... Physical courage became for Gandhi a powerful measure of equality between Briton and non-Briton, white and non-white. Throughout his life, Gandhi was determined to live up to that measure wherever he found it.'⁴⁵ Monty's commitment to non-violent resistance that saw the importance of putting one's own body on the line in any campaign of defiance, budding at Edinburgh, would become emblematic of his leadership of the NIC in the decades ahead.

Monty and Goonam enrolled at Skerry's Tutorial College for their university entrance examination. Monty passed the English and Tamil oral entrance examination in March 1929 and the written examination in September, and gained entrance to Edinburgh University to study medicine. In addition to Monty and Goonam, Yusuf Dadoo also arrived at Edinburgh around the same time. Goonam would recollect:

[Dadoo] did nothing. I had to take his class cards and put them in the class. He didn't attend lectures [laughs]. How he ever got through, I don't know because he was busy attending all the political meetings there...in the streets, in little halls...He wanted to gather as much information [and] we all took from him. He was a very powerful speaker and a good, wholesome sort of individual. Quite a character in the sense that he enjoyed life and was so serious and went to rock bottom to the workers...and he was a good-looking man. Women were after him. He had time for that too [laughs].⁴⁶

Monty's diaries for the period 1930 to 1932 are, unfortunately, missing, having been seized during one of the many police raids of the 1950s. However,

we are able to glean snippets of his stint in Edinburgh through his involvement in the Edinburgh Indian Association (EIA), an organisation that was pivotal to both his social and political life. Edinburgh had long attracted students from all parts of India due to the influence of two East India Company officials, John (1810-1882) and William Muir (1819-1905), the sons of a Glasgow merchant. William, in fact, retired to Edinburgh in 1875 and became Principal of the university, until his death in 1905. The brothers established the Chair of Sanskrit in 1862 and a first lectureship in Forestry in 1869. Large numbers of Indian students came to study forestry and medicine. The first Indian Students Association was founded in 1875 and it transformed into the Edinburgh Indian Association (EIA) in 1883. The purpose was to help students adjust to their new surroundings, present an opportunity for students from various provinces of India to meet, and cater for locals interested in “things Indian”.⁴⁷

By the time Monty arrived in Edinburgh, the EIA had grown into an influential body. It had purchased a building at 11 George Street with funds raised in India. This substantial building contained a debating hall, dining room, library, smoking-room, and committee room. The EIA was alive with activity. Debates and lectures were held on Fridays, and judging from the number of committees, the activities of the EIA must have been comprehensive: Reception Committee, Literary Society, Library Society, Billiards Committee, Ping-Pong Committee, Amusement Committee, Restaurant Committee, Special Law and By-Law Sub Committee, and Handbook Sub-Committee.

During 1932-33, Monty was on the Handbook Sub-Committee, on the Ping-Pong Committee, and a member of the Student Representative Council. The EIA Sports Club, formed in 1924, had cricket, tennis, and hockey teams that played competitively. The hockey team was considered the best in Scotland during Monty’s stay there. He was also editor of *The Edinburgh Indian Handbook 1932-33*. His editorial dated 1 November 1932 read:

As editor of this handbook, I may claim the privilege of giving you some counsel as to how you should direct your activities. This holds chiefly for the Freshers. Speaking broadly, a Fresher divides his activities between the academic and social side of life. For my part I have little or nothing to do with

the academic side; the University staff will see to that, but I may be allowed a word or two on the social side. The social activities of the Indian students in Edinburgh centre around this ancient Association of ours. In the Library we have a varied selection of books, and particularly of magazines and newspapers, both home and local, and among these, if you are book-minded you may feel free to browse. If you are the Athletic type you may participate in the various activities of the Sporting Club. If you are open-minded and are wondering how you are to get a little diversion from the ordinary humdrum, there is a Notice Board which will tell you of the Whist Drives, Debates, Dances, etc. which have been arranged for you. All my advice to you can be summed up thus: Join the E.I.A. and join at once. When you have followed this advice, you will find that your life in Edinburgh will be a much happier thing. I need hardly add that I wish a very prosperous time for you all during your stay in Edinburgh. I wish to thank Sir Thomas Holland for his "Foreword," Mr A.D. Patterson for all his help with the handbook, and the Members of the Association for their co-operation.

G.M. Naicker
Editor.

What Monty strategically did not add was that the EIA was also a hotbed of Indian nationalist and anti-imperialist agitation. A slew of speakers made their way through its doors, while numerous discussions were held about the unfolding struggle against the British Raj in India. Dr Goonam mentions the visit of Sastri, who was very unpopular among Indian students and became even more so when he came to Edinburgh to receive the freedom of the city at a time when thousands of Indian freedom fighters languished in British jails. What were his views on British Home Rule for India, they heckled?⁴⁸ Despite this, Goonam was chuffed when Sastri recognised her in the audience as he had visited their home in Durban. Sastri was to have a profound influence in the shaping of South African Indian politics, a legacy that Monty was to play a pivotal role in confronting.



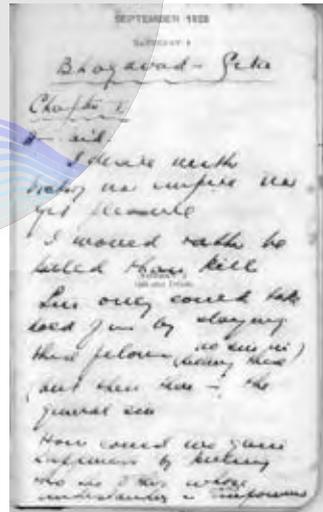
Library and Reading Room, Skerrys Tutorial College

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Monty's copy of the Edinburgh Indian Association Handbook

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Monty's diary

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Sir Srinivasa Sastri (middle) attending the wedding of Dr Goonam's brother
© Institute for Black Research (IBR)

Despite his involvement in the EIA and other social activities reflected in his diary, Monty completed his studies successfully. But he never forgot how to play either.

A curly-headed young man with beads of perspiration glistening on his wide forehead shouted “whoopee” on winning the table tennis match against his opponent, the champion at the Indian Association in Edinburgh. The student giving vent to his feelings was Monty. He was good at sports. Snooker was his favourite game as was tennis. I went to watch him playing near the meadows in Edinburgh immaculately turned out in his white tennis togs. Seated on the bench nearby, watching the players would be a bevy of Scottish beauties, but one stood out more clearly than the others.⁴⁹

The one who stood out more clearly than the others, became the focus of Monty’s affections for a while. In adolescent-like tones his diary reveals his affection for “M.C.” He was clearly besotted with her and determined that she take notice of him.

Monty was choosy and like Krishna, plumped for the best of the bunch. Of course he would not hurt a fly let alone a pretty girl. He struck a happy medium and kept them all around him with tact and diplomacy. Once at a party he disappeared for the evening when he was sent out on an errand to fetch a young girl who so wanted to come to the party but could not manage the distance alone. The ever-ready gentleman, “*toujours la politesse*” volunteered and that was the last of him for the evening. After that incident we thought better of asking him to go on such errands for anyone. There were moments when his inimitable smile and accompanying laughter would disarm us completely and it was impossible to get cross with him. He was naughty, but we were helpless against his many antics. He stood out in a crowd because he was one of the smartest and best dressed men among the students, wearing a Hector Powel suit with carefully chosen shirt and tie, spelling a quiet, classy quality about it. ⁵⁰

18 August 1933: Met M.C. Marvellous words these. “There’s room for one more.” MC.

5 October: Meeting at 7:30 at Gladfellows. If I don’t go I can’t see M.C. I haven’t seen her for ages. I suppose I shall have to go. I am glad I went.

6 October: Saw M.C. at noon. I timed her too well for her to avoid me. Dance – wash out. Flowers from M.R.G. Letters – Lamont, Peggy, Margo, Isabel.

8 October: Put back clock one hour. Arrange re. Thursday. Saw Mary at 7:00pm. Glad I did. I don’t believe she was tired after wandering about. Hoping against hope to work. Came home feeling low.

10 October: H.P. to try coat. [Hector Powell suit]. Gloves, Shirt, Book seat for Empire. 6:45pm – Ping-pong. Tea. Get things for tea. Get handbook for E.I.A. [Edinburgh Indian Association].

11 October: 9:15am. Tutorial on eye.



Love all

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Revision classes. Saw M.C. – she doesn't believe in smiling too much.

12 October: Dance – Palais. High Commissions for India to add the name E.I.A. Bank. Get balance.

13 October: Changes in Venereal in the evening. Find name. Eye shade for E.N.T.

14 October: Play Love. Empire. New Record. "Let's call it a day. Love song of the Nile." Enter for the final. Pay the Prof. fines. Letters to Debbies, Margo, Lamont, Isabel. You can't do justice to them all.

15 October: M.C. & Co. spent a hurried half hour in my sanctum – very pleasant in spite of all the reservedness.

16 October: Get book from Joe – Pathology and Pharmacology. Take book to Murdock. Surgery and vaccination. Classes in Operate Surgery.

17 October: Reserve seat at Empire. Get shoe repaired. Lunch with Rebecca at Martins.

18 October: Diwali. Ring Empire. Ring Lamont. Pay Peter.

19 October: Enter for final (10-1). Final fees. Skins – new Edit (Cranshaw). MUFFINS.

20 October: Bank. A/P Hector Powell. Empire.

21 October: "Adorable". New bio. Public talk 10:00am-11:00am – Museum. a/p with Prof. Lamont.

22 October: Lunch re. Home for Roes. 1:00pm Ismail, Ruben, Ball. Walk.

23 October: Find out the time for surgery lecture. Chemist a/p.

24 October: Arrange with Porhar. Fees.

25 October: E.N.T. 12:00-1:00pm instead of Friday. Put in attendance "Missed a Fortune".

26 October: 9:00-10:00am. Surgery lecture. High Commissioner for India



The suitor

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gave reception to members of E.I.A. Money for fees. E.I.A. luncheon to Mitra.

27 October: Dance. Invitation to Ruben 5:30-7:30pm. See Mrs Taylor re. drop fees, etc. H/P (own suit). [Hector Powell suit].

29 October: Red Braes Tennis Dance. 7:00 pm. M.C. & Co. – a very pleasant 2 hrs. Good driving.

30 October: Fees to be paid by Monday.
A/P with Fees Department.

31 October: 2-3 Surgery; 5-6: Medical Tutorial. Act re. instruction. Fraser House. Consult Skin programme as regards tutorials. Committee meeting 3:00 pm. Tickets for dance.

2 November: Cranston Skin book. New edition 12/6. New Pocket Dictionary 3/-.

3 November: A/P at 7:00. How is it going to end this time? Arrange re. Sunday. The best of the lot. Things are looking bright and we are hopeful.

4 November: Playhouse. 10:00am-11:00am – Usher Institute. Bank £19/17.

14 Montague Street. A. Baker.

5 November: MC – Big Flirt – not with me. Zena a bigger one. Jolly good wine though. Get more table tennis balls.

6 November: See re. exam cards which were to be sent. Naral 4:00-5:00 pm (arrange the dance). Pay laundry.

7 November: College of Surgeons Annual Dance at Plaza. Ticket, etc. Arrange with Parkhar. Manage to steal a dance with MC – terribly happy afterwards.

8 November: 9:00-10:00am – Eye tutorial; 6:00-6:00 pm – Medical demonstration. Dance.

9 November: A/P at 7:00. See Maud about this – “Fire”. Never so happy – too happy to last long. I am afraid I shall have to dream of the part as the pleasant present is too short. Not only civilised but divinely so.



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10 November: Showing certificate for facial.

11 November: Last term in Public Health. Spot – Disinfections, Water carriage systems. Disappointed as I did not see the one I wanted to see.

12 November: Hoping against hope to see them – even for a second.

13 November: Special meeting 1:30pm. The list for surgery. Arrange to have attendance (after Venereal Disease and Eye).

14 November: No Classes.

15 November: Professor in Forensics 2:00-4:00pm.

16 November: Professional Exam. Public Health 10:00-12:00pm.

17 November: Oral 11:00am. Forensic A/P. Lindsay. Ping-pong. Send Xmas cards – India via air mail. See oral list for Public Health.

19 November: A/P table-tennis, etc. Most horrible 6 hours I have ever spent. More a test of endurance than pleasure.

20 November: Lettle re. Skin Book 1/6 Forensic Book. Chakravati. 1.10.

21 November: Send Logu his Birthday present. Order more cigars from home.

22 November: Public Health book. Tea party.

7 December: Bank. H/P (jackets). Xmas cards for Home. Records. Major in Surgery. Appointment 7:00 pm Marco. Change Skin for Eye book.

8 December: Class exam in Eye. Room C. 11:00-12:00pm. E.N.T. clinical 12:00-1:00pm.

9 December: Phone Lawrence. Send letters.

12 December: Last lecture in Medicine at 5:00-6:00pm. Exams in Skins (Change book). A/P Good Girl.

13 December: Xmas dinner at Union Palais. Book on medicine.

14 Appointment at 7:30pm. Home – mail. Surgery 2:00-3:00pm. A/P Dr Miller. Hospital attention/ Collect D/P eye and clinical.

15 December: Term closes for Xmas holidays. Arrange for week holiday. Book rooms at Maternity Hospital.

19 December: Lyceum A/P.

21 December: African Xmas dance at Palais.

22 December: Dance.

Each man drinks the thing he loves.
Some drink it standing in their gloves.
Some seated from a jug
The upper class from thin stemmed glasses
The masses from a mug

Monty's diary ends with the following notes:

'Her name was Mary Rose;
MC – Margaret S.W. Clark – 41 Clerk Road;
Z.E. 15 Hope Crescent;
M.R.S. 23 Roukulla Street; G. Barker
14 Montague Street;
W.S. Mackenzie 1 Broughton Place;
Shaw 193 Phurdee Avenue, Gillingham;
Peggy Rooen;
Friends: Chackravarty, Ismail, Joe, Manuel, Joe, Ackwan.'



Who was the mysterious MC? We do not know what happened to MC for there is no more mention of her. There is just one tantalising clue – on the last page of the diary is etched:

'MC (I.L.H.)' possibly "I Love her".

And next to it in very tiny writing is 'S.4, SK.9, G.6½.' Were these sizes of her shoe, skirt and gown? Was it Margaret Clark, though Monty's address book contains an address for a Mary Chalmers, 41 Clerk Street, Edinburgh, telephone number 41694?

Monty completed his studies in July 1934 when he was formally awarded the M.B.Ch.B. The diary entries from his last year in Edinburgh read:

1934 Diary

17 May: Room 11. 23 Chalmers Crescent. Mahercity Hostel for Residents.

5 weeks from today.

25 June: Midwifery paper – 10:00am.

26 June: 11:00am – Surgical oral; 2:30pm – Surgery Practical.

27 June: 11:00am – Medical Oral.

29 June: Midwifery oral – 3:00pm.

2 July: 11:30am – Clinical oral.

3 July: 9:45am – cases.

4 July: Clinic – Cases – 9:45am; Orals – 3:45pm.

10 July: Probably date of final results.

11 July: Results out at 9:00am. Gosh, I am thro'. I can't believe it. Got absolutely right. Saw MC. She was as excited as I was. Poor darling. I do love her.

12 July: Got a note from the Dean who told us I was fortunate to get the Caurou Doley Scholarship. Saw Mary for 2 hrs.

13 July: Moody the whole day. Had a terribly good time at night. MC for ever. Went to HP for suits.

14 July: MC to see me again. Gosh – luck's still with me. I can sing loud with joy and happiness. MC at 7:30pm. Arrange for party.

16 July: Take Dinner Jacket to H/P (Trousers length and Sports jacket for repair).



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The Graduate

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17 July: Tea at BMA between 4:30-6:00pm. Air mail.

18 July: graduation at 10:30. Dinner at Chinese. Photo.

28 July: Term in Flats ends. Look for new flat and digs.

30 July: Shifted to No. 2.

31 July: MC at 7:00.

2 August: MC at 10:00.

3 August: Left for Dublin. MC left for holidays for 2 weeks. Must write to her regularly.

29 August: Exam. At 11:00. Thro LM.

30 August: Left for Edinburgh – after a lot of persuasion to stay. Wire letter from MC decided the question.

31 August: Phone MC on arrival. Phone bank. Pay registration. Matron registration fee, etc.

25 October: a/p Mary – 8:15; a/p Peter & Co. at 3:00.

26 October: Got up at nine. Met Prof. Sir Philips, Chalmers, Watson. Get bag. Meet at E.I.A.

28 October: Mary Film guild.

29 October: Dance. Black cat for luck??? H/P – suit, agherbati, hand bag.

31 October: 5:00 a/p Lamont; 7:00 a/p Meadows; 4:00 Meadows. See Prof. Phantou re Ruskin photos. H/P/ Thos Cook – ticket, etc. Gardeners.

30 November: Train to London 11:50 am. Waverley Station. Hair cut. Got lunch at 1:00 pm.

2 November: Boat from Southampton from 11:20. left at 4:15. Monty and Mary.

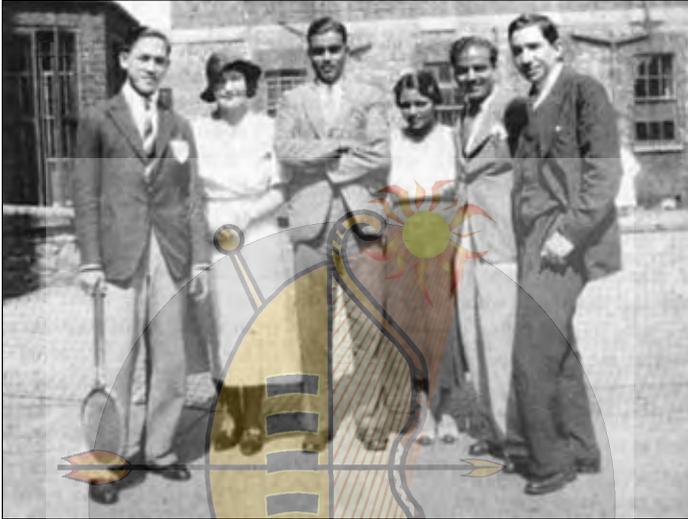
3 August: shaving cream, tooth cream, valet royal blade, Brilliantine, dress shirt.

While Monty was eating ‘Chinese’, courting a Scottish lass, playing tennis, having a haircut and smoothing it in style with Brilliantine, and dressing meticulously in Hector Powell suits, back in South Africa, the politics of the Indian community was riven with deep divisions, much of it related to the Cape Town Agreement and its repatriation provision. The Depression had also taken its toll and many of those who had recently arrived in the urban areas of Natal found it hard to secure employment and faced a life of deprivation and degradation.

As discrete as Monty was and as limited as his joys may have been, it is difficult to begrudge him his brief season of joy in Edinburgh. The next three decades,

while filled with life and love, would have the dark clouds of oppression, arrest and police crackdowns hanging over them.

Before being drawn into politics though, Monty would settle down with (another) “M”, Marie, with whom he would spend over four decades of his life – what a life it would prove to be!



Monty (second from right) and Goonam (third from right) with friends at Edinburgh

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A tale of two weddings

The Indian emigrants should adopt a high standard of living and eschew their old habits of primitive simplicity and contentment. Civilisation breeds new ideas and leads to a higher plane of life all around. A civilised community needs music, pictures, furniture, books and other appurtenances of advancing culture. Earn money but also spend it well; work hard but also enjoy life and make the best of it. Love and cultivate art and science and show the world we are a civilised people.

LALA HAR DAYAL, THE HINDI (1925)

Monty returned to Durban in 1934 and a number of public functions were held in his honour. There was great pride among locals that “one of their own” had gone overseas and qualified as a doctor, at a time when the overwhelming majority of Indians barely received a primary education.

The threads of Monty’s life back in Durban can be picked up through his diary.

25 November: Reception at 3:00 by Colonial Born Indian Association [Monty’s father was a founding member of the organisation]. At 7:30 by Carlisle Street School Old Boys Dinner.

26 November: Dinner at V.R.R.M.

27 November: Supper at Aryan Young Men’s Progressive Association.

28 November: 7:30 Reception social by Young Men’s Vedic Society.

29 November: Tennis.

30 November: Social at 8:00 pm. Sastri College Old Boys Club.

1 December: Tamil Society Reception at 3:00 pm. Surat Indian Association reception at 7:30 pm.

2 December: Lunch at Umbilo. Reception by Clairwood Social Club.

3 December: Tamil Sabha Library at 5:30 pm.



Monty outside his Leopold Street surgery.

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This mix of political, cultural and education organisations provides intriguing clues to how Indians brought with them into the urban milieu cultural organisations whose traditions stretched back into the villages of India, while simultaneously forging new organisations with local resonance. The Vedic, Tamil and Surat organisations indicated that culture, region and identity had travelled across the Indian Ocean, while 'colonial-borns' signified their roots in Africa, challenging those within the community, as well as the white power structures who advocated their repatriation. Monty's father was embroiled in many of the debates and divisions animating Indian politics. Monty may have been only vaguely interested in political developments when he returned, but that would not be for too long. He was just 24, single, and still to set up a practice – the fourth Indian medical doctor in Durban, following in the footsteps of Kassim Seedat, M.G. Naidoo and Makan Mistry. He opened a practice in Leopold Street, close to where he had grown up.

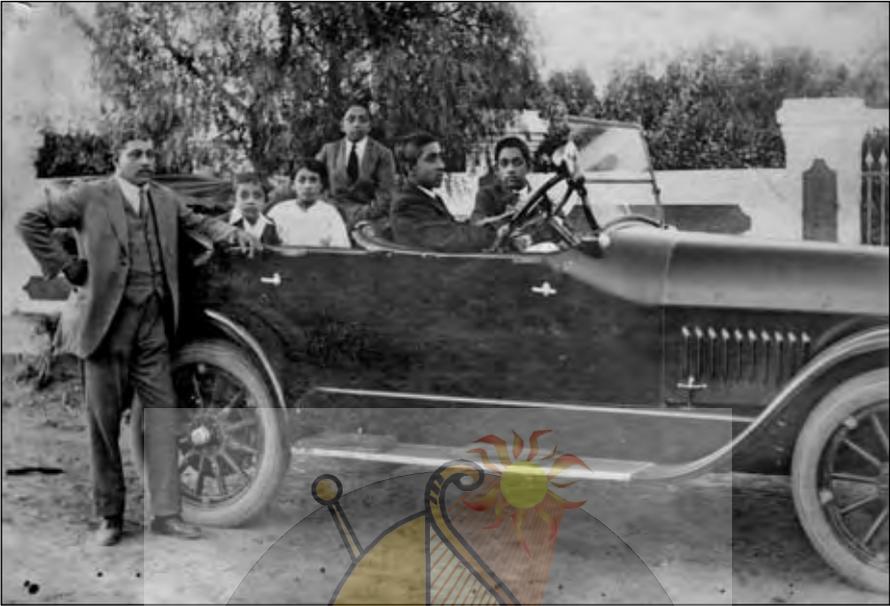
And then marriage beckoned. Born on 13 December 1911, Mariemoothammal Vadievellou Appavoo was a year younger than Monty.

They married on 29 November 1936 at the Shri Vathianatheasparan Temple on Umgeni Road. Monty was dressed in a dark grey suit while Marie, as Mariemoothammal was known, wore an elegant red Benares sari. If Monty's politics were to dramatically change over the decades, his dress sense did not – a wonderful photograph of him and Marie on the occasion of their Silver Jubilee shows him immaculately dressed in a suit with a bow-tie. By then, the early 1960s, Monty was fully immersed in the Congress Alliance, but still his Hindu traditions were prominent, as he sported a garland of flowers, and Marie was about to have someone imprint a *kungum* on her forehead.

Monty and Marie were to have two children, Vasugee, born on 9 December 1938, and Kresen, born on 8 October 1943. At their wedding, 16-year-old bridesmaid, Indrani Naicker, Monty's cousin and sister of M.P. Naicker, recalled that the younger girls in the family fondly called Marie "Sissy" (sister) and took an immediate liking to her. In the week prior to the marriage, Marie stayed with Indrani's family in Gale Street, and it was there that she dressed before making her way to the temple. The best man was Marie's brother, Dr Nadarasan "Kukri" Appavoo, who had studied with Monty at Edinburgh.

Marie came from the Eastern Cape. She was the daughter of Vadivello Appavoo, whose father Nadaraj had moved to South Africa after spending some years in Mauritius. Vadivello had four sons, Velaithum, Arumugam, Shunmugam, and Nadarasan ("Kukri")¹, and a daughter, Marie. The family settled in De Aar, which was an important node in the Cape railway network. The lines from Cape Town, East London, and Port Elizabeth joined at De Aar, and from there went to Kimberley. Appavoo's arrival was opportune; he did especially well during the First World War as a result of increased troop activity in the area, and his prosperity allowed Shunmugam and Nadarasan to study medicine at Edinburgh. When their business in De Aar became insolvent in the early 1940s, Arumugam settled in Port Elizabeth where he lived until his death in 1951, while Shunmugam set up a medical practice in Port Elizabeth, and Nadarasan one in East London.

The roots of the Appavoo family can be traced back to Karur in central south India. Marie's grandparents, Nanji and Veerama, travelled to Mauritius from



Marie seated in the back seat of the family car with her father Vadivello Appavoo and brothers.

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Pondicherry in the 1850s, and settled in Curepipe where they ran a livery stable hiring out landaus (carriages). After several natural disasters, the family's luck eventually ran out during the cyclone of 29 April 1892, which destroyed three thousand houses in Port Louis and left 20 000 people homeless, and Curepipe was almost totally flattened.

One of Marie's aunts and her husband, Namsoo, migrated to Port Elizabeth, where they established a forwarding agency. The rest of the family followed in June 1896. They were part of a larger movement of south Indian immigrants from Mauritius to the Cape Colony, including traders, teachers, religious men, and adventurers. Many had been impoverished by the disasters and were seeking to turn their fortunes around in the wake of the mineral discoveries in South Africa. Prominent Mauritian migrant families of the Cape Province included the Chettys, Pillays, Vandayars, Arnoosalams, Naidoos, Moodaleys, Padayachees, Sammys, Lingham and Odiars. Vadiveloo married Letchmee Vandayar of Mauritius by arranged marriage in Port Elizabeth. Marie was born in De Aar, their third child, and grew up at No.6 McIvor Street in a stately home surrounded by pepper trees with a windmill and dam on the property. The home was decorated with Indo-French furniture, a reminder of the family's sojourn in Mauritius. The boys attended Lovedale College in the Eastern Cape for higher education, while Marie attended the local Catholic school until standard five, as her orthodox Tamil parents would not consider sending a girl to boarding school.

Marie's mother died during the great Spanish flu epidemic of 1917-18, and she took on many of the family responsibilities at a tender age, including looking after her younger brother, Nadarasen, and later being entrusted with the company bookkeeping. The brothers owned racehorses and weekends would often see Marie accompany them to race meetings in De Aar, Prieska, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. Arumugam was clerk of the racecourse in De Aar. A pearl-embossed ladies purse, a prize won at one of the races, was a treasured memento for Marie who, in relating tales of her childhood to Vasugee and Kreesen, would often say that the most difficult part of moving to Durban was leaving behind the Karoo sunset, which she described as the 'most beautiful

sight in the world.’

Marie grew up in a religious home with a strong sense of her Tamil roots. Her grandparents spoke Tamil, Creole and English, and were vegetarian, and the women all wore traditional Indian clothing. Her father hired a Tamil teacher to make sure that all the children could read and write Tamil. In one corner of their home was a lamp surrounded by photographs of popular Hindu deities like Sarasvathi and Lakshmi. Marie was an accomplished piano player and also played the Pallanguzhi, a variant of the Mancala played by women in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh with dry beans or tamarind seeds. She acquired a reputation for cooking excellent traditional south Indian dishes, alongside exotic Mauritian delicacies such as *fricasse*, *ourite* (baby octopus), *bouillabaisse* and *la doupe*, as well as desserts like payasem, paniyaram, koeksisters and melk tert. She introduced “Cape-Mauritian” cuisine into the Naicker family circle. Vasugee recalled with relish that her mother ‘was a great cook and loved the social events ... because her parents were from Mauritius, she cooked a lot of dishes from there which were not in the normal Durban diet.’ Many visitors would comment on the wonderful culinary fusion and invariably also learnt the etiquette of eating off a banana leaf from Marie. Above all, Vasugee emphasised that ‘mum used to dress immaculately,’ a sentiment echoed by many who knew her and is also evident in the surviving photographs.

There are several narratives of how the match of Marie and Monty was made. The most plausible is that Marie’s father often travelled to Durban where he stayed with A.M. Padayachee, a neighbour of Monty’s father, P.G. Naicker, in Cross Street. Some say that it was during one of these trips that she and Monty set eyes on each another. Monty used his Edinburgh connection with Marie’s brothers, Shunmugam and Nadarasen, to initiate a conversation. A formal proposal to De Aar was followed by a visit of the senior men of the Naicker family. However, shortly after the proposal, Marie’s father died, and the wedding was postponed for a year. While in many Indian cultures the bride’s family hosts the wedding, according to South Indian custom this is the responsibility of the groom, hence the wedding took place in Durban.

This book does not record adequately Marie’s stalwart role during Monty’s

long periods of standing trial for treason and bannings, or her role among the women activists in the passive resistance campaign and beyond. She came from a political family – her youngest brother, Nadarasen, served as a central committee member of the CPSA and worked closely with Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu and Helen Joseph. Nadarasen was recruited by Govan Mbeki, his classmate from Lovedale, and Raymond Mhlaba to lead the underground in the East London area, when Alcott Gwentshe, known by the code name “Old Joe” in Umkhonto circles, went into exile. A close relationship developed between the likes of Yusuf Dadoo, Goolam Pahad, Marsala Pather, Mahommed “Barney” Desai, Dennis Brutus, Clements Kadalie, Malcomes Mgabela, King Sabata Dalindyebo and Nadarasen, which facilitated the link between the ANC, the CP and the Trade Union Movement of the Eastern Cape and the NIC and TIC with whom he frequently consulted.²

Arriving in Durban, Marie was thrust into an alien environment and took time to find her feet. But as we show, while not one for the platform or ideological debates, she did not retreat into the background, but participated in some of the campaigns and was prominent in support work during the Treason Trial from 1956 to 1961. As Marie set up home in Durban and Monty was establishing his practice, their community was a site of intense political discussion and divisions.



P.G. Naicker, Kreesen, Marie, Vasugee, Monty

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(left to right) T.V. Sammy (bride's brother); Thungachie V. Sammy (bride's sister); Sir Sayed Raza Ali; Ponnoo V. Sammy; C.S. Bucketts (Assistant Secretary to the Agent General); Lady Oppenheimer; Sir Ernest Oppenheimer

© Dr Daya Appavoo

While Monty and Marie's marriage followed all the norms and traditions as might be expected of families steeped in Tamil culture, another marriage around this time broke with all conventions. It was the marriage of Agent-General Sir Sayed Raza Ali, a Muslim, to Miss Ponnoo Sammy, a Hindu from Kimberley, in January 1936 that brought into the open in dramatic fashion the political and cultural tensions inside of the Indian community. Community delegations appealed to Sir Raza Ali to call off the wedding as it would exacerbate religious tensions and work against the attempts to forge a united front, but he refused to back down. This heightened tensions in a community already deeply divided along two central axes.

Central to the divisions was a critical assessment of the Cape Town Agreement. The fallout occurred over disappointments resulting from the "uplift" clause³ and the government's determination to repatriate Indians, while hemming in those who remained into segregated locations. Division among Indians was reflected in the two organisations that purportedly represented them, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and the Colonial Born and Settlers Indian Association (CBSIA).

The Cape Town Agreement married the ideas of repatriation and upliftment. Sastri was one of the more influential members of the Indian delegation, accepting at the outset that ‘the right of the European to political domination must be neither disputed nor endangered ... The European mind must be relieved of the fear of being swamped by an excess of Indians.’⁴ He also felt that whites had sacrificed enormously to attain a western standard of life and had the right to protect it. While Sastri could not provide an exact definition of these higher standards, he pointed out that ‘those who visit Durban and notice the difference between the quarters which are predominantly white and the quarters which are predominantly Indian will not ask for precise definitions of standards.’⁵

The philosophy of the Cape Town Agreement differentiated between desirable and alien, civilised and uncivilised, and made western standards the norm. This would be challenged by growing numbers of middle class professionals and trade unionists. With whites constituting a minority, it is difficult to sketch the exact muscularity with which they claimed the territory of South Africa as theirs, if not homeland, then hinterland, and the idea of Indians as alien dominated white political thought. Indians who were in South Africa had laboured on white farms under conditions of semi-slavery; survived, sought employment in factories, educated their children, and knew no country other than South Africa, yet were regarded as perpetually alien.

It is ironic that the two people who checked on the ‘alien-ness’ of Indians by heading important commissions during this period, Justice E.N. Broome and George Heaton-Nicholls, were born in Greece and England respectively. In fact, while twenty-five percent of whites in Durban in the late 1940s were born outside of South Africa, over ninety percent of Indians were born in this country and had lived in Durban far longer than whites.⁶ Mabel Palmer described an incident involving an Indian who was told by a white that he was “alien”. He asked the white individual where he was born and received the reply, ‘Stockport, England.’ The Indian replied, ‘I was born in Isipingo and so was my father.’⁷ ‘Whites,’ as P.S. Joshi wryly commented, ‘[were] never foreigners in a black man’s land.’⁸

The Cape Town Agreement stated that ‘Indians domiciled in the Union, who were prepared to conform to Western standards of life, should be enabled to do so.’ The litmus test of western standards was never defined, and Sastri’s definition only served to confuse: the general lay-out, cleanliness, absence of evil smells and the elegance or refinement of a cantonment ... personal cleanliness, mode of dress, furniture, mural decorations, sanitary arrangements, habits ... the categories of style of conversation, amusements and cultivation of fine art.’⁹

Repatriation was renamed ‘assisted emigration’ because most returning Indians were South African born. It was a central aspect of the Cape Town Agreement and the main argument among local Indians was against it. Even a moderate like Sorabjee Rustomjee was moved to pronounce in 1931 that ‘our community has had enough of this repatriation scheme. The Congress is not going to allow the bartering away of the rights of a section of the community for the benefit of those who remain here. Rich or poor we are in this country as Indians [and] will sink or swim together.’¹⁰ Those in favour of the agreement emphasised the “uplift” clause.¹¹ Some went as far as hailing the Agreement as a victory. C.F. Andrews even called it a ‘Magna Carta for Indians and Bantu alike.’¹²

Many white South Africans had a different interpretation and began to worry about Andrews’ optimistic spin. D.F. Malan, the future prime minister of South Africa, responded in a letter to *The Star* on 12 April 1927 that ‘the whole object of the agreement is to get as many Indians repatriated as possible ... All other points are subordinate to this.’¹³ P.S. Joshi was of a similar opinion: ‘Only one dominant motive lurked behind all the principal points of the Cape Town Agreement. It was to see that Indians left the shores of South Africa forever.’¹⁴ Each adult was offered a bonus of £20 to repatriate while those under the age of 16 were paid £10. Around 16 000 Indians repatriated between 1927 and 1941, when the scheme was halted because of the Second World War. The policy was a failure as far as whites were concerned, because between 1926 and 1930, when emigration and repatriation was at its peak, the Indian population actually increased by 11.8 per cent.¹⁵

Even “leaders” of the Indian community who supported repatriation were forced to rethink the policy as devastating stories of those of those who took

advantage of the scheme filtered back to South Africa. Pandit Bhawani Dayal visited India in 1930 to investigate the impact of repatriation and recorded many painful stories together with Indian national Benarsidas Chaturvedi.¹⁶ Born in Johannesburg in 1893 where his father Jairam Singh was a businessman, Dayal was educated at Bihar between 1904 and 1912. Upon his return he became an organiser during the 1913 passive resistance campaign and served three months imprisonment with his wife Jagrani Devi. Dayal edited the Hindi section of *Indian Opinion* during 1914; *Dharma Vir* (1917-18); and *Hindi* (1922 to 1925) and played a key role in shaping Indian public opinion about repatriation in both South Africa and India.

By the early 1930s there was general consensus that the Agreement needed re-visiting and an Indian delegation arrived on 4 January 1932 to discuss the issue. Indian South African hopes of a favourable outcome were set back at the reception in Kimberley where the leader of the Indian delegation, Sir Fazil Hussein, said that both governments accepted that 'none of our people should permanently settle in this country'.¹⁷ D.F. Malan, opening the conference on 12 January in Cape Town, emphasised that his government regarded the Agreement as a failure because repatriation had failed. There was a deadlock because the SAIC, based on Dayal's report, called for the scheme to be abandoned. To prevent negotiations from collapsing, the Indian delegation accepted the principle of a joint delegation to look into a colonisation scheme for South African Indians.

The Reverend Bernard Sigamoney, Sorabjee Rustomjee, Manilal Gandhi, C.F. Andrews, Joosub Ibrahim Gardee, Pragi K. Desai, P.R. Pather, A.I. Kajee, Albert Christopher, and V.S.C. Pather gave an undertaking on 5 April 1932 to participate in the scheme 'to ascertain whether there exists any good opportunities ... in the countries explored [but] Congress reserves the right to reject the Agreement and to withdraw its co-operation ...'¹⁸ Manilal Gandhi and Albert Christopher subsequently had a change of heart on the grounds of 'conscience' and 'self-respect.' Kajee countered that it was only an 'inquiry.'¹⁹ These divisions quickly formalised. Opponents called a mass meeting on 23 July 1933 where S.L. Singh, Albert Christopher, Ajum Haffeejee, and Manilal

Gandhi spoke forcefully against colonisation. Christopher moved a resolution protesting the inquiry as well as ‘the continuance of the assisted emigration scheme.’²⁰ For Manilal Gandhi, ‘the present population consists of the original labouring class who have had sufficient education to look after themselves, and forming as they do the majority of the community, it is time that they had the first say in all matters affecting them.’²¹

The Colonial Born and Settlers Indian Association (CBSIA) came into being on 22 August 1933 with Albert Christopher as chairman. Manilal Gandhi was vice-chairman, K.K. Pillay and Monty’s father P.G. Naicker were treasurers, while M. John, Ajum Haffeejee, and S.L. Singh were honorary secretaries. Albert Christopher was born in Durban on 7 April 1885 to indentured migrants who had arrived in the 1860s. His father, Narrainsamy Paupiah, arrived from Chingleput on the *Earl of Hardwick* in September 1863, while his mother Lutchme Goorvadoo, arrived on the *Saxon* in August 1864 from Chittoor. Christopher was one of the most prominent politicians in the first half of the twentieth century. He worked closely with Gandhi but was involved in several attempts to provide a platform for the political voice of colonial-born Indians to be heard. He was also involved in a host of sports, education, and social welfare organisations until his death on 24 November 1960. The party’s manifesto, adopted on 22 September 1933, declared that Indians ‘born in this country and those who have made [it] their home, have the indisputable right to remain.’²² This meant opposing colonisation. Membership included indentured and passenger migrants, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Gujarati’s, Tamil and Telegu. P. Bharat Singh was commissioned to investigate the fate of returned migrants. His report, published in *Indian Opinion* on 16 February 1934 confirmed the findings of Dayal and Chaturvedi and urged the CBSIA to undertake extensive propaganda against repatriation.

The Colonisation Committee’s inquiry lasted from 28 July 1933 to 3 February 1934. Hearings were held in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Pretoria, and Cape Town. The report, which was presented on 26 February 1934, concluded that South African Indians who had adopted a ‘western standard of life’ were wary of living in a third Colony with colonists from India. They wished to remain in

South Africa and fight to remove the restrictions placed on them. No potential colony of settlement was definitely identified, but British Guiana, British North Borneo and British New Guinea were mooted as possibilities. While these proposals failed to get off the ground, the fallout over participation, as Calpin pointed out, 'left [a] scar that was slow to heal.'²³

These issues took a backseat as attention focused on how the Agent-General would react to calls for him to scupper plans to marry Miss Sammy. Refusing to budge, Raza Ali instead appealed for unity. Indians should 'look to the dangers ahead. Close up your ranks and present a united front. The only way to salvation is through union and unity.' He warned that they were sitting on a volcano of impending commercial and residential segregation: 'it is your duty to present a united front,'²⁴ and implored Indians to end communalism: 'the essence of public life was ... a spirit of compromise ... It is impossible to remove grievances without adjusting your differences and ceasing to quarrel. Don't make South Africa a part of India in introducing communal differences.'²⁵

Despite his pleas, on 19 January 1936, the President, one of the two Joint Secretaries and one of the two Joint Treasurers, and four members of the Executive of the SAIC, resigned. Two days later, eight members of the NIC executive, led by V.S.C. Pather and Sorabjee Rustomjee, and 14 ordinary members also resigned. They issued a press statement that 'to the eastern mind, having regard to its traditional and religious character, such matrimonial alliances are undesirable ... It is not possible for us to co-operate conscientiously with the Agency whilst in charge of Sir Raza Ali.'²⁶ Despite the opposition Raza Ali completed his tenure on 13 February 1938. He also upset the South African government with his remarks at a farewell reception in Cape Town on 6 February 1938 that whites enjoyed 'all those benefits that made life worth living. Those who were not fortunate enough to possess white skins were subjected to ... disadvantages which make it impossible to make an honest living.'

Governor-General Patrick Duncan complained to the Viceroy of India on 10 February 1938 that these comments 'formed the climax of speeches of a similar character delivered by him ... Public criticism ... is not conducive to the maintenance of desirable relations between such representatives and the

Government to which he is accredited.’ The Viceroy assured Duncan on 22 March 1938 that they would impress upon Raza Ali’s successor ‘the great importance of avoiding statements in his public utterances that may jeopardise ... desirable relations between him and the Government of the Union.’

Raza Ali’s comments aside, the office of the Agency, whose nomenclature changed from ‘Agent’ to ‘Agent-General’ to ‘High Commissioner,’ had both a moderating influence on Indian politics and a dampening effect on the building of mass organisations. The Agents were Sir V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (1927-29), Sir Kurma Raj Bahadur Venkata Reddi Naidu (1929-32), and Sir Maharaj Singh (1932-35); the Agent-Generals were Sir Sayed Raza Ali (1935-38) and Sir Benegal Rama Rau (1938-41); and the High Commissioners were Sir Shafa’at Ahmad Khan (1941-44) and Ramrao Madhaurao Deshmukh (1945-46).



Sir and Lady Rama Rau with Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (standing)

© Dr Khorshed Ginwala

To appreciate their role we must understand, as Pahad points out, that the Indian Government wanted them to cultivate social relations with influential whites in order to educate them about India and demonstrate that Indians could attain a high degree of “civilisation”. Agents were to break down social barriers and cultivate ‘mutual understanding’ between whites and the moderate voice among Indians. Men of ‘considerable tact and *savoir faire*’ were appointed to this office. Agents had to watch that their public utterances did not complicate relations with the Union Government. The advice to Sastri applied to all: ‘avoid public pronouncements or making commitments on questions of policy without previous consultation with the Government of India.’²⁷ As anti-Indian legislation continued to be implemented, a letter to the press signed ‘Old Congressman’ questioned the effectiveness of the Agent-General as the ‘watch-dog of [Indian] rights and interests ... The money spent on the Agency comes out of the pockets of the poor, half-starving peasantry of India, and they should have at least the satisfaction of knowing that their money is well spent in attempting and striving hard to protect the rights of their brethren overseas.’²⁸ An editorial in *Indian Opinion* underscored another frustration – the office of the Agent-General was ‘inaugurated to support the Indian community’ but ‘a section of our community now looks upon the Agent-General to lead on all matters with the result that it is not possible to grow on its own strength. This is an untenable position.’²⁹ Radical leaders who came to the fore from the mid-1930s complained that the Agency, ‘being muzzled by the dictates of Whitehall, has become a very useful medium of holding back any form of radical and progressive leadership ... It has become the spearhead of compromise and defeatism.’³⁰

Sir Benegal Rama Rau (1889-1969), who was secretary to the Round Table Conference of 1927, replaced Raza Ali as Agent. His priority was to unite the warring factions in the Indian community.

He convinced most who had resigned to protest Raza Ali’s marriage, to return to the Congress fold. In the meantime, there was trouble brewing within the CBSIA. It was sparked when V.K. Pillay, president of the Pietermaritzburg branch, branded the organisation ‘obsolete’ and called for unity with the NIC.

The political paralysis was best summed up in a letter to the press signed 'G.R.V.', which bemoaned the fact that while the NIC was 'doing everything it can for the capitalists,' the CBSIA 'is doing everything it can to call up protest meetings and shout down the Congress. Besides this they have achieved nothing of any importance.'³¹ There was progress towards unity when eminent philosopher Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan visited in 1939. He appealed to both sides to work towards reconciliation. This appeal 'touched the hearts of all' and informal talks were initiated between the Congress and CBSIA.³² The parties agreed that 'in unity alone lies [our] salvation' and that they would leave the choice of the name of the new body to Gandhi's 'matured decision.' A meeting of NIC branches on 30 April 1939 approved the proposal which was sent to the Special General Meeting of the NIC on 4 June 1939 for ratification. Kajee, who had agreed to unity, delayed its consummation. The 4 June 1939 meeting was postponed so that he could attend a meeting of the TIC in Johannesburg. He found several excuses to postpone future meetings. Kajee eventually met privately with Albert Christopher and suggested that they first resolve the naming issue. He suggested 'Natal Indian Association' and this was agreed upon when the Congress and CBSIA next met on 22 August 1939.³³

Once more, however, Kajee opted out of the merger without explanation. A Congress meeting on 27 August 1939 elected Sorbajee Rustomjee as president and accepted the amalgamation proposal despite opposition from a faction led by Cassim Anglia, a supporter of Kajee. The NIA officially came into being on 8 October 1939 without Kajee and Anglia, who boycotted the meeting. Messages of support came from Prime Minister Smuts, Minister of Interior, H.G. Lawrence, and Minister of Finance, J.H. Hofmeyr.

It is remarkable, given the antipathy and sense of superiority that Afrikaner nationalists felt towards blacks in general, that these courtesies continued to be observed towards increasingly assertive Indian institutions. The answer seems to lie in the common Anglophilia that underlay both sets of nationalist leaders, essentially asking for a space within the existing system rather than its overthrow. Another possible reason was that Afrikaner nationalists took the Indian elite seriously as politicians. Many Indians were, according to interviewees who

lived through that period, 'better turned out,' 'more eloquent and savvy' than the average Afrikaner politician's unsophisticated rural constituency.

Kajee's faction comprised a significant portion of the old "Who's Who" of Indian leadership – Bhawani Dayal , P.R. Pather, M.A. Motala, E.M. Ebrahim, S.M. Paruk, Vincent Lawrence, B.A. Meghraj, Aboobaker Moosa, and B. Bachoo. A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather were the two dominant figures in moderate politics through the 1930s. Pather was born in Port Louis, Mauritius, in 1895. He moved with his family to Natal in 1903, settling at Elandslaagte in Northern Natal and later Pietermaritzburg and then Durban, where he became clerk for the law firm of Clark & Clark before starting an estate agency. Pather joined the NIC in the early 1920s. He was appointed one of the joint secretaries in 1924 and was a founding member of the SAIC in the same year. Like many of the leaders of the time, his involvement in community matters extended beyond politics.³⁴ When Pather died in 1968 his funeral was one of the largest ever in Durban, a recognition of his selfless dedication, even if his politics of moderation brought him severe censure from time to time. His son Masilamoney, who qualified as a medical doctor, was to follow a different political trajectory.

Abdulla Ismail (A.I.) Kajee was born in 1896 and, with Pather, was a dominant figure in the NIC from the mid-1930s to 1945. He did his primary schooling in Durban and studied at Aligarh in India. As a businessman he was best known for *A.I. Kajee (Pty.) Ltd. Brokers, Airways and Insurance Agents*. From the mid-1920s he became involved in the affairs of Indian workers. He was an avid reader and had an extensive library which included a great deal of political literature. Kajee entered the political arena around the time of the Round Table Conference (1927) and placed great store on the "uplift" clause. He was Joint Secretary of the SAIC from 1926-45. While many take umbrage at his politics of compromise, there is no denying that he was one of the finest minds during this period. While evoking the need for Indians to unite, this did not detract from his grasp of the relationship of race and class. He recognised that whites put race before class, once saying:

I have often maintained that the interests of the Indian merchant are the same as the interests of the European merchant or of the African merchant ... Superimposed

on the race struggle is the class struggle, and the class struggle occurs within races as well as outside them. Some signs of approach are discernable between the workers of the different races as a result of common interests. So far practically no signs of this approach are to be seen between the commercial sections of Europeans and Indians; though their interests are identical.³⁵

As we see in later chapters, many of the radical leaders made wide use of Kajeer's collection of books, and even trade union organisers turned to him for help when their strike actions faltered.

Kajeer and Pather were the epitome of 'compromise'. They were not averse to accepting voluntary segregation if this meant that segregation would not become policy.

The new NIA informed the government that it was the 'official' voice of Natal's Indians, but P.F. Kincaid, the Commissioner for Immigration and Asiatic Affairs, advised the Secretary for the Interior that it would be a mistake to extend recognition to the NIA which had been in existence for a short period only. That would remain the official position of government. The Kajeer-Pather faction continued to have a great deal of political clout, and in many senses the opposition that they faced from Albert Christopher, Manilal Gandhi, Sorabjee Rustomjee, and others who had links going back to Gandhi, was from "yesterday's men". A new emerging leadership, with Monty at the forefront, would put an end to the old style paternalistic leadership.

Among the new names in the NIA were Cassim Amra, George Ponnen, H.A. Naidoo, George Singh, and Monty who formed the core of the Nationalist Bloc which coalesced into the Anti-Segregation Committee (ASC). They wanted to chart an entirely different course. Their entry underscored the fact that 'dictatorship,' according to an editorial in *Indian Opinion* in 1938, 'will never survive in our community. Ten years ago our people accepted, as a matter of course, whatever our leaders said. But that is not the case at present. Our people are in a position to think for themselves, and will not tolerate being spoon-fed.'³⁶ It is clear that by the late 1930s there was a new spark needed to change the direction of Indian politics, and Monty would help provide this.

Raza Ali and his South African Hindu wife went back to India. It is ironic that

Raza Ali became one of the reasons for public division in the Indian community after his earnest quest to support unity. His political life never recovered from his South African sojourn and he disappeared into the obscurity of the Indian Civil Service.

Monty's marriage and simultaneous integration both into Marie's political family and local politics, on the other hand, saw his public profile on the ascendency. When he returned from Edinburgh, he could very well have settled into a life of upper middle-class comfort. He would reflect four decades later in 1973, when one of his banning orders had expired, that people 'are not on this earth just to make money.' Upon his return from Edinburgh, he had ambitions of being a surgeon, but was 'dragged into active politics by the extent of poverty and frustration around me.' Monty's surgery was in Leopold Street and many of his patients were what Frantz Fanon referred to as the "wretched of the earth",³⁷ those who worked for the Durban municipality and lived at the nearby Magazine Barracks.

To understand in part what it was that attracted men like Monty to politics, or trade unions, and even the Communist Party, we must appreciate the depths of poverty among Indians during this period, as well as the intransigence of white local officials and the dead-end offered by the politics of appeasement.

It is to these themes that we now turn.



A.I. Kajeer

© Doolie Barmania



P.R. Pather. Seated, A.B. Moosa

© Khatija Jhaveri

From the cane fields to the casbah

The pots at home they somersault
With the gravitation of emptiness;
My head at school it somersaults
With the gravitation of shallowness.
My stomach! Why aggravate its foodlessness
By a dole of diet meaningless?
Why tell the hungry, starving lad
That milk and butter and cheese,
That fruits and fish and meat
Are all needed for his health? ¹

B.D. LALLA 'SCHOOLING IS FOOLING'

The Durban where Monty was born and the Durban to which he returned after completing his medical studies could have been two different cities. Most significant was the speed at which Indians migrated to the city as Africans, dispossessed of land by a combination of armed incursions and legislation, replaced Indians on white-owned farms and mines before they themselves began the trek to the city.² The Indian population of Durban increased from 16 400 in 1921 to 123 165 in 1949 and the African population from 29 022 to 109 543 during this period.³ The urban landscape was permanently altered as Indians and Africans made their way to the city and the authorities scrambled to institute mechanisms of control to preserve *their* 'white' city. The differential and hierarchical racial incorporation into the city would feed into tensions and have tragic consequences for Indo-African relations in 1949.

Burrows noted that the flow of Indians to the city was 'due less to the offer of attractive employment or even of any employment at all than to economic pressure driving them off the land.'⁴ The Chief Constable of Durban bemoaned

the fact, in 1925, that ‘there has been a considerable drifting to this Borough, of the very poor from up-country districts, whose breadwinners are in most instances without education, trade or profession.’⁵ Of course, not everyone fitted into this bracket – Monty’s father, for example, made a good living as a banana exporter and stallholder at the Indian Market.

But to understand the politics of the years between the wars, one has to understand the feelings of the thousands of people streaming to Durban from the cane fields and coal mines. Living in tin shacks and ramshackle shanties, their poverty and deprivation was no longer hidden on isolated farms and mines, but staring people in the face on the very doorstep of the city. It was here that a generation of activists was to be born, many of whom would be among the first trade union organisers and cadres of the CP.



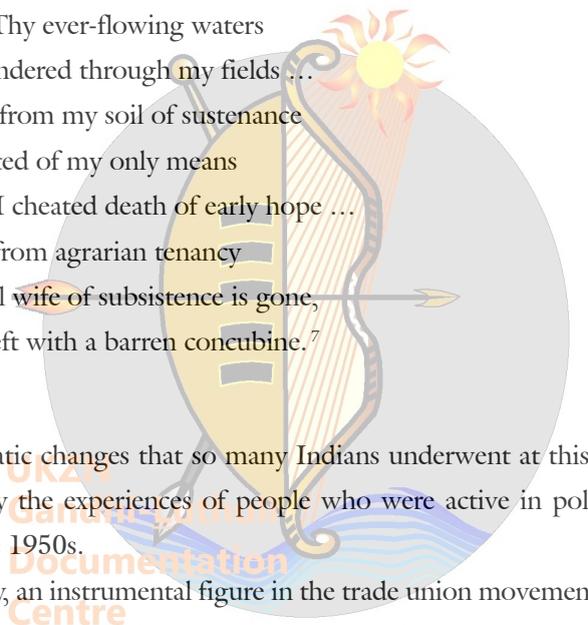
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Indian urban life

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One of the most eloquent witnesses to the experiences of the newly arrived “coolies” was B.D. Lalla (1904-1977). Poet, teacher, and staunch Hindu, his poems were published in two collections, *Black Coolie* and *The Ugly Duckling*, in the 1940s. Lalla was educated at Higher Grade Indian School in Durban and Central Hindu College in Benares, then at Marine College, where he was Monty’s contemporary, and finally the University of Fort Hare where he undertook a teaching diploma.⁶ Lalla’s poetry, while often forsaking complexity and nuance, captures the enveloping poverty, transformations in Indian social life, and revolutionary zeal of a growing number of young people.



Umgeni! Thy ever-flowing waters
Once meandered through my fields ...
Uprooted from my soil of sustenance
Expropriated of my only means
By which I cheated death of early hope ...
Divorced from agrarian tenancy
My fruitful wife of subsistence is gone,
And I'm left with a barren concubine.⁷

B.D. LALLA

The dramatic changes that so many Indians underwent at this time are best illustrated by the experiences of people who were active in politics from the 1930s to the 1950s.

P.M. Harry, an instrumental figure in the trade union movement in the 1930s and 1940s, was one of these people. His story in Natal starts with the arrival of his grandmother, Thayamma as an indentured labourer with two children, a seven-year old son, Panayan, and his younger sister, Paniaata. Thayamma worked in Clairwood and after serving her indenture, earned a living as a street trader behind Huletts Refinery in Rossburgh, where she sold mealies, madumbies and boiled nuts. Thayamma’s son Panayan eventually became *Sirdar* (foreman) at a Clairwood farm called ‘Dembes’, and the family settled in Houghton Road in Clairwood. When the area became industrialised, the family was forced out. Panayan married Mangamma from the Point Barracks



P.M. Harry and his wife

© A. Chinnappen



P.A. Pillay

© A. Chinnappen

and they had eight children. Two of their children were prominent in the struggles of the 1940s. P.M. Harry attended Clairwood Junior Boys and began his working life at Ropes and Matting at the age of 17. He married Ellamma Rookmanny of Clairwood, who was jailed during the passive resistance movement. Harry was involved in union work as a fulltime organiser from the 1930s. He would later move to Greenwood Park and serve on the committee of the Ranganather Temple until his death in 1975. His brother, P.A. Pillay (1920-1987), attended Sastri College and after qualifying as a teacher, worked at Clairwood Boys Junior. He was also an official of the Sirdar Road Temple and subsequently built the Sivankovil Temple in Bayview. Both brothers joined the CP and were imprisoned during the passive resistance campaign.

Their story is important in capturing the transitions taking place in people's lives. Thayamma did her time before earning a living as a hawker, her fate so similar to many who completed their indentures; Panayan worked on a plantation, but his family could not follow suit because the land was lost to industrialisation; P.M. Harry was one of a growing number of young Indians who were entering factories; and P.A. Pillay, as the youngest, benefited from an education due to the sacrifices of his elder brothers. As traditions kept alive during indenture fused with new urban surroundings, so the lives of people like P.M. Harry seemingly without contradiction traversed the CP and the Temple.

This theme, one that is common in many narratives, is important as we try to unravel what communism meant to the many Indians who subscribed to that ideology.

C.D. Moodley's life also illustrates these seeming contradictions. He was born in Mount Edgecombe in 1933 where his father K.C. Moodley was employed as a builder for Natal Estates Ltd. C.D.'s maternal and paternal grandparents came to Natal as indentured migrants. His paternal grandparents, Kandasamy and Kapurai, arrived in the 1890s and were assigned to Mount Edgecombe. C.D. remembers them relating stories about 'skirmishes against the white authorities and so forth. But besides that we knew very little.' By the time C.D. was born, African labour had replaced Indian field hands on most estates, and Indians worked mainly in the mills. K.C. Moodley lived in Mount Edgecombe until his death in 1953. C.D.'s mother, Parvathi, was from Hidcote near Estcourt, where her father was indentured to Natal Government Railways. C.D., the third child of eight children, remembers life in Mount Edgecombe in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly the poverty:

Generally the majority of people lived with the semi-detached system you know, the kitchen on one side and the living quarters on the other. People used to come in a very humble way asking for alms and my mother made sure she put something into their hands...not that we were anything close to a princely wage or anything although my father was a skilled constructor of buildings. He did the buildings for guys like, say, Marshall Campbell and that category. The others, of course, lived virtually below the breadline ... handmade bread ... *roti* ... and sour porridge ... that's what people survived on. Those were very hard times and the majority of people, including adults, couldn't afford shoes. They used to walk barefoot. You find all these adults going to the factory and back bare feet... to work. Some hardly had clothing.

It came as no surprise, then, that communism and trade unions became as attractive to workers as the Indian struggle against the British. C.D.'s father K.C. Moodley was 'an ardent admirer of Stalin.'

He was very politicised and he couldn't, you know, take what the whites were

doing to people and ... can I just relate a little story? On one occasion he called me and said, 'Sonny, come here, I want to you to write something'. So he dictated to me about the little girls – Indian girls – turned 11 years of age, going into the cane plantations after walking for miles to the site of their labour with a little billy can in one hand and a hoe on the other shoulder and weeding there from sunrise to sunset. And he was taking up these issues with Senator Byron in Cape Town and he told me to write, 'we are reaching the end of our patience with the working conditions of the people and I appeal to you to take a stand and rectify these things, failing which we are so agitated that we are prepared to set all your cane fields on fire'. Byron was a director or something in the sugar industry. My father was made of that kind of fire ... revolutionary in his own way, you know, and I think that is where I picked up my interest in politics as well.

And how did they learn about Stalin?

Number one, we were regular readers of the *Indian Opinion* and we subscribed to the *Natal Mercury* those years so his favourite pages were the political commentary. That was one source and I remember a white guy who used to collect dues on behalf of the trade unions ... Errol Shanley...He used to come and sit under a wild fig tree and my father used to give me two shillings to go and pay him, you know, his subscriptions. Then there were people like George Ponnen, Vera Ponnen, H.A. Naidoo ... these were the ones...even N.G. Moodley [father of later Black Consciousness leader Strini Moodley] ... they used to come around selling CP literature. My father had access to that kind of literature.

And then you had Gandhi's settlement not far from us and they churned out *Indian Opinion*. Also, Gandhi was an international figurehead. He took up the issue of Indians in South Africa. We looked at Gandhi, Nehru, Subha Chandra Bose, and Sarojini Naidoo with a lot of reverence. We all had photographs of them hung on the walls of our humble homes. We looked at them with pride ... it was something to crow about. Gandhi was our father figure ... Bapu. It was something to look at and discuss – India, our Motherland. There was no contradiction between this and admiring Stalin. Your personal situation...the oppression...made people think of alternatives. The more enlightened ones drew

inspiration from Russia. We were politically simple-minded and did not analyse the difference between the Indian struggle and Russia. We saw in India our own Motherland taking on the British, the white man, and in Russia we saw something to solve our economic problems. There was no contradiction for us.

According to C.D., by the 1930s many of his generation were getting some education. Those with secondary education lived with their parents on estates but worked in the laboratory at the factory or did clerical work at the Mill, while others acquired jobs in factories sprouting up in Verulam and Durban. Three of C.D.'s brothers would work for Eddels Shoe Factory in Pietermaritzburg.

The transition to urban wage employment was not always straightforward, as many Indians avoided wage labour by engaging in market gardening and hawking. Market gardening was attractive because land was available for lease, it required little capital to start, and it allowed Indians to create a diverse household economy. A 1940 survey reported that Indians farmed in Clairwood, Springfield, Mayville, Sea Cow Lake, Riverside, Umhlatuzana and Bayhead.⁸ Market gardeners initially relied on their proximity to the city centre to survive, but were gradually squeezed out. From the 1930s, gardeners had to give way to industrial expansion at South Coast Junction, Lamont Industrial Estate, and Umgeni; to the airport at Isipingo; and roadworks at Wentworth.⁹ Indian-owned land was also expropriated in Riverside, Merebank, Wentworth, Sydenham, and Springfield where they had lived for several generations.¹⁰

Migration to the city increased the number and plight of the urban poor. When the NIC complained that farmers were losing their livelihood, one official responded that 'there is no obligation upon the City Council whatsoever to find land for gardening purposes.'¹¹

You say you've a family of six
Plus an aged mother to care;
That rent is high and food is dear,
That wages is nothing but a dole...
You say your master is wealthy
And grows wealthier every year;

And it is sweated labour
That multiplies his wealth each year.

B.D. LALLA 'HUMAN BEAST OF BURDEN' ¹²

Two-thirds of Natal's manufacturing industry and industrial workforce was concentrated around Durban because of the port, abundant water supply, inexpensive land and cheap labour. ¹³ Industrial growth took off after 1935 and Indian employment in manufacturing doubled between 1925 and 1949. ¹⁴ The workforce was mostly male and concentrated in the food, clothing and textile, leather, furniture, paper and printing industries. Indian progress in industry was limited by the Apprenticeship Act, Industrial Conciliation Act (1924), and Minimum Wage Act (1925), which gave preference to white workers. Indians established a position as poorly paid semi-skilled and unskilled industrial operatives. The 1951 per capita income was £40.02 for Africans, £45.00 for Indians and £282.74 for whites. ¹⁵ The combination of a large influx of people to the city, the undeveloped industrial sector, the Great Depression, and White Labour Policy consequently resulted in large-scale unemployment and poverty, with many Indians barely surviving on the margins.

Ours is a good system of society, isn't it, Daddy?

I believe so, son.

Daddy, did you read in the paper that a woman was crushed while trying to get into Curries Fountain for 2lb rice?

I did, son.

And that old woman soaked in the drizzle waited for two hours to buy 2lbs rice?

Yes, son.

But, Daddy, you said ours was a good system of society.

Shut-up, son.

But Daddy...

Shut-up, son, I said. ¹⁶

B.D. LALLA

Unemployment and low pay resulted in widescale poverty during the 1930s and 1940s. The depression and White Labor Policy were crucial. For example,

1 600 workers in the coal mines, the Lion Match Factory, in laundries, printing press and furniture trade were replaced by unemployed whites in 1931.¹⁷ The government even offered a subsidy to municipalities to replace Indians with whites. This desperate position is illustrated by the fact that whereas only 633 Indians repatriated during 1930, 1 509 returned to India between February and October 1931.¹⁸ Sir Kurma Reddy, the Indian Agent, called on ‘those of our brethren who are blessed with wealth to act ... and we will rise in the estimation alike of our friends and enemies. Generously respond and we will have the satisfaction to feel that we have aided the authorities in solving the problem of unemployment.’¹⁹

As unemployed Indians became desperate, they took matters into their own hands. Following a mass meeting, over 500 ‘weary, footsore, and hungry’ workers marched to the Agent’s house demanding action.²⁰ This induced an instant response and the NIC criticised government apathy at a mass meeting in September 1931. An Unemployment Register was started and the Sir Kurma Reddy Unemployment Fund was established.²¹ Over 4 000 workers registered by August.²² The Committee handed out rations and arranged a food kitchen which was maintained on donations in kind from ‘the smaller men.’ Three hundred men were fed each day by volunteer workers and food parcels were given to women and children who came ‘clamouring for food.’²³

Unemployment remained a serious problem throughout these years. According to one estimate, 7 000 Indians were unemployed in 1949.²⁴ An independent study by the NIC reported that only 400 received unemployment benefits. The few who collected benefits were made to queue at least three hours each Monday to “sign in” and several more hours on Thursday to collect their money. They were treated poorly with one man complaining that ‘you are bullied about by them but beggars can’t be choosers.’²⁵ Dr Goonam, whose patients were mainly the Indian *poors*, wrote that ‘the children were ill-nourished. I could see pinched faces, big pot-bellies. When they came to my surgery I asked what they ate ... it was mainly dhal and rice – no meat, no protein at all. It went on – some lived, some died.’²⁶ A University of Natal study in 1943/44 reported that 70 percent of Indians were living below the poverty datum line and that 40 percent

were destitute.²⁷ And diseases of poverty began to increase among Indians. Dr Goonam reported in 1943 that in Clairwood, tuberculosis and bronchial asthma were rampant, caused by living in a hollow, while the loose dusty soil of the roads led to infectious diseases. In Cato Manor, the clay soil and cement floors caused rheumatism, arthritis and chest infections.²⁸

The years of depression led to the failure of many Indian businesses, including the declining fortunes of two families whose children would become household names in the struggle – M.D. Naidoo and M.P. Naicker.

A key figure to emerge during this period was Marimuthu Pragalathan (M.P.) Naicker, the son of Monty's paternal uncle Mariemuthoo. M.P., born in Durban on 28 July 1920, was the eldest of four children, the others being Indrani, Nadarajan, and Ganesh. Though M.P. and Monty were first cousins, the trajectories of their early lives differed markedly. Mariemuthoo was a stretcher bearer in the First World War, who subsequently opened a stall at the Indian Market, but his business became insolvent. Unemployment was followed by a job at Barratts Bakery (later Bakers) as a van driver. M.P.'s mother worked as a seamstress to keep the family afloat. During the 1920s they lived with Monty in Short Street, but later moved to Everton Road in Mayville.

M.P. attended St Aidans School and Sastri College from 1932, where George Singh played an important role in his politicisation with his passionate talks about the Soviet Union and India's drive to free itself from the yoke of British imperialism. Poverty forced M.P. onto the labour market and he joined the white-owned Independent Retailers, where he worked 12 hours per day, six days a week, before joining his father at the bakery. M.P. continued with night classes and completed his Junior Certificate and a course in bookkeeping. He also helped to form the Natal Baking Workers Industrial Union.

World War II and anti-war rallies at Red Square further awakened M.P.'s interest in politics. He joined the Liberal Study Group at 18, and came into contact with activists like George Ponnen, H.A. Naidoo, Dawood Seedat, and I.C. Meer. Impressed by Ponnen and Naidoo in particular, M.P. joined the CP. Despite being a communist, he could not escape tradition and married 16-year-old Saro in 1943, who was "handpicked" by his mother, Panjani. Saro was one

of the 12 children of M.C. (Khana) and Anglama Naidoo. Khana worked for the *Natal Mercury*, ‘delivering newspapers to the white households in town. He used to get up very early in the morning and deliver papers ... door to door.’ Saro explains that when Panjani came with a proposal, her parents consulted an astrologist ‘to see if the birth charts tally and what the suitability will be ... a very, very genuine, astrologist whose prediction was absolutely accurate ... I can recall he said, ‘She’s going to have a very, very difficult time ... she might leave the country as well but this is a better option than another suitor comes along ...’

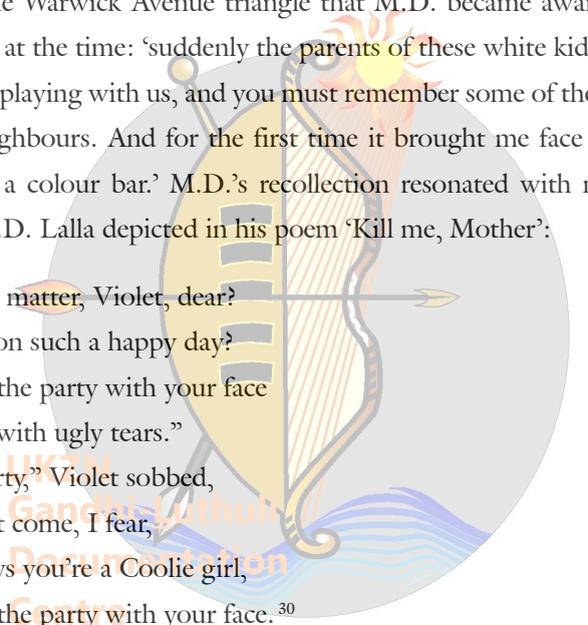
In 1944, M.P. quit the bakery and became a fulltime union organiser under the tutelage of H.A. Naidoo and George Ponnen. He came into his own when he disguised himself as a sugar cane worker and exposed their brutal working conditions in a riveting pamphlet titled *They Grow Your Sugar*. Shortly afterwards he began organising African and Indian workers into The Sugar Workers Union and joined it full time in spite of his wage dropping from £17.95 to £10 per week. As Saro recalls, this led to his mother ‘putting up such a big fight, quarrelling with him ... how can ever you do this?’

But as Saro reflects, the decision liberated M.P. for it was in the hurly-burly of organising and writing that he was happiest. M.P. would play an instrumental role in ousting the Old Guard of Indian politics, and he also assumed many organisational roles in the NIC and CP, becoming a well-known figure in Durban and appearing to keep his eye on all the major political developments. But he did not live his life simply as an instrument of rigid political ideology – he was also a real city man, a keen cinema-goer who especially loved Tamil movies, played tennis regularly with his father, and rarely missed a football match at Curries Fountain.²⁹

Mooroogiah Dhanapathy (M.D.) Naidoo was one of the most enduring figures in local city politics. He was the colonial-born son of indentured parents, R.M. Naidoo (1876-1944) and Mangammah Naidoo (1884-1940). Mangammah was the daughter of a Sirdar at Mount Edgecombe, while R.M. Naidoo and his brothers R.D. and R.C. Naidoo ran a small business in Riverside. The children

of R.M. and Mangammah Naidoo, particularly M.D. (1919-1995), M.P (1926-1994), and M.J. (1931-1997) were noteworthy figures in the circuits of local politics during the heady period from the 1940s to the 1970s. M.D.'s father was reasonably well off and fairly active politically. He had attained an education to standard four, the highest level available to Indians at the time, and M.D. would later state that his father's political activity and literacy had a great influence on him. The family was a fairly orthodox Hindu one. When the business in Riverside went insolvent during the Depression, they moved to Market Building in Etna Lane.

It was in the Warwick Avenue triangle that M.D. became aware of racism. M.D. was ten at the time: 'suddenly the parents of these white kids ... stopped their children playing with us, and you must remember some of these kids were next-door neighbours. And for the first time it brought me face to face with the reality of a colour bar.' M.D.'s recollection resonated with many Indian children, as B.D. Lalla depicted in his poem 'Kill me, Mother':



“What’s the matter, Violet, dear?
Why weep on such a happy day?
You’ll spoil the party with your face
All daubed with ugly tears.”
“Tis the party,” Violet sobbed,
“You cannot come, I fear,
Mummy says you’re a Coolie girl,
You’ll spoil the party with your face.”³⁰

During the early 1930s, M.D. joined the white South African Youth Movement which had an Indian branch, but he left shortly after because of racism, and from the mid-1930s was drawn to the CP, Indian Youth League and LSG. He began reading about the political history of India and socialism 'more out of a hunger for knowledge than anything else. I was very active in school debates, but always I would want to be certain that I knew the facts about my subject. I was a proud little kid and I'd never wanted to be bested by anybody in

these intellectual matters.’ Poverty, intense discussions, and mobilisation on the anti-war issue sharpened his political consciousness. ‘My generation generally took the position that the war was not our war.’ M.D.’s father was also anti-British, which ‘made him very pro-Hitler.’ As a result of these activities, ‘we were actually developing and growing politically.’

M.D. was also forced to leave school early. He got a job with the Central News Agency and completed matric through correspondence in 1940. He lost his job when he requested three weeks leave to write the final examination and became a fulltime union organiser, secretary of the Natal region of the NEUF, a member of the ASC, and shortly after, the CP. ‘This was a period of very intense activity – all-round activity – and I was at an age where it didn’t matter what time I went to sleep or what time I got up, whether I had breakfast or not, where I had breakfast.’ In 1943 M.D. registered at the University of Natal and was elected President of the student organisation.

Another key figure in the union movement was R.D. Naidoo who was born on 24 September 1914. This son of a borough policeman received his education at a mission school, where he won most of the prizes on offer for scriptures. Unlike many Indians R.D. grew up in a mixed-race environment. His father lived in a police compound with African and coloured policemen and when his mother died he was brought up by an African neighbour. Coupled with the fact that his teachers were white, ‘the question of colour didn’t appear to us.’

Two things transformed R.D. The first was a poem that he read at school, ‘The Slave’s Dream,’ by H.W. Longfellow. Interviewed over 50 years after reading the poem, R.D. was able to quote his favourite portion of it and he had retained a photocopy of the poem:

He did not feel the driver’s whip,
Nor the burning heat of day;
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,
And his lifeless body lay
A worn-out fetter, that the soul
Had broken and thrown away

According to R.D.:

The poem changed my entire character in life. Shows how the slave driver was whipping the slave, you know. This transformed my whole thinking in this non-racial issue because I saw the tyranny. I sometimes wonder what these people went through. But even in the modern technological age too, we still see that kind of oppression but in a different way. It changed me because I was a great believer. At that time I believed that Christ brought about many changes, like feeding the poor and getting the fish and blessing it, those things appealed to me as if Christ can tap on miracles and bring about change. That helped me a lot in the early days. I used to be a regular. I used to quote the Bible very freely even in my early days in the Trade Unions, doing my Memorandums, you know, I'm talking about 1936, 1937...

R.D. left school in 1930 following the death of his father and entered the baking trade. He carried baskets selling bread from house to house, 'tiring and backbreaking work.' R.D.'s outlook was further radicalised when he read Sydney and Beatrice Webb's book on the history of British Trade Unions. 'I realised I was fighting the Boss. My concept was very clear. There was only one person that we got to fight, the boss class. If there were anti-white discussions I do not believe I should be party to that.' R.D. was 'very moved by the incidences,' 'looked into our own situation,' and 'approached a number of people to see if we could form a Trade Union of Baking Workers.' The existing white union refused to accept Indian members and after a long struggle they formed the Natal Bakers and Confectioners Employees Union in 1936.

He joined the LSG and came under the influence of 'outstanding men' like E.J. Dhlomo, editor of *Langalasi Natal*, Peter Abrahams, George Singh, H.A. Naidoo, and A.K.M. Docrat. Through the union and the LSG, R.D. was drawn into politics. He joined the CP and recalls being interviewed by Rowley Arenstein, 'one of most brilliant theoreticians in those days.' He subsequently joined the NEUF, ASC, and NIC.³¹

By the late 1920s the biggest concentration of Indians was at Magazine

Barracks, whose residents provided a direct and immediate link to indenture. Most had begun their lives indentured to the Durban Town Council (DTC), and when their indenture ended, they remained in the Council's employ and comprised the most visible segment of Durban's urban poor. They also constituted the bulk of Monty's patients. The Durban Municipality was a major employer of Indian labour, employing an average of 2 000 workers through the 1930s and 1940s, but municipal workers and their dependants totalled almost 10 000.³² Most were housed at the Magazine Barracks in Somtseu Road, where conditions were deplorable and barely upgraded over the years, in spite of many protests. Councillor Knight provided one explanation for the refusal to do something about it: 'the more wretchedly the Indians are housed and paid, the more likely they will be willing to be repatriated to India.'³³

The Barracks persisted because they helped to maintain discipline and increase the efficiency of workers. It was fenced all round with entrances in the front and rear that were guarded by Sirdars who maintained "law and order" and had the power to arrest anyone breaking by-laws. They were provided with batons and cuffs, and given the status of Special Constables.³⁴

Municipal employees were among the lowest paid workers in Durban. A 1946 survey of the 6 140 residents of the Magazine Barracks found that the average family size was 6.1 persons with 1.4 wage earners per household.³⁵ The income of municipal employees accounted for two-thirds of their total expenditure, with the balance made up by the income of women peddlers and domestic servants, and males who worked in the evenings or on weekends to supplement their incomes.³⁶ Malnutrition was widespread as 45 percent of diets were deficient in calories, 70 percent in proteins and 57 percent in fats. What's more, 70 percent of families were in debt because of the high cost of food, clothing, and medical fees.³⁷

It is in this context of extreme poverty and appalling living conditions that many took up the fight against race and class oppression, not least Rungasamy Karuppa (R.K.) Gounden, who was the chairman of the Durban Indian Municipal Employees society (DIMES) in the 1940s. He was the son of the

famous Karuppa who had arrived from Chingalpattu in South India in 1880 as an indentured labourer. After completing his indenture, Karuppa remained in the employ of the Corporation as zookeeper in Mitchell Park, his most famous charge being Nellie the elephant. When Sastri was the Agent, he approached the Maharaja of Mysore to send an elephant, which he presented to the city of Durban as a gesture of goodwill to whites. When Nellie arrived in 1928, Karuppa was sent to the harbour to escort her to the zoo, where she became a major attraction as she ferried white children daily on her *howdah*³⁸ with Gounden as *mabout* (elephant keeper). After Gounden's death in a train accident in 1934, it is said that Nellie became depressed and was eventually sent to the Taronga Zoo in Sydney in 1948. Like her first mahout, Nellie's life ended tragically when she fell into a moat, broke her spine and died eleven months after leaving Durban.

Karuppa married Subbarayadu (1895-1965) in 1910 and they had two sons, R.K., who was born in 1916, and Swaminathan Karuppa (S.K.) Gounden, who was born in 1927. Both became involved in trade unions and politics. Their family of seven, which included three sisters, lived in a one-room home at "London Square" in the Barracks. R.K. attended Carlisle Street and later Sastri College. He was one of the first Indians from the Barracks to do so, but abruptly terminated his studies when his father died, because of a regulation that family members had to vacate the Barracks within a year of the death of the employee. He secured a job at the Depot Hospital so that his family could continue living at the Barracks. At Sastri, R.K. had befriended George Singh and other activists, and was a committee member of Monty's NIC in 1945.

George Singh was a man of many parts – footballer, unionist, politician, lawyer, teacher, historian, Marxist, and fisherman. When Phyllis Naidoo interviewed Dr Chota Motala, the ANC stalwart of the Midlands a few months before his death in May 2005, he recalled his Sastri days, especially 'A.D. Lazarus and Mr Singh, a footballer, with much pride.'³⁹ Singh was a brilliant soccer player who represented the South African Indian national team against India in 1934. Aside from football and teaching, George Singh was an important figure in

Indian politics and trade unions from the late 1930s. He was born in Durban to Janbahadur and Elizabeth Singh in 1913. His paternal uncle was S.L. Singh, who was involved in the Colonial Born Indian Association with Monty's father. George attended Depot Road School and Sastri College. Thereafter he taught at Sastri and influenced the likes of Cassim Amra, M.P. Naicker and others. After the passive resistance campaign ended in 1948, he completed a law degree at Fort Hare and set up a legal practice in Baker Street. When Ahmed Kathrada came to Durban in 1946 to participate in passive resistance, 'the highlight of the trip was the night picnic on a boat owned by George Singh. This was the first time we met, and I immediately took a liking to him.'⁴⁰ George's social life cut across class and religious lines. He fished for hours on end with municipal workers at the beach; he played rummy at the Gujarati Club, bridge at the Muslim Club, and was an intimate friend of Yusuf Cachalia of the TIC, and this relationship forged in the coalface of political struggles even drew their families together.⁴¹ He was a man who embraced people across various divides, and was also well connected in local political and economic circles through his marriage to Suriakumari Bodasingh from the well known north coast family.⁴²

George Singh helped organise municipal workers into a powerful entity and to build abiding relationships with the leadership of the union movement. He grew up in Garnett Road, just off May Street, in Greyville and saw firsthand the deplorable conditions under which municipal workers lived, and met many of their children through school and soccer, being quickly drawn to their plight.

The living conditions of the majority of Indians were still characterised by overcrowded neighbourhoods and high rents. A 1933 report of the Town Council noted that 16 100 Indians lived in housing categorised as 'unsuitable owing to inferior design and construction, decay and dilapidation, lack of ventilation and lighting and hygienic necessities.'⁴³ The situation was so desperate that 1 700 were living in stables previously used as animal shelters.⁴⁴

The reluctance to build homes for Indians was later justified on the grounds that to spend money on them 'would have been to spend money on an alien population, a large but unknown proportion of which was likely at any time, to

be removed to their own country.⁴⁵ This prompted one newspaper to remark that while the Council spent £100 000 for a concert hall for whites 'it has yet to provide a decent latrine for Durban's 90 000 Indians.' Housing provision was equally inadequate for the rapidly urbanizing African population, with the result that many lived in the backyards of Indian-owned properties.⁴⁶ These forms of urban interaction between Indians and Africans were central in shaping the racial dynamics of these decades.⁴⁷

Monty's medical practice in Leopold Street was close to the Magazine Barracks and soon his practice was teeming with the urban poor. And it was in the 'coolie quarter', in the lanes that connected Monty's practice to the Squatters' Market, that he broke bread with young people feasting on radical literature. It was here in offices after dusk that the Left reading groups met, trade unionists shared experiences, and communists recruited as they sought entry into the 'non-white' world. The Casbah was alive with subversion, and it increasingly drew Monty into its radical folds.

If the CP was one impetus for politicisation, the Indian nationalist cause was another, with many inspired by Gandhi, as well as Jawaharlal Nehru, and the one-time President of the SAIC, Sarojini Naidu, who many years previously had famously told Indian South Africans to demand justice rather than wait for concessions.

For now, we turn to the story of the Indian communists who were to play a salient role in shaping politics in the 1940s. The standout figures of this period were H.A. Naidoo and George Ponnen, who are intriguing not only because of the close bond they formed, but also because their journeys into exile would have such different outcomes.

The Hammer and the Sickle

Defiantly I flaunt my red cap of alien soil
And declare my hope in Communism fanatically
You see, I am bolder than bold
Fearless and regardless of any consequence
For no logic can reason with my flaming soul
My soul flourishes in this barren land of hope

Where Democracy has failed to thrive
Why then the Hammer and the Sickle
Must remain the emblem of my hope
Democracy! I wooed her long
She's turned a deaf ear to all my pleadings;
Broken-hearted I've sought solace elsewhere;
Why, then, be apprehensive of Russian maid ...¹

B.D. LALLA, 'THE HAMMER AND THE SICKLE'

A host of young militant community activists, many of whom were descendants of indentured migrants and had experienced the lash of white discrimination and mounting poverty in the urban areas, began to organise Indian workers who found employment in the factories springing up in the greater Durban area from the mid-1930s. Many had themselves found work in the very factories that they now returned to organise. Their understanding of working conditions and their personal commitment and courage was to galvanise large numbers of workers.

Some of the union organisers were influenced by a combination of the Indian nationalist struggle and the growing influence of communism, as Lalla's poem vividly illustrates. They would come to constitute the backbone of the struggle

against the moderate leadership of the NIC, and in time were also drawn to the African nationalist movement, and became determined bearers of a cross-race alliance. But if they were militant, they were often pragmatic in the way they sought to fuse race and class into the notion of “community” and even to turn to Indian merchants to sustain the strike actions of workers at critical moments.

The spark for union organisation among Indians was the Liquor Bill of 1927, which stipulated that Indians could not be employed in establishments that served liquor. This was a serious threat, as Indian workers comprised 97 percent of hotel employees in Natal.² Francis C. Pillay, chairman of the Durban Hotel Employees Association, called a mass meeting at which a resolution was passed condemning the proposed law and an appeal made ‘to the people of India and in general to Asia to extend their moral support to Indians in their struggle for existence.’³ Speakers included A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather. They pressurised the government to delete this clause from the Liquor Bill in February 1928.

Moderate politicians regarded the bill as a violation of the Cape Town Agreement and feared that it would be a precursor to other restrictive legislation. The NIC arranged a conference of workers, merchants and professionals in December 1928 to address racism in employment. *Indian Opinion* pointed to the anomaly that whereas ‘in other parts of the world such movements are inaugurated to fight against the capitalists, the movement in this country is not to fight the capitalists but their fellow European trade unionists.’⁴ At this inaugural Indian Trade Union Congress the platform was shared by the likes of Albert Christopher, A.I. Kajee, P.R. Pather, Sorabjee Rustomjee and Srinivas Sastri.⁵ A Natal Workers Congress (NWC) was formed under the tutelage of merchants and professionals. Albert Christopher was president, and A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather vice-presidents.

But as unemployment and poverty, brought on by the depression of the early 1930s, became widespread, the limitations of the NWC were exposed. It limited itself to making representations on behalf of workers and viewed forms of mass protests and strikes with disdain, and as the Depression took its toll, the working

classes sought *fighting* organisations to defend them. Into this vacuum stepped a new generation of leaders with a zeal and ideology that marked a different, far more aggressive approach, typified by the charismatic George Ponnen and H.A. Naidoo. They were joined by the likes of R.D. Naidoo, A.K.M. Docrat, Cassim Amra, Billy Peters, and M.D. Naidoo, who were prominent in trade unions and the CP. Pauline Podbrey, herself a high-flying member of the CPSA, recalled that ‘an endless stream of workers came knocking on our doors, pleading to be organised, wanting to be unionised. Their first choice for secretary or chairman was inevitably H.A. or Ponnen. They knew, they said, that these were men who could stand up to their bosses.’⁶

George Ponnen was born in 1913 in Rooikopjies, near present-day Westville. His background has been difficult to trace, but some family members identified his father as Padvatten Poonen (Ponnen), who arrived in August 1890 as an indentured labourer. His mother, Gengamma, arrived in 1893, and they married in 1896. Padvatten, who died in 1921, joined the Tramways Department, laying rails on various routes in Durban. To supplement his meagre pay, he and his wife worked as gardeners for white officials on weekends. A participant in the historic 1913 strike, Padvatten left a deep imprint on George, who recalled that though his father could not ‘read or write, he narrated glaring stories of exploitation, corruption and mismanagement in the mills and in the plantation where most of the women worked.’ George Ponnen was the seventh of eight children. Family poverty, which saw two of his brothers and a sister die in infancy, and the disparity in living conditions between whites and blacks, such as the absence of proper roads, transportation or hospitals in Indian areas, all moulded his political consciousness. Ponnen attended the St Thomas Government Aided Indian School from 1920, walking five miles to and from school daily. His mother tried to manage their smallholding after his father’s death but became insolvent in 1924, so they moved to Manning Place, where two of his brothers found work at a sheet-metal factory, while his mother hawked vegetables from house to house.

Ponnen was in grade three when the farm was sold. Though just 11 or 12,

the slightly built young boy left school and joined the Standard Cigar Company in Alice Street, where he stripped tobacco and filled the moulds for cigars and cheroots. He worked nine hours a day, six days a week. After six months the family moved to Sydenham where he attended St Theresa School, but when one of his brothers became unemployed in 1926, he returned to work, this time at S.A. Tinsmith in Bond Street. During 1927 and 1928 his brother found a job, and Ponnen attended Cato Manor School. The Great Depression of 1929, however, dashed his hopes once again and he returned to work at J.C. Kinghorn Broom and Brush Manufacturers Ltd in Prince Edward Street, cutting fibres for brooms and brushes. Next he packed tea for the Five Roses Tea and Coffee Works in Brickhill Road, but lost that job when the factory moved to Point Road. Shortly afterwards he joined Wrights Knitting Mills in Umbilo Road, where for the first time he worked with white women and African males, and was annoyed to learn that whites earned higher wages. He raised this with fellow-workers and was dismissed with three other workers when management found out.

Ponnen found work at African Clothing Manufacturers Ltd in Mayville as a trainee machinist, where his path crossed with H.A. Naidoo. It was to prove a formidable partnership, as described by I.C. Meer:

I have fond memories of H.A. Naidoo: his brilliance, his range of contacts, his high sense of discipline, his oratorical skills, his integrity and his passion to eliminate poverty. They were quite a pair – George and HA. Both were South Indians, both were trade unionists working among the poor Indian workers, both were involved with white women, and both were members of the Communist Party and the Liberal Study Group.⁷

Harry Allimuthu (H.A.) Naidoo's life had a similar trajectory. His maternal grandmother, Pooranam, was 17 but already a mother of two when she and two friends were swimming in a river near her Indian village. Legend has it that a recruiting agent kidnapped the three women, bundled them off to Madras and from there to Port Natal. Pooranam was convinced that her husband had

disowned her, and remarried in Natal. By all accounts she was an indomitable woman – one story tells how two fingers of her right hand were chopped off with a machete when she rushed in to prevent an abusive husband from beating his wife. Bloodied, she continued her attack until the husband backed down, and she shepherded the wife to safety.⁸ Pooranam's daughter, Valliyama, was ten when she married a struggling trader, Kunjebihari Naidoo. They had three children, H.A. (1915-1971), Krishna and Dhanum. Kunjebihari drowned shortly after Dhanum's death, leaving the family destitute.

H.A. attended the Depot Road Government Indian School in Greyville. Though bright, he dropped out in standard five as his family was destitute,⁹ and set out to find work in the factories that were springing up all over the city. These were often dark and dingy places with harsh foremen patrolling the shop-floor. Summary bosses' justice and a beating or firing for those who questioned work conditions was the order of the day. By the end of the 1930s, H.A. would become one of the best known figures in working class organisations. He was involved in around 20 trade unions, was prominent in the NIC, and a key figure in the CP. Rowley Arenstein would write that Ponnen and H.A. Naidoo 'became enthusiastic hardworking trade unionists and they were brilliant. George Ponnen was an outstanding organiser. H.A. Naidoo was not as good an organiser, but had a better political brain ... These two were to dominate the trade union movement, not from the aspect of manipulating but from the aspect of building.'¹⁰

Ponnen and Naidoo met at African Clothing manufacturers. They subsequently joined trouser manufacturer Durban Clothing in Sydney Road because they wanted to be closer to the city so that they could attend night classes under the auspices of the Indian Technical Institute at the Hindu Tamil Building in Cross Street. According to Ponnen, they 'became inseparable friends. For days I would stay with his family and H.A. would do the same.' They had an intellectual bent and participated in debates at the M.K. Gandhi Library in Queen Street. From the chance meeting at African Clothing was born a deep and abiding friendship that was to take them on a joint odyssey

of union organising, the comradeship and non-racialism of the CP, the mighty battles to defeat the conservatives for control of the NIC and then, tragically, exile. Here, their journeys parted to different continents.

The tragedy of their journeys into exile was that they were cut off from the everyday organising and mass struggles in a city where they knew every nook and cranny, and where their working class roots and education in Marxism made them pioneers in militant trade unionism. H.A. Naidoo was never to return, dying a (politically) disillusioned and forlorn figure in London because of his estrangement from the Party. Ponnien returned to South Africa in the early 1990s, old and frail. He had lost his wife Vera many years previously and his children were living in Canada. He spent his last days in a nursing home, where his old comrade and one time neighbour, Phyllis Naidoo, read to him and kept him abreast of events. He did get to vote in the 1994 election but died soon afterwards.

Ponnien and H.A. were drawn into politics through the Anti-Fascist League which had been formed in opposition to the “Grey Shirts”, Hitler’s Nazi supporters in South Africa. The Anti-Fascist League drew young members who were attracted to dynamic speakers like A.T. Wanless of the Labour Party, Harry Rochlin of the Textile Workers Union, trade unionists Jimmy Rintoul and Ronnie Fleet, Eva Green of the Left Book Club, and Edward Roux of the CP. H.A. and Ponnien were stirred to action by these meetings, which Ponnien described as ‘terrific and often ended by making the Grey Shirts run and their swastikas being burnt on the City Hall steps. We bought various literature sold by the Anti-Fascist League at these meetings.’ Both were avid readers and soaked up theoretical debates and reports of global activism, lessons they would carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Fascism was a direct challenge to the international communist movement. Antonio Salazar had seized power in Portugal in 1932 and turned his state machinery into the brutal repression of communists; the Nazis outlawed communists in Germany in 1933; Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935; and Franco commenced a war against the democratically elected government of Spain.

The Comintern (Communist International), founded in 1919 to work for the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, decided at its seventh and last World Congress in Moscow in July 1935, to form Anti-Fascist popular fronts to combat fascism. Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution, condemned this as collaboration with the bourgeoisie.¹¹ However, the CP had strong links to the Soviet Union and ignored the challenge from Trotsky. As Ponnen recounts, this mobilisation was a magnet for attracting new members to the communist cause, especially young Indians who came to play a prominent role in that Party.¹²

Around 1933/34, H.A. Naidoo and Ponnen met a CP member named Ramotla at an anti-Fascist rally, who introduced them to old stalwart Edward Roux, who in turn gave them copies of the communist paper *Umsebenzi* and invited them to his “school” in Beatrice Street. They were impressed by what they heard and attended regularly, meeting the likes of Mike Diamond, Errol Shanley, James Mbete, Bob Murray, Bob Berra and Philemon Tse. They joined the CP and were possibly its first members of Indian origin. H.A. was elected chairman and Ponnen party organiser of the Durban district in 1935.

The CP had been founded in 1921. While it supported the 1922 white workers’ strike which was infused with the language of white nationalism and racism, from 1924 the CP turned its energies to black workers. In 1928, the Comintern adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a ‘Black Republic’, ‘as a stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ republic, with full and equal rights for all races, black, coloured and white.’ While this gave credence to the idea of a two-stage revolution – national liberation, followed by socialism, a programme that was to be criticised by many left-wing activists – it did create the conditions for an alliance between communists and national liberation movements, and helped draw black members into the Party. In the 1930s, the Party witnessed a number of purges, especially those who were critical of Stalinism and felt that the Party was dominated by a ‘handful of hardened apparatchiks’ with ‘doctrinaire practices.’¹³ The Party’s influence within the trade union movement grew from the mid-1930s. Moses Kotane rose to be a central figure in the Party,

and was the pivot around which the alliance between the Party and the ANC was built.¹⁴

H.A. and Ponnen played a crucial role in organising Indian workers. In early 1935, when an Indian worker was caught stealing at Durban Clothing, the employer drilled large holes in the doors of the toilet to could keep watch. Workers found this degrading, and H.A. and Ponnen called a meeting at a nearby park where they convinced workers to embark on a protest strike. A committee of five, consisting of one white, one coloured, and one African member, as well as H.A. and Ponnen, distributed leaflets explaining the grievance and calling on workers to strike until the holes were sealed. They had 100 percent support, and the holes were repaired by lunchtime. H.A. and Ponnen's joy was shortlived, however, as they were summoned to appear in court for organising an illegal strike. Jimmy Bolton from the Garment Workers Union refused to provide them with legal assistance, but the CP provided a lawyer, Nelson Schonowolf. They pleaded not guilty. Bolton, according to Ponnen, coerced two white employees to testify against them, with the result that while the employer was merely reprimanded for drilling holes, they were each fined two pounds.

These kinds of actions gave the working class confidence and encouraged them to defend themselves through union organisation. The Anti-Fascist League called on factory workers throughout the country to send delegates to a national conference in Johannesburg on 16 and 17 December 1935, and H.A. and Ponnen represented Durban Clothing. The conference, according to Ponnen, was 'inspiring and educative.' They met prominent unionists like Solly Sachs, Harry Snitcher, Edwin Mafutoanyana, Issy Wolfson, and Hymie Basner, and came away convinced that 'workers must be strongly organised into trade unions to keep Fascism at bay. We came with a lot of literature, pamphlets and leaflets against Fascism, on Trade Union organisation and the working-class struggle.'

However, they were dismissed when they returned to work in January 1936. H.A. did get a job with a small trouser manufacturer, but Ponnen took to the streets to organise workers. H.A. and Ponnen's reputation became legendary,

and they were approached by workers for assistance with problems that ran the gamut from long working hours to ill-treatment by employers. Employees at the Falkirk Iron Works in Jacobs, for example, approached them to form a union because skilled white and coloured unionised employees struck for higher wages in February 1937 and accepted a separate deal, even though they had been supported by unskilled Indian and African workers.¹⁵ Indian workers approached H.A. and Ponnen to take up their grievances which included low pay, long hours, non-payment for overtime, and lack of compensation for work injuries.



A May Day rally in the late 1930s addressed by Cassim Amra

© Vishnu Padyachee



May Day rally, 1938

© Zoni Seedat

After several secret meetings, they drafted a constitution and printed enrolment forms, done without compensation during their lunch breaks, and called a general meeting where the (unregistered) Iron and Steel Worker's Union (Natal) was formed. H.A. Naidoo was elected secretary, P.M. Harry, a worker at the factory, was elected chairman, and M.O. Thompson was appointed organiser. When management found out, Harry, 15 Indian and one African worker were dismissed as part of a "retrenchment" program.¹⁶ Around 400 workers, mostly Indian, went on strike to demand recognition of their union. Despite intimidation from the police and employers, the workers remained defiant.¹⁷ In response to accusations that the strike had been instigated by communists, Harry wrote to the *Natal Advertiser* that they did "not know what Communism means. We are entirely unorganised ... If we are admitted as members of the AEU we shall be fully satisfied, and our union will immediately be disbanded ... [It] has been unfair to us [that] by raising the bogey of Communism ... [you] are trying to alienate public sympathy from our cause."¹⁸

The strike was resolved on 11 July 1937 after the SAIC intervened and worked out an agreement with the Minister of Labour.¹⁹ However, only 119 workers were re-employed.²⁰ The strike had incredible consequences; Rowley Arenstein recollected that it marked 'the beginning of tremendous growth of trade unionism amongst Indians.' Also important is that the strike was supported by Indian traders. As Arenstein points out, 'the merchants didn't realise what a thorn the Indian working class was going to be for them'²¹ ... the Indian merchant class closed ranks and collected money and gave support to the Indian strikers ... After the Falkirk strike not all Indians joined but generally Indian workers felt that unions could do something for them. According to Ponnen, the strike organisers approached the NIC for financial aid for dismissed workers: 'We said, 'look, you're supposed to represent the Indian workers.' We were able to convince them it was their duty to support the workers.'²² The NIC organised several mass meetings. At one such meeting, the 'hall was packed to capacity.' The Indian Agent attended because 'it was his duty to do what he could to help and make a full report to the Government of India.'

Prominent merchant E.M. Paruk said that the firing of Indian workers was a violation of the Cape Town Agreement and had 'become the affair of the whole community.'²³

A.I. Kajee branded the dismissals 'a turning point. We demand justice from higher powers, not only for these Indians but all other Indians who are ground down. Let us remember we are Indians first and everything else after.' Kajee criticised the White Labor Policy for 'retard[ing] the progress of the Indian working class. [This] has assigned Indian workers to a perpetual state of disorganisation and helplessness.' The 'right of Indian workers to form trade unions or to join existing unions,' he said, 'must be vindicated.'²⁴ Traders viewed the dismissals as an infringement of the Cape Town Agreement and communal solidarity was the buzzword. In appealing for relief, E.M. Paruk pointed out that the 'daily bread of 1 500 to 2 000 innocent women and children was involved. I ask you to stand by your fellow countrymen ... and extend to them your moral and material support.'²⁵ Traders, hawkers and stall-holders at the Indian Market contributed rice, salt, fruit, vegetables, and bread to sustain the 1,850 workers and their dependents for the duration of the strike.²⁶ Indian businesses donated freely.²⁷

To workers and their dependants, this was the difference between survival and starvation. To strike leaders, it was the difference between sustaining the strike and its collapse. Traders pushed for the upliftment of the lowest paid 'sections of our community. Trade unions must be formed and receive recognition officially ... with the purpose of raising the general standard of living.'²⁸ The NIC and SAIC requested permission from the Minister of Labour in April 1937 to establish parallel unions for Indians because of the racism of white unions, but this was turned down.²⁹ For Ponnien, the 13-week long strike was 'an eye opener and the beginning of an upsurge of trade union organisation in Natal.'³⁰

There were competing impulses at play. The turn to traders and intervention of the Agent-General brought into play the language of racial and communal solidarity. But this was not the only barrier to sustained Indo-African worker

*Late 1930's
Communist Party
rallies in Durban.
(right and below)*

© Vishnu Padayachee



unity – the whole trajectory of the Gandhi period and its aftermath was intended to build an Indian unity against racist legislation. The state both stimulated and reinforced this with the racist nature of its repressive legislation, while the differential incorporation of the Indian and African working classes into the Durban economy created its own divides. The ability of employers to exploit this was a potent weapon in breaking strikes and deepening racial divisions.

But there were just as important contrary inclinations. The Indian working

class was taking advantage of jobs in the manufacturing sector, trade unions were sprouting, and the CP was breaking out of its white enclaves and growing in influence among Indians and Africans. Some of the leading Indian trade unionists were also members of the CP and there was talk in the air of class solidarity and non-racialism.

H.A. Naidoo became chairman of the CP (Durban district) in 1937, the same year that he met Pauline Podbrey at a Party meeting. She had emigrated to South Africa in 1933 with her family and was 14 at the time. She describes their first meeting:

I shook hands with the handsomest man I'd ever seen. He stood at the table with an easy grace, narrow-hipped, taller than me, dark-complexioned with black, wavy hair and smiling eyes set well apart. His chin was as confident as a man's chin needs to be, without aggression, and his full shapely mouth suggested kindness and humour. His shirt was spotless and his well-cut suit contrasted sharply with the faded clothes of those around him but seemed just right on him. We shook hands and it occurred to me that this was unusual in more than appearance. Here was a black man who had no need of postures or assertions in his dealings with any group; he could afford to be perfectly at ease across the colour barrier, feeling neither hostile nor inferior. He was relaxed, friendly and fully in control.³¹

Pauline moved to Johannesburg shortly after and only met H.A. again when she returned to Durban in 1939. Their paths crossed at meetings of the CP, LSG, and the Left Book Club.

After being retrenched by Rex Knitting in 1939, H.A. Naidoo became a full-time industrial organiser. He was secretary or advisor to around ten unions. The work was intense but H.A. soon became a household name, according to Pauline:

We visited the branches on Sundays in the battered old jalopy belonging to the union. Word had been sent that H.A. would be coming...The audience regarded him with awe and reverence, they drank in his words. He concerned himself

about their miserable wages and appalling living conditions...On one estate a woman invited us into her home for tea. We crouched down low to enter a cave where the family lived. A rag curtain served for a door and there were no windows. The only decoration on the wall was a picture of H.A. Naidoo cut out of a newspaper.³²

Pauline was pulled into the hurly-burly of union organising as founder and secretary of the African Commercial and Distributive Workers Union. H.A. was its acting chairman. At the inaugural meeting, the all-African workforce greeted him with ‘a burst of applause.’ He had broken the racial boundary and was clearly accepted by African workers.³³

In 1942, H.A. and Pauline, deeply in love, decided to tie the knot. Pauline’s parents strongly opposed the marriage while H.A.’s parents also had reservations. Pauline recalled her first meeting with the Naidoo matriarch:

We spent the afternoon of my visit smiling and nodding and drinking tea. The family regaled us with an endless supply of syrupy, over-sweet pastries, made from semolina, honey and nuts, which they kept pressing me to eat. It was difficult to explain without risking offence, that, delicious, as they were, a few were more than sufficient. After we’d smiled our good-byes and shaken hands, I asked H.A., “Well, what do you think? Did they like me?” “Oh yes, they did,” he answered. “But before I left they told me: Think carefully about marriage. It’s better to marry one of your kind”.³⁴

Divine intervention arrived in the form of a missive from Jack Simons that H.A. move to Cape Town. The Central Committee of the CP had relocated from Johannesburg to Cape Town and wanted to make it representative of all provinces. H.A. was to work with Moses Kotane, Ray Alexander, Jack Cope, and Jack Simons. Pauline’s father was happy to bless the marriage once they left Durban. Her mother remained opposed and never saw Pauline again. In Cape Town, H.A. wrote for *The Guardian*, the unofficial paper of the CP. Colleagues on the newspaper included Brian Bunting and Naomi Shapiro. Ruth First was *The Guardian’s* Johannesburg correspondent and M.P. Naicker would be the

Durban correspondent in the 1950s. H.A. also served as the Party's national treasurer and wrote a highly acclaimed best-selling pamphlet, *Communist Party Policy in India*.³⁵



H.A. Naidoo and Pauline Podbrey

© Zoni Seedat



H.A. Naidoo addressing a Passive Resistance rally at Red Square, 1946

© NIC Pictorial

What may at first have seemed divine intervention, slowly turned into a poisoned chalice. The move from Durban was the beginning of H.A.'s undoing. Pauline observed that the change did not suit this man of the people:

When he left Durban, H.A. relinquished his public persona and adulation of the crowd. I realised he was missing not only the activity, but the acclaim that had been his. His work on the *Guardian* and his place on the Central Committee enhanced his standing within the Party, but he'd lost touch with the people. His new role demanded endless theoretical and tactical discussions and the drawing up of reports, analyses, statements. From being an outstanding local leader he became a desk man and the transformation didn't suit his temperament.³⁶

I.C. Meer would record that people in Mount Edgecombe missed H.A.:

He was an excellent trade unionist and had won their confidence. On one of my dues-collecting visits one of the women enquired, "*Bhaiya* [Brother], where is H.A.?" I told her H.A. had gone to Cape Town and would not be coming any more. "*Aiyau!*" she said. "How can you take a mango tree from Natal and plant it in Cape Town? It won't grow." Her words were prophetic. H.A., who had shone in Natal and led the trade union movement, faded. Some put it down to his marriage, others to his estrangement from his cultural roots. Whatever it was, H.A.'s light dimmed in the Cape.³⁷

H.A. and Pauline had two children, Sandra and Karen. Their story of love, politics and exile is taken up in later chapters. I.C. Meer described Pauline as 'strikingly beautiful, refined of speech, sophisticated. I remember her best in her vivid red coat and matching lipstick.'³⁸

George Ponnen also married a white left-wing activist, Vera Gwendoline Alberts, who was born in London in 1916 and migrated to South Africa in 1938, immediately becoming involved in organising black workers. Vera's arrival in Durban was described by Pauline Podbrey thus:

It was a hot, steamy, late afternoon and I was sitting in HA's office, watching Ponnen next door as he bent over his desk, humming tunelessly and drawing

lines in his ledge ... A strange white woman walked in unannounced and flopped unceremoniously in to a chair. 'My name's Vera Alberts.' Her thin, sharp features and sallow skin were clearly not South African. But what stamped her as even more a stranger was her extraordinary outfit. On this humid Durban day when the rest of us wore our coolest outfit, Vera appeared in a tailored tweed suit with a mannish hat to match, a satin, long-sleeved blouse and a pair of thick brown gloves. Even more extraordinary were her shoes. These were not where one might expect to see them – on her feet – but in her hands, as casually as her handbag. On her feet were her silk stockings, tattered, and shredded ... 'I am a comrade from London,' she announced.³⁹



seated: I.C. Meer, Vera Ponnen, Jackie Arenstein
standing: Cassim Amra, —, A.K.M. Docrat

© Fatima Meer

H.A. arranged for Vera for stay at Ponnen's house until she sorted out her accommodation. Vera was appointed the first *Guardian* representative in Durban in November 1941 when the newspaper opened an office at Pembroke Chambers in West Street. *Guardian* played an important role in radicalising workers. Jacqueline Arenstein, Harry Bloom, Dadoo's advocate during his wartime detention, Errol Shanley, Dawood Seedat, M.P. Naicker, and many others used it to expose brutal working conditions. The biggest market was the Magazine Barracks, where almost 150 copies were sold weekly.⁴⁰ I.C. Meer was one of those who helped to sell *Guardian* and recalled a humorous incident:

We used to have a big sale where Victoria Street ended and the buses used to be there and also the Indian market used to be there. And thousands of copies went out one week and we said, 'What the hell is this okay?' – such a big rush and all copies gone. And some of us went to investigate. We found that with the fishing season, there'd been thousands of fish in the port and people were spending a penny for the *Guardian* to wrap their fish.⁴¹

Vera was also variously secretary of the Mineral Water Works Union, a member of the Housewives League, the Non-European Dependants League, and vice-president of the South African Federation of Democratic Women. George and Vera married on 23 July 1943. They also had two daughters, Indira and Masha, born in 1946 and 1949 respectively, whom I.C. Meer described as 'beautiful and quite clearly Indian.' Vera, according to Meer, 'was a chain-smoker, swore like a trooper and was very domineering, but she had a heart of gold and was generous to a fault. One felt Vera's passion for Indian rights was closely linked to her passion for her daughters.'⁴² Vera was at ease with women across the class spectrum. As I.C. Meer points out, her friends 'ranged from the voluble Dr Goonam to the sedate Mrs Moosa, whose husband owned a prosperous departmental store in Berea Road. When it came to personal relations, Vera relaxed Party doctrine.'⁴³

Phyllis Naidoo is equally effusive in her praise of Vera. The likes of Cassim Amra, Dawood Seedat, and A.K.M. Docrat were regulars at Vera's Wills Court flat:

Vera was the very thing they were drawn to. You can't encompass that woman in words. She was bigger than any description of her. On the morning that M.D. [Naidoo] was picked up...Vera came running to my flat. I had big pots and little pots, but she took the biggest pot and cooked mielie pap which I don't even eat in the morning. I asked her why so much. She said it was because I had miscarried that morning and needed strength. That was Vera!

George and Vera were a contrasting pair, according to I.C. Meer:

Where Vera was loud and garrulous, George was quiet and rarely spoke. There was a mystique about him on account of his quietness, so that when he did speak, every word seemed valuable. Where George was restrained and non-judgmental, Vera was voluble, assessing and classifying people into good or bad. If one passed Vera's test, one passed the test of acceptability in general; she had that kind of authority. Together, the Ponnens displayed such strength of character that one thought of them as the bedrock of the Party.⁴⁴

Phyllis related a story about Ponnens. He once accompanied Moses Kotane to a union meeting. 'George could speak Zulu but Kotane couldn't, and so George told the African workers, "I'll translate from English," and they said "Where does this person come from? He has our hair but he cannot speak our language." And George used to add: "Me, a bloody Coolie, was able to speak to them. Him, the secretary of the Party, couldn't.'"

Between 1934 and 1945, 43 unions with Indian membership were registered in Durban. They included railway workers, coal miners, the sugar industry, industrial workers, laundry workers, tobacco workers, the bakery trade, clerical workers, retail assistants, hospital workers, transportation, and even teachers. Demands included a living wage, holiday pay, shorter working hours, payment for overtime, and sick and unemployment benefits. By 1943, 16 617 Indians in Durban were members of trade unions.⁴⁵ Unions were viewed as the "key" to a "better" life. Kay Moonsamy joined the Natal Box, Broom and Brush Workers' Union to improve his working conditions and wages. The union was organised by R.R. Pillay of the CP. Kay describes the system as 'exploitative – low wages, long hours. There was no such thing as a cloakroom for workers. We did not have an overall ... you had to work with the clothing that you wore. Sometimes we took a second trouser with us in which to work.'

Rapid unionisation threw up leaders like S.V. Reddy, Sam Pillay, N.G. Moodley, R.R. Pillay, E.I. Moola, R.D. Naidoo, Mannie Pillay, and M.D. Naidoo. African union organisers who came to the fore during this period included Christopher Mbonambi, Gladman Nxumalo, Steven Dlamini, and Harry Gwala. There was much cooperation between Indians and African

workers and organisers because Africans, as Kay Moonsamy explained, ‘were not in a position to form unions in terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 ... but when there was an award made for a particular industry, they also benefited from that.’⁴⁶

Naidoo, Ponnen, and other union leaders fought for higher wages, lunch breaks, overtime pay, and overalls. They often successfully took their demands to the Conciliation Board. There was an overlap between CP membership and union organisers; as Kay Moonsamy pointed out, ‘in that period, especially in Natal, most of the trade unions were organised by CP members in the main, and so it was people like R.R. Pillay, Sam Pillay, R.D. Naidoo, George Ponnen, and others.’ Kay joined the CP in December 1944, ‘not because I knew much about the Marxist philosophy but mainly because it was the only first authentic non-racial organisation. Non-racialism drew me to that movement.’ But overcoming racial divides was difficult, and the CP found a difference between intention and practice. As one luminary, Rusty Bernstein, stated, while the CP was ‘functioning in a non-racial enclave...there was a paradox.’ There was no differentiation on the basis of colour ‘inside the party [but] there was no way for us to grow outwards and avoid the great racial divide. Society imposed its racial division on our organisational forms and on our political activities.’⁴⁷ According to Billy Nair, many in his circle, who worked during the day and attended evening classes, joined the CP, especially when they learnt about the Russian Revolution and presence of the Comintern in so many countries. They felt part of an international movement of great importance as opposed to a single trade union, and believed that they could effect genuine change. Workers found unions and the CP attractive because they addressed bread-and-butter issues. According to S.K. Gounden, speakers like M.D. Naidoo and H.A. Naidoo were influential because they spoke about ‘race oppression, class oppression, poverty ... the things that we had to contend with. We listened carefully to what they said.’ They related these problems to the global quest for justice. Working class Indians saw the sacrifices of their leaders and respected them. Some were not aware of the excesses of Stalin, while others said they viewed

such stories as capitalist propaganda. While Nikita Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's brutality in the 1950s came as a shock to many, they rationalised that it was Stalin the man, rather than the system, that was responsible.

Jerry Coovadia, who would play an important role in the revival of the NIC from the 1970s, explained the lure of communism for Indians growing up in Durban:

The CP had a major influence in our lives because the people we knew, the best brains, even the most genuine whites, all happened to be communist. And we didn't know the details of what was going on in China and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. We were thrilled, like many of our forebears were, by what Karl Marx had said, and what Lenin had done ... And we were also reacting, partly emotionally, partly intellectually, to the injustices in South Africa. We knew that apartheid was an evil, we knew that capitalism was the foundation of that apartheid. And we knew that there had to be a better social order. Socialism and communism seemed to provide everything that was missing in our lives ... It was a wonderfully seductive set of ideas ... It was not accurate, but I'm not talking about historical accuracy... This great liberating philosophy had, at least, justice and equality and freedom, a genuine freedom as its objective and its goal.⁴⁸

The link of union organisers to the CP and NIC, and their involvement in several unions simultaneously, facilitated strong inter-union co-operation. According to Podbrey: 'We regarded the strike as part of the war with the employer class, and if we lost that sector, we would weaken the whole working class movement. If we won, we were strengthening the whole working class movement.'⁴⁹ Podbrey provides a wonderful description of their hive of activity:

On the corner of West and Grey Streets stood a derelict building ... We tracked down the Indian landlord who was quite happy to let us use the first floor for a moderate rent ... We erected thin partitions to provide offices for the mushrooming number of trade unions ... It was busy, exciting, exhilarating ... We begged and borrowed desks, chairs and filing cabinets, and as new unions were formed, so the space was divided and sub-divided. Overnight, it seemed,

were born trade unions ... An endless stream of workers, mainly Indian, came knocking on our doors, pleading to be organised, wanting to be unionised ...⁵⁰

The task of organising workers was 'a tremendously difficult task,' according to Ponnien⁵¹:

It was quite a battle organising the workers and fighting for higher wages and better working conditions. The employers, the bosses, we had to constantly clash with them. That's one. Then you had the government. It was very hostile to the workers, hostile to Congress, hostile to anything that they said was revolutionary ... I'll give you a good example. If I go to a factory to hold a meeting, the employer in the first place would not allow me to use the cloakroom or the hall where I could have a meeting. He wouldn't allow you to enter the factory. So you had to have the meeting outside the factory. I was arrested several times. The employer simply called the police to say that I'm illegally holding a meeting on public property and they would fine you five pounds. Or they caution and discharge you. Just to harass you, just to get you into trouble. Workers were never intimidated, they were inspired by this.⁵²

These interventions sowed the seeds of challenge to the hegemony of the moderates who spoke for the Indian community. Many workers were introduced for the first time to class politics. Between 1937 and 1942, Indian workers were involved in 46 strikes in Durban. While the situation presented a wonderful opportunity to cross race boundaries, the way in which events panned out made this difficult, as the strike at Dunlop illustrates. At the Dunlop Tyre factory, management replaced 'radical' Indian employees with whites and Africans, and the number of Indian employees dropped from 282 in March 1942 to 149 by December 1942. According to Rowley Arenstein, employers felt if African workers 'were just left alone, if they weren't agitated by the Indian workers and by the communists, then everything would be fine.' At Dunlop, workers demanded arbitration and succeeded in getting higher wages. 'Employers were furious. And they regarded the Indian workers as culprits.'⁵³

The situation erupted when 13 Indian employees, with long periods of service,

were dismissed in December 1942. Indian and African workers went on strike to demand their reinstatement and recognition of their union. The company used scab African labour to break the strike.⁵⁴ A meeting of 30 organisations and trade unions on 16 January 1943 emphasised that the strike had ‘assumed an Indian national aspect’ because of the racial dimension. The NIC agreed to take the matter up with the government as well as Dunlop management, and to provide support: ‘The Congress is always prepared to assist in the alleviation of the distress that may arise through any cause in which Indian men, women and children are involved.’⁵⁵

The Dunlop Strike Committee reads like a “Who’s Who” of Indian membership of the CP. It included Pommen, H.A. Naidoo, M.D. Naidoo, and R.D. Naidoo. Pauline Podbrey was the only woman member of the committee. It was also a strike that saw R.D. Naidoo come to the fore. His would be a political journey that would span five decades. With his long flowing beard, R.D. was one of the main speakers at the launch of the UDF in 1984. Along with members of the NIC, the Dunlop strike committee collected money and food and articulated the political demands of the strike. Once the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, the communists did not want to disrupt the war effort and moderated their attitude towards Dunlop. A.I. Kajee was to observe: ‘I wish there was no war and this powerful octopus of Dunlop’s might have been made to feel the weapon of boycott of its goods both here and in India.’⁵⁶ On 21 January 1943 the NIC asked the Minister of Labour to appoint an arbitrator. Management, however, insisted that all vacancies had been filled.⁵⁷ No Indian worker was re-employed by Dunlop.⁵⁸

This was repeated at another major strike by 800 Indian laundry workers at 25 laundries in December 1945.⁵⁹ Once again, African scab labour was used to break the strike which lasted three months. Few Indians were rehired. *Indian Views* opined that the failure of strike leaders to heed the lessons of Falkirk and Dunlop had resulted in ‘hundreds of the poorest Indians being unemployed.’ It criticised union organisers for ‘irresponsibly’ calling for strikes and then begging for donations to support workers. There was a lesson to be heeded,

according to *Indian Views*, from the laundry strike: ‘The potential danger of scabs among Africans was lost sight of ... In the unskilled field the Indian is not indispensable. There is any number of Africans available for that kind of work. Indian workers would be well advised to weigh their future.’⁶⁰



Indian workers discussing their grievances with A.I. Kajeje

© Doolie Barmania

Caught between white racism and employer intransigence, militant Indian workers, many unskilled or at best semi-skilled, faced the additional threat of competition from African workers who had arrived in the city in significant numbers during the war years. Employers were well aware of the racial divides and used this to their advantage when Indian workers confronted them. Given their lack of union organisation and the fact that they were both forced off the land in rural areas, and had at best a precarious toehold in the city, Africans were susceptible to offers of employment. The memories of how easily they could be replaced, as well as opportunities to participate in formal conciliation mechanisms, were among the factors leading to the “taming” of Indian workers from the 1950s onwards. But during the 1930s and 1940s, a significant core of the Indian working class was highly politicised and radicalised and formed the core constituency that propelled the radical faction within the NIC to leadership.

The CP was an important link in organising Indian workers, breaking the racial divides and engaging in the debate between nationalism and socialism. It was in this context that the stirrings of an anti-capitalist ideology started to take shape. H.A. Naidoo and George Ponnen had outstanding organisational abilities and were constantly gaining a deeper understanding of national and international politics through their membership of the Party. Around them was a coterie of trade unionists who spent endless hours recruiting workers in an environment of unemployment and underemployment, poor housing, lack of education, the closing of avenues for skilled labour, and absence of unemployment insurance. In a situation where there were as yet few Indian benevolent societies, unions were the last line of defence. While there was a commitment to class-based non-racial solidarity, with politically-conscious industrial workers in the vanguard of revolution, this did not preclude unionists from lending their weight to win control of the NIC.

Later there would be arguments that the 'politicisation' of unions eroded the emphasis on building strong shop-floor structures, and ultimately led to the unions losing their ability to attract new members and deliver on bread-and-butter issues. But as Kay Moonsamy argues, activists saw political and economic exploitation as two sides of the same coin:

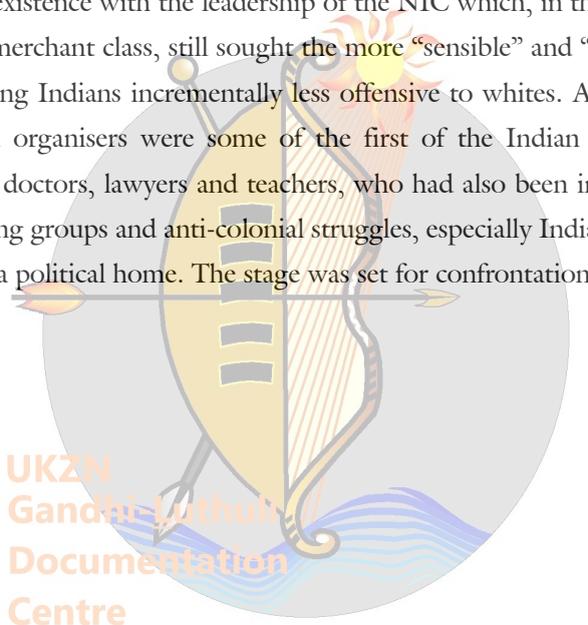
For us in the CP it was very clear ... you cannot divorce politics from economic demands ... especially [because] the African workers cannot form and join the trade unions because of the Industrial Conciliation of 1924 which precluded any pass-bearing person ... So for us it was quite clear that the political struggle was linked with the workers' struggle for higher wages and better conditions. Without emancipation there [could] be no economic freedom ... so the political struggle was primary.

Likewise, union stalwart R.D. Naidoo felt that it was 'crucial to involve workers in politics because unless you give political direction to the working class then all the education you're giving to the workers won't take them any further than that.' Union leaders had no fear of the struggle of workers being

hijacked by politicians.

We got accused of diluting the class struggle by including groups of people who were also exploiters. People feel that we'll be hijacked by the very people we're assisting ... I said no, these people also form part of the oppressed group ... Once we remove national oppression, we are clear to fight the working class struggle. With the strength of the working class we will not allow them to hijack us ... ⁶¹

As the 1940s unfolded the radical impulse of those organising unions stood in uneasy co-existence with the leadership of the NIC which, in the hands of a conservative merchant class, still sought the more “sensible” and “responsible” route of making Indians incrementally less offensive to whites. Added to this mix of union organisers were some of the first of the Indian middle-class professionals, doctors, lawyers and teachers, who had also been influenced by the Left reading groups and anti-colonial struggles, especially India's, and were searching for a political home. The stage was set for confrontation.



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The “Education” of Monty

On 11 February 1940, Dr Naicker made ... his maiden speech in a packed City Hall. He took his stand clearly and forcefully against non-Europeans supporting the war, and vigorously attacked the NIA leadership for collaborating with the white authorities to enforce voluntary segregation on Indians. At a second meeting, on Sunday 9 June 1940, at the Royal Picture Palace [the old Rawat Bio Hall], he seconded H.A. Naidoo’s resolution condemning the Christopher-Rustomjee fraternisation with the Provincial Council to prevent Indians from buying properties in ‘white areas’. Quietly but firmly, and with his typical humility, Monty Naicker asserted the right of Indian South Africans to live and trade where they wanted, and rejected the concept of ‘penetration’ into European areas. ‘It is racist Europeans,’ he contended, to rousing applause, ‘who were encroaching on Indian rights and Indian freedom.’ I sat up and took notice of this rising star.¹

ISMAIL (I.C.) MEER

Monty was 30 when he made this speech at the City Hall, but in a sense it was the culmination of five years of re-integrating himself into the city of his birth. On his return from Edinburgh, he joined the Hindu Youth Club, as his Hinduism, while worn lightly, was an important frame of reference. After all, this was a man who had copied out large sections of the *Bhagarad Gita* in his diary. He soon settled into the everyday routine of medical practice. Most of his patients were from the Magazine Barracks, a 20-minute walk from his surgery. By this time, the Depression, compounded by the pro-white employment policy of the City Council, had taken its toll on the residents of the Barracks. The majority were living in extreme poverty in buildings that were literally falling down around them. But even this might not in itself have driven Monty

into politics – other factors were at play. One was that the Indian working class was finding its feet both as a social force and a politically powerful group, as the first bare outlines of union organisation began appearing in factories. At the same time, the Indian intelligentsia were grouping together, discussing progressive ideas, and arguing about the best way forward.

The most influential of these groups was the Liberal Study Group (LSG), and at dusk, as the city emptied out its Indian workers, a few made their way to Ajmeri Arcade. Accessible by three streets – Pine, Cathedral and Grey – Ajmeri Arcade was the LSG's meeting place, a sweltering arena of intense intellectual debate. Monty had arrived in an environment in which progressive political ideas were being debated and where a core of people sought to translate these ideas into forms of activism. Many of the new intelligentsia were products of Sastri College, the brainchild of the first Indian Agent, Sir Srinivasa Sastri, who collected funds from merchants to build the school. The College was opened on 14 October 1929 by the Governor-General of South Africa. Sir Kurma Reddi told the gathering at the opening that 'within these walls themselves this torch of true learning will be kept alight to guide South African Indians in their search for truth and for what gives real value to life, and to enable them to form right conceptions of the good, the true and the beautiful.'² Many students took this advice literally, and their search for the 'true conceptions of the good' led them to the CP and an alliance with Africans to overthrow the white minority government, but it is unlikely that this was the 'truth' that Sastri and Reddi had in mind.

Are you interested in the struggle of your people?

Are you prepared to improve your condition?

If you are, then we invite you to become a member of the Liberal Study Group.

Our aim is to STUDY – STUDY – STUDY

The problems with which the Non-Europeans are confronted.

The LSG invites you to attend its lectures, debates and discussions and study classes.

The Call, July 1940



Sastri College, showing the four pillars: Culture, Civilisation, Truth, Beauty

© Rama Thumbadoo

The LSG was a seminal influence in radicalising Indian professionals, and both Monty and Dr Goonam joined the Group. It was founded in late 1937 by H.A. Naidoo, George Ponnen, Dawood Seedat, Cassim Amra, A.K.M. Docrat, P.M. Harry, Wilson Cele, and I.C. Meer. They were joined by the likes of Debi Singh, Steven Dlamini, Leslie de Villiers, Jacqueline Lax (Arenstein), poet Peter Abrahams, E.J. Dhlomo, editor of *Langalasi Natal*, S.V. Reddy, R.D. Naidoo, and M.I. “Beaver” Timol. Although Dr Goonam was the only Indian woman member of the LSG, white women like Fay King Goldie, Pauline Podbrey and Sarah Rubin also joined. The LSG held classes in English, political economy, and public speaking, and Zulu classes were organised from March 1940. The Group discussed issues like ‘Passive Resistance,’ ‘Non-Europeans and the war,’ and ‘The Socialisation of Medicine.’³

Anyone who grew up in Durban from the 1960s would have seen the familiar sight of a short, distinguished-looking man with a black beret walking in Victoria Street, as he made his way to or from Flat No. 1, Nirmal Court, Victoria Street. Abdul Khalek Mohamed (A.K.M.) Docrat was an elusive and largely unacknowledged figure, even though he played a crucial role in the

legal challenges mounted against the NIC Old Guard in the 1940s. Doc, as he was known, was born in 1915 in the village of Kathor in Gujarat, India. His grandfather moved to Natal and Doc joined the family in 1930 at the age of 15. He had only been educated to standard four, and worked for a few years in Hattingspruit near Dundee as a shop assistant, before returning to his village where he married Ayesha. He returned to Natal in 1938, this time taking up a job in Ixopo. Moving to Durban in 1939, he opened a little shop in Victoria Street. Ayesha succumbed to tuberculosis in 1943 and he subsequently married Rabia, who would serve a 30-day sentence with hard labour during the passive resistance campaign. Shortly after he arrived in Durban, Doc was drawn to the politics of the LSG, where he soon made a name for himself and became its secretary. Others too were drawn to the LSG.



A.K.M. Docrat

© Haroon Docrat

Pauline Podbrey accompanied her friend Sarah Rubin one evening to 141b Grey Street, with no idea of the lasting effect this would have on her life.

Walking down Grey Street we left behind us the familiar white area and entered another, stranger country. The scents and sounds were quite different from anything I was used to and it occurred to me I'd never really walked in the Indian quarter before. We'd passed through it, Mother and I, going to and from the Indian market, but we'd never stopped in the gaudy sari stores or dreamed of eating in the pungent curry restaurants. But there was no sense of danger, only the excitement of something new and adventurous.⁴

Podbrey joined the LSG which became an important recruiting ground for the CP. The Catholic Church became so perturbed that it sent a spy to report on meetings, and one of these reports capture its workings: 'Meetings are held two or three times a week, where someone competent is asked to read a book thoroughly either on religion, politics or education and then a discussion or debate follows ... the long and best evenings are on Sundays from 8 pm onwards. The speeches and debates are in the majority of cases highly blasphemous.'⁵ Meetings provided a forum for debating and discussing policy, and laid the foundation for the political beliefs and actions of many members.

During July and August 1940, George Singh reviewed Peter Neilson's *Colour Bar*; E.J. Burford spoke on 'The Present International Situation'; on 9 July Monty reviewed *India Today* by Palme Dutt; R.H. Smith spoke on 'The Rise of Democracy'; P.S. Joshi spoke on 'India and World Politics'; P. Muthukrishna delivered a lecture on 'The Position of the Indians in the Transvaal'; there was a debate on "Should Students and Teachers participate in Politics"; George Ponnen gave a lecture on 'The Rise of Trade Unions'; A. Ismail reviewed the *Cape Coloured Question* by W.M. McMillan; while O.G. Malinga reviewed *Bantu, Boer and Briton*, also by McMillan. These discussions were intellectually challenging and exposed members to new ideas.

While the local political space was initially restricted by the conservatism of

the dominant strand in Indian politics, the stirrings of anti-colonial struggles began to be strongly felt after a while. Dr Goonam recalls that it was in ‘this claustrophobic political environment we founded the LSG. A dark and dingy staircase of an old building, led to ... our meeting place. A few crude benches and rickety chairs provided the seating, a temperamental bulb the lighting.’⁶ The LSG occupied two sparsely furnished interleading rooms – in the first room was a manual duplicator, typewriter, and ‘shaky small table on which stood a chipped kettle and a collection of discoloured tin mugs.’ The inner room had two chairs, some benches, a podium, and photograph of Nehru on the wall.⁷ Nehru was the poster-boy of many Indian radicals during this period. According to I.C. Meer, Nehru’s message that ‘no Indian worthy of his country can demean himself and his motherland,’ had a ‘deep impact’ on them: ‘I was South African but India had great meaning for me, particularly because of the freedom struggle and the leaders of that struggle.’⁸

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was an emerging force in international politics by the 1930s. This English-educated barrister became one of Gandhi’s closest confidants, while rising through the ranks of the Indian National Congress to become its President. There were stark differences between the two – Gandhi at home in India’s villages tied to the spinning wheel; Nehru the urbane gentleman, bemused by Gandhi’s penchant to constantly refer to God in his speeches,⁹ and ‘more at home,’ as Gandhi wryly put it, ‘with Englishmen than with his own countrymen.’¹⁰ While Nehru often had to defer to Gandhi, they made a formidable team, as their respective strengths powered the Indian nationalist cause.

Nehru spent most of the period from 1931 to 1935 in prison. Re-elected President in 1936, he got Congress to adopt the *Avadi Resolution*, proclaiming socialism as the model for India’s future government. Nehru’s anti-British stance, embracing of socialism, and long period of incarceration resonated with many young Indians in South Africa. While they were drawn to Nehru, Gandhi remained an important symbol, according to M.D. Naidoo, even though they saw him as ‘someone whose interests were not the same’:

Gandhi was ... inclined to be treated more as a symbol. Certainly my generation did not consider there was any relevancy or political value in pursuing any criticism of Gandhi. Whatever the internal differences there may have been among Indians ... we saw his role as very progressive in the context of the conditions of the time. Perhaps some time in the future a more objective critique may be written.¹¹

Attendance at LSG gatherings averaged between 30 and 40. The room, according to I.C. Meer, was 'stuffed with our thoughts and smoke as we consumed cigarette after cigarette, and penned thought after thought on paper.'¹² M.D. Naidoo was a regular at the LSG and points to its importance in developing his thinking:

We would invite people, mainly Indian but also coloured and African, occasionally white, to speak to us. It was not just lectures. The lecturer would deliver the lecture and would have to submit thereafter to a discussion with no gloves on, and if he was somebody we didn't agree with, he would certainly know. We'd give and we'd take...it was a good thing and I began to meet for the first time people on the Left ... I began to find a more progressive rather than national outlook ... and take positions which identified this group as distinct from the older generation who controlled the Congress. We were developing and growing politically – our own ideas were being formulated ...¹³

A.I. Kajee, moderate politician and influential businessman, was another regular visitor to the LSG. According to I.C. Meer, 'Kajee took an interest in intellectual pursuits and kept a fine collection of left-wing books at his home in Ryde Avenue. He invited us to borrow these books.'¹⁴ Dr Goonam, too, has recorded that at Kajee's 'second home in Ryde Avenue, away from his family, he met his business and political contacts in a convenient and homely atmosphere. My former tutor, the principal of the girls' school [Pauline Morel], used to host the dinners. [Kajee] created the impression of a man who understood left politics, and was in sympathy with the plight of Indian workers.'¹⁵ Kajee was, by all accounts, quite a charmer. Dr Goonam does not mention it, but it was

common gossip at the time that Pauline Morel was more than hostess. Podbrey recalled that as a mixed-race couple she and H.A. Naidoo had few places to visit:

One place where H.A. and I might have gone together was A.I. Kajee's luxurious house. His candle-lit dinner parties were posh affairs, with damask tablecloths, sparkling wine glasses, polished silver. One dressed up to go there and the men behaved with courtesy and charm ... But H.A. wouldn't hear of it. Kajee was his political adversary. More than that, he didn't trust his intentions towards me.¹⁶

The LSG was a small but highly influential group, as its members spread out into many sectors of political life in the city, including the NIC, CP, ANC and NEUE. Its mouthpiece *The Call. For Freedom and Justice* was published in Durban and sold at various outlets: Peter's Lounge in Grey Street, Vally's Hairdressing Saloon in Grey Street, and Crystal Café in Albert Street. H.A. Naidoo was its political editor, I.C. Meer the overall supervisor, and Dawood Seedat the proprietor. Cassim Amra also played a leading role and several issues carried an announcement that he had written all the articles. The LSG also published newsletters of trade unions and the India League, which was headed by Dawood Seedat. Through this literature, the ideas of these young radicals were widely disseminated. *The Call* was under constant police scrutiny – in July 1940, for example, in reaction to its anti-war rhetoric, police raided the home of Dawood Seedat. When Seedat refused to allow this 'unwarranted intrusion, he was held back by the shoulders by two of the officers, whilst the third ransacked the place in real Gestapo fashion,' and took away documents, pamphlets, and personal correspondence.¹⁷

Tell Freedom, the first collection of poems by Peter Abrahams, was dedicated to LSG stalwart Cassim Amra, and the foreword was written by I.C. Meer.¹⁸ Abrahams' poems were published regularly on the front cover of *The Call*. Their message was of race and class exploitation. In 'Toilers', published in February 1940, Abrahams wrote, 'These who toil / Then die of hunger / When they cannot sell their strength / THESE SHOULD RULE / Not little fat

men – vultures grabbing gold.’ In ‘South Africa’, published in March 1940, Abrahams penned the lines, ‘This land that I love is a home of slaves / She binds her children in loud-clanging chains.’ In ‘The Brown Road’, published in April 1940, he urged people to ‘Try to smile beneath the load / Toiling up Life’s sloping road / Life, I think, was meant to be / More than pain for you and me.’



A.I. Meer, Cassim Amra and Jessie Waghmarie

© Fatima Meer

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Cassim Amra was known in local circles by the sobriquet ‘Communist Amra’. He was born in 1919, and attended Sastri. After matriculating in 1937, Amra plunged into politics with the CP and was a key member of the ASC. He moved to Cape Town in 1943 to pursue a degree in law, but was denied a permit to study in 1946 and became involved in the passive resistance campaign, the NIC and SAIC. After his banning in the 1950s, he worked for I.C. Meer in Verulam and also tried his hand at being an estate agent in partnership with “Beaver” Timol. He died in 1984 at the age of 63. Amra was not only a fiery

activist and incisive writer, but an excellent photographer. He lectured at the International Club on photography and was a member of the International Film Society and Durban Photographic Society.¹⁹

Dawood Seedat (1916-1976) was described by Billy Nair as ‘a real firebrand’ and was certainly one of the most colourful characters in the LSG. He was the grandson of Ladysmith trader M.E. Seedat, who had nine children, one of whom, Ahmed, moved to Durban to educate his sons Dawood, Hoosen, Mohammed, and Moosa. While Hoosen became a Professor at the Natal Medical School and Mo Seedat is based at King Edward Hospital, Dawood earned his ‘Professorship’ in the school of politics. After qualifying as a bookkeeper, he entered the political struggle in 1938, and is best remembered for the red tie which he, like many communists of the day, wore. Paul Joseph, once of the TIC who was himself forced into exile in the 1960s, described Dawood in his obituary as ‘quiet, unassuming, always sporting red ties, Dawood cut an Anton Makarenko-like figure with rimless spectacles and his manner of dealing with people.’ This was in reference to his lookalike, Anton Makarenko, the Ukrainian-born writer who, in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, established orphanages for children orphaned by the Russian Civil War. Seedat was elected secretary of the CP in Durban in 1943.

In 1945 Dawood married Fatima Seedat, a revolutionary in her own right. Fatima was born in Cape Town on 14 October 1922. She and Rahima (Moosa), her twin sister, were educated at Trafalgar High to standard eight and got jobs in the food industry, becoming involved in politics through their participation in the Food and Canning Workers Union. Fatima and Rahima also became involved in the Young Communist League and CP. In these circles they mixed with the likes of Ray Alexander and Jack Simons. Another powerful influence was Cissie Gool.

One particular story related by Phyllis Naidoo encapsulates the essence of Dawood Seedat. When he was 14, he attended an anti-pass campaign at Cartwright’s Flats in Albert Street on 16 December 1930. Seedat witnessed four people being shot by police, among them Johannes Nkosi. Years later, when

Nkosi and his grave site were long forgotten, Dawood identified the grave at Stellawood Cemetery and erected a stone at the site. He and Fatima organised a ceremony to which Nkosi's mother was invited. After the ceremony, the Nkosi family was invited to dinner at the Seedat's flat at Hampson Grove.²⁰ This is an indication of his loyalty to people he may not have known but who were nevertheless comrades-in-arms. Ahmed Kathrada, who first met the couple in Durban during the passive resistance campaign in 1946 when he stayed at their home, recollected: 'They exuded warmth, generosity, friendship and love, and everyone from the grandmother to the youngest child, welcomed visitors and strangers alike with open arms. Yusuf Dadoo told us that he could never go to Durban without calling at the house in Hampson Grove, and that he just loved the food.'²¹

Attempts to unite the NIC bore fruit with the formation of the NIA on 8 October 1939. Trade unionists, communists, and a more radical professional class joined traders in the leadership structures. The new NIA included many on the left: Monty Naicker, Cassim Amra, George Ponnien, E.I. Moola, H.A. Naidoo, George Singh, and P.M. Harry. While the issue of unity smouldered, other issues came to the fore, like South Africa's participation in the Second World War.

Indians were divided over the war. Moderates held a pro-war meeting at the Royal Picture Palace on 9 June 1940 and tried to pass a resolution in support of the war. Cassim Amra wanted to know 'what "conscience" calls upon you to lick the boot that kicks you?' A resolution supporting the war was proposed by Albert Christopher, S.R. Naidoo, Sorabjee Rustomjee, and Advocate J.W. Godfrey. Monty, H.A. Naidoo, George Singh, Cassim Amra, and George Ponnien proposed an amendment that the services of Indians be confined to South Africa, that there be equality in the defence force, and that full democratic rights be extended to non-Europeans. Before the boisterous crowd could vote, the Old Guard left the hall and considered the resolution as carried. This was given publicity in the press as reflecting the opinion of Natal's Indians who were advised to join the war 'out of loyalty to the Empire.' A War

and Comforts Fund was established with the Agent-General Rama Rau and the Mayor of Durban as patrons.²²

In *The Call*, Cassim Amra criticised Indians who were supporting the Mayor's Fund when 'Indian children are fainting by the dozen every day in Union schools from HUNGER. Why not make this your concern?'²³ Amra argued that the 'leadership has lost all sense of self-respect and honour.' He blamed Sir Rama Rau and 'an Agency that can command no more respect than that of the man in the street [for being] slavish in the service of imperialism.'²⁴ Amra pointed to the anomaly whereby both unemployment and contribution to the War Funds were on the increase. Indian 'leaders' contributed out of a desire to show the authorities that 'he is a good boy [and] preserved themselves at the expense of the majority. He is a coward, without principle or pride.' And rich housewives 'heard about European women knitting for soldiers. She reads about Mrs So-and-so's war effort to raise so-and-so fund ... She who would not lift a hand in time of peace to help the poor and needy suddenly becomes ultra-patriotic and charitable. She forgets that there are as many soldiers – martyrs of the economic system – who are walking the streets.'²⁵

H.A. Naidoo also wrote a powerful critique of the war, *Who are the real Quislings?* He argued that vested interests controlled the media and shaped public opinion to the extent that 'the average individual has ceased to think.' While Britain was portraying itself as the 'champion' of democracy, 'workers were the real fighters' in a war that was nothing more than an imperialist onslaught. Britain and France allowed the Italians to conquer Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and fascism to triumph in Spain. 'Who were the champions of Nazism then?'²⁶ This anti-war activity heightened the political consciousness of young activists – M.D. Naidoo would recall that 'political activity among Indians reached quite a level of height ... the issue of supporting the war or not supporting war became a sharp issue, and my generation generally took the position that the war was not our war.'²⁷

Dawood Seedat was the most vociferous critic of the war. Aside from articles in *The Call* and *The Guardian*, he also published a booklet *Don't Support the*

War. A Secret Memorandum of the Department of Justice dated 20 January 1964 recorded that ‘this pamphlet, coupled with the agitation of Seedat had a marked deterrent effect upon the recruiting of Indians for the war at the time.’ On 5 February 1941 he addressed a mass meeting at Red Square before 2000 people and made a statement that became synonymous with his name: ‘if freedom will not be given to us, we will have to use force and take our freedom.’ He was charged with contravening the new National Security Regulations of 1941. His other ‘scandalous and dishonouring words’ against King George VI included:

I now wish to tell you that I personally have no respect for King George VI ... We have got no more time for kings and emperors. The King is not fit to be Emperor of India ... The British Empire is not an Empire but a Vampire? It drains all the wealth out of India and keeps millions of our people in suffering, starvation, sickness, illiteracy, and without homes. Every act of assistance to Britain means the crushing of our Indian people at home and maintaining strongly the iron hands of the British imperialist robbers?

In court, Seedat made a passionate speech in his defence:

The non-Europeans of this country are called upon to sacrifice their lives for a cause that offers them nothing but insult and humiliation ... It is foolish for anyone to think that the non-European people have the same attitude to this war as the British capitalist class ... The present British constitution is but the outcome of a series of revolutions [to] break away from feudal oppression. If the ancestors of the British people thought these things were worth fighting for, so do we ... The British Government is much concerned about the Poles and has gone to war on that issue but it has not shown itself in any way willing to grant the simplest of democratic rights to four hundred million in India, hundreds of millions in Africa and other parts of the British Commonwealth ... If I say that I would like to see the downfall of the British Empire it is so that my people could begin to regenerate themselves.

Seedat was sentenced to three months with hard labour. When he was released on 17 July 1941, pamphlets were circulated widely advertising a meeting under the auspices of the NEUF and Nationalist Bloc of the NIA to accord 'a Public Welcome to a Young Leader who was imprisoned for CHAMPIONING the cause of NON-EUROPEAN FREEDOM.' Seedat was warned not to engage in subversive activities, but he ignored this and addressed the LSG on 31 August 1942, for which he was imprisoned for a further 40 days.²⁸ For Rusty Bernstein, the arrest of Dadoo and Seedat 'triggered the biggest campaign of meetings, handbills and posters that the Party had managed for years ... Whether we affected the fate of Dadoo and Seedat is hard to say. Both were found guilty and sentenced to short terms of imprisonment, making them the first martyrs of the Communist Party revival.'²⁹

The anti-war stance of the radicals was given a huge boost by the visit of Indira Nehru (Gandhi), daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, who arrived in Durban on 31 March 1941 en route to India from England where she was studying. She sympathised with the anti-war faction; her own father was behind the crafting of the September Manifesto that gave the British an ultimatum – India would support Britain if it was given full independence. This was rejected. As Japan entered the war on the side of Germany and Italy, Gandhi called on the British to *Quit India*. Nehru travelled across India mobilising the masses, but was arrested on 9 August 1942 and imprisoned until June 1945. According to I.C. Meer, 'we commemorated Nehru's release after he had served 1041 days in prison. We felt all that much closer to him because of the four pleasant days we had spent with his daughter a few years earlier.'³⁰ Kajee tried to organise a reception for Indira, but she attended one hosted by the anti-war Nationalist Bloc. According to Pauline Podbrey, 'this was a great coup for the young guard of the Nationalist Bloc. They set about trying to arrange a mass meeting ... It turned out to be one of the biggest public gatherings of Durban Indians ever held.'³¹



Welcome for Dawood Seedat on his release from prison

© Zoni Seedat

Seedat's Release
 A Leading Member of the Non-European United Front and the Nationalist Bloc.

Mr. D. A. SEEDAT who was imprisoned on 30th April, 1941, will be released on 17th July, 1941, at 8 a.m.

All sympathisers and supporters are asked to be present at the Central Gaol on Thursday, 17th July, 1941, at 7.45 a.m. to

WELCOME this Young Leader who was imprisoned for Championing the cause of NON-EUROPEAN FREEDOM.

At 5.30 p.m. on Thursday, 17th July, 1941, a Meeting will be held at the M.K. Gandhi Library & Parnes Rustonjee Hall, 140, Queen Street, Durban, to accord Mr. Seedat a Public Welcome.

Come in your hundreds to greet this young leader who served imprisonment in defence of your rights.

Issued by the joint Reception Committee of the Non-European United Front and the Nationalist Bloc of the Natal Indian Association.

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MISS INDIRA NEHRU'S MESSAGE

કુમારી ઈન્દિરા નેહરૂનો સંદેશો



MISS INDIRA NEHRU

who landed at Durban last Monday on her way to India from England and has sailed on Friday. Before her departure she has left the following message:

"All good wishes and successes to the non-European United Front in their struggle against oppression"

Indian Opinion - 4/5/1941

કુમારી ઈન્દિરા નેહરૂ એના ઈંગ્લેન્ડથી દક્ષિણાત જતાં અથા સોમવારે ડરબન ઉતર્યાં હતાં. તેઓ યુકવારે અંગ્રેજી વિદ્યાલયમાં છે. વિદ્યાલયનીનીના લેખણે નીચેનો સંદેશો પાઠવ્યો છે:

સંદેશો પાઠવ્યો છે:

"નોન-યુરોપીયન યુનાઇટેડ ફ્રન્ટને અગાળી જવો ઇચ્છાઓ અને દમનનીતી સમીની તેઓની હલતમાં તેઓને સંપર્ક સકવાતા."

© Vishnu Padayachee

The Nationalist Bloc turned to their old nemesis, Kaje, for the Avalon Cinema. Kaje, to his credit, made the hall available for the meeting on 2 April 1941. H.A. Naidoo was chairman and introduced Indira who spoke briefly while I.C. Meer and Dawood Seedat made impassioned anti-war speeches. Indira was accompanied by Fhiroz Gandhi, her future husband, Chupta Gupta, and Parvathi Kamaramangulam, whose parents were also imprisoned for resisting the British. For Podbrey, 'the unexpected arrival of these people was like a gust of fresh air ... Everyone was agog to see and hear our visitor, to rub shoulders with the famous, the sophisticated, the men and women from the world stage.' On the night before they left, Monty gave them a party at his home. 'Unlike most Indian parties,' Podbrey adds, 'there was music and drink

and dancing.³² It was this worldly, non-judgmental, free-spirited quality that allowed Monty to mingle in widely different political and social circles, and since Monty was a mutual acquaintance of so many, it was later to be at his well-appointed and inviting home where many who would otherwise not have met up or exchanged ideas, were able to do so.

The local CP had supported the twists and turns of Moscow and had steadfastly supported the Stalin-Hitler Pact, but when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, it changed course in response to a call by the Soviet Union for socialists the world over to support the war effort. H.A. Naidoo, Dawood Seedat, Cassim Amra, and others, toeing the party line, now argued that a broad front of democratic forces was necessary to defeat fascism. They sought to ensure that workers did not engage in strike action and called on them to put everything into the war effort.

Aside from those who emerged from the trenches of the workers' struggles, a number of formally educated leaders also played an influential role. Most were educated at Wits University. Ismail (I.C.) Meer was a highly influential figure in these circles. Pauline Podbrey's first impression of him was that of a man 'with finely drawn features and beautiful hands, his well modulated voice and air of good breeding, looked like a younger version of Pandit Nehru.'³³ I.C. Meer's father Chota arrived in Natal in the 1890s, and his cousins Moosa (M.I.) and Ahmed (A.I.) joined the family in Natal. Waschbank, where Chota Meer opened a shop, provided their earliest political education. I.C. Meer described the shop as a 'university'. The 19 Indian men living in Waschbank met most evenings to discuss Indian opposition to British imperialism. M.I. and A.I. would read items from overseas and local newspapers or recite poems which the group discussed.³⁴ Chota Meer's businesses failed during the early 1930s and they relocated to Ritson Road in Durban.

M.I. Meer, who had a primary school education, worked for and took over *Indian Views*, which became one of the leading Indian journals in Southern Africa and was in particular was the mouthpiece of Muslims. M.I. Meer's daughter, Fatima, who married I.C. Meer, was an anti-apartheid activist and

sociologist at the University of Natal. A.I. Meer worked for *Indian Views* for a short while before starting *The Express Printing Works* in 1937. He was secretary of the Indian Master Printers' Association, and prominent in Monty's post-1945 NIC as vice-president and General Secretary of the SAIC. A.I. Meer's son Unus described his father as 'a great follower of Nehru, great follower of independence of India, great follower of Indian history.' When Unus went to study in India in 1942, in the first letter he received from home, his father wrote 'something to the effect, "you've been given a great opportunity to go to India, things are difficult there, people are poor but I envy you because it's better to be a beggar in one's own homeland than to be a king in a foreign country." You know, he was a very strong Indophile.'

Jaydew Nasib (J.N.) Singh was born in 1920 to Nasib and Bhan Singh in Tugela. His grandparents had arrived as indentured migrants and became sugar cane farmers after completing their indentures. J.N. Singh attended Sastri College, where he matriculated in 1939. One of his classmates was P.R. Pather's son, Masla. Masla enrolled for medicine at Wits, while J.N. Singh registered for the BA degree at Natal University. After completing his BA, J.N. proceeded to Wits because the racial policies of Natal University prohibited black students in the Law Faculty. He registered at Wits in 1943 and was quickly drawn into politics, not surprising given that his contemporaries included Nelson Mandela, Ruth First and I.C. Meer. He participated in the 1946 African Miners Strike for which he was imprisoned for one month. He was serving articles when the passive resistance campaign was launched in Natal, and Dadoo roped him in to be secretary of the TIC Passive Resistance Committee. When J.N. moved to Durban in 1947, he was elected to the executive committee of both the NIC and SAIC. He was banned from the 1950s, which cut him out of day-to-day politics for long periods. His law practice in Baker Street served as a base for many anti-apartheid activists, and Baker Street has been re-named J.N. Singh Street.

Dr Masilamoney Ruthnum Pather was born to P.R. and Pereanayagum Pather on 4 August 1921, and was the eldest of seven children. While



*standing: M.D. Naidoo, Dadoo, I.C. Meer, —, M. Vawda
sitting: Dawood Seedat, I. Moolla, George Ponnen*

© Zonii Seedat

P.R. Pather emerges as a moderate politician in this narrative, his public work rubbed off on young Masla: 'Our home was a centre where social and political affairs were constantly discussed. This was my initiation into social consciousness.' Masla attended Fort Hare for a year in 1940 for pre-medical studies. He would later state that 'the introduction of a different culture and environment [at Fort Hare] was a stimulating and an enriching experience. I had my first experience with African colleagues, and this was to continue through university and further.' The Wits experience cemented Masla's growing political consciousness, partly because of the humiliation to which he was subjected in his quest for an education, and partly because of the people he met. He had to apply for a permit to study in the Transvaal because of restrictions on inter-provincial migration. Black students were not allowed to stay in the hostel and he lived in Vrededorp, 'a depressed area with people living in abject poverty and dilapidated homes.' Masla's political views were hardened through interaction with Mandela, J.N. Singh, Ahmed Kathrada,

Ahmed Bhoola, Zuleika Christopher and Karrim Essack. Masla was not as flattering of his white peers at Wits as he was of African colleagues at Fort Hare: 'White students were conservative, if not downright racist.' He joined the CP in 1942 and formed a branch in Vrededorp, working closely with Dadoo, Bram Fischer, Brian Bunting, and Moses Kotane. Masla graduated in 1945, served his internship at Lovedale Hospital, and returned to Durban in 1947. He subsequently moved to King Williams Town and eventually settled in Cape Town. He held on to his radical political instincts and we follow his footsteps later.³⁵

Ahmed Bhoola was the son of a commercial traveler Ismail who worked for the clothing firm Lockhat Brothers. Like many of the activists, the family lived in the Warwick Avenue area, first in Leathern Road and then Mansfield Road. Ahmed studied at Sastri and Adams Mission before going to Wits where he completed a law degree. He was a contemporary of Mandela, I.C. Meer, Masla Pather and J.N. Singh. When he returned to Durban, he held numerous official positions in the NIC until his bannings, and was well known because of his weekly satirical column in the *The Leader* titled 'POLITICUS'.

These individuals were drawn to left-wing politics in Johannesburg, and joined with white communists, mostly Jewish students from East European backgrounds living in middle-class and working-class suburbs like Yeoville, Berea, and Doornfontein, to form the Federation of Progressive Students (FOPS) in September 1943. Future anti-apartheid movement luminaries like Harold Wolpe, Ruth First and Joe Slovo were on the committee. I.C. Meer was organising secretary. William Nkomo, founder of the ANC Youth League, was the only confessed African communist on campus. FOPS' concern from the beginning was not student affairs in the narrow sense, but to connect with 'progressive' organisations like the CP, TIC, APO and ANC.

FOPS faced formidable opposition from Trotskyites in the form of the Progressive Forum (LPF) and the ANC Youth League, which had been launched at Wits in 1944 by among others, Nelson Mandela, an ardent Africanist, who moderated his Africanism during his Wits years.³⁶ That PF, FOPS and ANCYL

members engaged in heated discussions on campus, as well as at the homes of students, is evident in the memoirs of Ruth First, Ahmed Kathrada, and I.C. Meer. Meer's flat in Kholvad House was a hive of activity. Not only was Mandela a regular visitor, but he often slept over. Myrtle Berman, a member of the CP, described the flat as 'dreary ... badly furnished, bloody depressing, looking back on it ... but just the place to be.' Most important, perhaps, it was 'awash with activity, always, it was a hive.'³⁷ Mary Benson wrote that in I.C. Meer's flat, 'over endless cups of tea and curry meals at any time of the day and night, they discussed and argued and planned, they studied and they listened to the gramophone.'³⁸ Their circle included the Reverend Michael Scott and adversaries like Africanist Anton Lembede and many NEUM members. These serious discussions are attested to in a letter from Mandela to I.C. Meer on 31 October 1984. Mandela wrote to Meer on 29 January 1985:

I've missed you so much these 22 years that there are occasions when I even entertain the wild hope that one good morning I will be told that you are waiting for me in the consultation rooms downstairs. I watch the world aging, scenes from our younger days in Kholvad house and Umgeni Road come back so vividly as if they occurred only the other day – bending endlessly on our textbooks, traveling to and from Milner Park, indulging in a bit of agitation, now on opposite sides and now together, the fruitless polemic with [Ahmed] Bhoola and [Karrim] Essack ...³⁹

In Natal, attempts were also made to mobilise the youth, and H.A. Naidoo and George Ponnen formed the Natal Indian Youth League in February 1939, a federal structure of around 40 Indian youth organisations. Ponnen, who was Vice-President, recalled that they 'brought together various sectional and religious youth bodies. From there we were able to mobilise the youth, and we had the majority of the higher-class students of Sastri College joining us. And from there we recruited important people like Debi Singh, Cassim Amra, Dawood Seedat, all holding leading positions.' Ponnen also formed a Worker's Study Circle in Clairwood to educate workers in outlying areas.⁴⁰

The League's first AGM was held on 5 March 1940 in Clairwood. Ponnen was elected chairman and B.M. Vengtas secretary. They organised classes in political economy, grammar, and public speaking. George Singh organised the Merebank Literary and Debating Society. Its patron was Manilal Gandhi. Around 50 people attended a meeting on 14 July 1940 where a resolution was passed voicing 'deep resentment at the attitude taken up by the officials of the NIA and strongly protests against the expulsion of certain members of the Bloc and further demands the reinstatement of those members in the interests of the Indian community as a whole.'⁴¹

There were similar sparks of resistance among women. Dr Goonam was the only Indian woman member of the LSG. White members implored Indians to bring women along, as they argued that gender liberation was as important as class and race. According to Pauline Podbrey, although the men promised they would do so, they rarely did, and instead offered excuses that the women were shy, could not speak English, would not understand what was going on, or that they never went anywhere else either. On one occasion, H.A. Naidoo's brother Krishna brought their sister Dhanum to a meeting, while M.D. Naidoo brought his sister. The result:

They sat with their hands on their lap, eyes downcast. The men were equally uncomfortable. They were not used to socialising with Indian women and it was plain to see their traditions and background fighting their intellect and conscience ... [Eventually] both young women did return and took to accompanying us to trade union meetings and helping with the recruitment of Indian women workers. They spoke in a language the Indian factory workers could understand and with which they could identify. During the passive resistance campaigns, Indian women emerged from their seclusion and proved every bit as courageous and determined as their men.⁴²

Among Indian women, Dr Goonam stood apart; she formed a Women's Liberal Studies Group (WLSG) in 1942, and Debi Singh and I.C. Meer addressed their first meeting at the Gandhi Library. Other members included

Radhi Singh, who was studying for a BA degree at the University of Natal, Mrs R. Jithoo, Minnie Ramawthur, a student at Girls High, Irene Godfrey and Gertrude Lazarus. According to I.C. Meer, Dr Goonam ‘stood out among her fellow members in her vivid colours, puffing away stylishly at a cigarette at the end of a long silver holder. She was sharp, and it was clear no man could dominate her. But she was at the same time fun loving and a generous hostess. She liked arranging parties at her house and invited us around.’ In August 1942, Dr Goonam and 12 other women organised a meeting to protest the arrest in India of Indian nationalists like Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi.⁴³ The meeting was addressed in Tamil, Hindi and Gujarati since few Indians spoke English.

The WLSG sought to challenge the Durban Indian Women’s Association (DIWA), which was largely the preserve of middle-class women and aimed at securing the patronage of white women. Two Agents’ wives played an important part in this venture: Lady Maharaj Singh and Lady Rama Rau, who were well educated and articulate, and encouraged middle-class Indian women to become more involved in community affairs and interact with white women, from whom they could learn the values of ‘modern civilisation’. Lady Maharaj Singh, for example, told a reporter from the *Rand Daily Mail* that contact between Indian and white women would lead to Indian women becoming ‘civilised’.⁴⁴ Lady Rau was of the opinion that equality with white women could only be achieved through the adoption of ‘western values’.⁴⁵ Dr Goonam criticised DIWA’s conservatism in a letter to the *Natal Witness*:

They do nothing but attend receptions and tea parties. If this is what they call working for the poor, then they have certainly done something! The Indian Women’s Association is more or less composed of the well-to-do and its prominent officials are Europeans. You, unfortunately, do not belong to the working class. Take a walk any day across the Dorpspruit and see the condition of your fellow women and men, and just ask yourself if you have done your duty.⁴⁶

Dr Goonam was born in 1906. Her father, R.K. Naidoo, had arrived in the

1890s and exported bananas and pineapples to the Transvaal. Dr Goonam's mother arrived from Mauritius and was well educated for the time. She attended St Aidan's School and had a passionate interest in Tamil literature and philosophy, followed the suffragette movement, and was a secretary of the Indian Women's Association. Her heroines were Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant.⁴⁷

Dr Goonam's childhood was spent in the Grey Street complex. From May Street the family moved to Victoria Street, where 'the most important piece of furniture was a brand new Singapore cane settee with soft seats, placed in the setting room, especially for Mr Gandhi when he visited us. He usually dropped in after his meetings in Field Street. My mother would make my sister take him a glass of milk and a small bowl of almonds on a tray.'⁴⁸ From Victoria Street, they moved to Leopold Street. Monty lived nearby, and Dr Goonam recalled that 'he often came on small errands.' Her father bought a farm in Riverside where he cultivated beetle leaf (paan). Here they entertained the likes of Sarojini Naidu, Srinivas Sastri, and Dr Abdurahman.⁴⁹

Around 1926, aged 20 and increasingly frustrated by her desire for an education, Dr Goonam decided that the 'farm was not enough for me!' In spite of her father's initial reluctance, he came around to supporting her and wrote to H.S.L. Polak in London, who assured him that he would take care of her. This gave him the courage to send her abroad in the face of community opposition.⁵⁰ The Edinburgh years awakened Dr Goonam's political conscience and the determination to confront racism, which distinguished her public life. She wrote:

[Edinburgh] moulded my character. There was no racial discrimination in Scotland that I encountered. I went to church with them [whites]. I went to parties. I went to the best homes and saw how they lived and so on. I saw black and Indian people settled there and enjoying the vote. So we then realised that it is all a sham ... a whole lot of mockery, what's going on in South Africa. When we came back, we were not afraid to face the white man. We didn't go cowering to him at all ... even in our everyday demands ... Supposing you went to buy

a car [in Durban]; we went along and asked what's the price of the car ... You know how the Indians usually go ... like people who are frightened. We showed no fear at all of meeting the white man. That particular type of feeling we derived from living in Edinburgh and London.⁵¹



© Institute for Black Research (IBR)

Like Monty, she learnt of Indian poverty through firsthand experience:

I knew how they were treated on the sugar plantations. I got to know as a result of my connection with the Indian people who came to my surgery. You know the Hulett's and the Armstrongs and all those people who treated them very badly ... Some of them would tell me how their parents were treated. I used to go to Mount Edgecombe, Stanger ... all those areas ... in the course of my duties, but also sit with them and talk to them ... and I used to go into their homes, and see very, very poorly constructed homes and ... how they had ambitions.⁵²

Dr Goonam found it difficult to fit into Indian society when she returned from Edinburgh:

The Indian women did not want me because I was too far away from them. I did not think like them and I did not behave like them. I smoked cigarettes and wore short dresses and wore lipstick, which was all against the tradition...and drove a car, night or day, alone. All that was not in keeping with the Indian people.⁵³

This did not deter her and she set about organising women, first forming the Indian Women's League (IWL) in 1938. The IWL included Mrs V.R.R. Moodley as president; Mrs Sundaram and Mrs R.K. Naidoo as vice-presidents; Mrs G. Christopher was secretary; while the committee comprised of Dr Goonam, Miss M. Pather, Mrs R.N. Pather, and Mrs Peter Rajoo. Its aims were to encourage them to enter professional trades, educate them to join trade unions and work for their 'general advancement.'⁵⁴ Organisations like the IWL, while pioneering, came up against a pervasive chauvinism. Dr Goonam was aware that the road ahead would be difficult, and created a furore when she approached the NIC for representation for women. She was told that Indian women 'were not sufficiently advanced to receive representation.'⁵⁵ A correspondent to *Indian Opinion*, George Maistry, wrote in June 1938 that Dr Goonam 'was the one Indian woman we were looking for ... in you I see the goods.' However, Maistry wanted to know 'what will the end result be' if husbands and wives held different political opinions.⁵⁶ It was only when radicals ousted the moderates from the NIC in 1945 that women became more prominent in the organisation. By 1946, Dr Goonam, Dr Anusuyah Singh, Janaki Naidoo, Radhi Singh, and Miss Rathmoney were on the NIC committee.⁵⁷

These life histories, fascinating as they are, are important in illustrating the confluence of factors that created an environment in which the moderate and conservative leadership of the Indian community could be challenged. This included the urbanisation and abject poverty of many during the 1930s and 1940s, the opening of Sastri College which was a laboratory to share, exchange

and formulate ideas generated by young Indians, the Indian nationalist struggle, the emergence of authentic working-class leaders, and middle-class Indians imbued with new and more radical ideas. There were those who joined the CP and many others who realised that they had to break the cloak of 'Indianness' which had been placed around the struggle. In the words of Dr Goonam, 'in the early forties, it was already becoming apparent to us that we would only succeed against oppressive race laws through a non-European united front.'⁵⁸

In the post-Gandhi period, the moderate middle class leadership had eschewed an alliance with Africans. For example, they declined an opportunity to participate in the Non-European Co-operation Conference in June 1927. The SAIC sent a delegation, but emphasised that in view of the Cape Town Agreement, they could not involve themselves with Africans, without recourse to India and the Agent.⁵⁹ *Indian Opinion* explained that Indians were citizens of the British Empire and had a different status to Africans, who possessed the right 'to ask the rulers to quit. They have, however, not attained the standard of education or civilisation to enable them to do so.'⁶⁰ As late as 1941, Sastri argued at a meeting in India, where he shared the platform with Dr Goonam, that Indians stood a better chance of getting redress 'if we fight our own battle, for their [African] status is greatly inferior to ours and by making common cause with them, our community will only be disabling themselves in the very severe combat that has fallen their lot.'⁶¹

This attitude was challenged with the formation of the NEUF in Cape Town in the mid-1930s by the Coloured National Liberation League to unite Africans, coloureds, and Indians. The NEUF marked a tentative step towards joint action. Its president was Cissy Gool and Moses Kotane was the secretary, and significantly, H.A. Naidoo and Yusuf Dadoo were also officials. The dynamic Cissy Gool, who once famously said, 'I am afraid that I am slowly going Red,' in response to tightening racism,⁶² was an inspiration to many in Natal. 'The people took to her,' I.C. Meer felt, because of her 'oratorical skill, and, I am certain, her beauty. Cissy Gool was a huge success on the North Coast.' Dr Goonam supported I.C. Meer's recollection:

I recall a meeting in the sugar belt. We were a strong contingent. Messrs G. Ponnem, H.A. Naidoo, S.V. Reddy, Cissy Gool and I. We were conducted into a large marquee, through an entrance adorned with banana trees. There were a good number of turban-headed dignified looking men, who rose to their feet and putting their palms together, greeted us in traditional Hindu fashion. A gramophone played Indian music, not film hits but staid carnatic songs. After the preliminaries and speeches made by our trade union representatives, I addressed the meeting in Tamil. Then came the *piece de resistance*, Mrs Cissy Gool, a very fine speaker, who outlined her programme of united action among the non-European people through co-operative societies, clubs and schools ... She received resounding applause. The vote of thanks by Mr Singh was filled with praise for her. We left after an excellent dinner at the house of one of the prominent families on the North Coast.⁶³

The first Natal conference of the NEUF took place on 20 November 1939. A.I. Kaje and A.W.G. Champion were patrons of the body, H.A. Naidoo was chairman, Dr Goonam and Philemon Tsele vice-chairpersons, Cassim Amra secretary, Sarah Rubin assistant-secretary, and Dawood Seedat was treasurer. Prominent trade unionist S.P. Pillay told *The Guardian* newspaper that his union had 'affiliated with the NEUF because we realise that the workers' struggle is not confined to the economic front, but must extend to the political front.'⁶⁴ It was a two-way process, with workers giving impetus to political activity, and politicians organising workers. According to R.D. Naidoo, Indian members of the CP eventually withdrew from the NEUF on instruction from the CP whose theoreticians felt that the different racial components were not sufficiently well organised to form such a Front:

So we had to disband and go back into the different fields. We were asked to work in our own areas. As a result most of us felt that our role should be in the Indian National Movement. The party felt that it was very essential that these national groups must be first organised ... and then we should bring about a broad unity at a later stage. We followed instructions because the Party was

very well disciplined. I myself was disciplined many a time for not carrying out, you know, proper instruction. With the introduction of the Suppression of Communism Act, the Party had to go underground and many of us were torn from our organisations.⁶⁵

For these young men (and some women), joining the CP, ASL or NEUF transformed their narrow, restricted struggles into ones that took on a national and even international dimension. Workers were encouraged to identify with their counterparts in other parts of the world, while the ruling class was seen as part of an international imperialist elite. The horizons of workers expanded as they began meeting and exchanging ideas, first with Indians from different class, religious and regional backgrounds, and then across the colour line. The range of conversations also widened. If H.A. Naidoo was to discover the grim puritanical face of communism when he fled into exile to Hungary in the 1950s, this was certainly not the case in the vibrant 1930s. Judging by what was happening, there was clearly much action, organising, traveling, demonstrating and evading the police. This was affirmed by George Ponnen:

In the Youth League, the Liberal Study Group and the Nationalist Bloc we were discussing the oppressive measures of the ruling class on a national plane. How the oppressive measures affect the various sections of the people – the Indians, Africans and coloured. We were discussing the necessity of the Natal organisations of the non-white people working together to fight the oppressive measures. When we presented these points of view to the Working Committee of the Congress, the real fight started – the leadership would not budge from its old policies.⁶⁶

If non-European unity was one issue of contention among Indian politicians, the other major point of division during the war years was the so-called Indian penetration of white areas. It was in this environment of radical ideas and activism that was taking root in the city, while the government was committed to racial discrimination and segregation, that Monty made his political entrance.

Showtime at Curries

Penetration is a small problem which does not concern ninety-nine and three-quarters [percent] of the European population ... But the fact is that the remaining quarter percent have enough influence to make it appear a problem.¹

H.R. BURROWS, 1940

Long before apartheid, Durban's town planners tried to create a city where whites could enjoy the best spots, the city centre and the sea, allowing other races into these areas only as labourers and mobile peddlers. Black people were to be pushed to the city's peripheries, and the boundaries strictly policed. This 'squeezing' of Indians and Africans onto the margins of the city was to have dramatic and tragic consequences at the end of the 1940s. However, Indians hotly contested these policies of early urban segregation, and there were often open debates as to what was the best way to confront the plans of the City authorities. One of these disputes occurred over what came to be known as the 'Indian penetration' of white areas.

The NIA and NIC reached a 'gentleman's agreement' with the local authorities that Indians would not buy residential property in white areas. The moderate leadership of the NIC accepted that 'historical experiences show that the world over people of the same race find it congenial and convenient to live together, and the Indians in South Africa are no exception to this rule,'² but argued that to formalise this would insult the 'national honour' of Indians, because it would naturalise racial inferiority.³ When a similar law was passed in the Transvaal, Dadoo called for passive resistance but Gandhi, who was in communication with Smuts at the time, advised on 19 July 1939 that the campaign should be put on hold because he felt that Smuts may concede to some Indian demands.

Although preparations had been made to launch the campaign on 1 August Dadoo heeded the advice because Gandhi ‘has been our guide and mentor ... and we shall wholeheartedly await his advice.’⁴ The postponing of this campaign created a space for moderates to seek ways of placating white fears.



The Lawrence Committee, which included Indian members Albert Christopher, J.W. Godfrey, A.S. Kajee, Sorabjee Rustomjee, P.R. Pather, and P.B. Singh, was appointed in February 1940 to talk prospective Indian buyers out of purchasing property in ‘white’ areas.⁵ This was condemned by the radical faction, as shown by a February 1940 editorial in *Call* remarking that ‘humiliating as the plight of the non-Europeans is, perfidious and incongruous is the policy of appeasement taken up by the leaders of the NIA. By the very acceptance of voluntary segregation, these gentlemen have conceded the principle of segregation.’ Radicals failed to reverse this decision at a mass

meeting at the Durban City Hall on 9 June 1940. They continued within the NIA as the Nationalist Bloc but refused to have anything to do with the 'Assurance', instead carrying out an extensive campaign among workers 'to put an end to the short-sighted and narrow-minded path of expediency.'⁶ Following the meeting Monty, Amra, Beaver Timol, George Ponnen, H.A. Naidoo, and Manilal Gandhi were expelled from the NIA. Amra condemned this:

The ill-conceived act of expulsion revealed their FEAR; fear of the growing tide of the progressive force represented by the Nationalist Bloc which has dared to expose the stubborn arrogance of the leaders despite the wishes of the masses ... The pages of Indian history in South Africa for the last two decades reek with shame ... There has been a cancerous bartering away of the legitimate rights of the community ... It is the stigma of moral prostitution to be ourselves part of the law of degradation and perversity.⁷

Many whites, on the other hand, felt that the Lawrence Committee did not go far enough and continued to agitate against Indian penetration. The First Broome Commission (1940) concluded that Indians lived among whites to access better amenities. An indication of the depth of white feeling on this issue is that when P.R. Pather, a moderate politician of long standing, bought a house at 232 Moore Road on 17 December 1942, Councillors Boyd and Pritchard issued a statement that they would 'muster 200 men who will certainly see that Mr Pather does not occupy his house.'⁸ Vandals damaged the house, and Pather was only given the key after paying the full purchase price. He moved into his new home on 16 April 1943, but was arrested in July and convicted for violating the Pegging Act. H. Barren, the Chief Magistrate of Durban, postponed sentencing to November to allow Pather time to apply for a residential permit. However, his application was turned down, and in November he was ordered to pay £5 or spend seven days in prison. An irate Pather told the court that while the law 'may appease and pacify the racialists of Durban,' to 'dislodge a man from his own home is not the law of civilised society but that of the jungle.'⁹

Pather's appeal was dismissed by Justice J. Selke, but he refused to pay the

fine, rather asking to be imprisoned. However, the fine was paid anonymously. Pather called the person who paid his fine 'a traitor to the Indian cause. I was fighting for a principle and was attempting to establish the rights of the Indian people in South Africa.'¹⁰ While the identity of the person remains a mystery, according to I.C. Meer there were two rumours doing the rounds, one being that P.R. Pather had arranged with one of his friends to pay off the fine, and another that Senator Clarkson, Smuts's Interior Minister who was responsible for the Pegging Act, paid it to defuse heightening tension.¹¹ Given that Meer was a political adversary of Pather one must treat cynicism with some caution and it must be recognised that Pather's stand did bring the issue starkly into the public domain.

Pather agreed to vacate the premises while the Pretoria Agreement was being negotiated. When that Agreement failed, he returned to his home on 2 November 1944 and was promptly rearrested.¹² A mass meeting on 3 November 1944 protested his arrest. His wife's eviction while he was in prison intensified community anger and at another mass protest Advocate J.W. Godfrey echoed the majority sentiment that 'we as Indians are not going to tolerate this action against us and even less against an Indian woman.'¹³

A Second Broome Commission sat from 16 to 19 March and published its findings on 6 April, confirming Indian penetration. The government responded with the Trading and Occupation of Land Restriction Act of April 1943, which banned white-Indian property transactions in Durban for three years. It was called the "Pegging Act" because the intention was to "peg" Indian land ownership and occupations at 22 March 1943 levels until further measures were introduced.¹⁴ Indian political bodies saw the Pegging Act as the first step to racial segregation. The NIC, which had continued to exist under the leadership of A.I. Kajeer, and the NIA agreed to merge. They chose the name Natal Indian Congress because of its historical association with Gandhi. A cumbersome executive of 30 vice-presidents and 45 committee members was chosen at the inaugural meeting on 29 August 1943. The NIA's J.W. Godfrey was elected president, A.M. Lockhart of the NIC became vice-president, and P.R. Pather

one of the secretaries. Radicals like Monty Naicker, George Ponnen, Dawood Seedat, Billy Peters, and M.D. Naidoo made it onto the executive.



NIA Deputation to Prime Minister J.C. Smuts in 1943, with the High Commissioner of India. E. Haffajee and A.S. Kajee are fifth and sixth from the left standing. Sitting: S.R. Naidoo, J. Godfrey, S.M. Mayet, —, —, Sorabjee Rustomjee, P.R. Pather.

© Bhana Collection; UKZN Document Centre

The fragile unity of the NIC collapsed when moderate elements agreed to the Pretoria Agreement. A Third Broome Commission was set up in 1944, and when Smuts received its findings, he met with an NIC delegation led by A.I. Kajee, P.R. Pather and S.R. Naidoo on 18 April 1944 and announced the Pretoria Agreement,¹⁵ which established a board of two Indians and three whites to license the purchase of property by members of a different racial group from previous occupants. While the Agreement was meant to apply to land for housing, the authorities in Natal extended it to business and agriculture. Kajee raised these objections in a speech to Natal Provincial Council. He warned that racial strife was unlikely to end until whites changed their approach:

Does the European dominant group really want to solve racial strife? So long as the European section insists upon the economic and social inferiority of the

Indian community, so long will there be racial strife; so long as the European community insists that the Indian shall have no representation on bodies which determine the destiny of Indians, so long will there be racial strife; so long as the Indians are depressed and segregated by statutes legally imposed by the dominant group, so long will there be racial strife.¹⁶

The Kajee-Pather faction's hope that compromise would put on hold further economic and residential segregation was in vain, because white politicians, sensing the inability of moderate Indians to confront segregation, and aware of how popular the issue of Indian penetration was, pushed for more stringent legislation. Appeasement only reinforced the appetite of those baying for Indian repatriation. The government caved in by making a crucial change in the Agreement – the embargo applied to both occupation and acquisition of property.¹⁷

This was the last straw for the radicals who formed the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC) in April 1944 under Monty's presidency. The ASC was a broad front of intellectuals, trade unions, sports, cultural, youth and farmers' associations, including the CP, LSG, Overport Social Club, Hindustan Youth Club, and Springfield Farmer's Association.¹⁸ On the suggestion of the Agent Sir Shafa'at Ahmad Khan, who was more outspoken than many of his predecessors, the ASC agreed not to break away from the NIC but work from within to effect change.¹⁹ The ASC hosted a conference on 6 May 1944 at which 29 organisations rejected the Pretoria Agreement and, beginning with a rally at Red Square, set about mobilising the masses. According to Ponnen:

We had our own mass meetings, we went out to all the suburbs, telling the people what the new policy should be, for the real Indian political organisation. We want unity, not Kajee, Pather and Sorabjee running their own shows ... This was the real political campaign among the working class ... we had factory meetings – every factory lunchtime or evening meetings, and public meetings in the Red Square, calling on the Indian workers to join the NIC ... That was a tremendous task.²⁰

Protest against the Pretoria Agreement led by Monty and Dr Goonam

© Vishnu Padayachee



Protest against the Pegging Act organised by the ASC.

© Vishnu Padayachee

Dr Goonam also recalls the process of mobilisation:

We saw the antics and the manoeuvring of the Kajee-Pather group and we felt something must be done. We went from district area to area, group to group,

even religious groups we penetrated, talking in their own language, trying to sort of get their support ... We said, this is the Old Congress, the Congress of Mahatma Gandhi and you have to choose now. Are you going on the same path these people have led you, which has spelt ruin for us, or are you going to now consider change ... so we can effectively show the government that we oppose them? It meant hours of explaining. It meant changing very old people whose views cannot be changed overnight.²¹

An extensive campaign followed, with H.A. Naidoo, organiser and orator par excellence, hauled back from 'exile' in the Cape to assist. The absence of H.A. had only increased the desire of the working classes to hear him again. Workers from the Bus Employees' Union, Biscuit Workers Union, Tin Workers Union, Chemical Workers' Union and Laundry Workers Union were mobilised, while organisations like the Springfield Indian Farmers' Association, the Malvern District Indian Association, and the Overport Social Club threw their resources into the campaign. Soon a new language gained currency – 'appeasement' was blamed for the deterioration in the position of Indians, and moderates were placed on the back foot.²²

In January 1945, the ASC toured Pietermaritzburg, Dannhauser, Dundee and Glencoe. Dr Goonam would recall that the 'meetings were boisterous and the opposition rowdy. At one meeting in Pietermaritzburg, I had the sense of a cool reception and the reception became freezing when I took the microphone. I was met with a jet of water, and was soon drenched to the skin. Supporters responded by covering me with a tablecloth.'²³ Kay Moonsamy, who joined the CP in December 1944, was exposed for the first time to the likes of Monty, M.D. Naidoo, J.N. Singh, Ismail Meer, George Ponnen, and R.R. Pillay:

We as workers were drawn to them and there was a big campaign to remove Kajee and Pather. We went about recruiting members. Wherever Kajee and Pather called meetings of the NIC ... we went to these meetings and because of the membership drive and the large number of people who joined, in all those meetings we passed a motion of no confidence and took over the meetings.

Large numbers of people came to the offices and we had our NIC card and people simply joined in their droves.

The radicals penetrated every nook and cranny of the province. It was a time of heightened expectation and tension as families were divided and old friendships and alliances dissolved, while new ones evolved.

A strong strand of 'Indianness' ran through the mobilisation tactics of the radicals. For example, at a meeting of the NIC in Sydenham and Overport, Monty said that the area needed a strong branch as it was 'predominantly Indian – the people must make the Congress an effective instrument for supporting Indian demands.' Reports of every meeting were sent to India and 'every available means was being used to get India's intervention.'²⁴ Thirty-one meetings were held in three months and the NIC's registered membership increased from 3 000 to 22 000.²⁵ Like Kay Moonsamy, Billy Nair's political education took place during these crucial rallies: 'Not far from where I worked there were massive rallies taking place ... at what is called the Red Square ... I grew up, I matured during this period.'²⁶

The way in which political mobilisation and union organisation intersected becomes clear from the story of Dimes. During the 1940s, Dimes leadership comprised of George Singh (Secretary), S.L. Singh (Hon. Organiser), Billy Peters (Organising Secretary) and T. S. John (President). Only John was an employee of the municipality, as the others were professional organisers. Dimes saw itself as part of the wider trade union and political movements, and its *Monthly Bulletins* reported regularly on the activities of other unions, while workers were urged to read *The Guardian*, described as 'the premier union newspaper in South Africa.' Dimes was also a member of the Trades and Labour Council. On 20 November 1941, John spoke at a rally organised by 'Friends of the Soviet Union' which was attended by thousands of workers to raise money and implore the Allies to render full aid to the USSR.²⁷

Dimes was 'pleased' to report in July 1942 that it had assisted many new unions: 'It is only right that a well-established Union like Dimes should render assistance to fellow workers fighting for their economic emancipation.' On

5 July 1942, Dimes took part in a rally organised by the CP, where £250 was raised for the Party.²⁸ Workers at Magazine Barracks also formed the Red Rose Social Club which had communist leanings. Its meetings were held in an area of the Barracks known as “Stalingrad”.²⁹ Dimes was involved in the political debates and mobilisations of the time as an affiliate of the ASC³⁰, and regularly hosted ASC meetings. For example, a meeting on 3 December 1944 was attended by 8 000 people. Dimes urged its members to attend the NIC AGM in 1945 through its *Monthly Bulletin*:

The NIC is the official national organ of the Indian people and Dimes workers must be there, in their own interests to take an active part in the NIC. In the past the leadership of the NIC has neglected the rights and wishes of the working class. In a way the workers have themselves to blame, because they showed very little active interest. Today the position has changed and Indian workers throughout Durban can play an important role in their national organisation.³¹

The mood had swung against the moderates, as even the usually even-handed *Indian Views* became frustrated:

As long as we have in our midst officials who fail to carry out the wishes of the people; who constitute themselves into a permanent dictatorship refusing to hold annual elections; who without consulting the people conclude ‘Pretoria Agreements’ behind their backs and try to justify them afterwards; who, not content with their favourite pastime of running around with garlands on all and sundry occasions, display the disgusting spectacle of being chased with their garlands by a Mayor from the City Hall steps and by a local hotel keeper from his front door and still persist in running round the back door of the hotel, determined to perform their act of showmanship regardless of the humiliation to the whole community ... so long will there be need for even unknown persons to ‘emerge from obscurity’ to put a final stop to such things.³²

The big day was set down for 4 March 1945 – Natal’s Indians were to hold the annual election of the NIC, where they hoped to boot out the moderate

politicians. Voting was to take place by secret ballot for the first time in Congress history, and the stakes were high. *Indian Views* warned the masses to choose carefully, as they were poised at a critical juncture with the Union, Provincial, and Local governments 'united together for their kill.' The return of white soldiers would exacerbate Indian unemployment, the paper warned, while the land question hung like a noose around their necks. *Indian Views* called for a considered decision on the future of the NIC, which was 'the natural organisation of the Indian community.' The choice was between 'men who have meritorious services to their credit and ... untried men ... It is one thing to stand on a soap box and promise the moon to the people, but it is another to fulfill that promise.'³³

The 'wordy warfare,' as *Indian Views* described it, included the 'younger elements in the community styling themselves as Leftists and Progressives, unleashing a salvo of dodgers [pamphlets] and bulletins attacking the present officials.'³⁴ In the days leading up to the elections, two men in particular were targeted, P.R. Pather and A.I. Kajee. Pamphlets described them as the 'Old Gang, incompetent and defeatist, who sold their birthright for a mess of pottage and dragged the Indian cause into disgrace and despair.' When Pather was arrested for living in a white area, he was accused of being an 'opportunist and self-appointed martyr to the Indian cause, and playing the fool with principles and being more concerned with his own self-aggrandisement.'³⁵ The rallying cry of Anti-Segregationists was 'No Compromise!' *Indian Views* summed it up best: 'the attack has less to do with supposed failures of Congress policy ... What they want is Mr Pather's head and Mr Kajee's blood. That is the long and short of it.'³⁶

R.D. Deshmukh, who arrived as Agent-General in June 1945, entered the fray at the first official reception in his honour at the Avalon Theatre on 23 June. He warned, to a chorus of boos, that 'unless some of the younger men are prepared to forget their irrelevant ideologies, the Indian community will not be able to take their part in the post-war South Africa.'³⁷

The NIC, in view of the increased membership and changes in voting

procedures, was busy drafting a new constitution under the supervision of Advocate D.B. Moltano. The Old Guard continued to delay the election. Monty, Dr B.T. Chetty, and A.K.M. Docrat took the matter to court, which instructed P.R. Pather and A.B. Moosa in July to provide the ASC with the names and addresses of the committee members of the NIC, which they had refused to do. The ASC served notices on NIC president J.W. Godfrey, as well as 96 committee members and branch presidents, to convene the AGM before 30 September 1945. A committee meeting of the (moderate) NIC passed a resolution on 26 August ‘condemn[ing] the action of Dr Naicker who ... is aware that the AGM was adjourned for good and valid reasons, and regards his action in resorting to the Supreme Court as being inimical to the interests of the Indian community as a whole.’³⁸

The Old Guard argued in court that they had to hold a special general meeting to adopt the new constitution to make the NIC into a federal body to avoid the ‘dangers attendant upon the holding of mass meetings at which there is likely to be excitement, chaos, violence and even bloodshed.’ The Judge President ruled on 4 September 1945 that ‘the probability of the good name of the Indian community being smirched if disorders took place was not a valid reason for not holding the AGM.’ He ordered that elections be held by 22 October.³⁹ The Old Guard scheduled an AGM at the City Hall on 17 October, but Monty took the NIC to court again to force a change of venue to Curries Fountain in order to accommodate the thousands expected to attend. Anticipating defeat, most of the office-bearers and committee members of the NIC resigned.⁴⁰

As the countdown to the 21 October 1945 election loomed, there was expectation that the wily Kajee and Pather had something up their sleeves. Instead, as Dr Goonam remembers that historic day:

Election Day came, bright and sunny. We assembled on the dais and waited. The Curries Fountain ground began to fill in an orderly and peaceful way. There was no sign of our opposition. It seemed that they had thrown in the towel and the stage was all ours. We heard faint voices from a distance, faint at first but growing louder. We looked around and there on our right came the procession of

supporters, three abreast, singing, chanting, carrying huge banners, representing a multiplicity of unions – Lorry Drivers, Sugar-Cane Workers, Laundrymen, Taxi Drivers, Waiters, Stewards, Cooks and many more; and escorting them were the police on motorcycles. We outlined the policy of the Anti-Segregation Council. The momentous elections followed. While I was prominent on the platform and there was a large turnout of women at the rally, we did not participate in the voting on that day because the NIC's constitution denied that right to women.⁴¹

The official count of 7,633 in attendance elected all 46 nominees of the ASC, including 12 communists, to the executive of the NIC. Monty was elected President, George Singh Chairman, M.D. Naidoo and A.I. Meer Joint Honorary Secretaries; and M. Parekh and E.H. Ismail Joint Honorary Treasurers. There were ten vice-presidents and 30 committee members. There were many dynamic figures like I.C. Meer, J.N. Singh, and Debi Singh to choose as president, and Kay Moonsamy explains the choice of Monty:

Monty was a down-to-earth person. Apart from his medical practice in Short Street, he devoted his time and life to the Congress movement. He was a very committed, loyal member of the movement, the whole Congress movement, and he dedicated his life to the cause. He didn't shirk in his responsibilities and he was the one always concerned about his colleagues, the members of the movement and ever prepared to assist. The doors of his surgery, his home, were open to all and ... he was undoubtedly a stalwart leader of the liberation movement in our country. There was also the question of integrity. We saw the dangers of leaders doing somersaults or using the goodwill of the community for personal advancement. Monty, we had a sense, was not that person.

Some in the Indian community, like Gandhi's son Manilal, editor of *Indian Opinion*, were suspicious of communist influence within the NIC. He said in 1948:

My allegiance to Congress is qualified ... Congress is today, I am unhappy to have to say, controlled entirely by Communists ... I must confess, too, that I

have little faith in the Communists ... There is no knowing when they will stage a somersault ... Indian Communists are inspired by European Communists who, in turn, derive their inspiration from Russia. With all due respect to Russia, we cannot accept a foreign country as our guide.⁴²

Unionist organiser Bobby Pillay denied that communism was a Russian creation, describing it as an indigenous development:

It is the natural offspring of the corrupted herrenvolkism and lopsided economic evils that are prevalent under capitalist society ... It is inevitable that Communists should take root in South Africa, the blessed country where milk and honey flows for a fraction of its population, while the majority of its sons and daughters suffer from malnutrition for lack of nourishing food. And many of them die in starvation in this land of plenty ... What is more natural than for Indians to adopt a scientifically tested political party as their spearhead in the struggle against oppression?⁴³

The feeling of isolation of moderate leaders was perceptively captured by Advocate J.W. Godfrey:

Men today do not recognise that there was a community in the past, for the generation of today considers that the community begins and ends with them. Today a generation has arisen that knows no law other than its own. It is drunk with its own prosperity. At one time youth and age had stood together in battle. Today, youth in its impetuosity and dynamic strength, over the last twelve months, has made miserable the lives of the older people.⁴⁴

Godfrey was one of the wealthiest men in Durban and his fellow political traveller, A.I. Kajee, had a substantial business empire, while P.R. Pather was a man of considerable clout. The majority of those who unseated them were far from well-off. In fact, it may be argued that this generation of Indian leadership sacrificed as much, if not more, in personal advancement and family life than any other. Where Godfrey was right, was that this signalled a parting of the ways. Splits and contests for power had taken place before, but there was

always some kind of rapprochement. This time, the moderates and the radicals were to go their separate ways.

Moderates did not disappear from the scene altogether. A.S. Kajee, P.R. Pather, A.B. Moosa and A.M. Moolla formed the Natal Indian Organisation (NIO). A.I. Kajee was not formally involved, although he remained an advisor until his death in January 1948 at the age of 53. The NIO and later the South African Indian Organisation (SAIO) represented that faction of Indian politics that initially pinned its hopes on a round-table conference, and later would hold that accommodation was the path to redress, or, as A.S. Kajee famously stated, they were the 'half a loaf is better than no loaf men.' There were other changes taking place in various parts of Natal which ensured that Congress influence would spread far and wide, particularly in Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, and the North Coast.

The North Coast was secured with the support of the powerful Bodasing family, into which the likes of George Singh had married, as well as the commitment of one Gopalall Hurbans (1915-1965). The outstanding organisational skills and level-headedness of the standard six educated Hurbans are described by I.C. Meer in *A Fortunate Man*. Hurbans' roots lay in indenture, as he was the grandson of Sookan Hurbans and Jodeah. Sookan had arrived in Natal in February 1861. He married Jodeah Praug who arrived in September 1865. Sookan completed his three-year indentured term in 1864 and took up market gardening in Tongaat. He married Jodeah almost immediately after her arrival and they had one son, Sookun Hurbans, who married Moorthy Dukhi.

Gopalall was one of Sookan and Moorthy's eight children. Sookan purchased land in Tongaat and a farm Spionkop, opened a tearoom, and was a partner of V.P. Desai in the firm of Gandhi & Co. in Tongaat. Gopalall Hurbans joined the NIC in 1937 at the age of 22 and was immediately co-opted to the Working Committee. From 1953 he was vice-president and secretary of the NIC and SAIC. When Monty was banned, Hurbans was elected (Acting) chairman. He was also elected as chairman of the Natal Vigilance Committee, which had been formed in 1956 to monitor the Group Areas Act. He played a leading

role in establishing a Tongaat Study Circle for adult education, the Tongaat and District Indian Child Welfare Society (1937), and several schools: Emona, Vishwaroop, and Mohangi. As a devout Hindu, he established the Vishwaroop Temple and Dharmsala. Hurbans featured prominently at Kliptown where photographs show him appearing on the platform when the Freedom Charter was adopted.⁴⁵

In Pietermaritzburg two recently arrived doctors from India, Dr Omar and Dr Motala, made a huge impact. At the time of their arrival, the NIC existed in name only in Pietermaritzburg and was dominated by a handful of inactive people who were the equivalent of the moderate Kajee-Pather faction in Durban. They included Sooba Rama (S.R.) Naidoo, M.G. Naidoo, L.S. Moodley, Bobby Nulliah, Bona Naidoo, and Dougie Pillay.⁴⁶ The equivalent of Durban's LSG was the Technical Students' Society which included people like Shriraj Gopal, Y.D. Asmal, C.D. Moodley and Vasu Chetty. They invited lecturers and students from the University of Natal, such as Professors Higgins and Hans Meydner, students like Peter Rodder, Jean Middleton and Harold Strachan, and Alan Paton of the Liberal Party to address them. The body was already in existence when C.D. Moodley joined in 1949. Meetings were held at the HYMA Hall off Church Street on Sunday evenings. They had debates, discussions, symposiums, and quiz contests. Over the years guests included Phyllis Naidoo ('a young slip of a girl in those years,' C.D. Moodley recalled); Joseph Perdu, a French convert to Islam who was a guest of the Arabic Study Circle ('He was masterful, hey. He could tell you everything from the Quran, Bible, Hindu scripture,' according to C.D. Moodley); and Sir Edmund Hillary, who had just completed the conquest of Mount Everest. They also formed a "Thinker's Club" at Woodlands High and a Monday Forum, where they read newspapers and discussed international events.

One of the students who would make an important contribution through to the post-apartheid period was Appiah Saravanan "Teddy" Chetty. Teddy was born in Pietermaritzburg in 1929, attended Woodlands High where he was classified an 'agitator' by the principal, joined the *Natal Mercury*



NIC members in Pietermaritzburg. C.D. Moodley is seated third from the right.

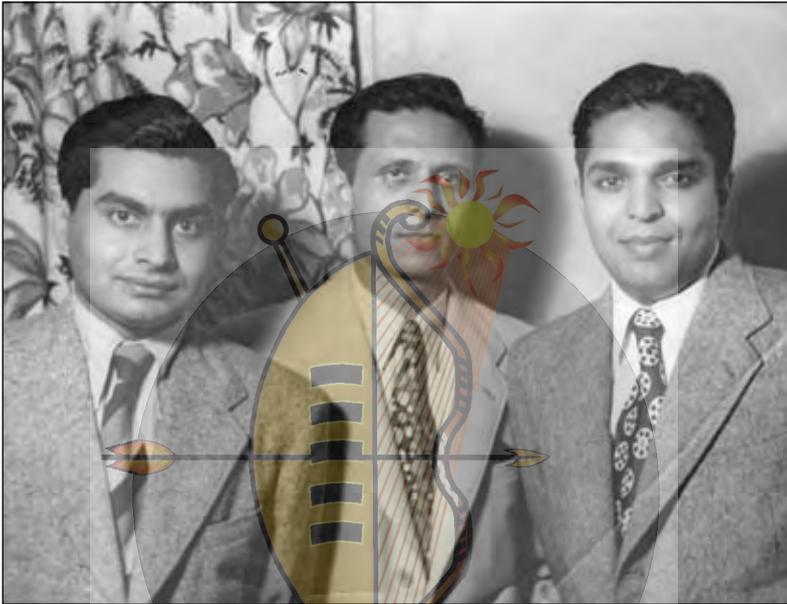
© Choti Motala



NIC Social in Pietermaritzburg. The popular S.B. Mangal is in the front row on the left.

© Choti Motala

as an office hand, and then Eddels Shoe Factory, where he was elected shop steward and dismissed at the first opportunity because of his union work. He subsequently joined cigarette wholesaler Suzman & Co. where he formed the Trade Union of Allied Workers with Moses Mabhida, and was again dismissed.⁴⁷



Omar Essack, Chota Motala, M.C. Meer. Bombay 1944, where they were studying medicine.

© Choti Motala

Motala and Omar played an important role in politicising many of these activists. Mahomed Moosa “Chota” Motala (1921-2005) was born in Dundee. Like many of his contemporaries, he was initiated into politics at Sastri College, and during this period he stayed at the home of Fatima Meer, whose father M.I. Meer was his mother’s cousin. After matriculating in 1938, he proceeded to Bombay where he studied medicine from 1939 to 1947 at the Grant Medical College in Delhi. He was accompanied by Omar Essack, also of Dundee, who studied with Chota at Sastri. Determined to study medicine, they shovelled coal on a cargo ship to earn their fare to India. Omar and Chota were

active in politics in India as members of the Colonial Students Association and Communist Party of India. The Indian struggle against British imperialism was at its height and they participated in the “Quit India” campaign.

Chota initially opened up a surgery in Longmarket Street and Omar in Edendale but subsequently moved his practice to West Street in central Pietermaritzburg. Both attended mainly to African patients from surrounding townships and working-class Indians. The appalling political and economic conditions of black people drew them both into the political sphere; they revived the NIC in Pietermaritzburg in 1950, with Chota as chairperson. When Chota was repeatedly arrested, they decided to go into partnership in Retief Street, so that one of them would be around to look after the practice when the other was detained. Later, another activist, D.V. Chetty, joined them.

Initially, the two doctors joined the Unity Movement and addressed NEUM meetings, including the All African Convention in Bloemfontein in 1950 and 1951. However, they soon switched allegiance to Congress. Chota started study groups at his Boom Street home, and gradually drew in old-time communists, and younger members of the student society, as well as radical factions of the Congress, including CP stalwarts like S.B. Mangal, Gary Maharaj, L.P. Ramdhin, Goolam Rassool, and Bobby Pillay. The CP had existed in Pietermaritzburg from the 1940s and mass meetings were held at the “People’s Hall” at the corner of Thomas and Longmarket Streets, which was a CP stronghold. It was here that they received literature from the Soviet Union and published their own material which they distributed all over Pietermaritzburg.

Others too, were drawn into the movement – Naren Ghela, Soko Moodley, L.T. Ramdeen, Ebrahim ‘Bhai Gora’ Haffejee, Aru Manikam, A.S. Chetty, Dr Vasu Chetty, Cooper Moodley, Hoosen Hassim, L.V. Cara, Goin Chengan, Pat Thumboo, and Satchie Naidoo. As in Durban, there was a close relationship between the NIC and CP. C.D. Moodley draws an interesting comparison between the doctors:

Dr Omar was very brilliant and I remember after our meetings ... study groups cum political group discussions ... from Pietermaritz Street where he lived,

he would walk across to the surgery in Retief Street, and sit there till about 2:00 am listening to Radio Peking and All-India Radio. It was mostly talks on socialism, communism ... We used to call him Omar Mamujee. Mamujee was a theoretician, brilliant, and Chota was the orator, very forceful on the platform. He [Chota] was unafraid of the cops. If they came to arrest him, he said, 'Under what section are you going to arrest me?' The guys were not able to answer. 'You go and bring your station commander.' And that used to work. These guys will scoot back to their police station and come back with the station commander. A man of action and guts too, you know.⁴⁸



*Choti Motala hoisting an ANC flag,
Fitzimmons Ground, mid 1950s. S.B. Mungal is on the right and Monty is on the stage.*

© Choti Motala



*Archie Gumede, —, Moses Mabhida, Monty, Robert Resha, Chota Motala.
Fitzsimmons Ground, mid 1950s.*

© Choti Motala

Omar was born in India and fluent in Gujarati, Hindi, and Urdu, while in South Africa he learnt English and Zulu. He composed many freedom songs in these languages. Teddy Chetty also pointed to the study groups as pivotal in shaping his political outlook, saying it was ‘especially a treat’ when the likes of Nelson Mandela, Moses Kotane or Walter Sisulu spent the night at Chota’s home while passing through Pietermaritzburg: ‘We would sit from 8:00 pm to 3:00 am listening to their analysis of the National Party, the economy ... brilliant, brilliant. Walter Sisulu ... we used to just sit down and listen and listen and listen. We would never get tired of what he had to say.’⁴⁹

Just as the NIC and ANC were moving closer together in Durban, so too in Pietermaritzburg, where Chota Motala, S.B. Mungali, S.B. Maharaj, Dr Omar Essack, and others began to forge closer ties with the local ANC branch led by Archie Gumede, Moses Mabhida, Harry Gwala and A. B. Majola.

Dr Omar’s brothers, Abdool Karrim (A.K.) Essack and Kader Hassim, were part of an important strand in liberation politics that presented an alternative to Congress, the NEUM, which had been launched in 1943 to unite Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The NEUM drew its support mostly from Cape-based organisations like the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA), the



Left to Right: S.M. Mayet, A.K.M. Docrat, Monty, A.I. Meer, J.N. Singh, N.D. Naidoo, M.P. Naicker, Dadoo.

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NEUM meeting in the 1950s. Dr A.I. Limbada is closest to the camera.

© Kader Hassim

Cape Coloured Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA), and the Cape African Voters Association (CAVA). An important influence was the struggle against Stalinism in the 1930s led by Leon Trotsky. This placed them at odds with the CP, which was part of the Soviet-led Comintern. On 26 August 1943, I.B. Tabata's All Africa Convention (AAC) issued "A Call to Unity" and proposed that the AAC join into a Non-European Unity Movement on the basis of a newly published ten-point program. In December 1943, a conference of Coloured organisations, including political bodies, sports clubs, community organisations, and church groups agreed on the need for a federal movement of Non-Europeans. A small group of Indians supported the NEUM whose ten-point program claimed universal franchise, and included issues like compulsory education, freedom of expression, the redivision of land, and the right to trade union organisation.⁵⁰

Dadoo met with the leaders of the NEUM, who subsequently claimed that he promised that a reformed SAIC would affiliate to it and that it was this that prompted Dr Gool to assist in the campaign to oust the conservative leadership in Natal in 1945. When the NEUM convened a conference in Cape Town in January 1945, the Reverend Mthetwa told the meeting that overtures made to the SAIC had been rejected. The conservative leadership of the SAIC, the Reverend Mthetwa said, 'was steeped in compromise and could not conceive of unity being anything more than a useful lever with which to extract concessions from the oppressors.' It was anticipated that things would change once the radicals took charge.⁵¹ But the new SAIC did not join the NEUM; its leaders were sympathetic to the CP.

The NEUM produced some outstanding theoreticians and intellectuals; several were the progeny of Ishaq Hashim. Hashim was an adventurer who left his family in India to seek his fortune in South Africa in the 1920s. He tried his hands at various trades, and eventually settled in Dundee where he opened a firm that made mattresses and specialised in French polishing. Karrim, born in India, was Hashim's third child. He completed his primary education in Dundee, and attended Sastri College from 1939 to 1943. He later completed

a BA degree at Wits and teaching diploma at Fort Hare. It was in 1943, during the Natal visit of the Gools, that 18-year-old Karrim addressed his first public meeting in Dundee. Karrim described his Wits years as ‘charged with intensive political engagement’ through his membership of the Progressive Forum (PF). At Fort Hare, he met African intellectuals from the Eastern Cape who were influential in shaping his thinking. He completed his law examination part-time while serving articles with Ashwin Choudree and opened a practice in Verulam in the early 1960s. Before this, he taught in Newcastle, Ladysmith, Clairwood and Umzinto. Karrim was Natal leader of the NEUM and Apdusa; authored many books and pamphlets; and in exile was a journalist and radio announcer, as well as practising law in Botswana, Zambia and Tanzania.⁵²

The PF was an organisation of non-Stalinist Marxists at Wits. It included among its ranks Karrim, A.I. Limbada, Enver Hassim, Zulei Christopher, Dolly Hassim, David Soggot, Mike Davis, Errol Vawda, Ivan Stoller, Jennifer Heyman, Bernard Berman, Jesse Berman, Leslie Martin, Andrew Lukhele, Victor Sondlo, Fatima Meer, Dr. Seymour Papert, Norman Traub and A.K.I. Vahed. This PF attracted young people who were highly sophisticated politically through their engagement in debates and discussions. Fatima Meer, a Congress stalwart, was initially attracted to the NEUM during her studies at Wits. I.C. Meer would record in his autobiography that ‘Fathu respected the NEUM, and I found this painful ... She had been drawn into what one might describe as an NEUM cell, run by Seymour Papert.’⁵³ She switched allegiance to the NIC after transferring to the University of Natal. I.C. also recalls that around August 1951, Dr Goolam Gool, his wife Halima, and I.B. Tabata visited Durban to recruit her. While they did not succeed, ‘she did not agree with my rejection of the NEUM, holding that it had a role to play in the liberation struggle and that it should be recognised and respected.’⁵⁴

Zuleika Christopher was the eldest daughter of Albert Christopher and Ghadija Gool. Albert Christopher had been involved in politics during Gandhi’s sojourn in South Africa and took a particular interest in the politics of colonial-born Indians. Ghadija was imprisoned as a passive resister in 1946 and served

the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society for many decades. Zuleika was born in 1924 and matriculated at the Indian Girls' High School. She attended Fort Hare to do her pre-medical course, before transferring to Wits where she qualified as a medical doctor at the age of 23. In 1951, whilst doing a locum for her uncle Dr G.H. Gool in Cape Town, she became involved with NEUM members like I.B. Tabata, Jane Gool and Minnie Gool, and became one of its key members. It was during this period that she met future husband Enver Hassim. They married in 1952.

When she returned to Durban, Zuleika worked for a provincial hospital and then opened a medical practice in Warwick Avenue. In 1954, Zuleika, Enver and Karrim Essack set up a study group, and in 1955 formed the Durban Branch of the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), which trained young NEUM cadres.⁵⁵ Kader Hassim, who attended those classes, reflects on the sessions:

They taught us the absolute need to spend our short time on earth in a manner most useful to society. They showed us the importance of tackling problems at the root and not be distracted by superficial manifestations. They taught us that there were no races except the human race ... We learnt to identify with the workers in the sweatshops, in the concentration camps of the white farms and the starving peasantry. They initiated us to the very potent weapons of no compromise on fundamentals and no negotiations with the enemy. In a word, they fashioned us into RADICALS. ... But their education was not limited to politics in the narrow sense of that concept. They strove to make all-rounders of us. From them we came to appreciate the masters of literature whose existence was carefully concealed from us by our formal teachers ... Exposure to serious works of fiction did wonders for our understanding of human beings, their motives and what made them do what they did.⁵⁶

Another key NEUM member was Dr A.I. 'Limbs' Limbada, whose father had a business in an African reserve near Dundee. Limbada studied at Sastri College and Wits, where he was also a member of the Progressive Forum.

*Ahmed Hassim, Karrim Essack,
Elma Carolissuen, Minnie Gool,
I.B. Tabata of the NEUM*

(left to right)

© Kader Hassim



*Enver Hassim, Kader Hassim,
Zulei Christopher, V.S. Rajah,
Shirley Rajah, Deidre Levenson,
Hoosen Hassim of the NEUM*

(left to right)

© Kader Hassim



I.C. Meer described him as ‘a handsome and charming young doctor.’ Zuleika Mayat, whose husband Mahomed was a contemporary of Limbada, concurs that he was ‘a debonair figure, a really charismatic person. He was an enthralling personality who could really, you know, get you to think his way politically.’ I.C. Meer and Limbada instantly became friends; Limbada even attended his marriage to Fatima Meer. They subsequently became political adversaries.⁵⁷ When Dr Limbada returned to Dundee, he started a study group to teach young activists politics.⁵⁸



A.I. Limbada (front middle) on the family farm. His friend Dr M.G.M. Mayat is on the right wearing a hat.

© Zuleikha Mayat

Doctors, according to Kader Hassim, were crucial in determining which political organisation would hold sway. They often ‘carried the town. These communities were so bereft of professionals, that if a doctor set up a practice in one of these small areas, overnight he became the leader of the community. And he would take the community with him.’ Thus, Limbada “took” Dundee; Monty was influential in Durban; A.H. Sader secured Ladysmith for the NIC, and Chota Motala and Omar Essack ensured that Pietermaritzburg was strongly pro-NIC. Dundee became a hotbed of the NEUM. Dr Limbada returned to

Dundee in 1951 and involved himself in political organisation with Karrim Essack. They worked through the NIC branch but advocated NEUM politics, and also formed a branch of SOYA. They called themselves the ASC in the hope of reviving memories of 1945 when the earlier grouping seized control of the NIC in Durban. However, when they opposed the Defiance Campaign in 1952, the NIC moved for the expulsion of the Dundee branch. Key NEUM supporters included Chota Patel, Cassim Kikia, Mani Pillay, and Yunus Hatiya, most of whom fled into exile in the early 1960s. Dr Limbada moved in the late 1950s to Pomeroy, from where he and Karrim were involved with the mobilisation of peasants in Pondoland and the Natal midlands.

A.H. Sader (1919-1995) was one of the five sons of Hoosen and Hawa Sader of Ladysmith, who opened a small general store on the farm *Hursley*, and later ran Sader Brothers in Murchison Street. After completing his primary education in Ladysmith, Ahmed was sent to Sastri in the mid-1930s. Shortly before World War II, he proceeded to Birmingham in England to study medicine. He was drawn to the politics of Indian students who were agitating for Britain to quit India, with one of his mentors being ardent socialist Krishna Menon (1897-1974), a well-known figure in India's anti-colonialism struggle, who studied at the London School of Economics and lived in London from 1934 to 1947, where he founded the India League. After India's Independence, Menon became India's first High Commissioner in London, was India's Representative at the UN, and later Defence Minister. Sader remained a lifelong friend.

In 1946, Sader traveled to Albania, where he met the leader Enver Hoxha, and from there went to Prague for the founding of the International Union of Students on 27 August 1947. He was sent as the representative of India by Menon. Delegates from 39 countries formed this communist-dominated union to maintain open lines of communication with student organisations across Europe, and prevent a resurgence of fascism. When Sader returned to South Africa in 1947, his passport was seized by the government. He set up practice in Murchison Street, and was the first Indian doctor in Ladysmith.



Dr A.H. Sader at the World Youth Conference, London, 1945, where he represented India. Seated next to him is Vidya Kanuga and to her left is Kitty Boomla, who led the Indian delegation.

© UKZN Documentation Centre

Sader began a local chapter of the NIC, and was prominent at provincial level as treasurer until his banning in 1964. During the State of Emergency in 1960, he was detained for nine months with Chota Motala and Archie Gumede in Pietermaritzburg, and shortly thereafter banned for a total of 15 years.

All these people working in and for the NIC proved that the organisation under Monty Naicker was a vibrant national organisation, working constantly towards unity and a better South Africa. I.C. Meer said that 'never before or after Monty Naicker did the NIC reach a higher organisational level.'⁶⁰ Monty was the point-man of the new, resurgent NIC. There may have been better speakers, more extravagant writers, and even superior theoreticians, but it became clear to people like Kay Moonsamy, Billy Nair, and many others that throughout the battle he had shown a tactical and strategic nous as well as sheer determination to finish the task at hand. His personality and openness to different political and ideological viewpoints allowed him to stitch together Gandhians and communists, working-class leaders and professionals. His political savvy, for example, saw him advocate a combination of law courts and

mass mobilisation, using the one to open spaces for the other.

It helped the cause of the radicals in the court of law as well as the court of public opinion that the leader of their pack, accused of wanting to unleash mayhem on the community, was a refined, well-spoken medical doctor. But there were many parts to Monty. Here was a man who loved his wine and food, his music and parties, but when the occasion demanded, could adopt a sober urbane mien, or a sharp tongue, or a combative edge to aggressively criticise and attack the state. Lurking behind the often smiling, fun-loving exterior, was a Monty who paid attention to detail in the wording of resolutions, the content of court papers and the minute meaning of points in the constitution of the NIC. Unlike the old, the new NIC paid greater attention to organisational democracy. Each branch was responsible to its constituency, and there was an office with a full-time secretary and staff, unlike the traders of the 1930s, who ran the organisation in feudal style, and transported the way they ran their businesses, with their networks of extended family and lack of formal accountability, into the NIC.

A.I. Meer, the NIC's Organising Secretary, explained to the *Leader* how the NIC had been reorganised. Eight departments were created: labour and unemployment; education; commerce; industry and agriculture; housing and expropriation; finance; social services and civics amenities; and organisation. Branches were involved in local matters like housing and civic amenities, in order to bring about a general improvement in people's living conditions, as well as raise the 'level of political education and consciousness of our people.'⁶⁰ When I.C. Meer returned from Wits University, he became a fulltime worker in the NIC, and believes that it replaced the CP as the best-run organisation in Natal. Dr Goonam would write:

Our branches were our strength. They kept us informed of the appalling conditions under which our people lived and kept us alert to the people's needs. Most of our people were living in slums with bad sanitation. In many places there were no roads, just sandy tracks and no electricity or water-borne sewerage. Unemployment was shocking, incidences of crime high and children

malnourished. The old Congress appeared above all to have concentrated on getting members' trader's licences. They neglected the people.⁶¹

The NIC rented offices in Lakhani Centre in Saville Street. Most trade unionists were either in Lakhani Centre or Pembroke Chamber. Officials of the NIC were either members of the LSG or a trade union or both, as membership often overlapped, and those from the LSG had invariably attended Sastri College. It is one of those ironies of history that an institution set up to acculturate a sector of the community into "western standards", to project the message that "upliftment" was possible, became the breeding ground for radical dissenters. It helped that young Indian men came from all over the province to study at Sastri College, and so spent a considerable time away from the 'discipline' of parents at an impressionable age.

The new leadership took its work seriously, and considerable time and energy was spent on organisational and campaign matters. The Secretariat, for example, met at 5:00 pm every weekday evening. Included in the discussions were trade-union leaders, so that the NIC was aware of goings-on among workers, and workers in turn were kept abreast of the political process.⁶² But sometimes the staid and mundane meetings were broken up by Monty, who, I.C. Meer writes:

... kept talking about *urumbu*, some sort of lizard-like reptile, which he said was a delicious dish. I don't know if *urumbu* ever materialised on his table. I didn't care much what it was. The importance of *urumbu* was not *urumbu* but Monty's predilection for talking about it ... Monty and Dr Thegie Chetty would lighten up and, squatting on the floor with tabla and harmonium, break into concert. They were hilarious evenings that relieved the tension and hard planning in the smoke-filled offices of Lakhani Chambers.⁶³

It was an attitude to life that was to hold Monty in good stead in the years ahead, when imprisonment, multiple bannings, and the exile and incarceration of so many of his comrades began to take their toll.

'Bold, sensible and decisive'

The Kajee-Pather leadership had left the Indian people to drift to disaster ... We offer you our earnest desire to serve the community. We have no ambition for power. We decided to fight because we felt that your voice was not being heard. We repudiate the charge that we want to pit the poor against the rich. We hold no ill-will against anybody ... We are, after all, sons of South Africa; and all we want is to live as free citizens in a free world...There comes a time in the life of the people when the opinion of the ... man in the street becomes wiser than the politician. This is such a time in the life of the Indian community ... We will not dilly-dally with our demands. We will be bold, sensible and decisive. We will never compromise on our principles and ... we will not go down on bended knees for crumbs. We want to live as men.

MONTY NAICKER, ELECTION SPEECH, 1945

The fight for control of the NIC was finally won. It had been a long and acrimonious battle, pitting Monty against the old, moderate war-horses led by A.I. Kajee and P.R. Pather. The lines were not as neatly drawn as some would have us believe, for side by side with the acrimony, went a sharing of resources and even friendships. Many communists attended Kajee's parties, used his library, and even turned to him for financial assistance in times of need, and Dr Goonam and Kajee's daughter, Bibi Kajee, were socially inseparable. According to Bibi Kajee's daughter, Zuby Barmania, Dr Goonam 'was always very active in our family. Goonam and my mother's social circle would get together, have parties, go for dinner with each other, movies ... that type of thing.' But as the contest dragged on, so the antagonism and distance between the groups grew.

It was not Monty's way to spew venom or to demonise, but he was convinced

that the style and content of the moderates' leadership was a dead-end path that would increasingly frustrate the attempts of the poorest Indians simply to survive. He witnessed misery and degradation daily among his patients, and brought a certain stoicism and patience to bear on their long drawn-out struggle, prolonged by Kajeer and Pather's bureaucratic wrangling. This was to be a feature of his subsequent leadership – his speeches, looking past its exclusive reference to men, symptomatic of the time, were a mixture of acute political analysis combined with biting humour that, as much as it galvanised the ASC, demoralised the moderates. Monty was also careful not to appeal to one section of the community but like Gandhi sought to galvanise the whole community across class and religious lines.

When the final showdown took place, it was not done through a small committee and voting by secret ballot. Instead, Monty wrested control of the NIC in a spectacular mass rally at Curries Fountain where he was anointed leader of not just an organisation, but a movement. When he rose to address the masses, alongside him on the platform were unionists, workers, professionals (doctors, lawyers, teachers) and a smattering of traders, especially small shopkeepers and vendors from the local market. Politically, there was a mix of communists, Gandhians and liberals who sought entry into the European world. Some would claim to be all at once.

An optimism of possibility shone through the gathering; the possibility of what could be, fuelled locally by their defeat of the moderates, and globally by the defeat of fascism and the growing confidence of the Indian nationalist movement that had put the British Raj on permanent retreat. And immediately after his somewhat hesitant acknowledgement of victory, Monty's tone took a more decisive bent. He outlined the immediate program of Congress: unconditional repeal of the Pegging Act, vetoing of the Natal Housing Ordinance, condemnation of segregation or residential zoning, removal of the provincial barriers which were a stigma on Indians, adult suffrage, and free education for Indian children up to Junior Certificate level.¹

It was left to M.D. Naidoo, Joint Honorary Secretary, to put the victory into

perspective and soberly outline what lay ahead. He described the meeting of 21 October as ‘the largest and most powerful and orderly in Indian history’ in South Africa:

The ‘Old Guard’ ... had to go because their policies were suicidal, their methods parochial, and because they obstinately refused to keep pace with the changed times. The task of dethroning established leaders was a most painful one. But the task had to be undertaken. The political welfare of the community left us with no choice ... It has been said that the new Cabinet consists of inexperienced persons who will fail in the admittedly huge task that lies ahead ... On the contrary, the new Cabinet contains material much more promising in its ability and efficiency. Trained and educated people [who] not only possess experience but enjoy the confidence of the masses.

What lies ahead? We shall stand on grounds which are ethically unassailable and, using this as a springboard, assault the whole structure of white tyranny ... History is full of examples showing that the determination and preparedness to sacrifice in a people has always overcome the oppression of rulers ... If we find that in spite of our opposition, we are legislated against, I hold we will be no worse off than if we became a party to a dishonourable and humiliating agreement. In fact, we shall have saved our honour. We are passing through grave and troubled times. The forces against us are united and determined as seldom before in the history of South Africa. We are no less determined to yield not a shade of what is due to us under a democratic government. We shall not waver in our demands. Our future is dark, but I am confident we shall emerge a happier and more united people.²

While M.D. Naidoo displayed the confidence of the new professional class the engine-room of this struggle was hardly formally educated – the likes of George Ponnem and H.A. Naidoo. There is no gloating over the victory, but more a sense of mission. Even if the struggle was lost, M.D. reasoned, the fact that people fought would ensure dignity. He probably had no idea how prescient was his warning that there could be ‘the possibility of imprisonment and even worse.’ Many of the new NIC, including M.D., were later to be incarcerated

on Robben Island, others were to be banned for long periods, and yet others forced into exile, leaving behind families whom they would only be reunited with after decades. Others would never return.

Monty, in looking beyond the confines of Curries Fountain, got a sense of the growing resurgence of the ANC. His friend and comrade Yusuf Dadoo had, through his membership of the CP, forged a relationship with J.B. Marks and Moses Kotane, whose simultaneous membership of the ANC opened doors for Dadoo into the upper portals of this emerging force. Monty was aware of how the Youth League was reinvigorating the ANC, even if any relationship with the Indian Congresses, and for that matter the CP, was still contentious. But Monty was also aware that these were issues for the future. In the present, Smuts was once more putting the squeeze on Indians through the proposed Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Bill ('Ghetto Act'). The new leadership had hammered away at the moderates for their policy of compromise and appeasement, but now were themselves confronted with how to respond to Smuts.

The new NIC's beginnings were more in keeping with the strategies of the old than following a new path, and their first step was a meeting with Smuts! Optimism of success was great, borne from a confidence in their ability to make a coherent argument, and also by the fact that Smuts was keen to maintain his growing reputation as an international statesman. Was this not the man who had stared down the *volk* as he took South Africa into the war alongside Britain? As the 9 November 1945 meeting approached, Monty's delegation, which included George Singh, M.R. Parekh, B.A. Meghraj, B.D. Lalla, I.M. Bawa, E.H. Ismail, B. Goordeen, and M.D. Naidoo, armed itself with statistics about the political and economic situation of Indians, with the contribution of Indians in the Second World War an added emotive lever. Displaying a surprising naivety, the delegation was confident that they would get Smuts to change his mind. This optimism was shared by many in the community, including battle-scarred veterans of past struggles, as well as one of Monty's closest confidants who sent him the following note:

I think you, and [George] Singh, [Ibrahim] Bawa and others are going to make a profound impression on the old man – for this is the first time he will be meeting the younger generation. I trust the old policy of begging for paltry privileges in a servile manner is gone forever. I feel also that our people are becoming more conscious of their rights as human beings and their ability to exercise those rights when they are won. I have a sneaking suspicion that the older generation does not honestly believe that we are worthy of the full rights of citizenship on parity with the whites – and old diplomats like Smuts can see beyond the brave words uttered without conviction by the old set. If your interview convinces Smuts that the Indians are conscious of their rights and are prepared to wrest them slowly but surely from the unwilling rulers by honest political methods, then, I think, a new era will have dawned in our political life in this country. I wish you and the members of the Delegation the best of luck.

These words of encouragement were penned by V. Sikari Naidoo on 6 November 1945, as Monty's delegation prepared to meet with Smuts. Like Monty, Sikari matriculated from Marine College. He taught at Sastri College (1930-32), completed a commerce degree at Natal University, and was a researcher in the Economics Department under Raymond Burrows. He published a number of studies on the economic situation of Indians, and armed Monty with draft reports on Indian Housing, as well as studies on the Magazine Barracks and Cato Manor Housing Scheme.

The meeting with Smuts was in many ways an initiation into a different kind of politics than simply ousting the moderates. They were face to face with a man who held state power, had brushed shoulders with Churchill and Roosevelt, and was committed to maintaining white supremacy. The delegation underscored the difficulties faced by Indians, such as denial of political and civic rights, lack of educational facilities, job discrimination, and restrictions on the acquisition of property and on inter-provincial movement, and called on Smuts to repeal the Pegging Act with immediate effect. In appealing to Smuts, Monty emphasised that Natal's Indians constituted 'one of the largest Indian colonies in the world. And while this question remains unresolved, the direct

and keen interest of India in the welfare of her children abroad cannot but be granted as right and dutiful.' The Administrator of Natal was categorical that racial segregation would be implemented with 'resolute determination.' Unless Smuts intervened to turn back this policy which aimed to 'destroy the vitality of our people,' Indians would resist 'with all the strength and determination at our disposal. The policy of displacement of settled groups and segregation is deeply repugnant to Indians.'³

M.D. Naidoo would recollect that after hearing their representation and accepting the memorandum, Smuts told them, 'Gentlemen, there is nothing for us to discuss; you have brought a political manifesto to me and you can't expect me to talk to you about it.' The meeting, according to M.D., 'lasted barely half an hour. That convinced me that we were living in two different worlds ... there didn't seem to be any possibility of a peaceful development.'⁴ The Congress delegation would have probably concurred with the characterisation of radical British MP D.N. Pritt of the difference between Smuts's United Party and Malan's NP: 'If the NP proposes to legalise the killing of Blacks, the UP would move an amendment to limit the length of the blade to three inches.'⁵ M.D. reflected on the impact of the meeting with Smuts:

I began to understand it a bit better ... the colonial nature of the regime – that they had acquired power by conquest and they regarded it therefore as their country, and the people they had conquered not as people to be treated on an equal plane. They were there to be ruled, to be subjugated, to be exploited. I think that is the one thing I can say, was the influence that that meeting with Smuts had.⁶

The delegation should have been prepared for this. Smuts had made his position on Indians clear decades earlier, telling the Imperial Conference in 1921 that under no circumstances would Indians be given equal rights, as this would lead to similar demands by Africans, and lead to the destruction of white South Africa. South Africa's political system, he added, was not based on 'a system of equality.'⁷ The whole basis of our system rests on inequality

and recognising the fundamental differences which exist in the structure of our population ... We have never in our laws recognised any system of equality!⁷ Smuts reiterated this at a South African Party conference in 1923, when he said, ‘There is a coloured line which is in existence today ... It is a clearly marked line you can follow, but once you cross that line we see no reason why there should be any distinction between Indians and the natives.’⁸

By 1930, Smuts was an internationally acclaimed statesman, and was elected president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in its centenary year in 1931. Speaking at Oxford in 1929, where he delivered the Rhodes Memorial Lecture, Smuts said that separation between racial types had to be maintained for things like ‘public health, racial purity and public good order.’ The mixing of white and black would lead to ‘miscegenation, moral deterioration and racial antipathy.’⁹ Smuts’s rebuff was to prove the making of Monty, and propel him on a journey into the frontlines against apartheid, while simultaneously carving a pioneering political path for Indian South Africans. There was a call for civil disobedience, which included a deliberate breaking of the law and courting imprisonment. To label the response ‘passive resistance’ is to miss the point: this was a concerted, collective civil disobedience carried out in the open, which included making oneself a target of violence, and being subject to horrendous prison conditions.

Monty kept a meticulous record of events and we include below his diary of proceedings as the movement towards resistance unfolded.

3 Jan: United Front against Smuts. (i) reaction; (ii) two deputations to India (Northern Natal and SAIC). Controversy; (iii) delay due to finance; (iv) committee not giving any practical help.

4 Jan: Returned from Port Elizabeth.

6 Jan: First mass meeting of the campaign in Verulam – Mahatma Gandhi.

14 Jan. Smuts proposed Bill.

21 Jan: Cooler engagement. Smuts statement re. new legislation to be brought in Parliament this session.

With the Pegging Act due to expire in March 1946, Smuts announced in Parliament on 21 January 1946 that the Government would introduce the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act, despite Monty's representation against it, to regulate the occupation of fixed property by Indians. The Act also provided 'a special franchise for Indians' to get representation in Parliament. The NIC cabled the government of India to appeal to the UN. While some critics of passive resistance felt that the Act only affected affluent Indians, George Singh argued to the contrary that 'a study of the Act reveals that its provisions directly and vitally affect all sections of the Indian population – rich and poor ... [who] will be forced during the years to come to live and trade in sorely neglected bazaars, ghettos and locations as rich and poor are already doing in the Transvaal.'¹⁰

The 'special' franchise would have allowed Indians to elect white representatives to the Assembly and Senate, akin to a 1936 Act that gave Africans communal franchise, but this offer was dismissed by Indians. According to an editorial in *Leader*, 'The chains are being closed around the Indian ... socially and economically. The sop of representation merely confuses the real issue – a smokescreen to hide the truly suppressive and deadly impact of the Bill.'¹¹

26 Jan: A.M. Moolla with peace proposal: 1st India delegation by NIC; 2nd by SAIC.

27 Jan: Met all the opposition at Avalon. Elected Sub-committee which met A.E. Shaik from 8:30 pm – no decision.

28 Jan: Three-hour executive meeting. Gave ultimatum to opposition group.

30 Jan: NIC Council's meeting. First occasion the House split - between the moderate left and the radicals over issue of the SAIC and delegation to India.

31 Jan: Seriously decided in the interest of the movement to resign. This will wake the leader of the Transvaal from lethargy as regards favourably keeping the national involvement. [The TIC was still under the control of conservatives.

Dadoo took control in March]

11 Feb: 2:30 pm. Saw Smuts with 60 others. A.I., Borat, A.C. spoke – of the

three A.I. put up a good case. As ever Smuts was the *Grey Steel*. Very abrupt and abrasive. No doubt of his determination to sacrifice Indians to the anti-Indian clamour of the British racialist in Natal. Even A.I., Borat and A.C. now convinced the only way to Freedom is through said struggle.

15 Feb: Left Cape Town for Durban. Saw Mandela at aerodrome. Delayed in Port Elizabeth. Delayed 4 hours in East London. Arrived 6:00 pm.

Monty attended the SAIC conference in Cape Town from 8-12 February 1946. Though the radicals controlled the NIC and TIC, conservative factions retained control of the SAIC. Councillor Ahmed Ismail of Cape Town was elected President ahead of Councillor MM Desai, the radical trade unionist from Port Elizabeth. Conference delegates included Monty, Dadoo, Debi Singh, J.N. Singh, Billy Peters, M.D. Naidoo, and A.I. Borat. They argued solidly for passive resistance because of Smuts' intransigence and won the debate which was 'eloquent and of a high standard.'¹² The conference consequently adopted the following resolution on 12 February 1946:

The conference of the SAIC, after having heard the report of the 60-man delegation that waited on the Prime Minister, expresses its grievous disappointment at his refusal to abandon the proposed legislation and to convene a Round Table conference between India and South Africa. This conference interprets this refusal as ... indicating a legislative design of repressing the Indian community and settling its fate at the altar of political expediency and sacrificing it to appease extreme white reactionaries in this country. The legislation ... is an insult to the national honour and dignity of the Indian nation.

This Conference resolves to mobilise all the resources of the Indian people in this country in order to take every measure possible to secure the lapsing of the Pegging Act and to oppose the proposed legislation of the Government by (i) Sending a deputation to India to urge upon the Government of India the convening of a Round Table Conference, failing which to request the Government of India to withdraw its High Commissioner in South Africa and apply economic sanctions against South Africa, carry out a campaign of propaganda in India to secure the

fullest support of India's millions, and invite Indian leaders to come to South Africa; (ii) sending deputations to America, Britain and other parts of the world; (iii) proceeding immediately to prepare the Indian people of South Africa for a concerted and prolonged resistance.¹³

Monty's diary entry after the 11 February 1946 meeting with Smuts is instructive in indicating that he knew there would be no relief, but at least he would be able to gain mass support and the moral high ground. The message to delegates was categorical: 'Proceed immediately to prepare the Indian people of South Africa for a concerted and prolonged resistance.'¹⁴

But a dispute arose over the make-up of the delegation to India, who would lead it, and whom they would visit. Monty would record in his diary:

18 Feb: 1:00 pm Secretariat meeting. Finally decided not to actively cooperate with [SAIC] Delegation to India.

The radicals, being in the minority, failed to get "their" candidates chosen for the overseas delegations. Sorabjee Rustomjee, Albert Christopher, Ashwin Choudree, and A.I. Kajee united against the Dadoo-Naicker leadership and voted against Dadoo, Naicker and A.I. Meer. Dadoo's nomination for India was rejected by 56 votes to 44, and A.I. Meer's by 51 votes to 41. The delegation to India was to consist of Sorabjee Rustomjee, A.S. Kajee, M.D. Naidoo, Albert Christopher, S.R. Naidoo, A.A. Mirza and S.M. Desai. Dadoo and A.I. Meer, the conservatives feared, were such powerful individuals that they would overshadow the conservatives. M.D. Naidoo, being younger and less well known, was acceptable to the conservatives but he refused to go without the NIC's backing. The delegation to the UK and US was to comprise of A.I. Kajee, Ashwin Choudree, Sol Paruk, A.M. Moolla, Reverend B.L.E. Sigamoney and P.R. Pather. Sorabjee Rustomjee, A.S. Kajee, S.R. Naidoo and A.A. Mirza left for India on 20 February 1946.¹⁵ They were received by Viceroy Lord Wavell in Delhi, and had the support of the Indian National Congress and Nehru and Gandhi (Poona, 3 March 1946), whom they also met. The Indian government

announced on 12 March that it would terminate its trade agreement with South Africa.¹⁶

According to Rustomjee, Indian traders in South Africa would not be affected by the move; ‘the loser may be the sugar exporter – the white exploiter of the poor labourers in the sugar industry – because he wants gunny bags from India.’ When Nehru met the South Africans his message was that Indians in South Africa should not look at their problem as a local issue or one for India, but as one affecting all the oppressed peoples of the world. This explains the change in attitude of both Sorabjee Rustomjee and Ashwin Choudree towards the passive resistance campaign, and Sorabjee’s keenness that Dr AB Xuma should attend the UN session later that year.¹⁷ The UK delegation left on 23 March 1946.

Monty and the radical faction, meanwhile, concentrated on their own course of locally based protest.

20 Feb: First National Prayer Day – *Hartal* [Protest]. Great success. All Indian shops closed throughout Durban and suburbs. Big crowd. Marred by 90 employees of National Bag Works at Clairwood being dismissed because they attended prayer without permission of manager. Workers too militant.¹⁸

The NIC organised a mass meeting at Curries Fountain which passed a number of resolutions. Smuts’s proposed bill was described as a ‘fascist measure based on Hitler’s “herrenvolk” theory to suppress the legitimate economic and social progress of the disenfranchised Indian community of Natal.’ The NIC called on the UN ‘to summon South Africa to explain its treatment of its Indian minority.’ Resolutions were taken to ‘plan mass resistance in some effective form,’ ‘call upon the national movements of the other oppressed peoples of South Africa to intensify their struggles for democratic rights;’ send delegations abroad; and ‘explore the possibilities of and take the lead in the formation of a World Organisation of colonial and oppressed peoples.’ They resolved to send a delegation comprising of M.D. Naidoo, A.I. Meer and A. Parekh to India.¹⁹

21 Feb: Interviewed manager of Bag Works. Had one-hour talk. Refused to re-engage workers. [Manager] used this occasion to dismiss them for old reasons.

26 Feb: Executive meeting – 7: 30 pm.

27 Feb: Telegram from Dadoo. Wishing help for 3 days in Transvaal.

28 Feb: 5:30 pm. Shop stewards approached regarding finance. 7:30-12:00 pm. NIC Committee meeting very stormy over decision to ask M.D. [Naidoo] not to go with the India delegation; C.C. [Central Committee] of C.P. doing more harm to the Indian struggle by asking its members in NIC to force its decision especially knowing the type of officials at the head of affairs.



*Debi Singh addressing a rally in Red Square.
Monty is seated to his right.*

© Vishnu Padayachee

We can not be sure what Monty meant by these cryptic notes. It seems, however, that he was keen on sending M.D. Naidoo to India, and that the CP probably had H.A. Naidoo in mind. M.D. eventually went to India.

4 Mar: Addressed shop stewards regarding the workers contributing regular small amounts to run *their* political organisation.

5 Mar: 7:30 pm. Executive meeting. Put forward P.S. Ayer's pamphlet on house expropriation and new bill.

12 Mar: Indian government sends a note to South Africa advising them of its intention of applying economic sanctions; 7:30 pm – Executive meeting decided on Passive Resistance. Decided to call for 10 000 volunteers. Dinath promised to a build fund of £100 000.

17 Mar: 21:30 pm. Jerry's wedding; 2:30 pm – NIC Committee meeting.

19 Mar: Executive meeting. Threatened to conduct the preparatory work as [Councillor Ahmed] Ismail showing no initiative.

24 Mar: 2:30 pm - Indian women organised to help battle the Ghetto Bill. Miss Meer makes striking speech. Meeting well attended.

Mrs R. Jithoo presided over this meeting. Dr Goonam said that Indians demanded their 'share of this fair country. It is big enough to accommodate us all. We Indian women have to fight for our very life now. Our lot is not just to stay at home and cook. We have to help our menfolk.' Jithoo was elected chairperson and Rathamoney Padayachy secretary, to take forward the participation of women in the campaign. Mrs P.S. Pillay, who spoke in Tamil, called on women to contribute at least four times more than men. Speaking in Gujarati, Mrs N.P. Desai said that 'the situation called for a determined struggle whatever the sacrifices.' They were 'ready for passive resistance which had already been successfully tested.' Fatima Meer described South Africa as 'a tyrannical white man's country. The Europeans consider Indian women to be at such a low level and so ignorant that we are not given the vote. That indicates that they count us at zero.' Meer was in full swing:

We have tried to point out to the white man of this country that we, as human beings, are just as good as them, but they have always tried to make us believe that we are their inferiors and that we should not enjoy the same rights and privileges as they do. In the war General Smuts stood out as the champion of Democracy, but in internal affairs the Prime Minister is the very reverse...The communal franchise is like a wax doll placed in the hands of a woman who is told that it is a real live baby. It is merely a farce. A white tramp can vote without restrictions, but the Indian is saddled with restrictions...The Europeans do not

want the Indians to progress. They would rather that Indians live edded in the slums. They would rather that there be no Indians in South Africa.²⁰



Fatima Meer addressing the rally at Red Square.

© Fatima Meer
Documentation
Centre

Monty's "Miss Meer" was the redoubtable Fatima Meer, born in Durban on 28 August 1928. She was 17 and in standard nine when called upon to speak. Born at the corner of Grey and Pine streets, diagonally across the Red Square, she attended meetings from a young age. Monty was clearly impressed with Miss Meer, for he sent her a photograph of her addressing the meeting with a laudatory inscription at the back. The admiration was mutual; Fatima Meer described Monty as 'full of humility, never sort of imposed himself on anybody and that is why people accepted him. He was a man who could unify.'



*back row: P. Randeria, Binnie Ballaram, Rookmanie Rillay, Fathima Alli.
middle row: Ivy Bunsee, Vedh Maherchand, M.C. Bala, Dhun Rustomjee,
B. Manjee, A.C.H. Mayet, Dollie Naidoo.
front row: Minnie Ramouthar, Keshav Bhoola, Jessie Waghmarie,
Y. Ansarie, Fatima Meer, K. Awaithé-Beharie.*

© Fatima Meer

Indian students from various institutions in Durban organised a meeting at Gandhi Library to protest the Ghetto Bill, which they described as “fascist” in design. Dawood Seedat’s brother, H.A. Seedat, a student at Natal University College, presided, and said that the fact that students had called a political meeting for the first time in their history, was an indication of how grave the situation was. ‘This gives you an indication of the extent to which the Government oppresses you.’ P.S. Tewarie declared that ‘taxation without representation was tyranny ... If you do not like to live in ghettos, then awake from your political slumber.’ Miss Jessie Waghmarie of Durban Indian Girls’ High said that Indians were ‘forced to take part in the political struggle of our people. The Government forces us into this position. We cannot study with these things piling on us.’ M. Naicker of the Indian Technical Institute warned that education would have no value if people were driven into ghettos. Fatima Meer pointed out that Indians had been brought to Natal for its economic

development, and ‘as a matter of fact, they begged us to come.’ After providing a history of the struggle, she said that Indian students of Durban were ‘ready. We pledge our fullest support to the NIC till justice is vindicated.’ The meeting called on ‘parents to give their fullest support to the passive resistance struggle and to allow their sons and daughters the fullest opportunity to play their part in the hour of national crisis.’²¹

25 Mar: 2nd reading of Ghetto Bill in Parliament. Smuts makes a very retrogressive statement proposing to settle the Indian question as he did the African question.

31 Mar: Provincial Conference and Mass Rally and procession.

The Ghetto Bill was introduced in the House of Assembly on 15 March 1946. Gandhi sent a telegram to Smuts on 18 March to withdraw the Bill, and issued a press statement describing it as a challenge to Asia and Africa. The debate on the Second Reading of the Bill began on 25 March. The Indian government gave formal notice that it was terminating a 1938 trade agreement.²²

The anger against the Ghetto Bill and feeling of a sense of betrayal among Indians is summed up in the reaction of the usually circumspect Sir Srinivasa Sastri, the first Agent-General to South Africa, who, in one of his last public statements before his death on 18 April 1946, said: ‘The Field Marshal [Smuts], and his sonorous hypocrisy should be exposed to the gaze of all honest men. There never was, and we trust there will never be, such naked and unashamed use of political power.’²³

The NIC responded with a Special Provincial Conference on 30 March 1946 which adopted a “Manifesto of Resistance”:

Workers, businessmen, professionals and farmers; only your united action can save us. Either we perish as a whole or we resist as a whole ... Any Indian, man or woman, who serves on an Advisory Board, accepts communal franchise, or obstructs the struggle in any way whatsoever, will be guilty of an act of despicable treachery against his family, the community and principles of democracy. Fellow Indians, forward to united Action! DOWN WITH THE GHETTO BILL!²⁴



Monty addressing a Passive Resistance rally in Red Square, 1946

© Kreesen Naicker

Monty gave an impassioned 20-minute speech at the 31 March mass rally. He was 'unusually charged that afternoon,' according to I.C. Meer, 'and the crowd cheered enthusiastically when he said, 'There are too many black marketers, bloodsuckers. They all need to be locked up and the foodstuff they hoard distributed to the poor.' Monty christened the Act the 'Ghetto Bill' and said that it was a 'radical measure and required radical operation.'²⁵ It was Dr Goonam, 'strong, strident,' who 'impell[ed] the energy of that large multitude into one loud freedom roar.'²⁶ Monty's diary is surprisingly silent during April and most of May. H.L.E. Dhlomo of the ANC Youth League and L.A. Smith of the APO also addressed the meeting and pledged to support the campaign.

The March conference resolved to form a Passive Resistance Council (PRC) of 25 members. Only volunteers for passive resistance would be eligible for membership on the Council, 'based on the firm conviction that it would be unethical for a non-volunteer, who himself was not prepared to court imprisonment, to serve on a body which directs volunteers to break the law and to offer themselves for arrest and imprisonment.'²⁷ As was the case with Gandhi's earlier passive resistance movement, PRCs were separate entities from the Congresses, they kept meticulous accounts, women were encouraged to participate, and mileage was gained from overseas support. The PRC formed

a Volunteer Corps to work for the welfare of resisters, foster comradeship and organise political classes to improve understanding of the struggle.²⁸ The TIC also established a 15-person PRC on 21 April 1946 under Dadoo's leadership, at a meeting of 7000 people. Segregation, declared Dadoo, would lead to political and economic 'serfdom,' inculcate feelings of inferiority and subservience to the ruling class, crush the spirit of freedom, and assist the growth of fascism based on racial hatred and white domination. Two Natalians studying at Wits University, I.C. Meer and J.N. Singh, were influential in the TIC, and both suspended their studies to focus on the campaign.

When the first meeting of the PRC was convened on 6 May, 11 people were willing both to volunteer for passive resistance and serve on the PRC – Monty, M.D. Naidoo, A.E. Patel, S.V. Reddy, H.A. Seedat, R.G. Pillay, M.P. Naicker, P.B.A. Reddy, M. Moodliar, R.A. Pillay and Debi Singh. Monty was elected chairman, Debi Singh secretary, and A.E. Patel treasurer. The PRC decided that the struggle would be launched as soon as the Ghetto Bill became law. Since there were no available vacant houses in 'controlled areas', they would occupy municipal lands in controlled areas. The first meeting of the joint PRC of Natal and the Transvaal was held in Durban on 11 May 1946, comprising ten members, five from each province. Monty and Dadoo alternated as presidents.

The Cape Indian Congress, under the leadership of the ultra-conservative Ahmed Ismail, who was also president of the SAIC, did not support the campaign. However, individuals in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and East London formed PRCs to support the campaign. They included Sundra Pillay, Cassim Amra, S. Gool, and Yusuf Motala from Cape Town; Dr N.V. Appavoo, Ms D. Jonathan, and R. Harry from East London; and S.V. Appavoo, V.K. Moodley, and M.M. Desai of Port Elizabeth.²⁹ The first batch of 12 resisters from Cape Town, which included three women, was led by Mrs Z. Gool, and was sentenced in Durban on 13 August 1946. The Port Elizabeth PRC sent four resisters and contributed £600, while the East London PRC contributed £250 during the first year.³⁰

India asked Ramrao Madhavrao Deshmukh, Indian High Commissioner

in South Africa, to return for consultations, and he left on 24 May 1946. The Ghetto Act received the assent of the Governor-General and became law on 2 June 1946. Gandhi publicly supported the withdrawal of the High Commissioner on 27 May 1946.³¹

We return to Monty's diary:

26 May: Clairwood Annual General Meeting 10:30 am; Natal Indian Sugar Workers Union Conference 1:30 pm; Reception Tea to delegates to England.

1 June: Secretary about printing of Tamil translation.

2 June: 7:00 pm – Avalon. Meeting the delegate from India. Ghetto Bill became law. 13 June was declared Hartal Day.

3 June: 8:00 am. Meeting with the ANC.

5 June: Passive Resistance volunteers. 6 persons.

7 June: Young Communist League.

9 June: 2:30 pm. Meeting at Briardene.

The 2 June meeting that Monty referred to in his diary was a welcome organised by the NIC for the conservative members of the SAIC who had gone to India and England, Sorabjee Rustomjee, Albert Christopher, S.R. Naidoo, Ashwin Choudree and P.R. Parther. The meeting was presided over by Monty who told the large crowd that filled the Avalon Theatre that 'our delegates have done their duty well. They have told the people of India and England that our cause is just and that our demand is to live as free men in a free society.' In their response, Rustomjee and the others stressed that the 'trip overseas had been very educational to all of them.' Rustomjee and Choudree, who had voted against Dadoo's inclusion in their delegation, volunteered as passive resisters under Monty and Dadoo. They also supported united action by Africans, Coloureds and Indians. I.C. Meer described this welcome as 'the crowning act of statesmanship on the part of the Dadoo-Naicker leadership.'³²

Manilal Gandhi and *Indian Opinion* also had a change of heart. In its issue of 14 June 1946, *Indian Opinion's* editorial implored the Congress to 'defer the campaign' as the 'moment was not opportune.' The editorial of 21 June warned

that ‘the passive resistance campaign is in danger of falling into the hands of communists, if it has not already fallen, and it is this danger that we would ask our people to guard against.’ However, when Manilal Gandhi returned from India, like Rustomjee and Choudree, he led a batch of resisters.³³

Alongside the mass rallies there was intensive planning, as the Reverend Michael Scott recorded:

Only in the offices of the Passive Resistance Council did one sense the tension which is the symptom of a crisis as deep in history as our present civilisation. Dr Naicker and the other leaders were looking tired and strained and immediately began consultations with Dr Dadoo. Dr Goonam, the first Indian woman in South Africa to qualify as a doctor, seemed cheerful and unconcerned and others were methodically busy about the task of organising sectors of passive resistance volunteers who thronged the offices and for whom classes of instruction had to be arranged.³⁴

It was not only legislation, but also the politics of moderation that were in the dock. The new leaders of the NIC and the TIC placed large blame for the mounting legal discrimination against Indians on compromise and appeasement, which, Monty and Dadoo argued in a joint statement, ‘enabled the Government to introduce measure after measure of racially discriminative legislation.’³⁵ If the approach of the moderates was responsible for the situation that Indians found themselves in, what would be the effect of the new leadership’s approach?

The first test was on the horizon. Hartal Day dawned.

'Abafana Baka Gandhi'

He [Ismail Meer] spent a month's hard labour breaking stones in a road gang near Durban, with a group of other Indian resisters working alongside African convicts who were visibly impressed by the Indians' gesture. They called them *Abafana Baka Gandhi*, the 'children of Gandhi'.¹

The historic mass meeting at Red Square on Hartal Day (13 June 1946) culminated with a great procession to the corner of Gale Street and Umbilo Road. Kay Moonsamy, CP stalwart, takes up the story:

That meeting was called at half past five on the 13th of June 1946 at Red Square. There were 20,000 of us assembled there and I was one of those 20,000. We marched behind Dr Naicker from Red Square to Gale Street where we pitched up a camp and there were people who occupied that place and thereafter...every day there were demonstrations and people used to go there, occupy that land. And everyday people would be arrested, taken to the Smith Street charge office, appear in court and they'll be discharged. But then finally Dr Naicker and a number of them were arrested and sentenced. I think the first lot got six months in prison.

Billy Nair was also part of what he called *the procession*:

Oh, it was tremendous. Monty, I directly saw him from a distance only ... he had the Gandhi cap. We students were part of a crowd shouting and joining in the big celebration that day and marched behind the big procession ... You enjoyed the feeling that there's a battle going on, a fight that you became part of. And because we, actually from primary school we struggled. I myself sold newspapers in order to earn a little bit of money for my shoes and shirts and so on. We had to

study under ... not even candlelight, paraffin lamp ... it was a pretty tough life.
So you see it applied to us directly.



Marching through the streets of Durban, 1946

© Fatima Meer

Led by Monty, 18 passive resisters (including six women – Zainab Asvat, Zohra Bhayat, Amina Pahad, Zubeida Patel, Lakshmi Govender and Veeramah Pather) pitched tents on a piece of vacant municipal land in defiance of the Ghetto Act.² In Pietermaritzburg, the NIC organised a meeting at the H.Y.M.A. Hall on the 13th. ‘The inevitable has happened. The Tenure Bill has been passed against the whole Indian community of South Africa. The passing of the Bill is cause for sorrow, deep sorrow,’ Dr M.R. Peters declared.



Pamphlet issued by PRC

© Kresen Naicker

B.A. Maharaj said ‘that in the heart of every Indian who feels that he should live freely there was an echo of resistance against the Tenure Law.’ The meeting adopted F. Satyapal’s resolution in support of passive resistance. The response of traders to the call to close stores ‘was excellent, both at the top and bottom ends’, while the ‘offices of professional men were also closed. One had a note on his door: “Closed on account of Prayer Day”.’³

There was widespread support for the campaign. In the words of *Leader*, ‘the response was magnificent; petty individual interests gave way to the larger national interests. Durban was dead on Thursday. The Indian quarter bore an atmosphere of quietness associated with Sunday.’⁴ Locally, the CP, ANC, and APO (Natal) gave their unqualified support. Passive Resistance was seen as ‘opening a new phase in the struggle for equal rights of all South Africans.’ The struggle of Indians was seen as strengthening the ‘whole non-European population in its fight for the rights of citizenship.’⁵ Cables poured into the NIC’s office from all over Southern Africa and India, and Indians in East Africa organised sympathy meetings. The Indian National Congress called an ‘African Day’ as a mark of sympathy. Gandhi’s telegram read: ‘Hope resisters will remain firm to the end. Everything possible being done this end.’ India acted decisively: the High Commissioner was recalled, and it would be 48 years before another returned. Trade sanctions were imposed, and unlike Gandhi’s negative response to Dadoo’s call in 1939, this time he encouraged his son Manilal to participate in the campaign. Manilal was to spend 23 days in jail and lose nine kilograms.⁶

When ‘white thugs’ began to attack the protesters, many took inspiration from the stirring words offered by Zaynab Asvat, who gave up her medical studies to join the campaign: ‘Hooligans or no hooligans, carry on we must, and carry on we shall.’⁷ The Reverend Michael Scott, one of a handful of whites to join the campaign, provided an eyewitness account of the attacks at the Gale Street camp. Scott (1907-1983) was a figure of international repute, and his opinion received wide publicity. He was an anti-apartheid activist, supporter of an independent Nagaland in India, and later a leading promoter of Namibian

independence. When the campaign started, the Council for Human Rights asked Scott to act as observer. He drove to Durban with Dadoo, Yusuf and Moulvi Cachalia, and Bettie du Toit of the Food and Canning Union. According to Scott, they were 'all nervous for each of us had a reputation that was inimical to the mobs at work in Durban, and no one had the least idea how it was going to turn out.' In the first attack on Monty's group, white youths...

... dressed in sports kit ... gathered in two's and three's ... Suddenly a whistle blew, and with shouts and catcalls the whole formation charged and bore down upon the little group of resisters who were standing back-to-back so as to face in all directions ... With their fists they struck the Indians in the face and about the body. No one retaliated but some tried to duck or ward off blows before falling down. On the ground they were kicked.⁸

Scott's commitment to justice meant that he could not remain an observer. Volunteering for imprisonment was, he would write, the 'only possible course.' He described his first direct experience of *satyagraha* (non-violent resistance):

In the same way as before the attacks began with a charge and sort of high-pitched hunting cry. The men volunteers were very soon knocked down and lying huddled on the grounds ... Two girls came up and started shouting 'Coolie guts' and 'Curry guts' ... It was during this episode that one of the Indian girls, a Muslim, said to me, 'It's not their fault, they don't know what they are doing.' ... I felt so sick, and helpless, and ashamed, and yet her remarks seemed strangely to reassure me in the knowledge that by standing still there on that particular piece of ground one was enabling something to be done ... I knew Zainab Asvat was right.⁹

Monty recorded these events in his diary.

14 June: Quiet day. Three Europeans tried to damage tent. Applied Gandhian teachings successfully.

15 June: Same thing applied in the evening. Wild rumours about town. Met

Dadoo at 10:00 am at Aerodrome.

16 June: 30 Europeans (organised) pulled the tents and dragged it away. This roused the determination of volunteers to unite and struggle; 11:00 pm put tent up again.

17 June: 5:30 pm. Meeting to appeal for non-violence and guards. 8:00 pm; 150 Europeans expected and action; Cordon of passive resisters formed. Used women around outfield; 12 passive resisters replace tent.

Monty described the attacks on the night of 17 June to the *Leader*:

About 8.30 in the evening a large number of white youths were seen walking on the outskirts of the camp. About 8.45 p.m. about 100 of them came rushing from the trees nearby where they had congregated. The guards were instructed to hold them back by forming a cordon arm to arm. The attackers broke through and pulled down all the tents and took them away and tore them. They took some blankets and pillows with them.¹⁰



Passive resisters.

© From *Indian Opinion*

Monty told a meeting later that evening that the attacks...

... open the eyes of the civilised world to the intolerance and intolerable conditions under which Indians and other non-Europeans live in this so-called democratic land ... The battle has begun and we are now face to face with the forces of prejudice and intolerance ... I am proud to say that not only the volunteers, but also those who were visiting us, observed the code of non-violence. Even Gandhi could not have grumbled at the behaviour of the Resisters under the circumstances.⁷¹¹

18 June: Dadoo left for Johannesburg. 300 European and 500 Indians assembled on East side of camp. Only the leaders in camp; having sent women volunteers to the footpath, Europeans brought women to molest our women. Very tense situation. Teach courage.

19 June: At appeal of Major Coetzee and Keevee decided to remove leaders from 5:30 pm to 10:00 pm and we decided to appeal to Indian supporters to keep away from camp for the period. 800 Europeans assembled. Completely out of control. One car burnt. One other car set light. Wife in same car. The few Indians present provoked and some badly assaulted – slept outside (no camp put up, was early in the morning – very cold). The ground. Asvat, Bhaba. Showed courage-vindicated.

20 June: Today at 2:00 pm. Met European sympathisers – Satchel, Wormington, Paul Sykes, they considering forming an organisation.

21 June: Last night, as the previous night, Europeans intent on assaulting us. Again cordoned. Isolated Indians hit and cars stoned. Ultimatum by Deputy-Commissioner Lt Colonel Booysen to quit camp or charge for inciting public violence – refused. Cable from Tata and £100 from Henderson from Ireland who deeply sympathetic.

On 21 June, Monty and the resisters were finally arrested for trespassing. They were found guilty, but cautioned and discharged. They returned to Gale Street and were again charged with trespassing, and this time, the magistrate

passed a suspended sentence of seven days hard labour. Undeterred, the resisters occupied the camp once more.

22 June: 7:30 pm. District Police Johnson gave us notice to quit ground or else be persecuted for trespassing. Refused – were arrested and taken in to jail. One batch remained till 9:00 pm at B Court. M.D and I left charge office at 12:00 am. (Tore all Edicts at 8:45).

23 June: Went to camp at 4:50 in the afternoon. 5:30 arrested and taken to charge office. Released and set to appear in court at 9:00 am next day.

24 June: Went to court at 9:00 am. Great interest by Indian people. Two of the thugs present to observe. M.D. and myself asked to appear on the 1st July. The rest cautioned. Last evening the thugs really got going. 2nd batch released. 3rd batch Joshi and A[unclear] laid out unconscious. Spirit untainted. We were released at 1:30 am. Went to office. A[unclear], myself and M.D. decided to go in the next batch. Sympathisers begged us not to go as thugs still present in large numbers to keep us up. We went and were arrested immediately. Court at 9:00 am. Charged. Rowdy mass weekly. Enthusiastic. Money coming in. Went to camp.

26 June: Rowdy and Europeans great. Act read and arrested. Spent up till 2:30 in charge office, then in the cell. Condition very hard. Court on Tuesday – seven days hard labour suspended for three months.

27 June: Dadoo and next batch of 50 arrested. Appeared on Wednesday. Case remanded till Thursday.

Dadoo was sentenced to three months hard labour under the Riotous Assemblies Act. The curtain finally came down on Monty:

28 June: Led batch with few more to occupy the land tonight. Expect to be imprisoned for long time. Sentence: six months hard labour.

With Monty's imprisonment, the diary entries end.

The *Faqir* (Ranji Nowbath) wrote of the difficulties of being a passive resister

in his 22 June 1946 column in *The Leader*.

One might be tempted to think that it is easy to remain non-violent, but it is damnably hard not to strike back in the face of provocation I spent some time one evening at the Resisters' Camp and the orders were strictly "no violence, do not hit back." As we waited for the raiders to strike we could feel the intense cold hitting at us from the three sides; the top, the ground and from the sea. The suspense was terribly nerve-wracking. You could see the group of Europeans walking about Umbilo Road waiting for a suitable opportunity to strike. They were dressed for their job – shorts and sand-shoes – and they appeared to be a squad of picked men. The police, too, were not taking any action. So they had nothing to worry about. When the raiders struck, all that the Passive Resister had to do was to look on. It requires a lot of courage to be a Passive Resister.¹²

The arrest of Monty and Dadoo did not stymie the movement. The struggle against moderates invoked a broad stratum of leadership, and when the two most prominent figures were jailed, others stepped forward. The process of courting arrest was well orchestrated: volunteers forwarded their names to the PRC and were put into batches of five to 20, offering themselves for arrest under an appointed leader. At 'Farewell Receptions' which were held at Red Square or Resistance Hall, prominent leaders reiterated the history of the struggle, the implications of the Act, and how to cope with prison life.¹³

Speeches were given in English, Tamil, and Hindi, and the common theme was that sacrifice was required to 'secure the future for the children.' It was a beguiling line, as many in the audience were sons and daughters of indentured labourers, who would have listened first-hand to the brutal conditions their parents laboured under, to give them a future in Africa. Volunteers were garlanded before offering themselves for arrest.¹⁴ When volunteers were released, 'thousands of Indians' gathered at Red Square to welcome them.¹⁵ Collective camaraderie and affirmation was vital in attracting people to sacrifice their families and jobs, and demand prison sentences. There was a long delay between arrest and imprisonment, as the police deliberately delayed completing

records to frustrate volunteers. During this time, the PRC provided coffee and sandwiches at the charge office.¹⁶



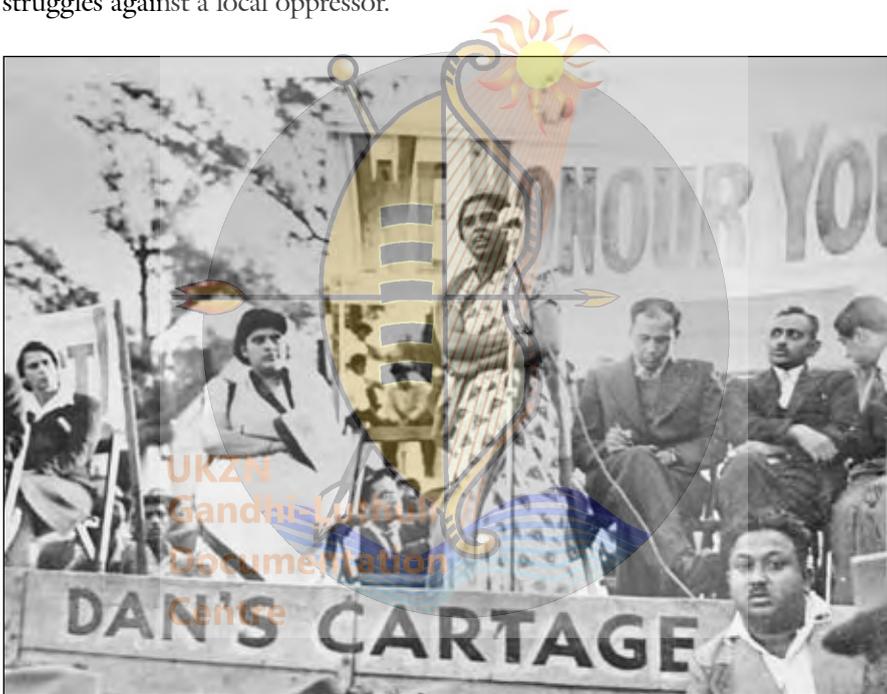
Resisters in Gale Street.

© Bhana Collection. UKZN Documentation Centre

Interviews with volunteers suggested that the welfare of the community was important – Sunkar Bagath, a hawker, felt ‘it is the duty of all Indians to rally behind the banner of the passive resisters. To do otherwise would be to help the government to strangle the Indian community politically, economically and socially.’¹⁷ J.M. Francis led a group of ex-servicemen who had fought in World War II, saying that ‘when we came back from the war we thought that the blood of our comrades had not been shed in vain ... but we are disillusioned and we have to fight again.’¹⁸ Union leader R.A. Pillay led a group of 16 volunteers on 29 June, arguing that the defeat of fascism in Europe had ‘changed the political outlook in almost every corner of the globe, but in South Africa the Smuts Government still persists in continuing its policy of suppressing the national minorities. If I am imprisoned I shall serve my full sentence with the firm belief that yet another nail has been driven into the coffin of reaction.’¹⁹

Sorabjee Rustomjee led the seventeenth group of volunteers, numbering 48. He referred to Monty and Dadoo as the ‘real leaders’ and it was ‘for us true sons and daughters of Mother India to follow in their footsteps and vindicate the honour of our community and our Motherland. Let every Indian search

his heart and decide whether he is doing his duty to his people in this hour of trial.²⁰ Handed a three-month sentence with hard labour, Sorabjee shouted: ‘Long Live Mahatma Gandhi; Long Live Resistance; Jai Hind (“Victory to India”).’ These slogans were repeated by the ‘throng of people who had gathered to see another group of gallant resisters sentenced’,²¹ to the infuriation of the magistrate, who did not understand what it meant. It translated into “Victory to India!”, and Sorabjee and his fellow resisters were not only drawing a link to Gandhi, but to the nationalist struggle against British imperialism in India, whose imminent success gave great hope to Indians fighting their own struggles against a local oppressor.



Women addressing a rally at Red Square. Cissie Gool is seated on the extreme left.

© Local History Museums Collection, Durban

The campaign marked an important change in the consciousness of women. As Pauline Podbrey points out, ‘all the preconceptions about the timorous little Indian woman, the housebound wife and mother, came up for serious reappraisal when they went into battle against the bulwark of white

domination.²² Dr Goonam led the fifteenth batch of volunteers, accompanied by Reverend Scott and 13 women.²³ They presented themselves at the NIC office and from there made their way to Gale Street, to white children's chants of 'Hey, Coolie Women!' The police arrived shortly after and arrested them. At the police station, she remembered:

A form was thrust under my nose. I filled it and was led into a police cell. It was by now past midnight. As the door locked behind me, I felt myself in utter darkness and overpowered by a stench that turned my stomach. As my eyes got used to the darkness, I saw a pail from whence the fetid odour was coming. Looking closely, I identified it as fermented vomit. It must have been there a few days. I walked away from it and found the floor slippery – more vomit. There was no place to sit. I stood looking for somewhere to stand. There was urine everywhere. I was tired and exhausted. If only I could lean somewhere. Gingerly I walked towards a wall. The smell emanating from the wall was unbearable. It was dried fecal matter. I moved away, found a spot relatively uninvaded by any obscene stuff and remained riveted to it the night through ... Precisely at 7 am, the cell door opened. I was ordered out. I cast a parting glance behind me. What I saw beggared description. I was cautioned and discharged. I had an impelling need to get home and plunge into a bath of disinfectant. It was the longest bath I'd ever had. I emerged, the stench still lingering in my nostrils, the filth flashing before my eyes.²⁴

Dr Goonam led two more batches of volunteers. By now the government had changed tack and sentenced her to six months imprisonment, four of which were suspended. With Dr Goonam's arrest, women from the Transvaal came to the fore. Women organised their own meetings – at the Gandhi Library on 18 July 1946, for example, Zaynab Asvat, Suriakala Patel, Fatima Meer, Miss P.K. Naidoo, Mrs Hajee S.M. Mayet, and Miss J. Patel addressed a large gathering of women. Batch number 28 was a 'women-only' batch, which included Zaynab Asvat, Suriakala Patel, Jumna Devi Patel, Sangama Naidoo, Violet Ramsamy Solly, Danbo Darjee, and Ayesha Ganchi. They occupied the camp around 8:00

pm. A large crowd gathered to support them and all sang a national song as they were arrested, punctuated by cries of *Jai Hind!* (“victory to India”) and ‘We shall resist!’²⁵ The following day, the women appeared in court wearing ‘safari jackets over their National dress [Saris].’ Asvat was sentenced to three months and the others to 30 days imprisonment with hard labour.

It was not only the wives of professionals and politicians who volunteered. Working-class women were also involved, and there were some amazing stories of sacrifice. One such story involves Muniammah Naidoo, who was born in Port Shepstone in 1911. Her mother was born in India and arrived as an indentured migrant, while her father was born in Natal. When she was young, the family moved to Houghton Road in Clairwood. Muniammah was unable to attend school because of their dire economic circumstances – they had no electricity and had to walk long distances daily to obtain water from the river. She married while still a teenager, and her husband died after the birth of their third child when she was 24. She found work at a jam factory: ‘I cleaned fruits at the jam factory, peaches, fruit, make jam there. Banana, pineapple, pear, grapes, every fruits coming there, must clean that one.’ Later she worked at a factory in Rossburgh cleaning nuts. ‘Hard, hard, that one,’ she recalled. The NIC was very strong in Clairwood where meetings were held nightly in a marquee near the Moon Hotel, and she joined the Passive Resistance campaign:

I went there, the meeting, everybody going, ladies and men, boys, all go there. I asked, one auntie, where are you going? ‘No, there’s meeting there, nice meeting, you must come, Aya’. Everybody’s going jail, this country fighting. I too went away. I want a country. I went away and gave in my name at that office ... I went on march. Lots of ladies. They took us to jail, the Central Jail. I stayed two-nights ... Very hard, ma, there. The third day that man came: ‘Tomorrow you must go India you all, plane to India’. One lady said: ‘No, I can’t go India, I came here, I can’t go’. Next morning he took us to ‘Maritzburg Jail. I stayed there 30 days. Go inside, we were in one room, three ladies, one room, four ladies. Like that we lived. Next morning come the nurse, knock on the door: ‘Go bath’. Took a bath, take your clothes in the bath, and go. Bath and come. After comes, dressed, the

food comes. Porridge and beans, sugar beans, it would be a little bit. Can't eat it. That one some people eat, some people they won't eat it, the working people there. Nobody came there, family. No one came. Christmas and New Year, inside that year. Christmas Day...drank one cup tea, cake. Wash your clothes, dry, again same, no iron, put it on like that. [Policeman] asked: 'Why you people came to jail? Why are you struggling like that, husbands, children left at home?' 'No, I came fighting my country, my country I want it, that's why I came.' Family... don't mind, my children only worried. My children, my mother-in-law, my little boys. Happy, support me. My brother and his wife [looked after my family]. My daughter-in-law, a big family, I left them and went away. I worried my children. I came, saw my children, they were happy, I'm happy. Ya.²⁶

The authorities made prison life unbearable hoping to break the spirit of resistance. The experience of Dr Goonam (Convict 612) was typical of the degradation and humiliation experienced by most:

'Kom, Kom, jou swart ding,' ('come, come, you black thing'), the police officer shouted ... We were herded into the van and pushed off balance as we shoved and squeezed to find seats ... Fifteen of us grown women were stuffed into a small vehicle meant for six, and at most eight.' At the prison, she was met by an intimidating matron who 'pulled out a chair and sat down, her skimpy black skirt riding up as she did so revealing her fat knees, her white blouse was tautly buttoned across her ample bosom. Her hawk-like eyes darted across the line of women, and she opened a large book and barked, What's your name?

Goonam.

She said something in Afrikaans which I didn't understand. Then she spoke in English.

Don't you know Afrikaans?

No.

Why don't you ... You stand on street corners. Isn't that what you do?

Yes. We have been busy ever since we began our campaign, not only on street

corners but everywhere.

Don't talk back. Shut up you drunken thing.

What work do you do?

I am a medical practitioner. I do gynaecology and obstetrics.

You what?

I am a doctor.

A witchdoctor?

They don't teach witchcraft in Scotland.

Shut up! Don't be cheeky. Have you been to school?

Yes.

You dirty liar. Can you write your name.

I can write my name. I have been to school.

What standard did you read?

Scottish University Entrance.

When did you get drunk?

I don't drink.

Don't lie you bloody devil. [She beckoned to the wardress]. This woman is another one off the streets. Make her sign her name. She says she can write.

Liar!

This was followed by a strip search by the wardress:

I was forcibly pushed into the room and thrust into a corner ... The wardress proceeded to pull my sari off me. I was stripped of every garment ... She started digging in my ears and pulled off my glasses ... I was made to stand arms outstretched while she pulled my long hair vigorously till it hurt. She dug into my scalp saying, 'Shut up you black thing! This is where you keep your dope and tobacco.' She shoved me through a gloomy corridor where there was another wardress standing in readiness. The new one began where her co-worker had left off. She prodded me in the ribs until we reached the open courtyard. I stood there completely naked in full view of other prisoners. She threw me on the wooden bench and I was subjected to the unspeakable humiliation of a vaginal

examination, in the presence of all the other prisoners. I was pushed then into a dark room ... Suddenly I felt icy cold water dripping on me.²⁷

Supper consisted of mealies that 'tasted like wood.' Dr Goonam was given a bucket to relieve herself. In the morning she cleaned this bucket and filled it with water to wash. Parade was followed by breakfast which consisted of porridge in rusty tins. There was no sugar or tea or coffee. Prisoners were locked up at 4:00 pm on weekdays and Saturdays, and 2:00 pm on Sundays, without company or reading material. She was given duties in the laundry room, and had to clean and polish furniture, and scrub floors. When she asked for soap, the wardress asked: 'You think it's a hotel?' She lost four kilograms during her deplorable experience:

Life stood still, hermetically sealed from everything. My work, my personal and political life, my home, my dogs, my family, friends all seemed far away. Yet that life lay just outside these walls. It seemed years since I had been free, yet it was only a few days ago ... I reached a stage where I forgot what the timbre of my own voice was like. Nothing short of soul force keeps one's sanity alive in that vegetative state.²⁸

Rabia Docrat, the wife of A.K.M. Docrat, was a victim of white hooliganism. She was not deterred and courted imprisonment. On her release, she related that women were forced to strip and were subjected to personal examination. They were then taken across the courtyard naked for a cold shower and made to wear wet uniforms.

In searching us and making us run naked in the yard, she said, common decency was not observed. The European women wardresses should have some sort of education. From their behaviour in searching the prisoners, making them run naked and abusing in the most offensive terms, it was obvious that they did not have any sense of decency or finer feelings. The lack of these was most distressing to the Indian women prisoners who are not used to being treated savagely.²⁹

It seemed an eternity before Dr Goonam was released:

It was time for my public meeting. It had become customary to welcome each resister at the Red Square. There was a huge crowd waiting to hear me speak. As I climbed into the lorry and took my position before the mike, I was greeted by a thunderous applause which humbled me. I took a grip of myself and accepted the welcome and thanked the people for their support. I told them that the human spirit could overcome the weakest of physical conditions and they should never be afraid to face imprisonment.³⁰

The meeting that Dr Goonam was referring to took place in August 1946. Debi Singh, chairman of the PRC, said that they were meeting to 'welcome and honour our gallant resisters, who been released from gaol.' There were around 80 resisters who had been in jail, including nine women. Monty's brother-in-law, Dr N.V. Appavau of East London, told the massive crowd that the people of East London had contributed £300 and pledged £50 per week until the campaign ended. Other speakers included Nana Sita, the chairman of the Transvaal PRC, Zora Meer, a representative of the Indian Women's Action Committee, I.C. Meer, Mrs Z. Gool of Cape Town, and Manilal Gandhi. A welcome rally was held the following evening at the V.D.S. Hall, where cries of 'Jai Azadi' ('victory and freedom'), the salutation of passive resisters, resounded on the platform when the freed prisoners, led by Dr Goonam and Dr Patel, all wearing Gandhi caps, were welcomed by a large crowd. They exchanged the Resisters' Salute of the arm bent towards the heart.³¹

Kay Moonsamy quit his job and joined the campaign, 'because, being a member of the CP, well, every member has to answer the call.' Kay was arrested on 5 July on his 25th birthday and sentenced to four months imprisonment. He was sent to Durban Central Prison (the present-day Workshop Mall), where about 2 000 prisoners were housed in atrocious conditions. As the number of resisters increased, the prison became overcrowded, and they were sent to different parts of Natal. Kay's group was sent to Ixopo after 18 days.

That's where I spent more than three months. The first day, it was seven in the evening and ... first of all, you know they had to remove our hair ... shave your

head. They didn't have what you call a barber's machine but they used shears. Would you believe it? They used shears to remove our hair and there was sort of a trough filled with water. We had to dip ourselves in that water. Can you imagine ... how that was in winter? Not just our head but the whole body and they gave us some sort of a ... I think Vaseline, and we had to rub that ... not to soothe it. No, no ... just in case you had lice. So ... like cattle dipping it was. The Ixopo prison was a terrible place. It was a farm jail and I remember working on the farm and there, for the first time, one experienced convict labour. One morning I was in this group ... after breakfast when we had plain porridge and so all the different ... gangs of people who used to go out, convicts ... so one, big, burly ... he was a white of course ... he came up to the warders and then he had a little discussion with them and then suddenly they told us, and I was in a group of eight, that we must follow this person. So we went along with him ... to work in his garden, you know. He was developing a flower garden so we had to work there. I can still remember we were paid two shillings. Now you can imagine that farmer is paying the prison but it doesn't come to the prisoner but it goes to them ... so that was the first experience of what we call convict labour.

Monty served his prison term in Newcastle. He wrote to Marie on 17 July 1946:

My Dear Marie

I am entitled to a letter and a visit after completing one month, that is, 26/7/46.

You can leave Durban on 26/7/46 evening by train or car. You will be here by 27/7/46 Saturday morning so that I can see you all on the same afternoon.

Love to all. Monty.

PS. In case you don't know yet, I am in the Newcastle Gaol.

Dear Marie, please bring along the following book: *Benhams Book on Economics*.

Monty's choice of book is interesting and points to a man keen to broaden his understanding of political economy. Frederick Benham (1900-1962) held a Ph.D from the London School of Economics (1928) and published his popular text on Economics in 1938. Monty sent a telegram to Marie on 11

November 1946 about his impending release, bearing some good news, some disappointing news, and some routine matters:

My Dear Marie

There happens to be a slight mistake in the remission form sent over from Pretoria. They have calculated the date of release to be the 18th of November. The acting Chief has rectified the mistake so that I will be released on the 16th of November [Saturday]. The correction has to be initiated by the Magistrate. I don't think there will be any trouble over this. You can let the interested know of the news. Also let me know what the office has arranged as a programme. The majority of the 66 resisters, mostly from the Transvaal, will be released on Friday [15/11/46]. They are anxious to know their programme too, whether to leave on the same day or wait a day here for me.

I do hope Dad has had some luck as far as the car is concerned. Did he try Pretoria? What about Kookery [Appavoo] and his great garage friend Casoojee? If you haven't thought of it, telephone Kookery as soon as you receive this note. Well I shall be with you all within a few days. Time, since the batch came here, has passed fairly quickly. If no particular arrangements are made then we shall leave the same day by car if possible. How is Dad? I would have written a letter last month, only I was waiting for the news from Pretoria for the last 20 days. It only came this morning. So Vasugee and Kreesen have put on weight, jolly good, and what's more they are behaving themselves, that's still better news. Don't forget to bring all the things I have asked for. Bring a pair of old flannel trousers in case the new ones do not fit me. The old Chief is on leave; the acting Chief is from Durban. I do hope you and the family enjoyed the trip to Pietermaritzburg. Did you persuade Thunga [Dr B.T. Chetty] to come and stay a few days with us? Give my regards to all our friends.

Love

Reading this letter from Monty, one gets a deep sense of his conviction to the cause, the cavalier way he deals with the possible effects of prison (bring me another pair of trousers, in case), the wonderful reference to the kids, and a

word about his close friend, Dr B.T. Chetty. Was the latter a guarded message, given Chetty's major involvement in the campaign? The letter also reveals that Marie was clearly in touch with the NIC leadership for Monty's enquiries about the role of other resisters on their release.



*M.P. Naicker addressing a Passive Resistance rally in Clairwood.
George Singh is seated to his right.*

© Dr Prin Naicker



Transvaal Indian Congress office, Market/Diagonal Street.

© Mosie Moola

The Reverend Scott, who was released on 23 September 1946, wrote a detailed memorandum on prison conditions for the Penal Reform Commission. He said that the cells were so overcrowded that ‘at night the floor space was entirely covered with the forms of prisoners lying alternately head to foot with room only for a pail of water and a latrine bucket.’ Prisoners were ‘made to strip naked in view of all of us and perform the most grotesque antics so that the warder could satisfy himself that nothing was concealed anywhere on the prisoner’s body.’ Corporal punishment was used to discipline prisoners who had to leave their clothes on one side of the prison yard and march to the other, where they waited in line for the punishment. Warders tasked with punishing prisoners practised ‘their strokes in view of the waiting prisoners, with a cane about four feet in length. Then one by one the prisoners would enter the shed to be tied to a triangular frame and undergo their sentence ... always, when the victim emerged from the shed, he would hardly be able to walk.’³²

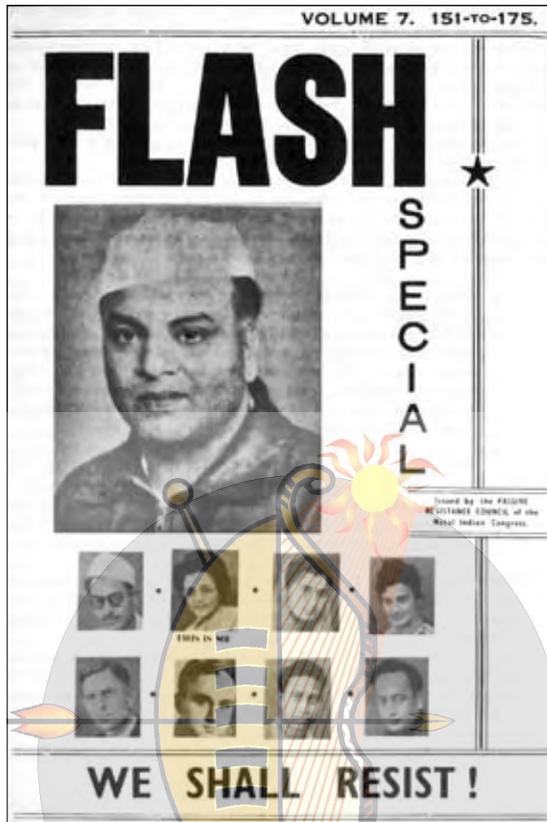
An NIC delegation comprising Dr B.T. Chetty, Acting President of the NIC, I.M. Bawa, Acting Joint Secretary, and P.B. Singh complained to the Minister of Justice that volunteers were ‘deliberately more harshly treated by prison officials.’ Resisters awaiting trial were abused by aggressive officials en route to jail. ‘So these are the Coolies from the Transvaal. We shall fix them. They would wish they were in Johannesburg by the time we are finished with them.’ Wardresses delighted in referring to Indians as ‘coolies’, ‘Marys’, bloody fools, bloody dogs and bastards! One warder declared that he ‘was not being paid £40 a month to tame chickens.’³³

At the end of September 1946, there was a two-week campaign across Natal to report back on the campaign, raise funds and recruit volunteers for a massive UN rally planned for 12 October. The campaign included 13 meetings in Northern Natal, the suburbs of Durban and the North Coast, and ended in Tongaat’s Gokhale Hall. It was chaired by Gopalall Hurbans. Speakers included Dadoo, who had been released from prison on 29 September 1946, J.N. Singh, and Dawood Seedat. A. Khan, the secretary of the Tongaat NIC branch, volunteered to lead the Tongaat UN Batch of passive resisters on 12 October.³⁴

The PRC received donations from Indians throughout South Africa as well as from India.³⁵ People from all walks of life contributed. For example, in July 1946, 200 workers donated a full day's pay, which amounted to £30.³⁶ In January 1947, 30 members of the Natal Fishermen's Association at Fynnlands contributed £50.³⁷ Organisers spread out throughout Durban to raise funds. George Singh, for example, addressed a meeting at Clare Estate on 21 July 1946, formed a Clare Estate PRC, and raised £200 from locals.³⁸ Money was needed to sustain the campaign, as about half the resisters were given an allowance to maintain their families during their imprisonment.³⁹ In the first three months, from July to September 1946, the PRC spent £10 000. In the first year £32 212 had been collected, much of it from East Africa. However, the PRC was in the red because operating expenses were £36 613.⁴⁰ Schools also contributed, with students and staff from Sastri College and Clairwood Senior Boys' School donating generously. The Students PRC hosted various events. For example, on 21 July it held a 'Show of Shows' which included three one-act plays at the Avalon Theatre. E.H. Ismail of the NIC and Mr Peters of Peters Lounge in Victoria Street recorded what was described as 'Grand Film Shots' of the NIC elections, the Gale Street camp, and the meeting at Red Square, and this was shown at Resistance Hall on 17 July to raise money.

Emotions were kept high by such events as a display of photographs of resisters being beaten by whites or being led to prisons, at Crown Studio in Grey Street. The newsletter of the PRC, *Flash*, was equally effective. Edited by M.P. Naicker, it was issued several times a day from the NIC office, Peters Lounge, and Resistance Hall. It contained emotive photographs and highly charged language, often put out in big print.

In Johannesburg, I.C. Meer edited *The Passive Resister*, and pamphlets were periodically distributed, including 'Five months of Struggle,' 'We Shall Resist,' 'Resist the Ghetto Act,' and many others.⁴¹ There were several detailed publications about the campaign: *The Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act*, by Reverend Wormington; *Non-violence – Law makers. Law Breakers*, by Reverend Michael Scott, and *The Asiatic Act* by George Singh.



Pamphlet issued by PRC.

© Kreesen Naicker

Despite the propaganda, support for civil disobedience was waning by December 1947. There were 1500 volunteers in the first six months and around 500 in the next 18. After a meeting of the Joint PRC, Monty and Dadoo issued a call on 11 December 1947 for renewed struggle: ‘Hooliganism, wholesale arrests, harsh terms of imprisonment and organised boycott of Indian traders failed to crush the spirit and will of the Indian people. The policy of repression has not availed the Government. At Gale Street, Passive Resistance has won a victory.’ But the statement recognised that the government was not yielding and that outside intervention was necessary. ‘The most practical method by which measures may be inaugurated that could lead to a solution of the conflict remains a Round Table Conference.’⁴²

The Passive Resistance campaign continued for exactly two years, and by the time it was halted in June 1948, over 2,000 arrests had been made. The list of resisters makes for interesting reading – an analysis of the first 1 303 resisters shows that 42 were under the age of 20, and 1 092 between 20 and 25.⁴³ A 1947 report revealed that the list of 1 710 resisters included 492 factory workers, 235 housewives, 26 laundry workers, 53 municipal workers, 29 jewellers, 28 shopkeepers, 13 tailors, and 117 waiters, as well as bus conductors, students, ushers, and welders.⁴⁴ These figures indicate that the majority of the volunteers were among those who could ill afford to lose a day's work, let alone months in a prison cell. The Indian working class responded in overwhelming numbers, and the years of painstaking organising by the likes of George Ponnien, H.A. Naidoo, Cassim Amra, P.M. Harry, Pauline Podbrey, and Vera Ponnien was reflected in the composition of those prepared to confront the law openly. It is also an indication that the merchant leadership was not reflective of the class composition of the community and their willingness to fight. Passive resisters came from all over Natal: Clairwood, Pietermaritzburg, Isipingo, Ladysmith, Stanger, Tongaat, as well as from Pretoria, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Kimberley.

However, the report of the PRC for the period June 1947 to May 1948 conceded that the campaign was not sustainable.⁴⁵ Unlike the first year, there were no full-time volunteers to co-ordinate the campaign and Debi Singh, the only full-time organiser, was seriously ill and many members were in prison. One additional problem, from October 1947, was that when Ashwin Choudree led a batch of resisters the authorities refused to arrest them, which nullified the objective of civil disobedience.⁴⁶ As Billy Nair put it, 'there was nothing worse than being ignored by the state.'

Recognising that the Ghetto Bill could not sustain the campaign, the NIC conference of May/June 1947 resolved to challenge the 1913 law prohibiting inter-provincial migration, which was also clearly meant to draw on memories of an earlier campaign by Gandhi. On 24 January 1948, R.A. Pillay and R. Mahabeer, chairman of the Sydenham Branch of the NIC, led the first batch



Dadoo and Monty crossing the Natal-Transvaal border

© Kreesen Naicker

across the Natal-Transvaal border. They were arrested on 10 February 1948 and sentenced in Johannesburg to one month's imprisonment, suspended on condition that the offence was not repeated, and were deported to Natal. On 12 February, however, 15 of the 23 resisters again crossed the border. They were sentenced on 18 February to three months hard labour. In all, 72 resisters were arrested for crossing into the Transvaal and 20 for crossing in the opposite direction.

On 25 January 1948, Monty led a group of 15 resisters from Natal and crossed the border into the Transvaal at Volksrust. This was a significant moment for Monty for he was following the path of his guru, Gandhi, who had led the same campaign in 1913. But where Gandhi was on foot, Monty chose more convenient forms of transport, and a convoy of cars wended their way through the hills and valleys of Northern Natal and reached the bridge that linked the

two provinces. The two old mates of Edinburgh, Monty and Dadoo, crossed the border together. However, there was no police presence and no arrests were immediately effected. Eventually, Dadoo and Naicker were summonsed and sentenced to six months imprisonment for violating the law. Monty was defiant as he read out a statement in court on 2 February 1948 on behalf of himself and Dadoo:

Your Worship,

It is our submission that the said Minute which deems the entire Indian community on economic grounds to be unsuited to the requirements of any particular province is not in keeping with the spirit, if not the letter, of the Act of 1913 ... We submit that our only offence is that of putting into practical effect the assertion of the Union PM, General Smuts, made so forcefully before the 1946 session of the UN Assembly that South African Indians are Union nationals. If we are Union nationals, then it is but reasonable ... to exercise the most elementary right of citizenship, that of freedom of movement within the boundaries of one's country of birth ... The crossing of the provincial borders ... constitutes the second phase of the Passive Resistance struggle ... The Passive Resistance struggle which we are conducting is based on truth and non-violence. It is associated with the name of one of the greatest men of all time, Mahatma Gandhi, on whose death in tragic circumstances just a few weeks ago, the whole world wept ... Gandhi, too, defied the unjust laws of South Africa and suffered imprisonment during the 1906-1914 Passive Resistance Campaign.

This struggle of the Indian community against the Ghetto Act of 1946, against the provincial barriers and against racial discrimination of all kinds, is part and parcel of the struggle of the whole non-European and democracy-loving peoples of South Africa to turn this country into a genuine democratic State in which our multi-racial population will live and work in harmony. It is in view of these considerations that we are pleading guilty to the charge. We are willing to bear the full penalty of the law. Our bodies may be incarcerated but our spirits cannot be crushed ... It is the spirit – deep-rooted in the heart of every non-European – generating the urge for a better life. It is the spirit that alone can deliver the

people from colour bondage in South Africa and make this land a happier place for the generations to come.

We Shall Resist



In the footsteps of the Mahatma. Monty crossing the Transvaal border, 1948. Journalist Ruth First is on the right and union leader R.A. Pillay on the extreme left.

© NIC Pictorial

A youthful Fatima Meer, who was part of a high-school support group, remembered how these words were read at one of their meetings, and how inspired they all were. Facing his second stint in prison, Monty remained defiant. But it was not just his defiance, as Meer remembers, that left a lasting impression on people, but the courage to deliberately court arrest once again, and the style that went with it.

Monty, due for release on 16 July 1948, wrote to Marie on 22 June 1948:

Dear Marie.

Yours to hand. I hope you had a good trip to prison? How is Goonam? Give her

my regards and tell her how glad I am that she is released and ask her to look after her health. I am glad you were able to get a car before my release. That's one worry over. The other worry is the remission. It should be here by the end of the month, so it won't be long now and as you can imagine we are looking forward. In health I am as fit as a fiddle and being kept busy so time passes quickly. The weather too has not been too bad. I am glad you like the colour of the car. We will have to see about the radio as I will miss it a great deal. When you come over take a chance and bring some sweets in case there's an opportunity – not much, say chocs. How's the July fever? I would like you to take a combination if you have the money, say £1 on Arundle (1st), Tactful (2nd), Sona Rusk (3rd), and £2 win on No. 7 just a fancy. One morning we saw clouds in the formation of a V which soon after took the form of No. 7 so that's the tip. I hope the jacket Dad left behind is seeing you through. Don't forget to remind Harry about the place I told him to fix up in Booth Road – whatever Dad says.

See Debi [Singh] and tell him that if they arrange a meeting for us on our release to give it a wide publicity as this would let my public know I have begun work. The big posters should be well displayed in the following areas: Isipingo, Clairwood, Mayville, and Overport, 2nd River, Mayville, Springfield, Clare Estate, Umgeni, Avoca, Mount Edgecombe, Greenwood Park, Magazine Barracks, Point Barracks, Point, Verulam, Booth Road, Wiggins Road. Tell them early and to pay someone to see that these areas are covered. Patel or Debi [Singh] will see to it. Tell Kreesen and Vasugee that I am looking forward to the day when I can cuddle them and be with them, not to mention yourself.

Warmest regards to all friends, and Love to you and family. Monty.

If leading from the front in 1946 was the birth of Monty, this letter in many senses is Monty's epitaph. This was a man in the midst of a major confrontation with the government, one that saw him give up his medical practice, face the extreme deprivation of prison and shoulder the responsibility of leadership at the age of 36, still exposing a love of life and an extreme sensitivity to his family, as well as the determination to pursue a struggle for dignity.

Urban poverty, white racism and the intransigence of the government all fed into a radicalisation of a critical mass of the Indian community. But this was also trespassed with contradictory impulses. When the Royal family visited South Africa in 1947, the NIC's position was that while it had 'the greatest respect' for the royal family, Indians could not join in the celebrations knowing that they 'were being treated as common criminals for the crime of upholding the rights of Indian people to be treated as human beings.' An Emergency Conference of the NIC called for a boycott of the celebrations.⁴⁷ Moderates led by A.I. Kaje, however, formed the Durban Indian Royal Visit Committee, and assured Mayor Ellis Brown that the king and queen would get a 'right royal welcome.' This Committee included bodies as diverse as the Liquor and Catering Trades Union, representatives from the municipal barracks, Durban and District Indian Cricket Union, Durban and District Girl Guides Association, Natal Indian Football Association, Hindu Tamil Institute, Early Morning Market, Riverside Muslim Madressa, and the Indian Durban Scouts Association,⁴⁸ many of which also supported the passive resistance campaign. The function went ahead, in spite of the boycott call by the NIC. Indian and western music was played and the Indian Girl Guides and Boy Scouts formed a guard of honour as the king and queen arrived. Both South African national anthems were played and bouquets were presented to Queen Elizabeth. The ceremony took place on a dais which was a replica of the Taj Mahal. There were 65 000 Indians in attendance at Curries Fountain, the largest ever public gathering of South Africa Indians.⁴⁹ This is remarkable given that the visit took place in the midst of the passive resistance campaign and that the NIC was enjoying immense popularity, and serves as a remarkable illustration of the ambiguous nature of Indian identity.

There was much excitement and buzz around the resistance campaign, but only around 2000 Indians volunteered, at a time when there were over 20 000 registered union members. Many were repeat volunteers. Was this due to the fact that many took a pragmatic view of segregation, and wanted to ensure they did not lose out on an opportunity to get access to some form of formal

housing? There were some signs of this approach – R.E. Johnson argued in the 1970s that the campaign failed because most Indians were not materially affected by the Act, and therefore did not participate.⁵⁰ Johnson's argument is contentious, as the rallies drew thousands to Red Square, so clearly there was support for the struggle. But the consequences of imprisonment would have been economically disastrous for those who worked in the factories dotted around the city. They would almost certainly have lost their jobs, and in the absence of social welfare and a restricted job market, few could take this risk.

I.C. Meer points out that 'at mass meetings, hundreds of hands went up when the call was made, but when it came to registration, the number was halved, and when it came to the point of defiance, there was a further dwindling in numbers.'⁵¹ This was an environment in which Indian labour was dispensable and 'radicalised' Indian workers were being replaced by Africans when the opportunity presented itself.⁵² Should the leadership have anticipated the fact that the Indian working class, struggling for a toehold in the city, just one step out of indenture, would find the consequences of their actions too much to bear? If they did, they sought to overcome this by leading from the front, making personal sacrifices and hoping to inspire others.

However, the campaign should not be judged on numbers alone. Much was achieved: India recalled its High Commissioner, the matter was placed before the United Nations, the campaign galvanised broad sections of the community, facilitated moves towards non-racial unity, and provided an apprenticeship into political leadership for new leaders, preparing them for the struggles that lay ahead. The campaign was, in the words of I.C. Meer, 'merely a prelude to bigger things to come, a prelude to the united struggle of all oppressed non-Europeans and progressives for a democratic South Africa, free from colour bar and racial discrimination.'⁵³

In spite of petering out, there were significant aspects to the campaign. Foremost was the cooperation between communists and Gandhians. Many of the activists who initiated mass action against discrimination were communists like Dadoo, Naran Naidoo (son of Thambi Naidoo), A.K.M. Docrat, and

M.D. Naidoo, who cooperated with Gandhians like Monty, Moulvi Cachalia, Moulvi Saloojee, and Nana Sita. Gandhi dismissed letters from some South Africans who complained that Dadoo was a Communist and should be isolated. He wrote on 27 November 1947 to S.B. Medh, 'The best way is not to bother about what any 'ism' says but to associate yourself with any action after considering its merit. Dr Dadoo has made a favourable impression on everybody here [India].'⁵⁴ Gandhi's support of the Monty-Dadoo leadership, and unity between communists and Gandhians, was significant, given the tension between nationalists and communists in India at the time.

The campaign also served as a catalyst to politicise increasing numbers of younger people, as Billy Nair points out: 'Going to prison, defying the government's laws, actually challenging the government, refusing to accept the...you could say, the so-called half a loaf, accept something that was actually a fraud. I together with my fellow students were moulded during this period into also resisting. I didn't go into prison but I wanted to know more about the struggle.'⁵⁵ Billy would more than prove his mettle over the next few decades.

The new leadership of the Indian Congresses spoke of non-racial action, even while non-Indian participation was limited. A meeting of the joint PRC on 31 August 1946 passed a resolution that it was 'tremendously encouraged by the rising tide of opposition of the South African non-European peoples ... This Council records with deep appreciation the fact that ... the other sections of the non-European people are also rising in defiance of segregation.' Mention was made of the 1946 mine-workers' strike and the anti-pass campaign, 'at the cost of many lives and in the face of unparalleled police brutality ... This Council calls upon the African, the Coloured and Indian people to ... launch simultaneously campaigns against oppression, thereby uniting all sections of the non-European people in action.' Walter Sisulu mentions the participation of a leading ANC member from Germiston, Joshua Makue, and the Reverend Scott in the campaign.⁵⁶

When passive resisters from the Cape were departing for Durban, Moses Kotane attended the meeting and pledged African support: 'You are fighting

against the Ghetto Act, we against the pass laws. We will co-ordinate our efforts and if we are united we will defeat the reactionaries.’⁵⁷ Importantly, there were signs of cross racial co-operation in the 1946 mine-workers’ strike as well. Dadoo, I.C. Meer and J.N. Singh were involved. When Dr Xuma called for the pass laws to be repealed at a mass meeting, on the platform was T. Naidoo, ‘bringing greetings from the Natal Indians.’ Dr Xuma referred to the Ghetto Act and told the crowd that ‘the battle of the Indians is the battle of the Africans.’⁵⁸

The ANC, at its December 1946 conference in Bloemfontein, passed a resolution commending ‘the gallant men and women of the Indian community and their leaders.’ Reflecting on the campaign, Nelson Mandela wrote that it ‘became a model for the type of protest we in the Youth League were calling for ... They reminded us that the freedom struggle was not merely a question of making speeches ... but of meticulous organisation, militant mass action, and, above all, the willingness to suffer and sacrifice.’⁵⁹ Crucially, Walter Sisulu, the ‘engine room’ of the ANC, was also highly inspired. The campaign fuelled a desire for a longer-term working relationship with the Indian Congresses. He was ‘impressed by their ‘efficiency and organisation.’ The TIC headquarters were situated opposite Walter’s offices, so he was able to witness all the hustle and bustle going on. He was particularly impressed by the women involved in the campaign, whom he had once assumed to be conservative and unwilling to involve themselves in public life.’⁶⁰

Monty spent almost a year of the two-year campaign in jail, and about three months in India. He referred to himself as a Gandhian in ‘What I Owe to Mahatma Gandhi,’ a speech delivered on 16 September 1948, in which he explained Gandhi’s influence on him. He was only a child when Gandhi left South Africa and ‘could not understand then the meaning of the struggle which for two decades he had to wage against the authorities.’ But when he ‘reached the age of reason’, he began to ‘make a deep study of the writings of Gandhi, and although I became an adherent of his great principles, little did I think that it would fall to my lot to take up the flaming torch he had left behind.’

I did not feel inclined to be in the forefront of the struggle that began half a

century ago. Yet when the call came, the response in me was instantaneous. It was the voice of Mahatma Gandhi calling for action. Without any preparation, I threw myself into the battle. I became, with thousands of my fellow countrymen, a *satyagrahi*. I made the vow of reaching the goal that we had in view, no matter what sacrifice was demanded of us. Two years ago when I was locked up in the prison of Newcastle, I spent my time reading *My Experiments With Truth*. I had read this book many times before, but inside the prison walls the words came to have a different meaning for me. It was in Newcastle that he started his epic march with thousands of men, women and children, and somehow I felt that I too was in the crowd that marched past across the Transvaal border in serried ranks. It was true that Mahatma Gandhi was now in India and not in South Africa, but did it really make any difference? Had we not promised to be pure satyagrahis? And whether the master was in our midst or engaged in a bigger struggle elsewhere, we had to show the mettle of our pasture ... I knew an intense moment in the struggle when I was sent to Pietermaritzburg gaol. Thirty-three years before, this prison had the privilege of holding an august prisoner: Mahatma Gandhi.⁶¹

But Monty was not just a rote follower of Gandhi. He went beyond Gandhi when he steered Indians into an alliance with Africans. He signalled that the struggle in South Africa was for full citizenship rights for all people. This is not to say that Gandhi would have disapproved, but that Monty was not caged by Gandhian pronouncements during his South African sojourn, and was also prepared to move ahead of his own supporters and use the respect they afforded him to challenge existing racial boundaries. And Monty certainly did not live according to the strictures of Gandhi's social mores – he loved parties, good wine and took delight in ensuring others did too. The Campaign was the forerunner to him leading the NIC into the Congress Alliance, and the Indian Congress's call for the franchise for all South Africans. The ANC's support for the mine-workers' strike indicated that they were also heading in a new direction. Monty, Dadoo and the Indian Congresses were standing at the crossroads that read 'racial exclusivism or non-racialism'.

Would these two hitherto independent streams of resistance meet, or would the separate resistances of 1906 (the Bambatha Rebellion and Gandhi's Passive Resistance Campaign) and 1946 (the African mine-workers' strike and the Indian passive resistance campaign) continue to haunt the struggles of the oppressed?



Smoking freedom

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In the footsteps of the Mahatma

You must be proud of India, proud of her culture and civilisation, proud of the high character of her men and women. It is not in these vital respects that I ask you to take yourself away from our moorings. Be Indians in your outlook upon life, be Indians in your religious tendencies, in your spiritual aims. But in material circumstances, in outward ways, in adaptiveness to the new conditions, there is no need at all, why you should refuse to be moulded by your environment.’¹

T.K. SWAMINATHAN, *THE INDIAN EMIGRANT*, 1914

Oswald Pirow, former South African Minister of Justice, once announced that ‘Nehru knows the West ... but he is only a coolie.’² Nehru may have been a ‘coolie’ to Pirow, but he was a hero to many Indian South Africans, as well as Africans whose attraction to pan-Africanism partly took inspiration from Nehru’s commitment to global de-colonisation. Nelson Mandela wrote in 1980 that in the anti-colonial struggles in the post-war period, ‘there could hardly be a liberation movement or national leader who was not influenced one way or another by the thoughts, activities and example of Pandit Nehru and the All India Congress ... I find that my own ideas were influenced by his experience.’

Nehru influenced the thinking of many young militants in South Africa. When Gandhi died on 31 January 1948, Dadoo lamented that ‘that great champion of our cause, the Father of our struggle is no more with us ... But we are fortunate in having a worthy successor [Nehru] whom we have accepted as our undisputed leader and adviser.’³ In Nehru, they had someone who had through the twentieth century taken a deep interest in the struggle in South Africa, as far as the “Indian Question” in Africa was concerned, though, Nehru was adamant that Indians were part of Africa and their struggles should reflect

this. He said on 15 September 1946:

While India must necessarily aim at protecting the interests and honour of her nationals abroad ... we do not seek any special privileges against the inhabitants of the countries concerned. This would apply especially to African countries where the inhabitants are relatively backward and have been exploited in the past by others, including to some extent even Indians. Our objective should be to help in the rapid progress of these African territories towards political and economic freedom.

Nehru was keen to ensure that Indians did not seek special privileges vis-à-vis the African majority, and in this his views were progressive. But his world view also reflected a modernising imperative. What did he mean by 'relatively backward' and in relation to whom? Nehru once called dams 'the temples of modern India' and defined progress in terms of industrialisation. While the moderniser Nehru's views could easily translate into Eurocentricism, he was committed to the struggle against apartheid, and insisted that Indians join in an alliance with Africans. During the 1946 passive resistance campaign, for example, he emphasised that the struggle in South Africa was:

... not merely an Indian issue ... It concerns ultimately the Africans who have suffered so much by racial discrimination and suppression ... Therefore, the Indians should help in every way and cooperate with the Africans. Indians should remember that they were the guests of the Africans ... We do not want any Indians to go abroad to exploit the people of any other country.⁴

These arguments may have been progressive politically but were also contradictory. Would Indians be eternal 'guests' in South Africa? And did this mean that they could be asked to leave at any time? Contrary to Nehru's limited horizon, Monty and Dadoo expressed a clear desire to be full and equal citizens in a free South Africa.

The struggles of Indian South Africans had always been linked to the struggles for freedom in India. Indentured labourers arriving in 1860 carried with them

memories of the 1857 mutiny. During Gandhi's stay in South Africa, the language of upholding India's "dignity" as a way to mobilise was paramount. Gandhi's departure did not diminish this link, nor was he loath to intervene directly in local politics. When Gandhi was observing a fast in 1943, there was a 'solemn gathering' at the Durban City Hall where 'Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Parsees offered prayers for the preservation of the life of the greatest living Indian – Mahatma Gandhi.'⁵ Dr Goonam chaired a meeting of women where speeches were given in Hindi, Tamil and Gujarati, and a resolution passed that the British Government was 'offending womanhood by imprisoning Mrs Gandhi, Mrs Sarojini Naidu and other women.'⁶

Important events on the Indian calendar were observed in Durban. The Indian Independence Day celebration was organised annually on 26 January from 1942 by the Indian League of Durban. Portraits of Sarojini Naidu, Gandhi, Nehru and Mawlana Azad were hung on stage as the history of each was recounted, and the 'playing of national songs added to the atmosphere of solemnity.'⁷ Pictures of Nehru adorned many an Indian home, Muslims looked to Mawlana Kalam Azad for inspiration, while Subhash Chandra Bose was an icon for young activists. Mac Maharaj recalled in his memoirs:

At home there were four photographs – of Gandhi, Nehru, Maulana Kalam Azad, and Subhash Chandra Bose. Nehru, Azad, and Bose were the lynchpins of the Indian Youth Congress. They were the young Turks. Bose argued for open warfare against Britain during the Second World War to achieve India's independence...Bose was a hero to me. I saw Gandhi as a hero, but I was prepared at that age to favour Bose. I was still of the view that the enemy of my enemy is my friend.⁸

As much as there was discussion of Nehru's support for the oppressed, so was there also talk about his relationship with Edwina Mountbatten, the wife of Lord Mountbatten, who was appointed Viceroy of India to oversee its independence. It was clear, Judd writes, 'that a passionate relationship soon developed between Nehru and Lady Mountbatten ... a curious triangular relationship in which the

close physical relationship between the leader of Congress and the last Vicereine seems not to have disrupted the warm friendship between Mountbatten and Nehru.⁹ It would appear that there was some substance to the rumours titillating Indians on the streets of Durban – the Mountbattens' daughter, Pamela, recorded that 'towards the end of the months we spent in India, the immediate attraction between my mother and Panditji blossomed into love.' In May 1947, the Mountbattens went to Mashobra with Nehru, who recalled in a letter to Edwina in March 1957: 'Suddenly I realised that there was a deeper attachment between us, that some uncontrollable force drew us to one another. I was overwhelmed and at the same time exhilarated by this new discovery. We talked more intimately as if some veil had been removed and we could look into each other's eyes without fear or embarrassment.'¹⁰ Whispers around this relationship served to enhance the mystique surrounding Nehru among local Indians.

When India achieved independence on 15 August 1947, Monty requested that 'this happy occasion of our Motherland's march towards her cherished goal be celebrated in a fitting manner.' Indian businesses closed and religious bodies held 'special services for the safety and progress of our Motherland.' A meeting at Albert Park drew 15 000 people; the flags of India and Pakistan were unfurled side by side; pictures of Gandhi, Nehru, Mawlana Azad, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and Sarojini Naidu adorned the platform, and women stood on stage in saris in the national colours of India and Pakistan.¹¹

While a combination of factors pushed the NIC and TIC into a substantial working relationship with the ANC, this did not break the link with the Indian nationalist cause, although it took on a different guise. As the British conceded ground in India, so did Indian South Africans call on the Indian government to apply sanctions on South Africa, recall its High Commissioner, and raise the issue at the UN in order 'to uphold the honour and dignity of Indians abroad.'¹² The Delhi government severed trade links with South Africa and withdrew High Commissioner Ramrao Deshmukh.¹³ This strengthening of links with India did not reinforce ethnic exclusivity, but helped facilitate the embracing of

a broader alliance against apartheid because Nehru was determined to locate India in anti-colonialism struggles and refused to deal with organisations proposing racial exclusivity.

The Indian government promptly indicted South Africa's racial policies before the UN. Its delegation wrote to UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie on 26 June 1946 that the treatment of Indians in South Africa be placed on the UN agenda when it met in October. Nehru took office on 1 September 1946, and India's delegation to the UN was led by his sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, and included the likes of Krishna Menon and Sir Maharaj Singh.



*Soirabjee Rustomjee (fifth from left back row) with the Indian delegation to the UN.
Mrs Pandit is seated in front.*

© Khorshed Ginwala

The Indian delegation faced an uphill struggle as most of what would come to be known as the “Third World” was still under the yoke of imperial rule. Britain and France vetoed calls for sanctions against South Africa. Smuts, who led the official South African delegation, was confronted by two separate South African Indian delegations. ANC president Dr A.B. Xuma, H.A. Naidoo, and

Sorabjee Rustomjee represented the PRC, while A.I. Kajeje, P.R. Pather, and Albert Christopher represented the moderate SAIC.¹⁴ Dr Xuma's presence in New York 'forever altered the political dynamic in South Africa, between black and white. The new theatre of battle created a new space in which the ANC openly contested white hegemony, with important allies from all corners of the World.'¹⁵ Dr Xuma's trip was funded by Sorabjee Rustomjee, who came up with the idea after meeting with Nehru in India.¹⁶

The choice of H.A. Naidoo was inspired. He was a brilliant orator, enjoyed the support of the Indian masses, and through his "education" as a communist and union organiser, was well versed in international relations. On 8 November 1946, H.A. and Dr Xuma addressed a meeting on West 26th Street where prominent African-American leaders, including Paul Robeson and Max Yergan, were in attendance. The *New York Times* reported this meeting on 9 November 1946 under the heading 'African Leaders Assail Gen. Smuts'. H.A. also raised £250 for the CP's legal costs. From New York, H.A. went to the Empire Conference in London where he was given a standing ovation when he addressed the annual conference of the British CP in February 1947.¹⁷

When the UN took up the question, the Indian delegation called for a Commission, but eventually supported a proposal by France and Mexico that the Indian and South African governments hold a round-table conference and report to the UN the following year. This was adopted by 32 votes to 15 on 8 December 1946.¹⁸ A.I. Kajeje was not impressed with the performance of the Indian delegation. In a letter to Ahmed Ismail, President of the SAIC, on 22 November 1946, he described the speech of the Indian delegation as 'short and well written but without meat and it was delivered rather ineffectually and lifeless.' In contrast, Smuts's speech was 'strong, and as someone said, devastating. Its main theme was that legally the UN had no jurisdiction to intervene in the domestic affairs of a Sovereign state.' Smuts tried to circulate the Pretoria Agreement with the consent of the Indian delegation but ...

Sorabjee objected, and threatened the members of the Indian delegation that he would report them to Gandhi. Sorabjee has the ear of Mrs Pandit. He is there

morning and evening reporting to her. The other members of the delegation are weak, and there is no coordination. They have all quarrelled among themselves except for Sir Maharaj Singh, Deshmukh and Sapru. Sir Bagpur was brought in from Washington by Mrs Pandit to assist in the drafting of the speech. Bagpur knows his stuff but his outlook is more moderate than moderate. Nevertheless overall the day went to India. The Indians are a queer bunch and don't know their own mind.

The South African government also circulated a pamphlet depicting mosques, temples, and 'happy gatherings' of Indians playing sport as well as medical facilities and schools built by the government. Kajee persuaded the Indian delegation to sponsor a pamphlet to counter this which he prepared and circulated. Kajee also bemoaned the fact that while 'the matter of finance is pressing' for the SAIC delegation, 'Sorabjee has \$30 000 to spend. Of course, he has a car at his disposal costing 30 to 40 dollars a day. We use tubes, trains and catch a ride from the India delegation whenever we can. Lake Success, where the committee meetings are held, is 24 miles away and Flushing Meadows where Assembly meets is 15 miles.'² Kajee was based at the Commodore Hotel in New York.¹⁹

On 9 September 1947, Ashwin Choudree and A.I. Meer, representing the TIC and NIC respectively, attended the UN session. They met with J.J. Singh, President of the India League, the Pakistani Ambassador to the US, M.A.H. Ispahani, and the Indian delegation led by Mrs Pandit. A.I. Meer prepared a pamphlet "South Africa Defies UN: What Next?" and when Rustomjee arrived at the end of September, this pamphlet as well as another, "Indian Question in South Africa" were published on behalf of the Council for Asiatic Rights. The Reverend Scott joined them on 10 November. According to Meer, 'his name and fame had preceded him' and this ensured that they were given wide coverage in the press. Meer addressed meetings organised by the India League, the National Association for the Advancement of the Coloured People (NAACP), and Progressive Citizens of America. The latter meeting was addressed by African American activists like Henry Wallace, Paul Robeson and Lena Home

with over 20 000 people in attendance. Meer left New York on 4 December 1947 for London as a guest of the India League. There, he gave interviews to newspapers and MPs, and addressed a number of organisations.²⁰ A.I. Meer was one of the first persons banned in Natal.

Smuts met his match in Vijayalakshmi who had played an active role in the Indian National Congress (INC) and was imprisoned by the British on three occasions. She disputed Smuts's view that the Indian issue was a domestic matter:

It is by no means a local one, nor can we accept any contention that a gross and continuing outrage of this kind against the fundamental principles of the Charter can be claimed by anyone to be a matter of no concern to this Assembly ... Millions look to us to resist and end imperialism in all its forms, even as they rely on us to crush the last vestiges of Fascism and Nazism.²¹

India, she said, had 'a moral obligation to those Indians whose ancestors had been sent to a remote land on the clear understanding that they would enjoy equality of rights and opportunities.'²² Krishna Menon has written that 'undaunted [by Smuts], Vijayalakshmi spoke with 'clarity, vigour, emotion and occasional flashes of irony.'²³ After another of her stellar performances, the SAIC sent a telegram of congratulations: 'Indian community and all oppressed people deeply grateful (of) your untiring efforts and brilliant advocacy (of) our righteous cause.'²⁴ The UN resolution amounted to little since there was no means to enforce it. India wrote to the South African government in December 1946, February 1947 and again in April 1947 about scheduling round-table discussions, but these overtures were ignored.²⁵

Smuts wrote to Nehru on 18 June 1947 that the NIC did not represent the Indian masses: 'Groups representing all classes of Indians are dissatisfied with the conduct of the affairs by the Natal Congress, whose leadership is under an ideological influence of which they disapprove and whose approach they consider harmful to Indian interests.' Monty and Dadoo countered that Smuts was referring to...

... a handful of discredited individuals who had formed the Natal Indian Organisation at a secret meeting behind closed doors guarded by officers of the C.I.D. supplied by the Government. This handful of disgruntled individuals danced to the tune of the Prime Minister and indulged in flirtations with him while delicate correspondence affecting the future of Indians was going on between the two Governments.²⁶

India reported to the UN on 2 December 1947 that Smuts had declined the offer of a round-table conference. In May 1949, the General Assembly again passed a resolution calling for round-table discussions but the Indian government's letter dated 4 July 1949 was ignored by the South African government.²⁷ The UN conference 'dramatically altered the political landscape in South Africa. White South Africans became increasingly self-conscious, drifting to the right, while world support for their cause energised black South Africans.' One result was Smuts's defeat to the NP in 1948.²⁸

In March 1947, the two old Edinburgh mates, Monty and Dadoo, visited India in the midst of the passive resistance campaign. India, aside from being the "mother country", was also a significant part of international left-wing discourse of national liberation. They were given a rousing farewell at a packed Gandhi Hall on the eve of their departure on 11 March 1947 and responded with fighting words:

We are leaving the shores of South Africa at a critical and decisive phase in her history. The Smuts Government has shown a bankruptcy in leadership in dealing with the acute post-war problems ... Instead of giving a strong lead on the decision of the UN, the Government is guilty of ... fostering race antagonism [which] has begun to express itself in the boycott of Indian traders and the open propaganda of our vulgarly fascist bodies ... The historic joint meeting last Sunday between representatives of the ANC, the NIC and the TIC, and the Joint Declaration ensuing therefrom, have paved the way for greater and closer cooperation between the African and the Indian people ... We appeal to all true democrats and men of goodwill in the European community to throw in their

lot wholeheartedly on the side of progress. They can either ... go forward in step with the world democratic forces to a greater and happier South Africa or allow the fascist forces to lead us into racial antagonism, a totalitarian regime and war. The battle for democracy is on! *Au Revoir*.

The 'historic joint meeting' was Monty and Dadoo's declaration of co-operation in March 1947 with Dr A.B. Xuma, pledging 'the fullest co-operation between the African and Indian peoples.'²⁹ It was not simply a bolt out of the blue, but a result of the lessons learnt from the campaign, Dr Xuma's visit to the UN with H.A. Naidoo and Sorabjee Rustomjee, and Dadoo's increasing links with the ANC through his membership of the CP and participation in the 1946 African mine-workers' strike. The visit gave Monty access to prominent political and community leaders, including Gandhi and Nehru. Monty recorded the trip in his diary.

10 March: Vandayar. Films, Left for Johannesburg 11:00 am.

11 March: Left 5:30 am Palmerfontein. Arrived at Nairobi at 2:00 pm. Met by thousands at aerodrome. Press conference 5:50 pm. Meeting at 6:30. Azad. Public Dinner 8:00 pm. Guest of Kassam Kanji.

12 March. Left for Khartoum. Arrived 11:30 am. Arrived in Cairo 5:30 pm. Met Advisor to Arab League. Margaret Pope at the port.

13 March: 10:00 am. Told of departure for Karachi at noon. 12:00 – Assam port; 2:30 pm – Left Cairo.

14 March: Arrived at 6:00 am. Met by Mayarant Sudhiva; Conference at 3:00 pm. Swami Kistavand M.L.A. and Chairman Provincial Congress with his executive visited us at 8:00 pm at hotel.

15 March: 8:30 am – Addressed Congress High School; 10:00 am – K. Punniah, editor of Sind Observer; 11:00 am – Invited to Legislative Assembly; 3:00 pm. Met C.H.V. Pathy [photographer / journalist for weekly journal Free India]; 6:00 pm – Drive with Mayor; Met Dr Chockram – Sind Province C.C. President.

16 March: 7:30 am – Mayor Reception; 4:00 pm – met Congress workers;

8:00 pm – Dinner at R. Puna; Major Mahomed Aksee Sikwani.

17 March: 10:00 am – C.H.V. Pathy; 2:30 pm – Congress students; 4:00 pm – Shaikh Ghoolam; 8:30 pm – Ranchod Ward; Dinner – Dr A.A. Khan.



India calling.

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18 March: Nanski; Mir Ahmed Talpier; Left for Karachi; Arrived 6:00 am. Met by Dr Appadurai, S. Mehta; Pandit Rungaru; Dr Lundra Sunderam. Guest of Lala Shankerahan. [They were met at the airport by Mrs Sarojini Naidoo, Dr Appodurai, Dr Lanka Sunderam Mehta, Pandit Kunzru and Dr Jivray Gandhi].

19 March: 10:30 am – Addressed Jawaharlal Nehru at Assembly; Left for Lucknow at 2:00 pm. Arrived 4:00 pm. Met the Pundit Odaught at 6:00 pm; Left for Patna at 8:00 pm. [At Lucknow they met Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit. The Hon. Sinha, Prime Minister of Bihar, and Dr Sayed Mahmud, the Minister of Development received them].

20 March: Arrived at Patna. Met by Chief Commander of Police and Congress

representatives. Guest of government. Left for Masauri with J.J. Singh. Met Gandhiji. Had one-hour talk. Lunch. More talk. Chat with Abdul Gaffur Khan. Went to Harley. Saw acreage devastated by floods. Prayer meeting at 7:00 pm. 50 000. Left for Patna.

21 March: Met at Patna by P.M. Shri Singh. Congress President. Left Patna by rail to Delhi.

22 March: Arrived at 8:00 am at Constitution Social. Met Mr Sunderam. Met various delegates, etc. [On return to New Delhi they met the Chinese, Vietnamese, Burmese and Ceylonese delegations to the Asian Conference].

23 March: 4:30 pm. Asia Conference. Great gathering at Old Fort Purana Qila (500 years old).

[24 March: Monty and Dadoo addressed a mass meeting of 20 000 Bombay workers under the auspices of Trade Unions. Representatives of Girni Kamgar Union, the Firestone Workers Union, and the Steel Workers garlanded them].

[26 March: Reception by Muslim Journalists Association presided over by Dr Abdul Hamid Kazi, a member of the All-India Moslem League Council. Dr Kazi assured Monty and Dadoo of their full support. B.G. Kher, Prime Minister of Bombay, gave an afternoon tea party on behalf of the Bombay Provincial Government Cabinet. Kher sent 'my greetings to my countrymen in South Africa.' Morarjee Desai, Minister in the Bombay Presidency Government, arranged for Dadoo and Monty to address a meeting of Congress Socialists where a resolution of solidarity was passed. In the evening they were entertained to dinner by Mr Chagla at his home].

27 March: Baldeo Sing; Babu Rajendragosad.

28 March: Met South African students at Aligarh; Special film at 3:00 pm; 6:00 pm – Viceroy; 9:00 pm – Nehru At Home.

29 March: Scripts for broadcast.

[30 March: Reception by the Provincial Congress Committee. Its president S.K. Patel promised that India would give greater assistance to South African Indians after independence. While accepting that Indians had South African nationality Patel said that India reserved the right to support their 'kith and kin.' The Imperial

Citizenship Association under the presidency of Sir Chimanlal Setalvad gave a reception in honour of Monty and Dadoo in the evening].³⁰



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Monty addressing listeners of All India Radio

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Monty and Dadoo attended the All-Asia Conference from 23 March to 2 April 1947. The setting highlighted feelings of history in the making: Purana Qila was ‘a large, somewhat rundown yet still majestic stone structure built by Sher Shah Suri in the sixteenth century.’ The opening and closing sessions drew crowds in excess of 20 000, with Nehru giving the inaugural address and Gandhi the concluding talk.³¹ Nehru told delegates that ‘there was a widespread awareness that the time had come for us, peoples of Asia, to meet together, to hold together, to advance together.’³² There were 190 delegates from countries like Afghanistan, Indonesia, Arab League, Korea, Indo-China, Malaya, Palestine, Soviet Republics, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tibet, and Nepal. Many would make their mark on the world stage in subsequent decades. They were unanimous that the first step to freedom was the ‘liquidation of imperial regimes’ followed by the establishment of socialist economies free from foreign capital.³³ The conference was closed on 2 April 1947 by Gandhi who, in a stirring speech that would be one of his last, spoke of the pernicious effects of European cultural imperialism:

The first of the wise men was Zoroaster. He belonged to the East. He was followed by Buddha who belonged to the East – India. Who followed Buddha? Jesus, who came from the East. Before Jesus was Moses. And after Jesus came Mohamed. Is there a single person in the world to match these men of Asia ... What I want you to understand is the message of Asia. It is not to be learnt through the western spectacles or by imitating the atom bomb ... In this age of democracy, in this age of awakening of the poorest of the poor, you can redeliver this message with the greatest emphasis ... It is up to you to tell the world of its wickedness and sin – that is the heritage your teachers and my teachers have taught Asia.

Monty and Dadoo, returned to South Africa on 28 May 1947, inspired by the retreat of the British in India and the confidence of the nationalist movements. The importance of the Indian nationalist struggle in radicalising South Africans was highlighted by A.I. Meer’s son, Unus, a student at the Grant Medical

School. Unus was in Bombay with the likes of Chota Motala, Omar Hassim, M.C. Meer, Ebrahim Bhorath, and Ismail Meer (Fatima Meer's brother) in the early 1940s, where they took an active part in student politics. O.V. Jooma, for example, was General Secretary of the student body at Grant Medical College and participated in student uprisings against the British from 1942, and Ismail Meer was joint secretary of the leftist Bombay Students Union. Students were incredibly active in the political life of the country, among the Gandhians, Socialists and Communists.³⁴ South African students were caught in the swirl of this heady revolutionary atmosphere; Chota, Omar, Ismail and Unus Meer were at Gowalia Tank, Bombay, when Gandhi moved the Quit India Resolution in August 1942. Unus Meer recalls Monty and Dadoo's visit:

Dadoo called me because of the connection with the Meers and I ended up going with them to all their meetings, organising some of the meetings and sorting out their problems. They addressed a meeting of the Garmi Kamdar Union which was the biggest trade union in India ... under the control of the CP. Incidentally, the Indian press – while passive resistance was on – used to have continuous coverage on what was happening here. Everyday it made front page news. Always South African Indian news was prominent in the Indian press. I went to one of the large Leftist, anti-British papers ... a fellow called Karanja was the editor. I spoke to him and said that my father was prepared to act as your correspondent for no financial gain. So I arranged for my father to send news regularly. So we [Monty and Dadoo] went to that paper. We went to the Home Minister of Bombay – Moraji Desai. We had a long discussion there on the Congress. Then the CP of India headquarters was in Bombay. We were invited for lunch and we had a talk there with the top three people, P.C. Josh, a man called Dr Adhikari and Randhiwe. In Bombay, Dadoo, because of his Aligarh background, knew a lot of Urdu and we arranged *qawwalis* as he enjoyed that sort of thing.

When we landed at Madras station, on the platform there must have been about five to six thousand people with banners. Now both Monty and Naicker did imbibe a bit and Indians were very puritanical, the CP and the Congress too. They were very strict about how you dressed and behaved. So these people

asked, 'Where's Dr Dadoo and Naicker?' I said, 'Wait, wait, sit here.' I rushed over and found these two saying, 'U-n-u-s ... how you? Have one,' and so on, and jumping around. I said, 'Look, there's a serious ...' They said, 'don't worry, don't worry,' and came and looked. I never saw two people become so sober and so clear so quickly. In Madras there were lots of ministerial meetings. Naicker was interested in South Indian music and that was the season where they have *kacheri*, classical Tamil music. You'd have it all over the city and different families would organise this. I used to accompany him quite a lot to those in the evenings. We even went to see Tamil movies which I found most confusing sitting next to him and he's explaining to me. In Madras, we met Sir Aliga Chettiar. He was a brilliant man who had a whole city named after him – Aliga Parnagar – just like you have Tatanagar after the Tata's.



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We went to Baroda for a meeting. Now that was strange. They were still divided, Congress, Muslim League, CP. So, the Congress people said we will not have a joint meeting with the Muslim League, the Muslim League says we won't have anything with the Congress and both won't have anything to do with the communists. So Dadoo said, 'look, you [Unus] better sort this out.' So I went to

Baroda. I stayed at the government guest house and went first to the Congress people, then the Muslim League, and then the CP. I said, 'It doesn't matter, I am convening the meeting. Will you all come?' So the meeting was organised in Baroda under my name.

The Indian public regarded them as great, great heroes. They knew about Dadoo and Naicker. In Madras, at the railway station there were about five thousand people. At the Bombay meeting there were forty to fifty thousand at the Parel Ground. They got on excellently. Monty was a very sincere man, sincere in what he did, a man with high passion in what he believed in, a man prepared to make sacrifices. He was a very good leader. Dadoo was a great intellectual. He could talk on lots of things. I myself had a great time because they were friendly, jovial, intelligent people, and politically I was in accord with them.

Shortly after his return, Monty told the 1947 conference of the NIC that every political party in India had pledged its full support:

During our short stay in our Motherland we travelled extensively from West to East and South to North. In our ears still ring their determined and passionate promise to give us all possible help in our unequal battle for fundamental rights. We were inspired by the fighting spirit of the masses who everywhere encouraged us to fight with increased vigour. India recognised that we in South Africa were not only fighting for our just rights but also to preserve the national honour and dignity of all Indians ... A mighty India is arising and will allow no country to trifle with her sons and daughters in other countries.³⁵

The Asian Conference was a seminal moment for Monty:

The unqualified success of the Conference was the manifestation of the indomitable urge for freedom, culture, unity and strength. It was a challenge to dying and tottering imperialism ... When any item on the agenda was discussed the delegates went straight to the root of the problem which, when unearthed in each case, was found to be imperialism. And they decided unanimously that as a prerequisite to progress this decaying root must be pulled out and hurled

into the dust bin of history...We took the opportunity of meeting and discussing our problems and struggle with delegates ... fresh from the trenches, the battle-scarred patriots ... This is a reminder to us that Freedom must be won and



Monty and Dadoo with Gandhi.

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cannot come as a gift ... Our struggle is not merely a struggle for fundamental rights of the Indian minority in South Africa but a spearhead of the struggle of the oppressed people against the establishment of this Master plan ... Today we pledge with cold-blooded courage that we will rather stand on our legs and fight and die if need be than grovel on our knees and live for the crumbs that may fall to us.³⁶

They received many messages of support from India. For example, Morarji Desai, Secretariat, Government of Bombay, wrote on 21 April 1947:

I was very glad to meet you to discuss the critical times through which you are all passing in South Africa on account of the unjust and inhuman attitude of the whites there. The days of racial superiority of the whites are fast ending and the sooner they realise it the better it will be for them and our happiness. The duty of my Indian brothers in South Africa is very clear. They ought to make common cause with the Africans, and to fight for the fundamental rights of all

human beings to participate equally in their government. I am proud of the non-violent struggle you are all carrying on to get your legitimate rights of equal citizenship and have no doubt that you will succeed in it if you continue to do so in the spirit in which you have started it. Yours is the most righteous cause and you are fighting with the cleanest weapons – truth and non-violence as taught by Mahatma Gandhi.



All-Asia Conference.

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The President and members of the Vanniakula Kshatriya Mahasangam, Madras, presented Monty and Dadoo with a plaque on 27 April 1947:

No nation ever became glorious without bitter struggle and sacrifice. You are holding the flag of India aloft by such means and we feel particularly gratified that one of their own members [Monty] aided by his colleague, is in the forefront of the battle for freedom. The fight you have put up against the Ghetto Act and the indignities you have suffered at the hands of an arrogant race, who have no intellectual pretensions to superiority over us, but pride themselves on having white skin forgetting that pigment is due only to climatic conditions, have made deep and indelible impressions upon our minds and we all passionately look forward to that day when pride would be humbled and humility, universal love and the feeling of brotherhood will triumph. You have laid the foundation for

this and all honour to you. Your names will go down in history as the great makers of nations and will always be coupled when the South African questions are discussed with that great name of Mahatma Gandhi. The Poorest of us who have no silver and gold to give you, give instead our hearts and tears and pray God that He will prosper and bless you.

The highlight of Monty's visit was meeting Gandhi, which he reflected upon following the Mahatma's death:

To be with Mahatma Gandhi was like the vision of a dream. I was not going to meet a stranger. His teachings had become part and parcel of my life. His autobiography had been my Bible. Yet to meet one's hero in flesh and blood was to be such a noble experience ... We were ushered in his room...Gandhi was sitting cross-legged with the spinning wheel in front of him. We had come to meet the Father of the Indian Nation, and the welcome we received was naturally that of a dear father to his affectionate children. We will never forget the warm smile which lighted upon both of us – the smile of the hero we had loved and admired for 30 years.



Gandhi at the All-Asia Conference.

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“Do you speak Gujarati, Naicker?” he enquired. I had to confess my ignorance of this language. “I understand your difficulties,” he replied. “Besides your own Tamil, you have to study English, and therefore there is not much time left for other languages.” We gave him an account of the progress of the struggle, and were surprised to find that he had found time to keep in touch with the latest developments of our satyagraha movement. We discussed every phase of the struggle, and at every point he intervened with observations that had the effect of illuminating the subject. Throughout, he kept on emphasising the central lesson of the *satyagraha* movement ... that non-cooperation was not the weapon of those who found a shelter in a negative attitude of life; it was a positive action leading straight to success if the principles were not compromised. South African Indians, he said, would see the milky way if they followed the example of the mother country. He also advised patience. “Success never comes in a flood.” When we took leave of him he asked us to come again after we had completed our tour in India. When we met for the second time ... Bapuji was eager to know the response we had met from the various leaders in India and he was glad to learn that everywhere we had received enthusiastic assistance. We were going away with his blessings and this made our work all the more easy. By his death, Gandhi came nearer to us. It is not in a spirit of mourning that we must honour the memory of the great departed. It is our pride and our delight that he was born on Indian soil. It will be our privilege to follow his teachings. In the realisation that our outlook will be informed by his ideals lies the hope of the whole Indian race. Let us strive so that his message may find practical application in the heart of all mankind.³⁷

Monty was an adherent of non-violence in the Gandhian tradition, but his unquestioning acceptance of Gandhi’s vision meant that he failed to recognise the contending forces within Indian nationalism, its class basis, the struggles of subalterns outside the gaze of the dominant anti-colonial politics, and also the debates on non-violence itself as a strategy of resistance.³⁸ For Monty, the Indian struggle for independence was encompassed by Gandhian philosophy and leadership, and there is no indication in his speeches and writings that he

engaged with other impulses.

The working classes had their own heroes and leaders who argued, in various ways, that Congress was planning to compromise with the British, and advocated violent uprisings based around a well organised CP and the support of the masses. Factionalism meant that they failed to present a coherent front, allowing Nehru, who understood the meaning and extent of Gandhi's leadership, to emerge as chief.³⁹ One important figure was Dr B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), who was born into a Dalit family and spent a lifetime fighting the caste system. He remains a figure of inspiration to Dalits.⁴⁰ There is no mention of him in Monty's diaries though he was at the height of his influence during Monty's time.

As far as non-violent resistance is concerned, Gandhi saw suffering as a means to a just society, and the cooperation of an opponent was to be secured through the consistent application of truth and justice, and non-cooperation.⁴¹ Monty's preparedness to endure attacks suggests that he absorbed these lessons. Their effectiveness in enlightening whites, however, was debatable. And some in Natal favoured violent resistance. Naroo Babenia has described acts of sabotage that he was involved in while in India.⁴² Chota Motala and Omar Essack regarded satyagraha as having failed the Indian masses, and initially canvassed strongly against non-violent resistance under the banner of the NEUM, while Subha Chandra Bose, who advocated insurrectionary nationalism, struck a chord with the young activists.

Gandhi's August 1942 Quit India campaign led to mass rebellion against the police and army, and took the British a year to quell. Government buildings were set on fire, bombs were set off, transport and communication lines were severed, and electricity supplies were disrupted. Around 100 000 Indians were arrested. The violence associated with the movement was important in making the British accept that their days in India were numbered. This violence cannot be ignored in discussing the road to India's independence. Noting the different strands in the Indian nationalist movement is important to understand more clearly the ways in which local activists were divided on armed struggle.

The trip to India was crucial in renewing old connections in the form of Gandhi. His endorsement of the leadership of Monty and Dadoo and the tactics of passive resistance were crucial. As if to reinforce this link, Monty and Dadoo illegally crossed the Natal/Transvaal border, evoking memories of Gandhi's 1913 march. Importantly, the transnational link did not reinforce a local struggle that was limited to Indians. Here, Nehru was important as he emphasised the building of Indian/African unity. The Indian Congresses were already moving in this direction but the Indian trip solidified this impulse.

The Indian nationalist struggle was important inside in the ANC as well, in ways that ranged from dress (Luthuli's adoption of the Congress cap) to strategy (non-violence). Links were drawn between the historical trajectory of the ANC and Gandhi. It is significant that Luthuli had visited India in 1938 as a delegate to the International Missionary Conference in Madras. As early as 1948 he remarked:

I have no doubt that his [Mahatma Gandhi's] efforts for his people inspired African people such as Dr J.L. Dube and others to concern themselves with seeking human rights for their people in South Africa ... His distinctive and unique contribution was his unshakeable belief in the dignity of man and the efficacy of non-violence as an instrument of struggle for oppressed people ... May those inspired by his philosophy become my undaunted disciples.⁴³

Monty was due to go to the UN in July 1948 but the government denied him a visa. The NIC sent a telegram to Nehru:

We draw your urgent attention to undemocratic and unwarranted action of union government in refusing passport ... Congress satisfied this unprecedented attack on civil liberties of Indian people in South Africa is deliberate and calculated attempt to stifle and black out any adverse expression by voteless, voiceless Indian community ... Nationalist Government has shown hollowness of South African democracy, revealed fascist tendencies and has flagrantly violated fundamental principles of UN charter.

The Delhi-based *India News Chronicle* observed on 25 September 1949 that the South Africa question had ‘become a hardy annual with the UN’ with little achieved.⁴⁴ In October 1948, M.D. Naidoo and Moulvi Cachalia visited India and Pakistan, where they met with Nehru and Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Khan, who were headed to the Commonwealth Conference in London. Dadoo and George Singh met Nehru and Khan in London during the conference. Dadoo and Cachalia also visited India in June 1949 to rally support. At the NIC conference of 24-26 June 1949, Monty said that the ‘fundamental aim’ of the UN was ‘to safeguard human rights on the face of this earth. Signs of the revival of fascism are evident in South Africa ... The question before South Africa is whether it can at this stage of human history defy the world?’ Monty added that at the Commonwealth conference, Nehru had conveyed to Malan ‘the desire of Asia’s teeming millions to free themselves from exploitation ... We hope Dr Malan has returned to this country a wiser man.’

M.D. Naidoo was present at Lake Success in 1949 to advise the Indian delegation which pushed for an international Commission of Enquiry. However, under pressure from other countries, the Indian delegation withdrew this resolution and called for a round table conference. While negotiations between South Africa and India at the UN during Smuts’ reign were described as ‘no more than a game of chess’ it was not even this when the NP came to power.⁴⁵ For Malan, the rules of the game were determined by apartheid. Blacks and whites were to be separate, and white power had carte blanche to checkmate moves to subvert this. The NP ignored successive UN resolutions because of support from traditional allies like the USA, Britain, and the white Dominions of Australia and New Zealand. The *India News Chronicle* observed in 1949:

Apartheid constitutes nothing less than the most blatant defiance of the authority, and an utter disregard of the prestige of the UN...The duty of India is clear. Millions of oppressed people throughout the world are looking to it for leadership and guidance. India must not allow itself to become a pawn in the imperialist strategy of America and Britain. Commonwealth connections

and dollar aid mean nothing if they stand for the perpetuation of racialism and colonialism ...⁴⁶

The South African government reluctantly met with an Indian/Pakistani delegation led by Pandit Kunzru in Cape Town in February 1950. South Africa insisted that it was participating out of goodwill, rather than fulfilling an obligation to the UN and promulgated the Group Areas Act in April 1950, ignoring an Indian request to put this on hold. The Indian government responded in June 1950 that in view of this brazen intransigence there was no point in future meetings.⁴⁷ South Africa boycotted the UN commission of inquiry into apartheid, which reported to the General Assembly in 1955 that South Africa was 'the only government in the world which believes it can carry such a fabulous experiment [apartheid] successfully.'⁴⁸ The Indian High Commission in South Africa was closed in 1954. In 1955, when India secured the exclusion of South Africa from the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Nehru took Moses Kotane and Moulvi Cachalia along as observers. When Oliver Tambo and Dadoo escaped into exile in the early 1960s, Nehru provided them with Indian travel documents and transport from Dar-es-Salaam to London.⁴⁹

Nehru emphasised that the problem of Indians in South Africa could not be separated from the legitimate aspirations of Africans – for example, at a speech in Rajya Sabha on 5 December 1958, he said that the 'question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa has really merged into bigger questions where not only Indians are affected but the whole African population.'⁵⁰ In the Lok Sabha [Upper House of Parliament] on 28 March 1960, following the Sharpeville massacre, Nehru said that 'the people of Indian descent have had to put up with a great deal of discrimination and we have resented that. But the African people have to put up with something infinitely more, and ... our sympathies must go out to them even more than to our kith and kin there.'⁵¹ Under Nehru's leadership, the South African issue was kept high on India's agenda, and he insisted on the need for Indo/African unity.

Nehru's firm stand on apartheid inspired many South Africans' affection

for him. When he died in 1964, Monty sent a letter of condolence to Indira Gandhi:

The SAIC on behalf of Indian South Africans extend to you, the Government and peoples of India our heartfelt condolences at the irreparable loss mankind has suffered at the death of India's beloved Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. The democratic world has lost one of the greatest torchbearers of freedom of our times. He was a great inspiration to peoples the world over who believed in and fought for the brotherhood of man. His entire life was dedicated to opposition to all forms and the dignity of man. With the rest of the democratic world we mourn his loss, for he was to us one of the most outstanding symbols of freedom in this age of conflicts. On this sad occasion we can do no more than pledge to uphold the noble ideals of peace and freedom which were so dear to the hearts of Pandit Nehru. May the almighty give us all courage to sustain this great calamity which has befallen India and the free world.

Nehru's plea for Indo-African unity was to be driven home compellingly when the relative calm between Indians and Africans gave way to a three-day orgy of violence that forced Indians to reassess their relationship with the African majority, and exposed the shortcomings of leadership pacts and the necessity to build alliances forged in joint struggle.

We go back a decade and take up that story.



A formidable duo

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'Oh, they had become arrogant'

The venom of anti-Indian propaganda, the preaching of race hatred from high places...was bound sometime or other to throw the country into a racial conflagration. The frustrated, badly housed and most neglected and exploited section of our population, the Africans, gave vent to the resentment against all these injustices by attacking the least protected section of the population – the Indian people. The tragic happenings have turned the wheels of progress backwards. Fortunately the African and Indian leadership was not wanting...The basis has been laid for genuine cooperation. We must see that this foundation is built upon soon. The task before us is great and grave.¹

MONTY NAIDOO (1949)

Monty's reference to anti-Indian propaganda in his presidential address in June 1949 was not simply 'speechifying'. The passive resistance campaign had shown in graphic form the feelings of whites towards Indians. In the aftermath of the campaign, white leaders had, among their solutions to the Indian 'problem' proposed 'kicking the Indians into the Bay' and in the opinion of one senator, 'were it not for the danger of being prosecuted for murder, shooting would be a solution of the Indian problem.'² These pronouncements from on high permeated widely in white society. One white resident reflected:

I detested the Indians. When the anti-Indian pogroms began ... I sat down gleefully to write a letter to the NIC. In it I asked if this was not surely the warning to leave South Africa and return to India. The riots did not spread to Pietermaritzburg, where I was then living, but one Sunday afternoon when I was driving with friends through the city's main street, I had a glimpse of an African running towards an elderly Indian, balancing on one foot with his arm raised

to shoulder level, and kicking out and upwards at the old man's face...The old Indian was petrified. I was disgusted at the time, but only as I might have been disgusted by cruelty, say, to a dog.³

But racial stereotyping also infected black peoples, a point made powerfully by Ben Kies:

The white minority looks upon the African as a 'raw kaffir' and such he has been to the majority of coloureds and Indians. The white minority looks upon the coloured as a 'bastard Hottentot' and such he has been to most of the Africans and Indians. The white minority looks upon the Indian as a 'bloody coolie', and such he has been to most Africans and coloureds. The coloured is told he is superior because the 'blood of the white' flows in his veins – and he has believed this. The Indian has been told he is superior because he belongs to a great nation with a mighty culture – and he has believed this ... the slaves have taken over the segregationist ideology of their master.⁴

While pointing to the invective of whites as one cause of the riots, Monty understood that to simply blame white collusion was naive. He rightly identified the terrible conditions under which Africans lived in a rapidly expanding city as a cause of frustration. George Simmel's 'The Stranger' (1908) argued that 'throughout the history of economics, the stranger everywhere appears as the trader, or the trader as stranger.' The image of the 'trader as stranger' predominated in African testimony before the Riots Commission. In a context of widespread poverty and terrible living conditions, the "alienness" of Indians marked them as convenient targets for retribution. Because of the way in which the urban economy took shape in Durban, Africans symbolised demand, while Indians symbolised supply around many points of contact.⁵ As Prashad points out, 'the merchant appears to be the decisive exploiter and oppressor, while financial houses are protected by their spatial invisibility and by their crafty mechanisms that create economic distance.'⁶ White elites were absent from the immediacy of this terrain.

Monty's remark that the task to build Indo-African unity was 'great and

grave' was perceptive, for this continues to haunt well into post-Apartheid South Africa.⁷ In a way he also made an auto-critique of the limitations of the Doctors Pact. He showed awareness that the Pact was a meeting of individuals rather than something that gripped the imagination of the masses. As the 1950s unfolded, Monty would dedicate his life to ensuring that it became a more enduring Alliance. The joint declaration of co-operation with Dr Xuma was facilitated by the unfolding passive resistance campaign and Dadoo's links with the ANC through his membership of the CP. The Pact was the most public affirmation that the struggle of Indians could not be fought in isolation from Africans, and was the first tangible signal of the commitment to translating the struggle from a sectional one seeking comparative equality with whites, to defeating segregation for the benefit of all oppressed South Africans. This attempt to forge a different sense of political identity, one not based on racial exclusivity, would face severe tests.

Two years after the Doctors' Pact, its hopes were dramatically challenged when large-scale rioting broke out in Durban on the afternoon of Thursday 13 January 1949. Details of the incident that sparked the riots are somewhat hazy. The accepted version is that George Madondo, an African youth of 14, asked a 16-year-old Indian shop assistant, Danrajh, for a cigarette. They got into an argument and Madondo slapped Danrajh, whose employer, Harilal Basanth, pushed Madondo through a glass window. Madondo was cut on the head and taken to hospital, where he was treated and discharged. Basanth was found guilty of common assault a fortnight later and fined one pound.⁸ This seemingly minor altercation proved a lightning rod for the most violent confrontation between African and Indian in South Africa.

The incident took place late in the afternoon at the Indian market, an area that daily saw thousands of Africans and Indians jostling for space as they waited for buses to ferry them in and out of the city at the bus rank. Madondo's assault set off a spate of African attacks on Indians, starting in Victoria Street, but quickly spreading to Grey Street and Warwick Avenue, and from the Indian quarter outwards, to Tollgate, Musgrave Road, Mayville, Cato Manor, and Overport.

By 11:00 pm, 22 Indians were admitted to King Edward Hospital.⁹ When the violence first started, NIC officials contacted the Police District Command at Wentworth, who took no action. They met with the police on Friday morning (14 January) and were assured that ‘precautionary measures would be taken to prevent further outbreaks.’ But police inaction allowed the violence to continue for several days.¹⁰

The riots occurred in two phases. The first began immediately after Madondo’s assault amidst wild rumours that Madondo’s head had been impaled on a railing outside the Grey Street mosque. This phase subsided by midnight.¹¹ On Friday morning, Indian workers were attacked by residents of the Dalton Road location, and around lunchtime, 2000 Africans marched out of the Beerhall in Grey Street and shattered shop windows, attacked Indian traders and shop assistants, and stoned vehicles. They were joined by workers from the Point area. West Street, Commercial Road, Broad Street and Pine Street became no-go areas. Looting followed, with G.H. Calpin reporting that some whites joined in looting Indian shops. One rickshaw puller was seen making off with a full load of women’s shoes.¹² This is probably not what a shop owner had in mind when he placed a large banner outside his shop: ‘Smash and Grab Sale.’¹³

There was minimal deployment of police, in spite of one compound official telling a *Daily News* reporter on Friday that ‘from snatches of conversation I have heard between Natives in the compounds, I gather that they are “all set” for another go.’¹⁴ Monty and A.W.G. Champion, president of the ANC in Natal, travelled throughout Durban in vans with loudspeakers to appeal for calm, medical aid, food and clothing. They also issued a joint statement on 14 January:

We are deeply grieved that ... violence and disorder were prevalent to the detriment of large numbers of innocent African and Indian people ... We sincerely appeal for greater tolerance and understanding between our peoples. We sympathise with all those who received injuries ... As leaders we appeal to our respective followers to assist in trying to discourage the wild and false talk which brought about this trouble.¹⁵

Dr Xuma issued a statement on behalf of the ANC Working Committee (WC) on 20 January:

Notwithstanding the assault of an African youth by some Indians, the Union policy of differential and discriminatory treatment of various racial groups is the fundamental contributing cause of racial antagonisms. It has rendered the African the football and servant of all which he silently resents ... The WC appeals to the African people not to be used by other people who desire to further their own political ends at the expense of the African by fostering race hatred. The WC appeals to the leaders of the Indian community to restrain their own people from doing anything that may lead to similar incidents and clashes. The WC is of the opinion that the situation demands a round-table conference of African and Indian leaders including representatives of Indian commercial groups.¹⁶

That Indian commercial groups were singled for special mention was a tacit recognition of the perception that Indian traders were exploiting Africans. However, the ANC's call for calm was not heeded; instead, as workers from the city centre joined the residents of Cato Manor for the normal weekend recreational activities, looting gave way to violent physical attacks on Friday night.¹⁷ Informal networks linking hostel dwellers with the wider African population provided the communication necessary for a full-scale assault, and looting was now accompanied by rape, murder, and the burning of homes.

Swaminathan Gounden lived in Cato Manor and was working at a shoe factory in Jacobs when the riots broke out. When he returned home Friday evening, the bus dropped them off at Booth Road:

The driver wouldn't go any further because the houses were burning. He said, "You get off here and make some plan." We ran behind Ebrahim's Shop and there was a little stream ... we were living in an outbuilding. We went there. I looked. My neighbours' houses are all burning ... my mother is not there, my sister is not there. We saw all the people huddled like the black hole of Calcutta in one little room. I opened the door. I tell you ... the heat that came out, man, so many squashed there. I went inside too and stayed there. In the morning ...

about four o'clock the police came announcing 'whoever is here come out,'... so we got into the police van and they took us to Cato Manor police station. From there ... the SPCA had its headquarters on the top of the hill then. They took us there and we had to sleep in the open veld for one week ... No tents, nothing, open field we were sleeping in. Whilst we were there, Monty, Luthuli and a few others came by lorry. They spoke to the people ... tried to get the people together ... After a week we returned home, stayed there, trying to rehabilitate.

The scenes at Cato Manor were played out in Umbilo, Wentworth, the Point, and Somtseu Road. Children and the aged were equally the victims. Close to midnight on Friday, Indian homes and shops in Umlaas were attacked. When police reinforcements arrived and called on African attackers to give themselves up, the reply was: 'No, we want Indians, not white men.'¹⁸ Cato Manor and Mayville witnessed systematic looting and burning of Indian homes and businesses by men armed with sticks, axes, knives, and iron bars. A reporter for *Indian Opinion* found 'huddled under the flames of one of the burning shops [in Cato Manor] were four women and a dozen weeping children. The male owner was in a grotesque state on the front path, knifed in several places and dying. A younger son staggered in the road with his head split open.'¹⁹ The Van den Heever investigation into the violence would record that 'houses were burnt by the score in the vicinity of Booth Road. Almost all the Indians not evacuated from this area were killed, burnt to death or left dying. While the men were clubbed to death, Indian women and young girls were raped by the infuriated Natives.' The violence was not perpetrated by local Africans but workers from the Point Barracks.²⁰ The *Daily News* carried a report on 15 January that Indians were seen running, some carrying children, in all directions in Cato Manor. A few leapt across a ravine with a fifty-foot drop. The image on Saturday morning was a marked contrast: 'death with burnt houses and shops; the other, peacefully detached as whites hosed and worked their gardens.'²¹

The *Natal Mercury* headline of Saturday 15 January 1949 read, 'Indian Families Shot and Burned. Streets Ablaze. Hundreds Flee.' With the exception of Clairwood, where Indians organised themselves into defensive units, there

was little resistance because of the suddenness and swiftness of the attacks. Congress officials were active day and night attending to complaints all over Durban. According to one report, by Saturday morning the plate glass of every shop was smashed in the city centre. At King Edward, 'a long trail of blood leads to the receiving department' as people tried to 'stem the flow of blood with sheets and towels.' Importantly, it was here, too, that African nurses 'gently' treated injured Indians.²²



'Indian families, shot and burned...' (Natal Mercury)

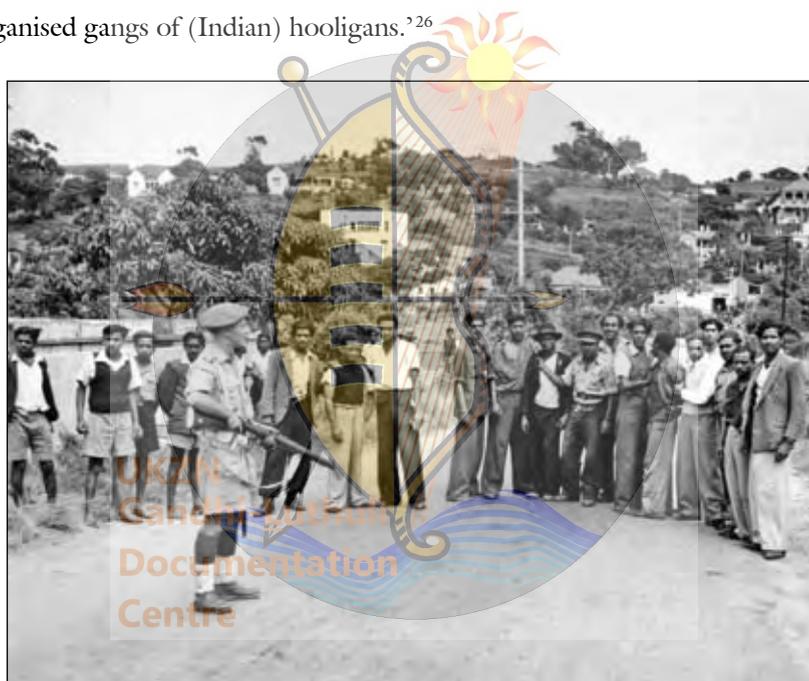
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Order was restored when the army reinforced the police contingent and began patrolling the affected areas.²³ When the riots were finally subdued by force, 142 people had been killed and 1 781 injured.²⁴ More Africans were killed (83 to 59) than Indians, mostly in the confrontation with police. This is a point forgotten by Indians, according to Phyllis Naidoo:

I was told by one of the big bugs in the Teacher's Society in Clairwood, 'Oh, Phyl, we made mincemeat out of them.' I said, 'What do you mean? You know, your gardener or whoever worked for you, could have been on the street and you killed him? Hey, that's barbarous man.' And he was so sorry he told me that

story. There was a doctor and this doctor's wife was the only African woman driving at that time. I met her at McCord's and we talked about the riots. 'Oh,' she said, 'Phyllis, you know, you only know the Indian side of the story, what about the African side of the story?'

Lieutenant-Colonel Kriek, officer in charge of the anti-riot squad, warned Indians to stop 'provocative actions' which may lead to further trouble and cautioned that it was not for them to take the law into their own hands.²⁵ There were complaints, for example, that Africans travelling on Indian-owned buses on the Booth Road and Merebank routes were 'ruthlessly assaulted by organised gangs of (Indian) hooligans.'²⁶



The army begins to patrol the area

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The aftermath of the riots illustrated the impact of the violence. Police ordered that badly charred bodies be photographed and buried without locating families. In addition, 768 injured Indians were treated in hospital and 2 590 refugees were in camps set up in community halls, schools, temples and mosques.²⁷ By

17 January 1949, 44 738 Indians were housed in camps.²⁸ In all, 268 Indian homes were completely burnt and 1 690 partially destroyed and looted. Forty-seven Indian businesses were completely burnt and 791 partially destroyed and looted. Indian-owned vehicles to the value of £49 980 were destroyed.²⁹ In the midst of this carnage, factory owners announced that unless Indians returned to work, they would be dismissed, while the Durban municipality debated whether they should deduct the wages of employees absent because they were affected by the riots.³⁰

Indians, particularly in Cato Manor, were terrified for a long time after. According to Swaminathan, ‘there was a rumour that Africans were going to come back so all the neighbours stayed in one house and barricaded the place. During the day they’d go to their rooms ... for about a month or so.’ Rumours of another attack continued to do the rounds. During the weekend of 24-27 February, for example, security personnel and members of the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade were stationed at Ahmedia School in Cato Manor and the Madressa School in Clairwood. Temporary First Aid stations were set up, and the Fire Department and police were put on alert. Indian-owned buses were parked off at the Madressa School for fear of an attack.³¹ Dr H. Stone of the Durban City Council reported that on 6 March 1949 ‘a large motor lorry with about 60 Natives on the back pulled up in front of the A.Y.S. Camp. The driver extinguished the headlights and occupants began catcalls, etc.’³² On 7 March, Stone reported, the ‘conduct of Natives in the Bellair Road and on the buses was definitely aggressive and the familiar cries of the Zulu were frequently heard.’ On 8 March, the Superintendent of the Madressa Refugee Camp in Clairwood reported that 38 refugees had arrived in the camp because ‘a distinct air of tension now existed in the area surrounding the Clairwood Race Course.’³³

Once calm had been restored, Congress officials took up individual instances of assault, theft, and arson, and assisted Indians to recover their goods. Sixty refugee camps were set up in Durban and suburbs, including Cato Manor, Jacobs, Malvern, Clairwood, Bellair, Montclair, Wentworth, and Durban Central, in schools, temples, and community halls. Volunteer Committees were

established by Congress officials and trade unionists who were on 24-hour duty. The *Natal Mercury* captured the urgency: ‘Thousands of frightened, beaten and bewildered Indians are flocking to the refugee stations in Durban. Who is to care for them, where are they to go, how are they to be fed, what arrangements can be made for sanitation and shelter?’³⁴ Thousands of Africans were also displaced. The *Sunday Tribune* reported on 19 January that ‘Durban’s new problem today is the growing number of Native refugees created by the riots ... A high corporation official said there were now at least 1 500 Native refugees in the various institutions, and this figure was climbing hourly.’³⁵ African refugees were housed at Jacobs and Lamont locations.



Indian refugees

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The Mayor convened a meeting on 18 January to coordinate relief. Two committees were established. One dealt with homeless refugees and the other provided ‘essentials’ to families to restart their lives. M.D. Naidoo (NIC), Khadija Christopher (Durban Indian Child Welfare Society), and A.S. Kajee (NIO) were on the committee for the homeless while J.N. Singh (NIC),

P.R. Pather (NIO), and Mr Moonilal (Bus Owner's Association) were on the second committee.³⁶ Wesley Hall in West Street was opened as a Food Depot and as ordinary citizens brought in food, a convoy of cars and lorries transported this to refugee camps.³⁷ The public donated food (sugar, legumes, canned foods, loaves of bread), medicine, blankets, mattresses, utensils, clothing, and shoes. Within the first week, five tons of food was sent from Stanger alone. Stallholders at the Indian Market provided fruits and vegetables.³⁸

This was insufficient and the NIC requested that Mayor Leo Boyd open a Relief Fund. The Natal Distress Fund was opened with the government subsidising it on a pound-to-pound basis until 30 June 1949. Indians were initially denied representation on the committee. The NIC and NIO submitted a Joint Memorandum on 1 February 1949 stating 'it is most essential that individuals, representing the main sufferers and having intimate and first-hand knowledge of their needs and who can speak for the Indian and African communities, should find a place on this committee.'³⁹ The chairman reluctantly appointed A.M. Moolla to the executive and J.N. Singh to the Action Committee. Boyd announced that it was 'confidentially expected that substantial contributions will be made by the Indian community to alleviate the distress of the sufferers, among whom are a very large number of their own people.'⁴⁰ Around £85 000 was spent when the Fund was closed at the end of September 1949. The Fund, according to J.N. Singh, provided immediate relief in the form of food and medication and also assisted people to restart their lives. Indian tradesmen were sent around Durban repairing homes, and families were provided with a 'kit' consisting of knives, buckets, plates, spoons, blankets, pots, barrel bolts, and food to start their lives.⁴¹

Most refugee camps were closed by the end of January, even though there were 15 000 homeless Indians. Despite pressure from the NIC, it was only in the middle of April that the last 2 000 refugees were removed from six schools (Ahmedia, Madressa School, A.Y.S., Dartnell Crescent, Pinetown, and Tamil Institute) where they had stayed for almost three months. They were placed in camps in Cato Manor and Clairwood, which were kept open until October

1950. The 5 000 refugees in Cato Manor stayed in an overcrowded camp consisting of a few rooms and a cowshed. After visiting the camp on 8 February 1949, Dr Stone reported that ‘the buildings were all leaking and in the main shed all their belongings including their bedding had become wet.’ Children suffering from rheumatic fever and asthma were being cared for by ‘an African nurse and an Indian female doctor [Dr Ansuyah Singh].’⁴² Women residents cooked on fires outside the camp, and refugees lined up with paper plates for meals twice a day. Breakfast consisted of tea, bread, and jam. Residents washed under communal taps in the open. Fear of another attack resulted in men taking care of security in shifts.⁴³

J.N. Singh, his wife Radhi, and principal Pauline Morel, took charge of the Dartnell Crescent camp which operated at the school from January to April 1949. Three hundred refugees stayed in the 14 classrooms, hall, and staffroom. Morel stayed at the camp during this entire period, Drs Sydney and Emily Kark planned the diet, A.K.M. Docrat assisted with administration, while teachers formed committees to see to food, hygiene, and security. Schooling began a few weeks late. Inmates slept in the classrooms. Each evening they stacked the desks in one corner and laid out blankets to sleep. While classes were in session, women and children cleaned the grounds and toilets, washed clothing and bedding, or cooked. Ingredients for meals came from collections from shopkeepers. The one baby born in camp was delivered in the school hall by inmates.⁴⁴

Next followed a Commission which, according to Billy Nair, commented on everything but the actual causes of the riots: ‘Their findings were slapdash. One of the things that we pressured...to what extent government influence or white influence played a role, they didn’t want to talk about that.’ On 25 January 1949, Malan appointed a Judicial Commission, which was chaired by Justice van der Heever, to enquire into the causes of the riots. When Van den Heever met with political organisations on 17 February, he refused the right to cross-examine witnesses because ‘it would take too long.’ Dr G. Lowen, representing the NIC and ANC, told the Commission that the riots were caused by ‘deeper

causes' than antagonism between Indians and Africans, and that he had to cross-examine witnesses to demonstrate that Africans 'as a whole' were not against Indians 'as a whole'; that Africans endangered their lives to assist Indians; whites incited Africans; (white) Senators made inflammatory statements; that if the authorities were 'determined to suppress the riots they could have done so'; and that Indian traders did not charge any higher prices than whites, whose property was not damaged. The Commission would 'not get at the truth without cross-examination.' But Van den Heever held his position and 18 organisations, including the CP, NIC, and ANC withdrew from the 'sham.'⁴⁵

The Commission interviewed 146 witnesses: 60 whites, 34 Indians, and 52 Africans.⁴⁶ In summary, the principal grievances of Africans were insolent treatment by Indians, overcharging by traders,⁴⁷ ill-treatment on buses, 'loose' relations between African women and Indian men (miscegenation), exorbitant rents by Indian landlords (rack-renting), competition between Africans and Indians for bus certificates, the 'superior' position of Indians in industry, and general economic competition between African and Indian traders. Alfred Mgbosi, for example, told the Commission that the riot was an act of God against Indians, who prevented Africans from getting trade and bus licences, and drove in cars at night to pick up African women. 'We would ask the government that they remove the Indians to their own country. After all, they only came to this country as indentured labour.'⁴⁸

Chief Ndodembe Ngcobo of the Maqadi, whose mission was on the border of Mount Edgecombe, told the Commission that he did not have problems with his Indian neighbours. On the Saturday of the riot, one of his members returned to the mission from Durban and told his followers that all the Africans in Durban had been killed by Indians and that they should arm themselves 'to finish off the Indians in our area.' Chief Ngcobo's brothers pacified his followers. The member who spread the rumour was fined £2 by the Chief and £4 by the magistrate at Ndwedwe for spreading false rumours. On Sunday Mr Govender, a local Indian, called the Chief to his home, where he found a large crowd of Indians gathered. A frightened Govender told him that if they

were to be killed, they preferred dying together. The chief assured them that they were safe and they returned to their homes. The chief nevertheless pointed out that in his area, 'a large number of children are born and they are not children of my race. They have straight hair, like the hair of an Indian. According to Zulu custom, this is not a pleasant sight. It is like a cow giving birth to a goat kid.'⁴⁹ The general feeling among Africans about Indians could be gauged from a remark that was commonly uttered during the riots: 'I would mention this remark was even heard from the lips of women. Almost everywhere you heard *Afe kabublungu ama Ndiya; hawu kodwa, maye, abesedelela* ['The Indians died cruelly, but oh, they had become arrogant']'.⁵⁰

An editorial in *Indian Opinion* on 21 January 1949 refuted these allegations, and pointed to a (white) conspiracy:

There is something deeper than these flimsy causes. Nor can they have arisen spontaneously. They were premeditated and it is our firm conviction that a master mind was behind them. For how else could the Africans have used large quantities of petrol and resin to burn down homes and shops? It grieves us to learn that Africans are attributing economic causes for these disturbances. Nothing can be more absurd. It was the Indian who ventured out into the wilds to serve the wants of the Africans. It was the Indian who pioneered in the transport business and carried the African to their remote homes. It was the Indian who, as the vegetable gardener, had been supplying the Africans at prices which are within their reach.⁵¹

Indian evidence to the Commission highlighted two aspects of the relationship between Indians, the state, and Africans. They indicted the state for creating conditions that led to the riots and for failing to protect Indians from mob violence. Second, advertently or inadvertently, they portrayed the 'superiority' of Indians. Indians from the lower economic strata stressed the contradiction between alleged African grievances against wealthy Indians and the attack on working-class Indians. They questioned why the attacks were directed at working-class Indians if traders were the problem and whites determined access

to trade licences and other resources.⁵² The NIO's written submission accepted that Africans suffered disabilities, but argued that Indians were targeted because the African 'knew that his oppressor was the European, but he also knew the might of the European ... He was afraid to show his hostility to the European. He found in the Indian a convenient scapegoat.'⁵³ Inflammatory anti-Indian speeches by white politicians 'have tended to single out the Indians in Natal as an unwanted entity. These must inevitably reach the ears of the Africans ... The Native would not fail to observe that the general attitude of the European is to send the Indians back to their country, lock, stock and barrel.'⁵⁴ Indian testimonies reflected an internalisation of the colonial racial hierarchy around which Durban was structured – Indian witnesses communicated with white Commission members within a discourse where Africans were understood to possess lower capabilities to both Indians and whites. Maharaj, a schoolteacher, remarked that the African, 'as we know him is mostly uneducated and it is quite simple to sway him to think the way one desires. He has much regard for the Europeans and he could easily fall in with their opinion.'⁵⁵ He further added that the 'Native is like a child, in my opinion, and if you laugh at a child that is doing something wrong, he will continue to do it.'⁵⁶ The chairman, in response to Maharaj's comments, asked, 'Is it not conceivable to you that the Native, backward as he may be – and many of them are – in development, is very race conscious.'⁵⁷ The chairman's line of questioning supported an evolutionary racial hierarchy where Indians and whites were considered more 'civilised' than Africans; Indians less so than whites.

The Commission issued its final report three months after it began collecting evidence. It exonerated itself from acting as a judge or jury, stating that 'it was charged with the duty of investigating the causes of the riots to the end that a recurrence be avoided, not in order that guilty persons may be punished... There was no triable issue before us, no plaintiff or defendant, no prosecutor and no accused person.'⁵⁸ The Commission's assumption that it could separate cause from culpability, is contradicted by its handling of the state's response: 'We are satisfied that the Police acted with promptitude and discretion, considering

the unexpectedness of the situation which developed and the forces at their disposal.⁵⁹

The Commission dismissed Governmental culpability. The report stated that Indians, 'in the hope of receiving compensation, were anxious to place responsibility for the riots squarely on the shoulders of the Government.'⁶⁰ In other words, Indians were not justified in feeling wronged by the Government and Africans, and hoped to extract monetary compensation from the state. There was a sharp contrast in the way the Commission dealt with Indians and Africans: Indian behaviour was blamed for the attack, while Africans were deemed to have exaggerated their grievances. By vacillating between these perceptions, the Commission, without giving Indians an opportunity to test the evidence against them, rejected Indian feelings of being victims, and hence liable for compensation by the state. Aggrieved Africans were 'apt to blame the Indian,'⁶¹ and 'one has to reckon with the workings of the Native mind', the Report explained.⁶²

The Report also stated that 'while the disturbance was at its height, they [Indians] were pathetically passive and allowed themselves to be slaughtered like sheep,'⁶³ suggesting that Indians should have taken the law into their hands and defended themselves, through counter-violence perhaps? The Commission seemed to be condoning lawlessness, while removing the responsibility of the state to protect its citizens. Indian political activity during the passive resistance campaign was identified as directly triggering the riots: 'The Indians were hoist with their own petard ... In the recent passive resistance movement in Durban the Indians ostentatiously contravened the law of the land, attracting as much attention as they could to the fact that they were flouting authority ... It set the Natives a bad example.'⁶⁴ Thus the Report indirectly condoned the attack as punishment for political protest.

Ambivalence towards Indians and Africans mirrors the disinterest of the state towards the riots, except where the apparatus of state control was affected. The treatment of Indians underscored the growing discomfort of whites with their role in Durban, and the Commission was more bent on exonerating the police

than finding the causes. The change in (racial) power dynamics following the riots minimally affected white interests. The Commission's ambiguous position and the state's hands-off attitude allowed Africans to maintain possession of Indian property 'conquered' during the riots. The Commission was the government's official response to the riots. Kirkwood aptly describes it as the 'Failure of a Report.'⁶⁵

While the report provides a clear view of the state's unclear perception of the causes of the riots, the testimony of Africans and Indians to the Commission allows for individual voices to emerge and point to feelings on the ground. Two themes emerge in the narratives of Indians who lived through the riots: that whites were instrumental in instigating the riots and that Indians and Africans enjoyed good relations prior to 1949, but that the riots created a rift. Phyllis Naidoo, Billy Nair, Kay Moonsamy, Fatima Meer, Rama Thumbadoo, and many others are convinced that the white hand was behind the riots. They relate stories of whites openly inciting Africans, and occasionally joining in the violence and looting. Swaminathan points to 'the garage just before you go to Mayville police station...They supplied petrol to the Africans to burn the houses and they also got a few whites who disguised themselves in black paint.' According to A.K.M. Docrat, many whites ...

... thought we were 'too big for our boots' and that we needed putting in our place. Africans were frustrated with their lot and Europeans used this to turn them against us. My family had always lived peaceably with Africans, but the riots caused a terrible rift in our relations. I saw Europeans egging them on, giving them weapons to attack us and some were joining in as well. The Europeans felt that they would gain from making Indians and Africans be at each other's throats.⁶⁶

Debi Singh, who was General-Secretary of the NIC, blamed the:

... accentuation of anti-Indian propaganda since the coming into power of the Nationalists. The Government declared the Indians an undesirable foreign element, loudly pronounced its policy to repatriate them and its Ministers

engaged themselves in incessant preaching of race hatred against the Indian people ... It is a real tragedy that sections of the African people, poverty-stricken and frustrated, allowed themselves to be misled by the anti-Indian propaganda and resorted to the tragic pogrom.⁶⁷

For Billy Nair, ...

... to cut a long story short, the Nats come into power on the ticket that Indians must be deported to India because they were the greatest competitors of the Afrikaner shopkeeper in the rural areas ... There was a chap here, owner of a piggery farm in Westville and he was a Nat in parliament ... He addressed a meeting just the day before, inciting everyone to revolt. Then, ironically, it was at Red Square in the evening, he collected Africans ... he spoke fluent Zulu ... and he was letting fly against the Indians ... So they said they don't want to smell the oil rags of the Indian ... you see, [Indian] people burnt camphor and did other rituals, so they called us oil rags. The incitement was done by whites [who] gave their fellows leave...their domestic servants, gardeners, and others. Whites were even caught painted black.

R.D. Naidoo, who was a member of the Riots Relief Committee and lived in Mayville, the area most affected by the riots, did not point to specific instances of white agitation, but rather the general tenor of government policy towards Indians.

I attribute the 1949 riots as a direct cause not so much the white man himself, as the anti-Indian agitation that was going on year in and year out, and had been soaked into the Black man, pointing out to him that these Indians are the people that are making your trouble; these are the people taking your jobs; these are the people opening businesses and shops, and depriving you. The frustration got the better of them.

The belief that the riots were organised, whatever their veracity, was widespread among Indians. A rumour had been circulating in Durban that Africans would attack Indians on 16 December 1948. The secretary of the Cato Manor Indian

Economic Housing Scheme even sent a letter to Major Bosman in early December 1948, informing him that residents of the area had held two mass meetings to discuss the impending attack, and that Indians required protection on the 16th. The riot took place a month later.⁶⁸ The view of white connivance was shared by virtually all informants, and is corroborated by contemporary reports in the *Leader*, *Indian Views*, and *Indian Opinion*, and was also the official view of the NIC and CP. Dr Goonam ‘remembered a councillor saying: “Votes ... what votes? It’s not votes we must give them, we must give them boats”.’⁶⁹ Dadoo, addressing a demonstration of Indian, African and Colonial students in London in January 1949 against Nationalist rule had no doubt that the riot ‘was premeditated, that a hidden hand of instigators lurks behind the events, that such events eminently suited the Government in order to weaken the growing opposition to Government policy, and that it may be used as a weapon to impose further repression on both Indian and African people.’⁷⁰

Many remembered cooperation as well. J. Mnguni recounted: ‘Mr Esau was living among some Africans as he did at Mkhalandoda. When the riots broke out they protected him stoutly until the riots subsided.’⁷¹ Dr Goonam related an experience of a late-night trip to Cato Manor to attend to a pregnant woman who was bleeding: ‘As I turned into the lane leading to the patient’s house, I saw a group of Africans with stones and bricks ... They surrounded my car ... when they recognised me...throwing away their missiles shouted in chorus, “Aeo Doktela, Aeo Doktela” ... and said “Hamba Kahle, Hamba Kahle”.’⁷² The home of Jordan Ngubane, editor of *Inkundla ya Bantu* in Inanda, was almost destroyed because he stopped attacks on Indians.⁷³ The *Daily News* observed that ‘an ironic feature at the hospital is that as soon as the Natives and Indians enter the gates, they seem only too anxious to help each other. Several times I saw burly young Natives pick up Indians who had collapsed on the ground.’⁷⁴

The idea that white agitation spurred the riots is too simplistic. Even the editor of the *Sunday Tribune* suggested that the causes of the riots ran much deeper:

Look at the pattern of these riots – thousands of Africans, detribalised, dressed

as Europeans, turned suddenly into a ravening mob; back to the days of Chaka and Dingaan, marching in *impis*, chanting, offering their bodies as targets for machine-gun fire. All this because of Indians? To believe that would be to believe that the whole horrible business was carefully planned, that in the breast of every Native beats a savage hatred of the Asiatic. It is not true. That there is dislike is probable; that the African resents the Indian is also now apparent. But what has happened and is happening is that the Native has burst the bounds of frustration.⁷⁵

The common-sense view of whites instigating the attacks does not allow for African agency, and ignores the competition for space and trading opportunities in the urban milieu that gave Indians advantages over Africans. Indian and African urbanisation must be viewed as interwoven processes in which concrete social conditions integrated Indian and African migrants' various class, linguistic, and religious backgrounds into a common urban landscape. It also does not take into account ways in which the African petit-bourgeoisie derived benefits from the riots. Leo Kuper's account, for example, shows the gains made by the African middle classes from the riots.⁷⁶ This point was made by the Reverend Hamilton Zulu in 1949:

My people have no satisfaction in their relations with Europeans, and no satisfaction in their relations with Indians. They must always be bottom dog. We do not think it is right for Africans, coming to Durban, to have no quarter at all where they can have their own businesses and other facilities of that nature.⁷⁷

Nuttall and Edwards locate the riots in their political and economic context.⁷⁸ While the authorities reshaped urban space along racial lines from the 1950s onwards, during the 1930s and 1940s there were many points in the city where Indians and Africans lived contiguously. The Magazine (Indian) and Baumantville (African) barracks, for example, were within walking distance of each other. In their daily lives, Indians and Africans, while they may have been socially apart, competed for limited resources as Durban's population more than doubled between 1936 and 1951. South Africa's entry into the Second

World War increased industrial production and saw a relaxation of controls over African migration into urban areas to fill expanded requirements for labour.⁷⁹ Many newly arrived Africans squatted on land rented from Indian landlords in Cato Manor: between 1939 and 1943, African shack dwellers in Cato Manor increased from 2 500 to 17 000.⁸⁰ The cause of the riots should be examined within the context of these emerging social relations.

Indians, Africans and whites were incorporated separately into the local economy, Indians earlier than Africans. Although disadvantaged relative to whites, they were better placed than Africans. Industry was dominated by white capital, commerce by Indians and whites. Indians dominated trade in the non-European sector of the city, including African areas. Africans were not welcome in white shops, and patronised Indian-owned shops, where they also received credit. As inflation cut the level of African real wage levels from the mid-1940s, the most tangible index of declining living standards was the prices of goods in Indian stores.⁸¹ In the absence of municipal transport, Indians controlled bus routes to outlying areas. Transport was an arena of struggle for the African poor, who travelled great distances to work.⁸² In industry, Indians and Africans competed for unskilled jobs in the manufacturing sector, while Indians, because they were in the city earlier and were better educated, dominated semi-skilled and supervisory positions spurned by whites. And for yet other Africans who may not have had to deal directly with Indians, there was a feeling of exclusion because of the very visible presence of Indian traders, hawkers and market gardeners.

This racial hierarchy ushered struggles in trade, housing and transport. Establishment African middle-class politicians wanted to use segregation to their advantage by obtaining concessions at the expense of Indian bus and land owners and traders.⁸³ The stereotype of the “trader” was a useful mobilising tool against Indians, who were portrayed as retarding African economic progress. This is corroborated by evidence before the Riots Commission. A counter argument is that rather than politicians shaping attitudes on the ground, the influence was as much the other way. Organised politics among Africans was

weak, and the feelings of many Africans towards Indians were expressed in everyday interactions. Some Africans expressed their frustrations in Zulu-language newspapers, in which the racial transcript resonated with anti-Indian rhetoric.⁸⁴ That day-to-day interaction between Indians and Africans produced racial stereotypes is evident in correspondences to the press. ‘Insulted Native’, for example, wrote to *Indian Opinion*:

The Indian people are indignant at the discriminatory and humiliating treatment accorded to them by the white races on earth ... In spite of their indignation the Indians still look at the sons of Africa as their inferior types of human beings! ... It is indeed humiliating to see in the non-European cinemas, most of which are run by Indians, a colossal amount of segregation. The African patrons of these cinemas are forced to sit segregated on the sides and narrow rows, while the Indians and coloureds sit in the middle and comfortable rows. The Indian people depend largely on native purchasing power to keep their businesses going. It is an insult to segregate and maltreat people upon whom they depend for the most part for their livelihood.⁸⁵

In similar tone, Mandy Florence suggested that:

Indians should show more interest towards the political, social and educational side of my people ... When speaking to an Indian teacher the other day I was told: ‘How can we Indians join you politically when we have a tradition and civilisation older than yours?’ I am still wondering what this superior civilisation might be that is so safeguarded.⁸⁶

Similar sentiments expressed in newspapers and before the Commission tend to homogenise Indian (merchant) and African (victim), and ingrain stereotypes like ‘arrogant’, ‘wily’, and ‘dishonest’. An African interviewee, for example, related that rioters failed to find safes in 1949 because ‘the coolies were extremely clever. They took away the safes and sent them away. When the fighting broke out ... there wasn’t a single safe here.’⁸⁷ This is reflected so strikingly in Ezekiel Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue*, where his Aunt Dora

wants Abdool to stamp her purchase book: “Stamp the book I say, coolie!” Aunt Dora demanded, “You come from India to make money out of us, eh!”⁶⁶ That the vast majority of Indians were working class did not matter. Indians were compressed into the stereotype of the trader, and the riots brought the antagonism of everyday life into the open. As James C. Scott points out, such explosions allow ideas embodied in ‘hidden transcripts’ to ‘finally find open expression.’⁸⁹

Walter Sisulu’s reflection on the riot points to the difficulty of pinning down a single cause. Sisulu believed that ‘whatever the tensions between Africans and Indians, it was the racial propaganda of the Nationalists that had aggravated the situation.’⁹⁰ Yet he was to hear first hand that there was deep-seated resentment from the grassroots against Indians. During a visit to Natal in May 1951, Sisulu addressed a rally in Cato Manor alongside Luthuli. Sisulu was anxious to emphasise Indo-African unity and was ‘dismayed by the attitudes he encountered in his discussions with ANC branches in Natal ... Some took pride in the 1949 riots.’ He was amazed by the view among some that because whites had defeated Africans there was some justification at accepting ill-treatment at their hands. Indians had never defeated Africans and had no right to look down on them.⁹¹

A.W.G. Champion, leader of the ANC in Natal, who brushed shoulders with the likes of I.C. Meer and A.I. Kjee, reflected that ‘in 1949 the Indians deserved to be assaulted. They had become too big for their shoes. They were too proud. They looked upon us as nothing except a labourer and *kaffir*.’⁹² The Zulu Hlanganani Association commemorated the riots annually for several years. The riots marked an important turning point in race relations. African narratives remained celebratory. Edwards notes that ‘shantytown residents believed they had liberated Mkhumbane. If the area had not been finally won, their claim to own land and property in the area had surely been very forcefully made.’⁹³ Emergent petit bourgeoisie trading groups and Buyers Collectives reaped benefits from the removal of Indians from African-dominated sectors of the city. The riots ended existing residential integration and the implementation

of the Group Areas Act would further transform in race relations. The riots also evoked powerful memories in the minds of Indians and Africans reinforced the sense of racial separation.

Whatever social, economic (and Third) forces potentially pitted Indian against African, and however great the resentments and fears, it is remarkable that the violence of 1949 was not repeated for over three decades. The discursive work performed by leaders in the Indian and African Congresses to downplay differences, was crucial. Indeed, it was a significant strategic strand within progressive Indian circles, a point made most persistently and passionately by Monty. The NIC was to subsume its own trajectory under the leadership of one led by Africans. Luthuli's leadership of the ANC was not only open to an alliance, but his personal relationships with leading members of the NIC facilitated Indians and Africans accepting that they shared a common strategic, and often tactical, orientation to end minority rule. Luthuli's commitment is shown in his statement that since Africans 'welcome the sympathy of all races in the rest of the world, it would be absurd and contradictory to reject Indians in our own country. I myself would rather see the African people destroyed than see them turn against Indians.'⁹⁴ Personal relationships became increasingly important as leaders tried to forge a non-racial opposition to the increasingly brutal apartheid regime. As Clingham puts it, this generation of leaders, 'through their connections and interplay, their increasingly tactile knowledge of one another, were becoming something of a family network, with all the personal loyalties such networks entailed. These were relationships, loyalties and connections that were to have longstanding political and historical effects.'⁹⁵

The Fanatics

My observations are open to all and may be judged by all, for they are made in a spirit which will not disgrace the cause of Truth to which I am wedded. In the statements of our case, we must not fall in line with the methods of our opponents whose torrent of angry and malignant passions have been let loose on us. Their mind has been led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. They have tried to support the justness of their actions by the loudness of their declarations and the bitterness of their invective. Our actions must be guided by a judicious estimate of our true interests, unbiased by any considerations other than those representing and advancing the general good of the public and country at large.¹

MONTY NAICKER, NIC CONFERENCE, JUNE 1949

Monty was reacting to the coming to power of the National Party (NP) in 1948 and its promised draconian policy of apartheid. His language was borrowed from the Gandhian lexicon and there was a certain naiveté of political analysis in seeing the enemy motivated by timeless ‘preconceived jealousies and fears.’ There was no hint of the divergent class interests that coalesced into the NP. Nigel Worden, among a number of writers, points to the fact that apartheid ‘provided the means of cementing the cross-class Afrikaner alliance which had consciously been forged in the preceding decades.’ The new message of ‘separateness’ resonated with traditional NP supporters like teachers, clerics, and intellectuals, large-scale farmers of the Western Cape, white workers threatened by African urbanisation, white farmers seeking cheap contract labour, and small Afrikaner traders and businessmen in Natal and the Transvaal who profited from the removal of Indian competition.²

A deep sense of Afrikaner identity, buttressed by religious conviction married to ideas of racial supremacy and economic motivations, lay behind the growth of Afrikaner nationalism and the ideology of apartheid.³ Even without subscribing to a deterministic economic view, we can accept that the affirmative action policies of successive NP governments, which included state support for an Afrikaner capitalist class, job reservation, and farm subsidies for whites, were crucial in the resonance of Afrikaner nationalism.

Monty's idea of what constituted the 'public' and 'country' was at odds with that of the new ruling class. His views were delightfully impertinent in relation to apartheid thinking, which despised Indians as a foreign nuisance and denied blacks the right to determine the 'public good'. Monty's assumption of the political ground from which to consider these universalist questions was not so much a challenge to the logic of white domination, as a negation of it. He ignored the fact that the Nats did not see him as a full member of 'their' country. By not confining himself to Indians, Monty challenged one of the foundational pillars of apartheid, namely, that South Africa could be divided into watertight racial compartments.

Monty's analysis of a 'torrent of angry and malignant passions' being let loose on the country was spot on. Prime Minister D.F. Malan initiated a massive social restructuring program through a plethora of discriminatory legislation. Malan may be viewed as the founder of apartheid, Hendrik Verwoerd its main architect, and B.J. Vorster its ultimate enforcer. Malan was born in the Cape in 1874 and studied theology and philosophy at the universities of Stellenbosch and Utrecht in Holland.⁴ He was ordained a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1905 and joined J.B.M. Hertzog's NP in 1914, becoming the first editor of the party's newspaper *Die Burger* in 1915, and a cabinet minister when Hertzog defeated Smuts in the general elections of 1924. As Minister of Interior from 1924 to 1933, he was involved in round table negotiations with India, campaigned to replace Dutch with Afrikaans, and pushed for a national flag free of the Union Jack. During the 1929 general election, he coined the slogan that a vote for the NP was a vote for 'white South Africa.' When Hertzog and Smuts

formed a coalition in 1934, Malan formed the Purified National Party.⁵

Malan adopted the extreme xenophobic views spreading across Europe. This, together with the economic meltdown resulting from the Great Depression of 1929-33, and droughts across the country, which created the so-called 'poor white problem' (estimated at 300 000 in the early 1930s), made Malan's political extremism highly attractive to Afrikaners.⁶ The Carnegie Report of 1932 blamed white poverty on blacks who 'stole' their jobs in manufacturing industries and on the mines.⁷ Malan promised to eradicate poverty among Afrikaners through segregation and jobs.

The secretive Afrikaner Broederbond (AB), formed in 1918 by railway employees in Johannesburg, was key to making Afrikaner nationalist ideology hegemonic. The AB formed networks of social, economic and cultural organisations across the country as its members sought to 'occupy important administrative positions.'⁸ The Second World War, in which Smuts supported Britain, boosted Malan's popularity. Afrikaner anti-war sentiments are reflected in the rise of the *Ossewabrandwag* (oxwagon guard), which was formed in 1938 to represent a burgeoning Afrikaner nationalism inspired by the Great Trek centenary celebrations, and had a membership of 350 000 at its peak. The OB's paramilitary group, *Stormjaers*, basing itself on the Nazi Brown Shirts, carried out acts of terrorism to protest South Africa's entry into the war.⁹ The relationship between religion and politics is evident in the fact that a founding figure of the OB was the Reverend 'Spitfire' Kotze of Bloemfontein, who was chairman of its first leadership council, which also included C.R. Swart, who was the Minister of Justice when Monty was charged with treason.¹⁰

Future South African Prime Minister B.J. Vorster formed the OB in the Eastern Cape. He was arrested in September 1942 and interned for a year for anti-war terrorist activities. Malan's close confidant, Paul O. Sauer, who drafted the report that became the ideological framework upon which the Apartheid edifice was constructed, was an OB general. Another future Prime Minister, P.W. Botha, was an OB activist in the Cape. According to Botha, the OB 'emerged to ... lead us *actively* to our final destiny.'¹¹ T.E. Donges,

Malan's Minister of Interior, was also a member of the OB. Anton Rupert, who would carve a successful career as a business tycoon and be sanctified by the ANC in the post-apartheid period, was a member of the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond, which was closely allied to the OB and 'vied with it in its ultra-right, nationalist, radical rhetoric.'¹² OB leader Johannes van Rensburg attended the Olympic Games in Germany in 1936 and met with Adolf Hitler whom he greatly admired. Malan was fully supportive of the OB, telling his followers in 1940 that 'the Afrikaner volk is the *Ossawabrandwag*. When you touch the OB, you touch Afrikanerdom.'¹³



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Smuts's support for Britain, among a host of factors, played a part in his declining fortunes and Malan's NP came to power in 1948.¹⁴ Leading OB members were incorporated into the NP by 1953.¹⁵ The Nats' race policy

(apartheid) was based on the Sauer Report which was formulated after taking submissions from academics, farmers, professionals, ministers, and journalists. The aim was to ‘maintain and protect the purity of the white race’ through territorial segregation, confining Africans to rural areas, labour control, Christian National Education, suppression of trade unions, and separate political representation. Indians were considered temporary sojourners who should be repatriated.¹⁶ This was incorporated into the NP’s election manifesto:

Indians are a foreign and outlandish element which is inassimilable. They can never become part of the country and must, therefore be treated as an immigrant community. The party accepts as a basis of its policy the repatriation of as many Indians as possible ... No Indian immigrant will be allowed to enter the country. So long as there are still Indians in the country a definite policy of separation will be applied.¹⁷

In the six years that he was in power before being replaced by J.G. Strijdom, Malan outlawed marriages and sex between whites and blacks, categorised people into racial groups, created racially separate residential areas, and removed coloureds from the common voters’ roll.¹⁸ He was unrelenting on the Indian question, insisting that they be forced out of homes that threatened the exclusive spaces of white residence; their trading opportunities were radically curtailed; white job reservation was systematically policed, and the right to citizenship was denied to Indians.¹⁹

Malan believed that he had the support of English-speaking Natalians. Addressing a NP conference in Durban in May 1950, he said that ‘the common outlook’ of English and Afrikaner ‘on the non-European question formed a unifying bond.’ The historic conflict between English and Afrikaner was to be set aside and a common white identity forged.²⁰ These were chilling words for Indians who had already felt the whip of the English-dominated Durban City Council, which was a forerunner in many of the policies of urban apartheid. Now, the Afrikaner leader of the government was calling on the English to unite behind apartheid as an ideology geared to white supremacy. These words

encouraged the City Council to forge ahead with plans to uproot Indians from areas deemed to be threatening to whites, as they could now rely on both ideological and material support from the central government.

Not that the English needed much encouragement. Mabel Palmer, writing in the 1950s, stated that 'one often hears in Natal: "I do not mind the Natives. After all it is their country and we must do something for them. But I cannot stand the coolies; the sooner we get rid of them the better"'.²¹ Palmer quoted an example of a school friend of hers who presented a paper on Indians at her school:

At the conclusion of the meeting a mistress who was present referred to the Indians as "those cockroaches of Grey Street", to the great applause of her hearers. This incident occurred at one of the leading secondary schools in Durban, attended by girls of important European families. It is not so very long ago since most Englishmen believed in the doctrine of race-supremacy. It was as firmly held by many of the *sahibs* in India, as by the Afrikaners.²¹

South Africa's Indians initially turned to India for help. The *Hindustan Standard* carried thumbnail sketches of several NP leaders on 13 July 1958, which showed what they thought of the leadership.²² Verwoerd was described as 'a fanatic and, like all fanatics, can see ... his side of the argument ... [He] will stop at nothing to achieve his object, which was a Republic with 'the Afrikaners on top, the British the underdogs, and coloureds an inexhaustible pool of cheap labour.' Strijdom, the 'Lord of the Nationalist Hosts, is a self-appointed messiah whose mission is to save white civilisation in South Africa. Able, energetic, ruthless and narrow-minded, he is a worthy successor' to Malan. Strijdom's ruthlessness emanated from his belief that there was no 'half-way house between domination and equality.' The description of Minister of Justice C.R. Swart began sarcastically with the remark, 'believe it or not, South Africa too has a Ministry of Justice [though] Ministry of Injustice would have been a more appropriate nomenclature.' Swart was deemed to brand everyone opposed to Afrikaner ideas 'as a Communist. The notorious Suppression of Communism

Act arms him with powers that might well be envied by the Romanovs and the Hapsburgs.’ Minister of Interior T.E. Donges was described as a ‘perfect prototype of the late Senator McCarthy of the USA,’ whose witch hunt of alleged communists and their sympathisers in the 1950s destroyed thousands of innocent lives.

The defining feature of the Indian response to the tightening apartheid noose was to move from racial exclusivity to a broader alliance against apartheid, which flew in the face of the NP’s ominous warning. Several factors coalesced to make this possible, the most obvious being that control of the Indian Congresses had been wrenched from the conservative factions. Much the same happened in the ANC, where younger leaders like Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and Nelson Mandela came to the fore. The membership of the ANC, NIC, and TIC also came to include industrial workers who had joined trade unions as the manufacturing sector expanded in the 1940s. The CP, until its banning, played a crucial role in all three organisations.²³ While a degree of suspicion would remain among some in the ANC, there was also genuine camaraderie.

Once he was Prime Minister, Malan set out to implement his ‘final solution’ to the Indian problem. His aim was to repatriate Indians, and this formed the *raison d’être* of the 1927 Cape Town Agreement as far as he was concerned. During a campaign speech on 29 March 1948, Malan assured whites that there would be no parliamentary representation for Indians who would be kept apart from indigenous races, facilities for trading outside Indian areas would be ‘drastically curtailed and gradually abolished’ in African areas, and inter-provincial movement prohibited. He promised to deal ‘severely with Indians who incited non-European races against the Europeans.’²⁴

Despite Malan’s hard-line approach, the NIC hoped to achieve concessions on segregation. A.I. Meer and Yusuf Cachalia wrote jointly to Malan on 4 June 1948 for a meeting to discuss the Ghetto Act. Malan’s office replied on 14 June that the matter had been referred to Minister of Interior, Donges. On 25 June, Meer and Cachalia again wrote to Malan requesting an appointment to discuss ‘highly important and urgent matters affecting the Indian community.’ Malan’s

office declined their request on 2 July. Donges replied on 12 July that he could not meet with any Indian organisation:

... which sponsors or associates itself with any organised flouting of the laws of the country. I also exclude organisations which are communistic in their orientation or leadership which while claiming to be composed of Union citizens, invoke the political aid of another country ... The Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses do not fall within the ambit of organisations with which I am prepared to discuss matters affecting the Indian population.

Monty told an NIC meeting on 11 July 1948 that Indians were not afraid of the Nats. After all, he said, 'what can the present Government do more than the Smuts Government? Sentences imposed on the Passive Resisters were solitary confinement, spare diets and whippings.'²⁵ As he would personally discover, a lot more.

Cachalia and Debi Singh made one last effort to negotiate when they wrote to Donges on 2 August 1948 that Malan's 'inaccessibility ... constituted a departure from ordinary democratic principles.' Indians in South Africa 'maintained their unfettered right to seek the goodwill of India ... so long as they remain the victim of unjust racial discrimination.' Donges again spurned the invitation and Monty warned an NIC rally in Durban on 17 October 1948 that the 'struggle is going to be hard':

They intend making our life a misery. Repatriation at the moment is impossible. Deportations are bad enough ... To what extent they will go, heaven alone knows ... Our struggle is going to require nerves of steel. I know you have them ... If you want to save this country from Nazism, you must fight the fascist tendencies of the Party in power. We fight them back – that is why they hate us.²⁶

The meeting condemned apartheid 'as a serious threat of enslavement', and gave 'a solemn undertaking that we will strenuously resist every measure flowing from the policy of apartheid.'²⁷ Monty denounced Donges' branding of the NIC as communist and 'using the Communist bogey to cause a rift in

our ranks. Every demand for democracy becomes a Communist demand...It suits the Government to allege that behind every struggle for liberation lay the hand of "foreign inciters".²⁸ Monty was not a communist, but insisted that everyone, including communists, were welcome in the NIC. Only six of the 25 members of the executive committee of the NIC in 1948, he pointed out, were communists. Little did Monty realise that he himself would soon fall under the ambit of the ever-widening definition of "communist".

The anti-communist charge was led by Minister of Justice Oswald Pirow, Johannes van Rensburg, and Eric Louw.²⁹ As a diplomat in Europe during the 1930s, Louw admired dictators like Benito Mussolini of Italy and Antonio Salazar of Portugal.³⁰ As Africa representative of the Anti-Comintern from 1937, Van Rensburg carried out an extensive anti-communist programme based mostly on the fact that communism advocated racial integration.³¹ The origins of the Suppression of Communism Act are to be found in the propaganda of the war years when the anti-communist argument was that 'as the proletariat in South Africa was black, communism was fighting against whites. Racial segregation and a national-socialist *volkgemeenskap* was seen as a decisive bulwark against communism.'³²

With the NP rejecting NIC overtures and increasingly showing its oppressive hand, Monty laid the basis of policy for the next decade in his June 1949 NIC presidential address:

We remembered the noble struggle of freedom of the Afrikaner people against Imperialism, and hoped that the Malan government would recognise the same passion for freedom in the hearts of the Indian people ... Instead of accepting the sincere hand of cooperation offered, they have subjected the Indian people to the basest anti-Indian propaganda – reminiscent of the anti-Jewish pogroms of Hitlerite Germany ... These measures are not an end in themselves. They are but means to an end. The end is Repatriation as the Government calls it, but what we correctly described as Expatriation ... We see clearly mirrored in these laws the death and destruction of our economic life in this country. It has been their aim ever since they sucked in the last of our forefathers. General Smuts

failed to achieve this end. The Nationalists now feel that they can succeed. They fail to appreciate that the people of this land have been greatly inspired by the struggle for freedom and liberty throughout the world. They fail to appreciate that Mahatma Gandhi left us a heritage to fight the battle of life. It is in this spirit that that I say Repatriation is dead.

This was Monty at his most eclectic. He was fitting the apartheid state into the typology of fascism, as he sought to raise alarm bells of impending state repression and the spectre of repatriation by evoking the recent memory of Jewish persecution under Hitler. The parallels would not bear historical scrutiny, but inflamed passions, and mobilised locally and globally. Reference to Gandhi both linked present and past battles, and strategically drew on Gandhi's cult-like international status. Importantly, it signalled a commitment to non-violent civil disobedience.

Meetings and pleadings were not going to halt the Nats. This intransigence, *krakdaadigheid* in the parlance of the time, roused a general mood of resistance. Monty told an NIC meeting in Durban on 16 October 1949 that 'No bloody white man can throw us Indians out of the country.'³³ The mood of defiance was matched within the ANC, whose 1949 'Programme of Action' signalled the use of strikes, stayaways, and boycotts. There were important changes in the leadership of the ANC: James Moroka replaced Xuma as President, Walter Sisulu became secretary-general, and Mandela was co-opted onto the National Executive in February 1950. Mandela and Sisulu reinvigorated the ANC, and turned it into an organisation with a national character and capacity to coordinate mass action.

During the 1948 elections, the CP, in alliance with trade unions, the SAIC, and ANC, organised a 'Votes for All' rally in the Transvaal and OFS. Rusty Bernstein remembered that among the engine-room of the campaign were Ismail Meer, J.N. Singh, Vella Pillay, Paul Joseph, 'and most tireless of all of us, alas still at high school and probably truanting from classes for the duration, Ahmed 'Kathy' Kathrada.'³⁴ Bernstein saw the Fordsburg rally as the 'end of a chapter of black liberation politics which sought only reform and betterment ... the

modern struggle for the vote and majority rule began.³⁵ This first campaign to cut across racial boundaries was in response to the proposed banning of the CP. The ANC convened an emergency conference on 14 May 1950, which Monty attended in his capacity as President of the SAIC. Dadoo and Tambo called for a united front. This was significant because Mandela had previously opposed collaboration with communists and Indians. Bernstein notes the irony that the government 'created the first all-inclusive alliance against its own policies ... unnoticed, the foundation stone was laid for the ANC coalition that would come to dominate the next decades of South African liberation politics.'³⁶

Monty set about mobilising. On 2 May 1950 he addressed a meeting in Durban convened by the CP and said that since the Nats had come into power, 'relations between Non-Europeans and Europeans have become very unhealthy – these riots [1949] are the result of oppressive laws in this country.' On 28 May he addressed another CP meeting where he said that the government 'thinks we are a lot of animals. This mass meeting must be a lesson that we will not rest until we get what we want. The British soldiers thought that they could oppress the people of India, but they united and threw them out. I have no doubt that the same thing will happen here.'³⁷ To avoid insinuations of strike action, 26 June 1950 was designated 'National Day of Protest and Mourning'. Walter Sisulu travelled across the country mobilising, and one of the biggest meetings was held in Port Elizabeth, where he was hosted by Dr Shunmugam Apavoo, Monty's brother-in-law.³⁸ Monty urged Indians to prepare for great sacrifices. He told an NIC rally in Ladysmith on 11 June 1950:

We either accept apartheid or do not. If you accept, there is no future for our children. On the other hand, you can die like a man and make the sacrifice for your children for posterity. They will look upon you and bless you. You are not going to dishonour those forefathers of ours who came for 10/- a month. I do not want my children to be slaves. India did not sit back and wait for freedom. She fought for it and died for it ... You cannot stand back and listen to fine speeches. You must sacrifice.³⁹

With the exception of Port Elizabeth and Bethal, the stayaway was not particularly successful. In Natal, according to Elinor Sisulu, 'there was greater support among the Indian working class than among African workers.' The City Council showed that it was a past master at racial politics by firing Indians who went on strike and replacing them with African workers. The SAIC and ANC consequently 'found themselves in a sticky situation.'⁴⁰ Despite the relative lack of success, the protest consolidated links between the Congresses; for example, immediately after the protest, Walter Sisulu went on a fundraising trip to the Eastern Cape, accompanied by Naran Naidoo, the son of Thambi Naidoo, Gandhi's ally during the 1913 passive resistance campaign.⁴¹ Sisulu played a crucial role in addressing the antipathy and suspicion that the likes of Mandela initially harboured against communists and Indians.

In spite of stating publicly that he was not a communist, Monty was served with a banning notice on 26 September 1951 in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act (1950). He wrote to the Minister of Justice on 2 October 1951 denying 'allegations that I have been an active supporter of the Communist Party and request you to let me have at an early date full particulars of the evidence on which allegations are made.' A confidential police report dated 18 December 1951 stated that the police were unable to find evidence to substantiate the allegation that Monty was an active supporter of the CP even though he addressed its meetings at Red Square – his speeches 'give no indication of active support of the party.'⁴² But in spite of its own assessment clearing Monty, the Ministry replied on 28 December that Monty had been banned because he had addressed two CP meetings in May 1950 which were chaired by A.W.G. Champion and where he shared the platform with the likes of Harry Gwala, Dr Moroka, and Moses Kotane. The meetings were called to protest the Unlawful Organisations Bill and Group Areas Bill.

Monty responded on 8 January 1952 that the evidence did not 'in the least substantiate any charges against me that I was a member or office bearer of the CP ... No reasonable person could allege or draw the inference' from the evidence. As president of the NIC and SAIC, he had met with government

ministers and the Mayor of Durban in the past, and had addressed these rallies in his capacity as NIC President, 'representing the views of the Indian people' on the proposed legislation which affected 'national issues.' Monty insisted that his presence was 'bona-fide and public' and did not give 'active support' to the CP by propagating communism. The appeal was in vain. Monty was banned from addressing public gatherings even though he was not a named communist. His riposte was that government officials should be charged under the Suppression of Communism Act for arousing hostility between black and white through their utterances. The banning did not make him despondent:

No matter how many persons he [Minister of Justice C.R. Swart] may ban, the noble work of liberation undertaken by the African and Indian Congresses will go on unflinchingly until this country becomes free and takes her rightful place in the family of democratic nations ... Banning orders bearing the signature of Mr C.R. Swart have become certificates of recognition for services rendered in the cause of democracy. The movement for liberation of the oppressed people in South Africa will not be stemmed by the banning orders.⁴³

The CP dissolved on 20 June 1950 and ceased all activities because the Act rendered communists 'non-persons' and the Minister of Justice could order people to leave their jobs, tell them where to live, and virtually imprison people in their own homes. Even though the CP had disbanded, former members and even non-members were persecuted as the government interpreted communism as simply meaning opposition to apartheid. As for the others who had been at Curries Fountain when Monty took charge of the NIC, H.A. Naidoo had left Durban for Cape Town in 1943. He and Pauline were 'named' communists and the Central Committee suggested that they go into exile since they would not be able to operate underground because of their public visibility. H.A. applied for a passport in Durban and Pauline in Cape Town, but both were refused. When attempts to get backdoor passports failed, they sought to leave the country illegally, and eventually convinced two Indian lascars to assist. They met at a secret hideout in Cape Town. The lascars were only able to converse in Gujarati

and Hindi. Luckily, Dawood Seedat, who was fluent in both languages, was in town and negotiated a deal. The lascars agreed to take H.A. as a stowaway for £300, six chickens and a crate of brandy. The journey was difficult because H.A., whose frame was rather large, had to sleep in an oil drum. Pauline, meanwhile, disguised herself as her friend Joan Robinson and left with their daughters on the *Pretoria Castle* in July 1951.

In London, Bob Stewart of the British CP suggested that they move to Hungary to broadcast for Radio Budapest in English. They reluctantly agreed, and spent the next three years struggling to reconcile the contradictions of propagandising for freedom, while living in an authoritarian environment.⁴⁴ H.A. and Pauline also experienced first hand the racism against gypsies, several of whom approached H.A. because he was of dark complexion, to help them escape the country. Hungary was a great disappointment. When they returned to England in 1956, H.A. broke with the CP because of its 'denial of human rights, corruption, nepotism, inefficiency, and lack of values.' He was convinced that Stalinism 'was ugly, inhuman, corrupt.' Old friends, according to Podbrey, 'broke off contact because they reckoned we had betrayed the revolution.' H.A., a revered figure among workers, an inspiration to a generation of activists in the 1930s and 1940s, was a broken man. Once ex-communicated from the world of exiles, he could not find the outlet to make a meaningful contribution. But perhaps in his refusal he was making the most significant contribution, for both his personal journey through life as a person of integrity and independence, and also as a symbol that there were some who had the courage to confront authoritarian practices in the very Party that had been his and Pauline's life.

While the ideals of communism and the fact of communist organisation in South Africa provided the impetus for a number of courageous campaigns, as well as non-racial organisation in South Africa, it is arguable that, as time went by, the ideology of the actually existing CP in its sometimes slavish mimicry of Stalinism, and importation into South Africa of authoritarian dogma, as well as the culture of 'toeing the party line,' came to inhibit this struggle.

H.A. became depressed in London. In Pauline's words, in 'the last ten years

of his life, he was incapable of doing anything ... he became a very sick man', and died in 1970.⁴⁵ Podbrey stopped her autobiography *White Girl in Search of the Party* in 1955, because she did not want to dwell on the decline of this shining star of the liberation movement in the 1940s: 'It wasn't a story I wanted to share with the world. I didn't want to share it with the girls either. I wanted them to know their father as he was when he was a hero, when he was strong, when he was capable, charismatic.'⁴⁶

H.A. is air-brushed in most texts about the liberation struggle. His marginalisation may be due to the fact that he dared to challenge the Party line on remaining silent about the abuses of Stalinism and the contradictions of existing socialism in Eastern Europe. But clearly he was an incredible organiser, who rose from the shop-floor to a leadership position in the trade-union movement and the Party. His value and abiding quality is that he never forgot the need to confront injustice, even if it meant taking on his own comrades. He paid a high price, being shunned by his own in an alienating environment, far removed from the everyday pulse of mass struggle.

George Ponnem was banned for five years in 1950. He could not belong to any organisation or enter any factory, and was confined to the magisterial district of Durban. He was forced to resign from all union activities as well as the NIC. Ponnem lost his livelihood. His wife Vera was not working at the time and they had two daughters. They began dressmaking at home with a single hand machine. When the Tea and Coffee Workers Union vacated their offices, they offered the premises to Ponnem and Vera, who transferred their venture there. As Ponnem would later recall, 'Comrades and Friends were wonderful' in supplying work. With two others who provided finance, they opened a small factory in 1956.

The banned Ponnem kept in touch with comrades from the trade unions. Clandestine meetings of unions and the NIC were held at the factory or their flat in Warwick Avenue. Billy Nair and Steven Dlamini of SACTU would often bring money collected from shop stewards for safekeeping. George and Vera faced further harassment in 1964 and were forced into exile. This was the state's

way of silencing individuals, but it could not stymie the movement for the NIC was producing new layers of activists. Even as older leaders like H.A. Naidoo, Dawood Seedat, and George Ponnen were silenced, other activists were coming to the fore – Kay Moonsamy, Billy Nair, Fathima Seedat, Fatima Meer, and Phyllis Naidoo.

One individual who proved an able replacement for the “old guard”, and who would be synonymous with the struggle until freedom was won, was Ittynarain R. (Billy) Nair. Billy was born in Durban in 1929 in a racially mixed part of Sydenham which, he felt, forged a strong non-racialism. His father, Kisten, was a seaman in India who settled in Durban around 1910, while his mother, Parvathy, had come from Mauritius. Billy’s maternal grandfather K.R. Pillay was a famous temple builder. Billy was unable to go to secondary school as his father had died and his mother was the sole earner, running a fruit and vegetable stall in the early morning market. While Billy’s family were never without food or accommodation, conditions were difficult:

We had no electricity. We actually, all of us, had to study by candlelight or mostly by use of paraffin lamps and this filled the whole room with smoke. We were not poverty-stricken but had to make do with patched clothes. Sometimes we walked barefoot to school. Insofar as food and accommodation and so on, we were well catered for. And this became the entire responsibility of my mother.⁴⁷

Billy found employment in the early 1940s as a shop assistant, completed JC, matric, and bookkeeping through night study and joined Durban Combined Dairies in 1951 as a clerk. He became politicised during the passive resistance campaign which he ‘followed very closely ... After college I attended all the meetings, took part in the first march ... This is what really inspired me to join the Congress.’ Evening classes at the Technical College (later M.L. Sultan Technikon) were crucial:

We did quite a lot of politicking ... Herbie Thumbadoo, Pandey, Ebrahim Seedat ... some African students were quite conversant with ANC politics and so on. This group became well politicised through these meetings. [Some] of us

became members of the CP study group. The party classes actually taught us a lot. It was kept under wraps. It was legal at the time ... 1946, 1947, but if you were found out, you were victimized ... if you applied for a passport they tell you even beforehand you are wasting your time ... I had political discussions of a wide variety but the most specialised one was the Party classes where you learnt dialectical materialism and so on.

Billy also emphasised the impact of India's struggle for independence; he admired Nehru because his approach 'was more appropriate for our circumstances.' One book in particular made a huge impression on Billy, the *Chittagong Armoury Raiders* (1945) about Kalpana Dutt (1913-1995), who joined revolutionaries from professional-class families and on Good Friday 19 April 1930 attacked the European Club, disabled the railway track, and captured the police armoury. British reinforcements arrested them in May 1933 and Dutt was given life imprisonment. She was released in 1939, graduated from Calcutta University, joined the CP of India and resumed her battle against the British by organising the women's fronts in Chittagong.⁴⁸ Billy would quote liberally from her experience when debates about the armed struggle took place, and the book remained a 'valuable possession.'

Billy joined the NIYC in 1950 and became secretary in 1952. He was an advocate of non-racialism, but did not see a contradiction in joining a racial organisation. As he explains, 'the key was that it stood for non-racial democracy. Because people were resident in particular racial areas, it was convenient for Congress to operate under the banner of the Indian title.'⁴⁹ At Combined Dairies, Billy was moved by 'the conditions particularly of African workers who were earning a pittance' and organised them into the Natal Dairy Workers' Union. He was dismissed when management discovered his activities. This catapulted him into the trade union movement fulltime and from that time on his life was to be soaked in activism that saw a journey into sabotage, Robben Island, the UDF, and Operation Vula in the early 1990s.

India joined the world of free nations in 1947, and was the most overt signal of the decline of the British Empire. In South Africa, things were more

complicated: the Afrikaners claimed that they completed their struggle for national liberation with their electoral victory in 1948, but this was based on an array of discriminatory legislation against the majority of the country's citizens. A part of the liberation movement defined this as 'colonialism of a special type.' It was to come to be known all over the world as apartheid, and the UN would later define it as a crime against humanity.

Monty had lived through the heady days of anti-imperialism fervour at Edinburgh, spearheaded the campaign to see off the moderates, and had led from the front during the Passive Resistance Campaign. He had met the Mahatma, and joined in the optimism of the All-Asia Conference. He had celebrated, with the rest of the NIC, the defeat of Nazism and the independence of India. Now all this seemed to be drowned out as he received the enveloping ideology of apartheid with great foreboding. The Nationalists made it clear that they were not prepared to meet, let alone negotiate the policy of apartheid.

Monty knew, as did his old Edinburgh mate Dadoo, that they had to build a fighting alliance with the main African liberation movement, the ANC. The pact with Dr Xuma was one impulse. But this pact of leaders did not permeate among the rank and file. The "votes for all" campaign signalled that the Indian Congresses were beginning to couch their demands in the context of all South Africans. It was another signal of what Monty saw as the way forward – an alliance based on mass protests by all South Africans. If Monty's world was moving from the arena of Indian politics into the arena of non-racial politics, what remained sacrosanct was his belief in non-violent civil disobedience.

After all, he repeatedly reminded his followers, had not the Mahatma prevailed in India?

'The future is ours'

The clear duty of all intelligent South Africans in these days of fast-developing fascism in this country is to rally around the call of a United Democratic Front for the defence of Democracy. This is the only certain guarantee of halting the forces of reaction in South Africa. The Nationalists cannot fight against the future. The future is ours. Time is on our side.

MONTY NAICKER (1949)

Planning for the Defiance Campaign began as soon as the ANC National Executive decided on 17 June 1951 to invite other 'National Organisations of the non-European peoples' to participate in a program of direct action. While the campaign was conducted under the overall direction of the ANC, the SAIC was represented on the Joint Planning Council (JPC) by Dadoo and Yusuf Cachalia. Other members were James Moroka, Walter Sisulu, and J.P. Marks. The JPC resolved on 8 November that a National Day of Protest (Gandhian 'Hartal Day') would take place on 26 June 1952. The JPC was to present an ultimatum to Malan that if certain apartheid laws were not repealed by 29 February 1952, the Defiance Campaign would be launched. Mandela would later write that he feared that because Africans had few 'literate and trained men,' and 'lacked economic resources and influential contacts,' Indians would exert an 'influence out of all proportion to their numbers.'¹ For Fatima Meer, this was the moment when 'the ANC became liberated from itself.'

The ANC was a very closed organisation and as Nelson admits in his introduction to Ismail's [Meer] autobiography, there were "feelings" against Indians and you couldn't join the ANC. It was a closed African organisation and they very, very jealously guarded their leadership of it. They felt that Africans had to be in

leadership and they didn't want to work with coloureds or Indians.

The SAIC's annual conference in January 1952 'acclaim[ed] the growing unity of the oppressed non-white peoples [and] pledges to continue in its sustained endeavours to that end.' Further, in order to 'defeat the attacks on the liberties of the people of South Africa,' it resolved that 'the Indian people must consolidate Indian-African co-operation and endeavour to strengthen further co-operation between the Indian people, the coloured people and the European democrats.'²

The headiness of the resolution was not met with similar responses on the ground. It was still difficult to draw people into the campaign – J.N. Singh and I.C. Meer, who represented the NIC on the JPC in Natal, were tentative, as was Chief Luthuli as the trauma of 1949 weighed heavily. Monty, according to Billy Nair, was also concerned that Indians would view this as a repeat of the passive resistance campaign, from which many had not recovered financially and physically: 'He felt strongly that the Indian response would not be that good because of this experience in passive resistance and to some extent he was right but still we had to rally because for the African people this was a new experience. For that reason we agreed to take part.'

Luthuli felt that the campaign was premature given the festering resentment between Africans and Indians. He suggested a postponement 'until a better and healthier relationship could be forged.' Walter Sisulu, however, convinced both sides to look at the campaign as an opportunity to start the healing process, the basis of unity being that 'both groups were victims of white oppression.'³ Luthuli, who only became leader of the ANC in Natal in May 1951, faced severe opposition from Africanists like A.W.G. Champion and Selby Msimang, provincial secretary of the ANC, who, in a letter to *Ilanga Lase Natal* on 12 January 1952, criticised the JPC for 'practically taking over the control and leadership of the ANC.' He opposed 'any form of ultimatum being issued in an atmosphere of boisterousness and bunkum.' Msimang resigned from the ANC before the campaign began. Nationally, A.P. Mda and his supporters in the ANC Youth League supported the campaign but opposed Indian and

communist involvement. They were irate, for example, that Moulvi Cachalia and Manilal Gandhi sat on the dais at the annual conference of the ANC in December, and that I.C. Meer answered most of the questions at the press conference. But as M.D. Naidoo insisted, Indians had no intention of assuming leadership:

We all understood that if the ANC was to be built into a mass organisation among Africans, and the African population was by far the largest, and therefore will be the main contender of the struggle for liberation, it was essential that the image of it being an African organisation must at all times be seen, and historical conditions were such that though there may be fewer Indians engaged in the struggle, and fewer whites, they had greater advantages, and with other things being equal, be in a position to exercise a leadership role out of all proportion to their numbers. That would not be doing a service to the struggle.⁴

On 21 January 1952, Moroka and Sisulu sent an ultimatum to Malan to repeal six 'unjust laws': the Group Areas Act; Suppression of Communism Act; the Coloured Voters Act of 1951; Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, (which replaced the Natives' Representative Council with government-approved chiefs and advisers); pass laws; and 'stock limitation' (a policy that required African cattle to be culled to reduce overgrazing, when the cause of the problem was the 'theft' of African land). These laws were chosen to ensure that some aspect of the program would appeal to South Africans across the race and class, urban and rural divide. The government warned that it would 'deal adequately with those responsible for inciting subversive activities of any nature whatsoever.'⁵

The JPC called for an open-ended program of non-cooperation and non-violence, starting with the breaking of selected laws in major centres. An important distinction was that this was not passive resistance, but open defiance, a more combative assertion. The campaign was to broaden into urban and rural areas countrywide, until defiance 'assumed a general mass character' where government was 'unable,' in Mandela's words, 'to administer certain laws.'⁶ Dr Molema, opening the conference of the SAIC on 25 January 1952, called

for unity among Africans, Indians, and coloureds, and unyielding resistance, because their hope 'for a change of heart among the rulers' had been in vain.

On 6 April 1952, while white South Africa was celebrating the tercentenary of Van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape in 1652, the ANC and SAIC observed a 'National Day of Pledge and Prayer' for '300 Years of Sorrow, Sin, and Shame.' Mass rallies were held in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, Durban, East London, and Cape Town, and the support of the masses convinced many Congress leaders that the people were ready for Defiance.

While the ANC and TIC organised joint meetings in the Transvaal, the NIC and ANC held separate meetings in Durban, the ANC at the Bantu Men's Centre and the NIC at Red Square, raising questions about African-Indian unity. At Red Square, Monty called for united resistance against apartheid, which he equated with fascism:

Fascism is the weapon of the oppressor. In our struggle we are going to use a weapon that only civilised people should use and that is the weapon of non-violence. Hitler used violence in his creed of Fascism ... We must pledge ourselves to stop another Hitler raising his vicious head in this land. If you allow them to divide us, we will have to live the lives that Germans had to live. It is the bounden duty of every one of us to say we are going to be united. As united people there can be no power against us.⁷

When Sergeant Coetzee saw notices advertising the meeting in Durban, he asked the Town Clerk to ban them. The latter replied on 31 March 1952 that there was no law against such gatherings. It was Rowley Arenstein who secured a space in the law allowing such meetings to take place. In 1950, Arenstein was charged with holding a public meeting without permission. He doggedly pursued the matter to the Supreme Court, where he prevailed, the Court ruling that the existing by-law did not regulate gatherings, but conferred arbitrary power on the Mayor to do so. This exceeded (*ultra vires*) the powers conferred on Council by the Local Government Ordinance. The by-law was amended shortly before the commencement of the Defiance Campaign, effectively giving

the Mayor arbitrary power to rein in all opposition.⁸

The government also tried to cut off the leadership of the Campaign by turning to its favoured tactic of bannings. Five leaders were banned in May: Kotane, J.B. Marks, D.W. Bopape, J.N. Ngwevela, and Dadoo. The government also banned the *Guardian*, which promptly reappeared as *The Clarion*. The banned leaders responded by simply ignoring their bannings and becoming ‘the vanguard of the volunteers.’ Kotane spoke at a meeting on 2 June and was arrested; Dadoo, Bopape, and Marks were arrested within a week.

Around 10 000 people attended a ‘Day of the Volunteers’ rally in Durban on 22 June 1952, where Luthuli and Monty publicly committed themselves to the campaign. They carried banners reading ‘Raise ban on Guardian’, ‘Down with Passes’, ‘Remove Inter-provincial Barriers’, and ‘Throw Malan out of Power’. Mandela came from Johannesburg to rally support as ‘Volunteer-in-Chief,’ a position that ‘would bring him a national public following unmatched by any other African politician.’⁹ Monty told the rally:

Under the Group Areas Act and the connivance of the English they are going to shift you to locations. Once we are driven to these locations we will have barbed-wire fences around us and people to drive you to wherever they require labour ... Are we going to permit this or are we going to say that we are going to fight even at the cost of our lives ... I believe in this struggle because I believe in free men ... in the beauty of life ... in peace. Because we believe in all these things, we have volunteered in this campaign against unjust laws so that we can make this country a fit place to live in.¹⁰

On 26 June, Nana Sita, president of TIC, and Walter Sisulu courted arrest by entering the African township of Boksburg. They were arrested and taken to Boksburg prison. Released on bail, they were arrested two weeks later as part of a group of 20 that included Dr Moroka, J.B. Marks, Mandela, Kathrada, and Moulvi and Yusuf Cachalia.¹¹

The Campaign started late in Durban because of organisational problems resulting from the ousting of the conservative ANC leadership. Luthuli, his

power entrenched, issued the following statement on 30 August 1952:

As Africans we are glad that at the invitation of the ANC, the Indians and coloureds, through their national organisations, pledged to support our Congress in its just struggle. I am happy to announce today that the Africans in Natal with their allies, the Indians, under the joint direction of the ANC and the SAIC, are going into action against discriminatory and unjust laws tomorrow, August 31, 1952.

The NIYL, with the likes of Billy Nair, Kay Moonsamy, Ebrahim Ebrahim, Ebrahim Seedat, 'Josh' Naidoo, and Jack Govender at the forefront, helped organise the campaign. They went from house to house distributing pamphlets, raising awareness and generally trying to rally people. During September and October, there was a permanent platform at Red Square, where speakers addressed rallies twice daily. Four thousand attended a boisterous rally on 31 August 1952 to initiate the campaign, and were addressed by Monty, Luthuli, and P.J. Simelane, assistant secretary of the ANC in Natal.¹² All, according to I.C. Meer, were 'in top form.' Monty said that the masses were 'determined to defy discrimination and unjust laws to save our souls, our honour and our future. Fascism is strongly implemented in South Africa. Only the people can uproot this threatening menace.'¹³



Monty addressing a rally during the Defiance Campaign

© Zoni Seedat

Thousands followed the first batch of 21 resisters from Red Square to the Berea Road railway station. They were led by a large red banner proclaiming ‘Defiance of Unjust Law’ and flanked by the black, green, and yellow flags of the ANC. The volunteers, comprising of 10 Indians and 11 Africans, and including four women, filed into the waiting room marked ‘Europeans Only’, and sat down, some casually lighting cigarettes. They included Monty, A.C. Meer, Billy Nair, A.K.M. Docrat, Theresa Mofokeng, A. Vadival, P.H. Simelane, Fathima Seedat, Mannie Naidoo, and the Reverend J.M. Sibiyi. The police warned that unless they left immediately, they would be arrested. Monty responded, ‘We are defying the law. We refuse to leave. You may arrest us if you will.’¹⁴ They were herded into waiting police vans as the large crowd cheered, sang freedom songs, gave the thumbs-up sign, and cried out ‘Afrika!’ and ‘*Mayibuye!*’. Billy Nair describes what happened:



*Monty leading a Defiance Campaign march, 1 September 1952.
Ashwin Choudree is on his left.*

© Kreesen Naicker

We had a massive first group. We were going to break the laws about apartheid at the railway stations where seats were reserved for whites only. It is symbolic in the sense that you are not breaking apartheid as such but you are sitting on a seat reserved for “whites only” in the same way as you refused to carry the pass and you were arrested. So we were in the first batch. Dr Naicker and Stalwart Simelane led the first batch and there were 19 others of us. The large crowd followed but not inside the station because it was too much of a crowd. They remained outside. Some of the key people went in just to see what’s going to happen to us. So they [police] said, we must get out of our seats. We said, “No, we are not going to move because we want to occupy the seats. We say it should not be reserved for whites only, open to all.” The police said, “nonsense we are charging you all for breaking the law.” We were handcuffed [and] marched to the police station.

The incident took place on a Sunday and when they appeared in court the following morning they refused to plead. Monty addressed the packed court, but to no avail. Magistrate C.E. Russell remarked that his ‘sole duty was to administer laws and not to comment on them.’ They were sentenced to one month’s imprisonment with hard labour. The cry of “Afrika”, accompanied by raised right fist and thumb in the air, became a rallying call. It frustrated whites to the point that magistrate C.E. Russell warned protesters that he would charge those who shouted “Afrika” with contempt of court.¹⁵ Monty’s month in jail did not dampen his spirit. Shortly after his release, he told a joint meeting of the NIC and ANC in Pietermaritzburg on 5 October 1952:

The people of the four provinces have shouted ‘Afrika’ so long that Dr Malan is shivering in his pants. Every person who shows this sign shows that Africa belongs to him. There is no such thing as different nationalities here, we are all South Africans. Those who do not accept that must please go back to their respective countries. What struck me when I was in prison in 1946, 1948 and this year is the enthusiasm of our people. They are determined to recover their country. Nobody in this country can have peace if they keep us in slavery. We

want all people to have proper houses ... enough food in their stomachs ... medical attention ... The Government is worried and now they are trying other methods, they have arrested all the leaders of the Indian and African people. You do not have to be afraid or scared of any of these things, because they may happen to you without joining the campaign. History is with us. Have faith and faith is nothing else but blood and guts. Afrika, Afrika! ¹⁶

Undaunted by the highly charged environment, Monty directly confronted the presence of police at another meeting on 9 November 1952 in Durban:

I see the police are also present here today. Instead of wasting their time here they should go and arrest Mr Swart. A man like Swart should be in jail for the racist statements he makes. The police have become trigger-happy because they know that Uncle Swart will condone their actions. Now Mr Swart is trying to blackmail the Indians. He says that if Indians take part in the Resistance Campaign they will be locked up and deported... Well, I can tell him that he will have to deport 11 million people before we are going to stop shouting 'Afrika'. He also talks of extreme measures. What extreme measures? Do they want to shoot all the non-Europeans in this country? ¹⁷

Other volunteers came to the fore. NIC vice-president Ashwin Choudree led volunteers on 13 September. He told the court the following day that he hoped his 'peaceful violation of the laws would force the people who made them to see the error of their ways'.¹⁸ I.C. Meer led a group on 29 November 1952. Passive resistance in 1946 had witnessed women going to jail. This continued in 1952. Some were already veterans of the previous struggle, such as Fathima Seedat, while Saro Naicker and Sita Gandhi, Gandhi's 24-year-old granddaughter, were more recent recruits, though their defiance lineages ran deep. Sita, daughter of Manilal, was born in 1928 and went to India in 1945 where she completed matric and enrolled at Benares University. Following Gandhi's assassination she returned in June 1948. She had participated in the Simla march with Gandhi and Nehru in March 1945, and this inspired her to participate in the Defiance Campaign. She defied Post Office regulations in Durban on 29 December

1952, joining Rowley Arenstein in the ‘Whites-Only’ section of the Post Office to send a telegram to Prime Minister Malan requesting that a UN delegation be allowed to visit the country.¹⁹



Monty is arrested during the Defiance Campaign.

© NIC Pictorial

Included in Ashwin Choudree’s batch was Saro Naicker, the wife of M.P. Naicker. This was quite a transformation; at the time of their marriage, she had only been educated to standard four and ‘we were taught not to ask questions so even after my marriage I never asked questions.’ Saro’s involvement in politics had begun during the campaign to oust the conservatives from the NIC when Monty organised a program called “Sisters of Weekends”, which canvassed the support of Indian women to sign petitions to force the Kajee-Pather faction to hold elections. By the time the Defiance Campaign was launched, Saro was highly politicised. There were two women and fourteen men in Choudree’s batch. Saro ‘was not afraid. I know we were fighting unjust laws ... M.P. had updated me. He said, “That day they’ll put you in and the next day the magistrate’s court ... there you have to say”...and so on.’ The prison experience was ...

... terrible, degrading, the hardest work that they could find. Even in prison I found a lot of apartheid system works there, where white women wore their own clothing, they wore socks and shoes and they were three in a cell and had wash basins, whereas we were six in a cell, literally breathing into each other's faces. We did all sorts of work, even washing toilets. They used to give you two buckets ... one to use as a night toilet, the other to wash your face.



A defiant Fathima Seedat being arrested.

© Zoni Seedat

Durban Bay was being reclaimed and male prisoners were taken there to join the labour gang which worked from dawn to dusk. According to I.C. Meer, they 'worked with wheelbarrows, and spades, digging, loading, depositing ... It left our hands blistered and our backs sunburnt ... We survived the test. We fared well and came out of prison strengthened.'²⁰ Billy Nair also reflected on the prison experience:

We were at Central Jail in Pine Street. We slept on the floor. They tried to squeeze

us. Food was generally ... bad ... mealie rice, samp for Indians ... quarter piece of bread with a bit of margarine or lard, coffee in the evening, porridge in the morning. Porridge three times a day for Africans and sometimes mealies at lunch time and beans in the evening ... We worked in the stone yard, where you use a hammer, break stones into smaller pieces ... But this was nothing compared to working in the quarry on Robben Island where we did pick-and-shovel work, not using a hammer ... We were happy to be out. You went home, had your shower and then back to the offices, all the people crowded there ... and had a big do.

As the campaign wore on, magistrates opted for whippings for defendants under 21, and imprisoning national leaders. The likes of Dadoo, Yusuf Cachalia, and Ahmed Kathrada, then president of the TIYC were found guilty on 2 December 1952 of what Justice Rumpff, who would later be the presiding judge in the treason trial, called 'statutory communism,' in contrast to 'what is commonly known as communism,' and were sentenced to nine months imprisonment with hard labour, suspended for two years.

Rallies were well supported. The NIC's annual conference in February 1953 recorded that 'the enthusiasm of the masses at these meetings and the great demonstrations held whenever a batch of volunteers went into action was most inspiring.' But the number of volunteers fell short of expectations. Countrywide, from the launching of the campaign on 26 June to 10 December, there were 8 080 arrests, including 5 719 in the Eastern Cape, 423 in the Western Cape, 1 411 in the Transvaal, 269 in Natal, and 258 in the Free State. The heavy-handed approach of government was one factor that impeded the campaign: leaders were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act, offices of organisations were raided, as were homes of members, meetings of Africans were prohibited in Scheduled Areas and a by-law was introduced to control meetings in public places in Durban. This was gazetted after the campaign was launched.

Organisers cannot be blamed for the gap between the huge turnout at mass meetings and small number of volunteers. There were regular press statements

in newspapers, though the establishment newspapers did not give sufficient coverage. A newsletter (*Afrika*) was published fortnightly, and dealt with organisational aspects of the campaign, as well as policy. Nationally, the ANC and SAIC took over publication of *Spark*, formerly the mouthpiece of the TIYC, and renamed it *Spark for Congress News*. The Campaign was covered on All-India Radio, BBC, Radio Budapest, and Air China.

The NIC threw its full weight behind the campaign. Regular marches were held on Sunday afternoons from late June 1952, generally proceeding from Red Square along Pine Street, Grey Street, West Street, Brook Street, Cathedral Road, into Pine Street and back to Red Square. Meetings were also held on weekday evenings as well. Rallies were planned at Red Square on five Sundays, 2 November, 9 November, 16 November, 23 November, 30 November, and 13 December. Permission was also sought for weekday evening rallies at Red Square (5th, 12th, 19th, 26th November), Cartwright Flats in Umgeni Road (4th and 18th November), and Market Square in Warwick Avenue (11th and 25th November).²¹

The state used every means to frustrate the campaign. For example, a meeting on 2 November, which Debi Singh explained, was to 'welcome passive resisters who have been released from jail; to bid farewell to those who are to court imprisonment; convey the decisions of the ANC (Natal); and hear addresses from Nelson Mandela (Transvaal) and Dr Njongive (Cape)', was met with strong police objections. Constable Graham wrote to the Town Clerk on 30 October that the marches were 'harmful to the more ignorant type of non-European in the city, who do not understand what the procession is about, but seeing other Natives in this procession, they join them, more out of curiosity than anything else, and in many instances are incited to accompany the resisters in their acts of defiance.' Mayor Percy Osborne banned the meeting.²²

In spite of this there were several major gatherings. A 'highly successful' meeting, for example, was held at the Bantu Social Centre in Beatrice Street in September, where 'the crowd overflowed into the streets, pavements and islands ... [despite] uncalled-for provocation by the City Police on their motor-

cycles who kept clearing the streets of people who were peacefully listening in to the meeting and when no traffic was using the road.’ Debi Singh noted that between 26 June 1952 and the end of October, Congress had organised three meetings per week at Red Square, attracting between 3 000 and 10 000 people each. There was no indoor venue large enough to accommodate them when it rained because applications to use the City Hall were turned down, even though the Torch Commando and Defenders of the Constitution held meetings there. The attitude of the Council ‘demonstrates a complete lack of appreciation of the wants of the non-European communities of Durban and treats lightly a serious matter.’²³

The secretary of the NIYC wrote to the Mayor on 3 November 1952 that the organisation had passed a resolution on 2 November ‘condemning the ban ... The action of the mayor has not only proved his Nationalist tendencies, but also his attempt to stifle freedom of speech and assembly.’ Around 500 residents of Mayville convened at the Arya Samaj Hall in Bellair Road on 6 November, and passed resolutions condemning the ban. H.R. Deoduth and V.S.M. Pillai, joint honorary secretaries of the NIC, wrote to the Mayor on 7 November ‘lodging its strongest protest against the Mayor...[whose] decision was arbitrary and dictatorial and [denied] non-European people of the fundamental right of the freedom of speech and assembly.’²⁴

An application by Ebrahim Seedat, chairman of the NIYC, to hold a meeting at Red Square on 10 December to commemorate Human Rights Day was declined because Graham advised the Town Clerk on 22 November that ‘numerous respected natives’ had told him that ‘the minds of the uneducated natives are being greatly disturbed by these very frequent meetings, at which speakers are definitely sowing the seeds of discontent and discord...and all fear a repetition of the rioting which took place some years ago [1949].’ Graham added that whites were ‘disturbed by the noise of the loudspeakers...which causes an echo which can be heard as far away as the hotels in Broad Street.’ A member of the SB who attended a meeting of the NIYC on 13 November to celebrate the anniversary of the World Federation of Democratic Youth,

reported that the speakers 'attacked white supremacy in South Africa and used it to enlist volunteers for the Defiance Campaign. Meetings sponsored by the NIYC are a mere subterfuge for the NIC and the ANC to achieve their aim to hold open-air public meetings.'²⁵

Activists took this as a challenge to find new ways to defy. In one instance, at 8:50 am on 31 January 1953, City Estates manager A.E. Mallinson received a call from Graham that 'numbers of Indians' were occupying Corporation land at the corner of Brook Street and Victoria Street. Mallinson could not evict them as there was no notice that trespassers would be prosecuted. Graham told Mallinson that it was the 'same organisation of Indians that had given recent trouble' and suggested that he ask them to leave. If they refused, he should report it to the police, who would arrest the trespassers. Mallinson spoke to Chetty, 'an Indian who gave me the impression that he was in charge,' and told him to leave. Chetty asked for the instruction in writing. When Mallinson warned that he would call the police, Chetty replied that he would 'handle' the police when they arrived. Graham duly arrested the men. As Mallinson was walking past the Indian Library in Brook Street, he noticed a white man 'busily engaged in putting up a noticeboard within the library grounds,' "Trespassers will be prosecuted", which was meant for the vacant ground!²⁶ This was the ruling elite that regarded blacks as inferior.

The clampdown on meetings remained unrelenting. When Billy Nair applied, in his capacity as secretary of the Chemical and Allied Workers' Union, to hold a meeting in Gale Street, the police advised against it on 5 November 1954:

The applicant, who is a prominent non-European politician was recently prosecuted and convicted for holding a similar meeting at the same place without permission ... Meetings such as these, which are held during the normal lunch hour of factories, not only attract members of this Union, but numerous other natives employed in the vicinity. This tends to make these meetings an ideal opportunity for irresponsible elements to disseminate propaganda of a political nature.²⁷

The state's closing down of spaces for public mobilisation, the imprisonment of the leadership and whipping for younger resisters, took its toll on the campaign, as recruits dried up, and the state became more assertive in using the law to disrupt the ability of the Congresses to re-group. Violence started to envelop the campaign, especially in the Eastern Cape, where the killing of seven people at a rally sparked a violent reaction that led to the death of two whites. The government banned all demonstrations, and almost all the organisers were already banned. It was in this context that the ANC called off the Defiance Campaign.

There were some impulses in the spectrum of anti-apartheid forces that did not agree with the orientation of the Defiance Campaign. Unity Movement members, for example, were of the opinion that it was foolhardy to think that the government would buckle to 'pressure' exerted by volunteers breaking laws to court imprisonment. These differences played themselves out most starkly at a meeting in Dundee on 23 November 1952. It was advertised as a 'Mass Meeting of All Non-Europeans' and speakers included Dr Wilfred Masuku of the AAC, Dr Isiah Luvunu (SOYA), Dr A.I. Limbada, V.G. Naidoo, and Drs Chota Motala and Omar Hassim who represented the Anti-Segregation Council, Pietermaritzburg. Naidoo called for the crowd to 'fight the fight for freedom.' Limbada asked the audience to observe a minute's silence for Africans shot by police. Dr Zuleika Christopher, who came from Wits University, called for unity:

Why do we non-European races fight amongst one another? Is it because we are harbouring a prejudiced feeling towards each other? Since the arrival of the European in this country, they have systematically spread disunity amongst the black races of South Africa, causing us to continually fight and live in disharmony, to such an extent that at the slightest provocation we will unhesitatingly grab at each other. We do not hear of the Europeans behaving in this manner, so why do we adopt this attitude towards one another?

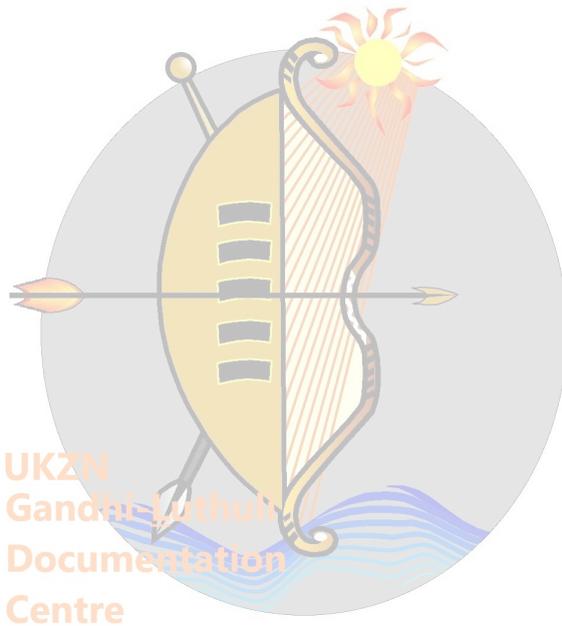
Omar Essack compared fire to politics. He said that in the old days people

were afraid of fire until they were able to put it to their own uses. Politics could be put to such use as well. He criticised passive resistance because it retarded the interests of non-Europeans. He explained that it had started in India in 1932, but by 1945 there were no peace movements in India. 'Peace and non-violence brings you nowhere.' Chota Motala criticised the Group Areas Act and Suppression of Communism Act, and also opposed passive resistance, which 'has caused disastrous results. Passive Resistance did not shake off British Imperialism in India. Freedom will only be obtained on the basis of non-European unity. Millions of natives work on the mines and are denied family life. On their return they die of tuberculosis.' He criticised the NIC and the Defiance Campaign for ignoring these factors. Limbada criticised the NIC for not accepting the challenge of the Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (anti-Cad) movement to a debate on the Defiance Campaign which was 'the same old dirt in a new garbage dustbin.' V.G. Naidoo was re-elected president of the NEUM with Limbada and Chota Motala as secretaries, while Frank Maharaj of Waschbank became treasurer.²⁸ Chota Motala and Dr Essack would subsequently switch allegiance to the Congress Alliance.

While the Defiance Campaign failed to draw the expected number of volunteers, it was a very public demonstration of opposition to apartheid. For Walter Sisulu, looking back from the vantage point of the defeat of apartheid, the campaign marked a significant break with past ways of handling opposition to the regime: 'It had the effect of making people confident and fearless, prepared to defy the laws, prepared to go to jail and meet any situation.'²⁹ The campaign also witnessed the first stirrings of Indo-African cooperation in the cauldron of resistance. Against the backdrop of 1949, the joint campaign was an important breakthrough, even though the co-operation did not permeate to the masses.

There was a lull in overt political activity after the Defiance Campaign. As Rusty Bernstein put it, the conclusion of the campaign 'left a quietus on the Congress political front, as though everyone was taking time out to recuperate and regroup ... before a new round of struggle could start from where the last one had ended.'³⁰ Relationships forged in defiance were developing into

camaraderie, and none more so than that of Albert Luthuli and Monty Naicker. Monty's admiration for Luthuli, and the closeness of their political ideals, was to reflect in an abiding friendship. The names of both Monty and Luthuli would feature prominently in this new round of struggles.



*'A knock on the door'*¹

A movement for national liberation can become reactionary in character. Nationalism under anti-democratic leadership can become a great threat to the basic values for which we stand. Afrikaner nationalism is an example of how a movement essentially progressive in its initial stages has today become a great threat to democracy and has become the spearhead of fascism in South Africa. African nationalism too, under the wrong leadership, can become an anti-democratic force giving rise to the emergence of Black fascism in the Union. It is to the credit of the leadership of the ANC that African nationalism has chosen the path of democracy ... The slogan of the ANC is not South Africa for the Africans but South Africa for all her peoples of all creeds and nationalities.²

MONTY NAICKER (1954)

It was barely two years since the historic Defiance Campaign, the living symbol of the deepening relationship between the Indian Congresses and the ANC. Monty was buoyed by these moves but it did not dull him to potential dangers that lay ahead. Cleverly using the example of Afrikaner nationalism, Monty warned against impending dangers within the liberation movement, while emphasising, almost encouraging, the strides made by the ANC in adopting progressive values in their vision of the future of South Africa. Monty placed great store in non-racialism, and supported the drawing up of a programme that committed the Alliance to this and enshrined democratic values.

Sobered by 1949, Monty sought to translate the “paper alliance” of the Doctors’ Pact into joint fighting campaigns of non-violent civil disobedience. He led from the front in the Defiance Campaign, and this commitment helped nurture an enduring ideological compatibility with Luthuli. Important changes

had taken place in the leadership of the ANC as well. Mandela's election as president of the Transvaal ANC in October 1952 to succeed the banned J.B. Marks, and Luthuli's election as president-general of the ANC in December 1952, were to prove crucial in the future trajectory of the Alliance. They were leaders who, while cautious, were receptive to the idea of non-racial organisation. Throughout this period, Monty faced imprisonment, bannings, hounding by the police, and his medical practice, running as if it was a public utility, faced financial difficulty. Yet photographs and reminiscences of his contemporaries paint a picture of a man whose demeanour was one of confidence about the broader stage that the alliance with the ANC presented.

On 5 May 1953, Monty was charged with 'promoting feelings of hostility between the European inhabitants and the non-European inhabitants of the Union' and banned from the magisterial districts of Pietermaritzburg, Dundee, Newcastle, Pretoria, Port Elizabeth, East London, and the Cape for one year. The Minister reached this decision 'on the basis of a confidential dossier' which described Monty as 'a very active agitator with strong communist sympathies ...'

... who spent time in prison during the passive resistance campaign; crossed the border illegally into the Transvaal with 15 others in January 1948; and visited India with Dadoo in 1947. Dr Naicker is militantly anti-white and a supporter of complete equality between all races in the Union. Dr Naicker is remarkably industrious in his organisational work in support of the resistance campaign of the ANC and SAIC. There exists not the slightest doubt that Dr Naicker is a very cunning and dangerous agitator and that he is one of the powerhouses behind the resistance campaign. It is regarded as being urgently necessary to put his activities to an end in the interests of law and order in the country.³

Even though Monty had forced the Minister to concede that he was not a communist, when this first banning order expired, he was served with another two-year order on 1 November 1954. J.N. Singh, acting for Monty, wrote to the Minister on 6 December 1954 to provide reasons for the banning, but in

spite of several reminders the Minister only replied a year later on 6 December 1955. He quoted from Monty's speeches between 1946 and 1954 to argue that cumulatively they 'vilified' whites as oppressors of blacks, and incited blacks to resist white rule, which made him guilty of furthering the objects of communism.⁴



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Despite the state's attempts to stymie his activism, Monty continued to forge links with the ANC. He invited Luthuli to open NIC conferences in 1952 and 1953, and Walter Sisulu, Secretary-General of the ANC, the 1954 conference. Monty was serving a banning order and could not attend, but his message was read out by I.C. Meer. He said that the Suppression of Communism Acts was 'being ruthlessly used ... not only to stifle and gag, but to remove elected leaders from their organisations in an attempt to destroy all opposition to apartheid tyranny.' In welcoming Walter Sisulu, Monty observed that 'despite all the attempts to sow seeds of division and despite the preaching of apartheid and segregation, steady progress is being made in the field of interracial cooperation.'⁵ Monty, in turn, delivered the Opening Address at the ANC's national congress in Durban

on 16 December 1954. Banned, his message was read out: ‘The invitation symbolises the great, unbreakable links which have been forged between the African and Indian people we represent ... It is my fervent hope and prayer that jointly we shall advance together with all true democrats in South Africa to the goal which we have set to achieve – freedom in our lifetime.’ Monty spoke out powerfully against both racism and colonialism:

As oppressed people, believing firmly in the ideals of democracy, we totally reject all forms of imperialism and colonialism. We reject the exploitation of man by man. We make common cause with the worldwide movement for peace. We make this contribution in particular by opposing all forms of racial discrimination. In our hearts we are convinced that in racial discrimination lies the seat of a massive global conflict. As protagonists of peace, we are the enemies of war, and are opposed to the armament race which is now in progress. We stand for total banning of the atom and hydrogen bombs.⁶

The growing relationship between the ANC and NIC came at a time when the NP sought to strictly codify racial separation and bully black opposition into acquiescence through a variety of legislation. But the will to resist ran deep, and just as apartheid sought to shore up the unity of white South Africa, so resistance movements moved to ensure more sustained and coordinated joint actions under a common programme of demands.

The relative quiet that followed the Defiance Campaign began to change from March 1954, when the ANC met with its allies, the SAIC, COD, SACTU (SA Congress of Trade Unions), and CPC (Coloured People’s Congress) in Stanger. The meeting, as Rusty Bernstein recalls:

...was held in a rural school for Indian children, near Stanger, where Chief Luthuli had been confined by ministerial decree. Luthuli presided over 40 delegates who tucked themselves uncomfortably into children’s desks. The classroom, murky enough with its dusty windows by day, was even murkier when lit only by storm lanterns by night. The atmosphere was somewhat conspiratorial since several of those present were there illegally in breach of ministerial bans.⁷

Professor Z.K. Matthews proposed the holding of a Congress of the People (COP) to adopt a Freedom Charter. A National Action Council (NAC) was formed, chaired by Oliver Tambo and including Yusuf Cachalia from the SAIC. The NAC called for 'Freedom Volunteers' to gather people's demands across the country and present these at a mass assembly where a Freedom Charter would be adopted. An ANC circular in 1955 described the envisaged document as being 'written by the ordinary people themselves, through the demands that they themselves send in.'⁸ Monty gave his full backing to the call, as he told the congress of the NIC in 1954:

The formulation of the Freedom Charter ... is the most important task which faces all true democrats of all colours in the country today ... Let me assure you, on behalf of the Indian people, that the Indian Congress will do everything in its power to make the COP a success ... I visualise the Freedom Charter as one of the most historic documents to emerge from South Africa. It will not only in the clearest possible terms state what freedom is, but will be a document by which all South Africans will be judged, whether they stand for freedom and democracy, or for oppression and segregation.⁹

Monty campaigned actively under the banner of the NAC. He addressed meetings in Verulam, Tongaat, and Stanger on 15 August 1954 and in Durban on 29 August and 5 September, urging volunteers to go from door to door to collect people's demands so that these could be incorporated into the Freedom Charter. A police report on his activities during this period recorded that 'Dr G.M. Naicker has been a vituperative agitator for years already and he lets his anti-white attitudes drip from almost every speech he gives. It is also noticeable that he appears together with named communists at every other meeting. With the coming into being of the COP, he has thrown in his lot with this organisation.'¹⁰ On 7 November 1954, Monty addressed a joint meeting of the ANC, NIC and COD at the Gandhi Library in Durban to rally people for the COP. He said that the Government had 'a luxury called apartheid. Instead of them paying for this luxury themselves, they want you to pay for it.'

In an article titled 'South Africans Must Answer Swart Challenge' in *New Age* on 25 November 1954, Monty said that 'now is the time for each and every person who loves basic human freedom to speak out clearly and without hesitation against the wrongs that are being perpetuated by those who rule our beloved country.' At a meeting of the NAC at Regents Theatre on 2 December 1954, a message was read out from Monty wishing 'the COP campaign every success.' A similar message was read out at the ANC conference in Durban on 16 December 1954. On 26 January 1955, the Republic Day of India, Monty sent a message of congratulation to the Prime Minister of India, which earned the ire of the South African government, as India continued to hound it on international platforms and had taken the lead in having no diplomatic relations with the country. Monty's message was also read out at a meeting of the ANC, NIC, and COD at Gandhi Hall in Durban on the same day: 'The Nationalist policy is completely reactionary and if its philosophy is allowed to go unchecked it can only end in chaos and the ultimate ruin of South Africa.'



Canvassing support for the Congress of the People

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The Defiance Campaign had created a group of battle-hardened troops to rally the masses on behalf of the NAC. They conducted a countrywide campaign to establish what ordinary people wanted and create awareness of the forthcoming COP. Meetings were held, canvassing was carried out from house to house, and pamphlets were distributed countrywide to attract volunteers. The one directed at Indians read:

Listen friend...

Yes, it's you I mean – Amrit, Amina, Mariemoothu, or whatever your name is – what are you interested in? Football? Cricket? Swimming, maybe, or other sports? What are you keen on? Films? Dancing? Studying, perhaps? Do you like reading? Do you want a chance to learn a proper trade or profession? ...it's a job, for you, Ahmed, Ismail, or whatever your name is. Don't sit back and dream of what you like from life. Write your hopes into the Freedom Charter! Become a Freedom Volunteer!¹¹



The people speak

© NIC Pictorial

Billy Nair explains how the demands for the COP were collected by unions affiliated to Sactu:

Sactu set about getting its affiliated unions to separately collect demands

from their members. We held mass meetings directly in the factories. First we distributed leaflets to the factories to explain to workers what the COP was all about. Thereafter we had to enter factories to have group discussions. In many instances we entered the cloakrooms of factories illegally, without management knowing, but with the workers actually collaborating. The workers were encouraged to submit any demand which they thought was important. Among the demands that were frequently made was the call for a fully paid 40-hour week. Another important demand that found its way into the Freedom Charter was that all who work should be free to form trade unions. That question was vital at the time for African workers ... Often we got a set of collective demands coming from the factory because the workers were there under one roof. The collection of demands enabled Sactu to push forward one of its major aims – organising unorganised workers.¹²

In Pietermaritzburg, the NIC worked closely with the ANC. The likes of A.S. Chetty, Archie Gumede, Harry Gwala, Moses Mabhida, S.B. Mungal, and Chota Motala covered the city as well as surrounding areas like Cato Ridge, Elandskop, Edendale, Plessieslaer, Willowfontein, Harding, Estcourt, Lions River, Kranskop, Howick, Richmond, Greytown, and Ixopo. According to Chetty, this was crucial in building non-racialism: ‘We used to do a lot of pamphleteering, and a lot of painting of the walls and all that ... we painted “Resist this”, Resist that ... whatever the campaign was.’ Chetty found Africans receptive to non-racialism:

When Indians went into an African area there was no question, you know, that the guy’s going to assault you. The moment you give them the sign, you’re a comrade. You say *Afrika!* And they say *Mayibuye* [Among Indians] it took a hell of a long time to break the old pattern ... This idea of association was a hell of a bogey created by the oppressors. *Swartgevaar* was a real bogey, and it made our task very difficult.¹³

The work was hard, the campaigning long and tiring, and the responses interesting. According to Chetty:

In the main, it was housing, housing, housing. [Sometimes] you get these fellows arguing politically, you know! ‘Oh, you fellows are wasting your time’; ‘you can achieve nothing in this country’ ... that kind of talk. There was one fellow; I went on explaining about the importance of the Charter ... and in the end he said: ‘Ay, man, how much donation you want?’ I said: ‘I’m not asking for donations, man, I’m explaining what the Freedom Charter is.’ He said: ‘Ay, you talking so long. Here you are man, take five shilling and go!’¹⁴



Kay Moonsamy (standing on the right) with members of the CP in the 1940s

© Kay Moonsamy

It was in this period, too, that new leaders emerged to replace those who were banned. One young man who would follow in the footsteps of George Ponnen and become a stalwart of the CP made his mark in the lead-up to the COP. Keseval Moonsamy, or Comrade Kay as he is popularly known, was born in 1926 to Coopan and Amrutham Moonsamy. Kay’s maternal and paternal grandparents were indentured migrants from Tamil Nadu. As a 20-year-old, Kay had displayed his courage by participating in the passive resistance

campaign. Now, at 30, he would play an important organisational role. Kay's father was a waiter at the Royal Hotel: 'I recall I once went to see my dad. Do you know what I had to use? The fire escape! I had to walk up the fire escape to go and see him because hawkers and dogs were not allowed. Ya, that's what we were!' Kay was the eldest of seven brothers and attended the SRS Overport School to standard four. Around 1940 he enrolled at St Aidan's Boys' School, but was there for a short while only 'because of the hardships at home the economic ... conditions ... I was just simply forced to leave.' Kay's working life began at Rhodesian Timbers in April 1941. Shortly afterwards, he was recruited into the Natal Box, Broom and Brush Workers Union by R.R. Pillay, a member of the CP from whom Kay learnt 'everything I know. Work conditions were exploitative – low wages, long hours.' Kay displayed obvious leadership qualities and by 1945 was elected president of the Union.

Kay worked there until 1946 when he volunteered for passive resistance. He had joined the CP in 1944 and felt duty-bound to participate in the campaign. After his release, he was unemployed for two years before joining Durban North Dairies in 1948. He joined the Natal Dairy Workers' Union where he linked up with Billy Nair, and rapidly progressed to chairperson. Organising workers and participation in passive resistance were part of Kay's political education and would make him into a battle-hardened warrior. He remained in the dairy industry until his arrest during the 1956 Treason Trial. Kay participated actively in the lead-up to the COP:

In places like Cato Manor you'll find that the person will sign and contribute even a ticky. Imagine their commitment because the majority were poor. We also collected demands – people wrote out what they would like the future of South Africa to be – like the right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of movement. Meetings were held in Durban ... some in suburbs like Overport, where Raboobee's Corner is now. There was an open ground and we used to address meetings there. The fact that we sent 365 delegates to the COP from Natal was an achievement. I was there, at Lakhani Chambers, when the last busload of delegates left at midnight.

Despite the banning, Monty was too taken by the campaign around the Freedom Charter not to play an active part in events leading up to the gathering in Kliptown. Traveling *incognito* he attended secret meetings at the farms of Dr A.H. Sader in Ladysmith and Gopalal Hurbans in Tongaat on the North Coast. The last such meeting of the working committee of the NIC was held on 5 June 1955 at Monty's surgery, where the draft of the Freedom Charter was discussed.



Congress of the People, 1955

© Choti Motala

A.S. Chetty and the Natal Midlands delegation travelled in three trucks to Kliptown. At Heidelberg their journey was almost derailed by restrictions on inter-provincial movement, as at least five members of the party did not have permits. When they reached the border post, a white policeman came to check their documentation. The comedian in the group took over:

Heyyy, July handicap coming up very soon, hey.

Yes, got any tips.

Huh, definitely. I give you the tips, don't worry. This horse, definite winner. That horse, number two winner. Baas, we going for this wedding. Everybody's okay here. Come on, man. We're getting late for the wedding ...?

Okay, don't make a noise, hey. All these people are sleeping in Heidelberg. You mustn't make a noise. Please go!¹⁵

They were met in Johannesburg by Mosie Moolla and Babla Saloojee who, according to Chetty, were ‘a tower of strength ... To organise that huge Congress was no joke.’ Delegates were hungry and proceeded to Azad Café in Fordsburg, which was ‘jam-packed. We find all our guys hustling for breakfast. The café-owner is simply frying eggs, and cutting bread ... It was chaotic in that place.’ And when they heard that Mosie and Babla had pre-arranged for the TIC to pay, ‘the guys went to town on the bloody chow! The TIC must have had a hell of a heavy bill!’¹⁶

Ebrahim Ebrahim (Ebie) attended Kliptown at the tender age of 18. He campaigned vigorously from house to house in the months leading up to the COP. He was on the Durban committee of the NIYC and completed hundreds of questionnaires. He was moved by the visit to the Magazine Barracks. They ‘were the most oppressed and exploited class, [so] it was particularly important that they contributed to the demands.’¹⁷ He did not have a permit, and was travelling with Ismail Gangat and Norman Middleton. Norman decided that if they were stopped at the border, they would say that he was Norman’s nephew. ‘With my colour, I don’t know how I would have passed as Coloured!’ Ebie found Kliptown liberating, especially the coming together of all South Africans: ‘[They spoke] from the same platform, in the same voice, and showing the same militancy ... the whole concept of non-racialism became very meaningful. Although you knew this had been Congress policy, it was brought to your attention in a dramatic manner.’¹⁸ Ebie returned in a truck with over 40 people, and despite the vigilance of the police and the lack of a permit, got through the border controls. It would not be the first time that Ebie would cross borders without the requisite documents.

It had been decided before the COP that there would be three recipients of the Isitwalandwe award for service to the freedom struggle – Luthuli, Dadoo and Father Trevor Huddleston. The award took the form of the emblem of the COP – a four-spoked wheel to signify the unity of the four Congresses. The awardees illustrated the broad reach of the movement – the Gandhian-like leader of the ANC; the Indian leader of the CP; and the leading white

progressive Christian clergyman. The choice of a black, Indian, and white also signified non-racialism.

The COP met at a sports field in Kliptown from Saturday afternoon 25 June to Sunday evening 26 June, to map out the vision of the South African people. Delegates poured in from all over the country in cars, buses, lorries, trains, and by foot, some even barefoot. Each delegation was allocated an area of the sportsfield. There were 2 884 official delegates (including 360 Indians, 320 coloureds, and 112 whites) and thousands of ordinary members of the public were present. Key NIC representatives who made it to Kliptown included Billy Nair, M.P. Naicker and Gopalal Hurbans but many of those responsible for the mobilising and collecting demands were not at Kliptown when the Charter was adopted. The likes of Monty, I.C. Meer, Luthuli, A.C. Meer, J.N. Singh, Dadoo, Mandela, Tambo, Fatima Meer, and a host of others were banned. Monty had been banned in November 1954. I.C. and Fatima Meer were also banned in November 1954 for two years. Fatima was three months pregnant at the time. Always looking on the bright side, Monty called her on the phone as soon as he learnt of her banning. He pretended to be the chief of the SB and asked in a deep voice: 'Have my men served you with your banning order? Do you understand it?' It was Monty's style to make light and poke fun at the state's heavy hand. This time there was a twist as Monty's 'voice quickly returned to normal, "Oh, Fatima, sorry, they have come for me as well".'¹⁹

Bannings were an inspired move by the Nats because they cut activists off from their mass base, and made their ability to earn a living a nightmare of bureaucratic entanglements. As I.C. Meer would reflect, bannings changed their lives completely: 'I was cut off from practically all my former activities. I was forced to resign from a number of organisations in which I was active, above all the NIC. I tried pursuing my political ideals through other channels, but in vain. One needed a historically established structure and its credibility.'²⁰

The original plan was that the contents of the Freedom Charter would be read out clause by clause, and that if anyone had an amendment, they could go up to the podium and articulate it. But because of police intervention, 'the leaders

on the platform decided to telescope the procedure to fit the time remaining. Instead of taking one chapter at a time, the Charter was open for discussion as a whole ... The whole, unamended Charter was put to the vote and approved by acclaim ... Counting was impossible.²¹ The Freedom Charter became the manifesto of the African National Congress:

We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know: ...
The People Shall Govern! ... All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights! ...
The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth! ... The Land Shall be Shared
Among Those Who Work It! ... All Shall be Equal Before the Law! ... All Shall
Enjoy Equal Human Rights! ... There Shall be Work and Security! ... The Doors
of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened! ... There Shall be Houses, Security
and Comfort! ... There Shall be Peace and Friendship! ... THESE FREEDOMS
WE WILL FIGHT FOR, SIDE BY SIDE, THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES,
UNTIL WE HAVE WON OUR LIBERTY.

Around 3:30 pm on Sunday, 300 policemen arrived at Kliptown, many on horseback and backed by Saracens. They surrounded the sportsfield while some went to the main platform and announced that they had warrants to search for 'inflammatory and subversive literature.' The last few clauses of the Freedom Charter were read out and adopted to the singing of Nkosi Sikelele, while the police were searching delegates on the platform. The irony was not lost on Manilal Gandhi: 'the government being present on the platform as though to bear witness to it. It was all an act of God.' Delegates were searched and their names and addresses recorded, and this finished around 8:00 pm. Many were arrested for not having permits or passes. Based on police brutality against delegates, Manilal concluded that 'there can be no compromise where reason is completely absent and unreasonableness, stark injustice and tyranny is the order of the day.'²² Billy Nair suggests that the police allowed the Charter to be adopted, so that they could use it against them during the Treason Trial of 1956,²³ when the state argued that to achieve the aims of the Charter, the Congress Alliance would have had to overthrow the state.

When delegates returned to Durban, there were report-back meetings. A meeting of the NIC at Bharat Hall in Durban on 28 August 1955 approved the formation of a National Joint Consultative Committee to popularise the Freedom Charter. The ANC adopted the Charter at its March 1956 Congress. Mzala made an obvious but often forgotten observation that ‘by sneering at the Freedom Charter and calling it an ANC document, some people forget that the Charter was in fact, produced not by the ANC but by the people of South Africa.’ The ANC only adopted the Charter as its policy document nine months later.²⁴ In fact, some in the ANC were unhappy with aspects of the Charter. Luthuli himself felt uneasy with parts of the Charter, such as the reference to ‘national groups’ and ‘nationalisation’. Luthuli wanted to de-emphasise racial groups. These disagreements resulted in ANC adoption of the Charter being postponed from its December 1955 conference to a special meeting on 31 March 1956.²⁵

The year ended with Monty still banned. His New Year’s message for 1956, published in *New Age* on 29 December 1955, had a simple refrain: ‘The year 1956 will be what we make of it ... The Freedom Charter enshrines the hopes and aspirations of the millions of underprivileged peoples of the Union and in 1956 our main task will be to advance the cause of the Charter.’²⁶

Rusty Bernstein, one of the drafters of the Charter, wrote of his disappointment at the failure to build on the excitement generated by the COP: ‘Attention had been focused too closely on the event itself so there was no plan to follow up ... The movement slipped back into an uninspired routine of meetings and more meetings.’²⁷ On the other hand, for many the COP was a momentous occasion. In the words of Chief Luthuli, ‘nothing in the history of the liberatory movement in South Africa quite caught the imagination as this did, not even the Defiance Campaign. Even remote rural areas were aware of the significance of what was going on.’²⁸ Luthuli accepted that while it was ‘by no means a perfect document ... its motive must be understood, as must the deep yearning for security and human dignity from which it springs.’²⁹ This was echoed by many across the country and the ANC’s membership

increased dramatically to an estimated 100 000 by the end of the 1950s.

Despite optimistic noises, we should not ignore voices of dissension. The demands of the Charter provoked debate inside and outside the Congress Alliance over its contents. It came under criticism from African Nationalists, and later by Black Consciousness activists and various factions of Marxists for espousing politically centrist liberal views. From the left, the critique revolved around demands like ‘the people shall govern’, which were seen as not emphasising clearly the working class leadership of the movement, by submerging it under the amorphous term, ‘the people’. This criticism merged with those who criticised the Charter as being a national democratic document that could easily be co-opted by capitalism. Africanists like Jordan Ngubane, on the other hand, felt that the Charter was a communist document, and that the ANC had subordinated the interests of the African majority to those of the Congress Alliance.³⁰ Bernstein also points out that many of the clauses ‘ran into heavy criticism for either being too radical or too imprecise, or even for being meaningless.’³¹

Africanists in particular were virulent in their criticism. They focused on the Charter’s preamble, ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white’, and ‘fiercely denounced the Charter and the colour-blind direction taken by the ANC’. South Africa, they insisted, did not ‘belong to all who live in it’. It belonged to the Africans!³² A group would eventually break away and form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) under Robert Sobukwe, who felt that the Congress Alliance and Freedom Charter diluted African nationalism. In April 1959, Sobukwe, in graphic language, threw a challenge to Indian South Africans: ‘The down trodden, poor “stinking coolies” of Natal who, alone as a result of material conditions, can identify themselves with the indigenous African majority in the struggle to overthrow white supremacy, have not yet produced their leadership. We hope they will do so soon.’³³ M.D. Naidoo challenged the view that the NIC was dominated by merchants:

What the PAC said way back in 1959 when attacking the Freedom Charter was that the ANC leadership was being led by the white communists and the Indian

merchants which was nonsense because the Indian Congresses were not merchant bodies. They were merchant bodies before the days of my generation. It's true that they were merchant bodies then, but that's precisely what they ceased to be in the 1940s. We were no longer representing the merchants. We represented the more progressive elements and the working class, all the new trade unions among Indians that were formed during that period, all their officers were with us. So this is just projecting a prejudice – not reality – to suggest that the Indian Congress, because it's Indian, is merchant.³⁴

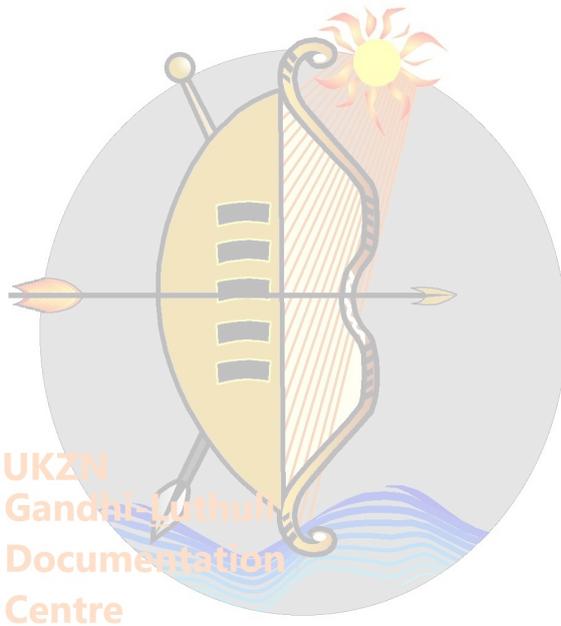
Ironically, it may have been precisely the fuzziness of the Charter that proved attractive to so many. It meant different things to different people, and therefore galvanised a broad array of groupings. Coming in the midst of the elaboration of the central tenets of apartheid, the Charter had a massive impact on rank-and-file members of the Congress Alliance. For trade unionist R.D. Naidoo, 'I looked at the birth of the Freedom Charter as only the knock on the door. At least the birth of the Charter gave this Government an alternative to think about. It offered a base for the Government to negotiate with the people. We say the people can decide [later] whether they want the Charter or not.'³⁵

In spite of the discordant forces within the liberation movement after Kliptown, Monty was reinvigorated as he interrogated those who attended the gathering and studied the outcomes. For him, the Freedom Charter was the beacon that the Congress Alliance could coalesce around, and he carried a supreme optimism that its vision was possible in his lifetime. Monty told the SAIC conference in 1956 that:

... the Freedom Charter has become the guiding star of all South Africans of all races advancing on the road to freedom. In all our deliberations, decisions and actions, our main concern should be to make this great Charter a living reality ... I am personally a great believer in non-violence. The non-violent army of freedom in South Africa will and must triumph and daily our ranks are swelling.³⁶

Monty was confident that the constituency of the NIC would grow as the Charter promised the 'eternal aliens' who faced the constant spectre of

repatriation, a permanent home in Africa. But just as the Congress Alliance was gathering strength, so was the apartheid state growing its repressive machinery. Monty's leadership would once again be put to the test.



'Hon links'

December 5th 1956. The newspapers scream: "High Treason." Dawn swoop and country-wide arrests. It is the talk in the bus, in the train, at the street corner... The key rattles in the lock and the heavy door swings open ... The cell is slowly filling...Who will be next? More come singly and in groups. Walter, Moses, Ruth, Joe, Duma, Rusty, Jack, Ismail Meer...A fortnight of waiting ... Robert Resha taking longer rests than exercise walks. Mosie Moolla constantly posing in the hope that Alex La Guma will deign to sketch him. Dr Naicker and 'small walks' ... The joint sessions of the 'upper' and 'lower' house are an inspiration ... Debi Singh outlining the history of the struggles of the Indian people ... Chief Luthuli joining hands in dedication and rededication to the fight for freedom. Tomorrow, December 19th is 'Treason Day.'¹

ALFRED HUTCHINSON, 18 DECEMBER 1957

During the early hours of 5 December 1956, activists belonging to the Congress Alliance were arrested in coordinated raids across the country. A visibly upset Marie described Monty's arrest: 'At about 4:00 am we were awakened by the police. My husband who opened the door was told that they had warrants to search the house. He called them in and was handed the warrants of arrest and search. After a search lasting nearly two hours they left the house taking away documents and my husband.'² Thirteen-year-old Kreesen initially thought this was one of the normal police intrusions into their lives, but he also sensed for the first time that his father was not his smiling nonchalant self, as he usually was when faced with similar police searches and harassment. As the days turned into months, Kreesen felt the pain of his father's frequent absences, the tension in the household, and the lowered voices of the elders that spoke of his father 'being away for a long time.' His father's absence was exacerbated as his mother,

too, was caught up in solidarity campaigns. Monty's occasional visits only served to increase the tension, as Kreesen prepared for the inevitable goodbye. He kept his smile, although his young body told him something else.

The situation was doubly traumatic for Monty's teenage daughter, Vasugee. Having been educated abroad, Monty was determined that she would also receive a "proper" education. He arranged for her to study in the United Kingdom. At the back of his and Marie's mind, no doubt would have been the need to allow Vasugee to escape the everyday tensions of political life that was the diet of the Naicker household. But there was to be no escape. The high-profile arrests and Monty's subsequent charge of High Treason was difficult for a young woman to bear. Now in her 70s, she recalled being 'devastated when I heard about the Treason Trial. In the digs that I lived in, there were no phones ... remember this was the 1950s ... and my news from home was only by letter which arrived by sea. The two years were very confusing for me.' Vasugee, who subsequently completed a degree in Optometry in Glasgow, went through a trying time, made all the worse by the time lag in communication. Her letters would take weeks to reach home, as would the replies. She tried to scan newspapers for bits of news, but this only reinforced her belief that her father was in serious trouble.

On 28 September 1955, Monty was elected president of the SAIC. Still banned, his messages of support and defiance were read out at the annual conference of the NIC on 22 June 1956, and the SAIC conference held between 19 and 21 October 1956. His pronouncements were not limited to local politics but also global affairs. On 5 November 1956 for example, he issued a statement criticising Britain and France over the Suez affair. As soon as his banning order ran out, he took to the platform. The public was keen to see and hear Monty in flesh, and there were flashes of the "old" Monty at the Bolton Hall on 25 November 1956, when he launched a virulent attack on the Group Areas Act, and called on the community to unite against it. He also regaled the audience on the mounting anti-imperialist struggle and the mood of freedom capturing the imagination of millions across the world.



Ismail C. Meer

Ismail C. Meer. Born 1918. Attorney. Secretary of the Natal Teachers' Union in the early '40'; secretary of the Transvaal Indian Congress during 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign.



Pious Goodman Mei. Born 1912. Trade unionist. Worked as a clerk on the gold mines and joined Congress in 1936. Left the service of the Native Affairs Department to become a factory labourer and then a trade union official.

Dr. Mahomed M. 'Chota' Motala. Born 1921. Qualified as a medical practitioner at the Grant Medical College, India. Active in student activities there when India was winning her independence. Practices in Pietermaritzburg.



Dr. G. M. 'Monty' Naicker. Born 1910. President of the South African Indian Congress. Served two terms of imprisonment of six months each during the 1946 Passive Resistance campaign, and went to prison again after leading the first Natal batch of Defiance Campaign resisters. Toured India's riot areas with Gandhi.



M. M. Ntshongweni



Billy Nair. Born 1930. Trade unionist. Secretary of 5 Natal unions in the tin, chemical, dairy and box industries.



Abednego Bhekabantu Ngeobo. Born 1931. Former textile worker, now law student. As president of the Students' Representative Council played a leading role in the fight against academic segregation at the University of Natal.

Dawood A. Seedat. Born 1916. Bookkeeper. Banned from all political activity from 1941 to 1945 under a War Measure. Active in the Non-European United Front, and in the Natal Indian Congress since 1939



Errol T. Shanley. Born 1911. Bookmaker's clerk. Formerly secretary of the Natal Sugar Workers' Union, secretary of Durban Trades and Labour Council for eight years. Served with S.A. Coastal Defence during the war



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Pitness H. 'Stalwart' Simelane. Born 1910. Teacher and chemist's assistant. In 1933 helped organise 22 night schools for adult Africans. A leading spirit in many Natal Congress campaigns.



Massabalala B. 'Bonnie' Yengwa. Born 1923. Bookkeeper, later an articulated law clerk. Prominent in the Defiance Campaign. In 1953 was banned from entering seven main magisterial districts in the Union and was banished for two years to Mapemula, a place he had left 17 years before.

Jacob B. Mafora. Born 1906. Entered domestic service and then became a gardener. Confined to Bloemfontein in 1953 for one year, under the Riotous Assemblies Act. Leading ANC figure in the Free State.



Mrs. Martha Mohlakaane. Born 1906 of a family of farm squatters. Has worked in domestic service for 22 years. Joined Congress in 1939. One of the leaders of Free State women in the anti-pass campaign. Mother of 4 children.





Mrs. Bertha Mkize.
Teacher and tailoress. Veteran campaigner against passes for women in the 1931, the 1936 and subsequent campaigns.



Kesval Moonsamy.
Born 1926. Indian Congress organiser. Served four months imprisonment in the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign. Helped organise the June 26 Protest Day strike against Suppression of Communism Act in 1950.

M. P. Naicker. Born 1920 Durban branch manager of 'New Age' newspaper. Formerly secretary of the Agricultural Workers' Federation which organised sugar field workers; secretary of the Natal Passive Resistance Council during the 1946 Campaign.



Kesval Moonsamy

Narainsamy Thambi Naicker. Born 1924. Attorney. President of the Non-European Students' Representative Council at the University of Natal in 1952. Active in the Natal Indian Congress since 1945.



Miss Dorothy Nyembe. Born 1930. Women's organiser. Served two prison sentences during the Defiance Campaign; led the contingent of Natal women who protested to the Prime Minister in August, 1956, in Pretoria, against passes for women.



V. S. M. 'Mannie' Pillay. Born 1918. Trade unionist. Has played a leading role in Durban's trade union movement and is today Durban's secretary of the National Union of Operative Biscuit Makers and Packers.

Mrs. Dorothy Shanley. Born 1928. Nursery school teacher. Mother of three children aged 11, 9 and 7, cared for by friends and neighbours during the arrest and trial of Dorothy and her husband, Errol.



Debi Singh. Born 1913. Smallholder. In 1944 was the secretary of Anti-Segregation Council which campaigned against the then conservative leadership of the Natal Indian Congress and for the election of the Dadoo-Naicker leadership. Secretary of Natal Passive Resistance Council in 1946.



Dr. Arthur E. Letele. Born 1916. Medical practitioner. Before Africans were admitted to University medical courses, trained as a medical-aid in a leper hospital. Led the first Kimberley volunteers in the Defiance Campaign and was one of those found guilty of leading the campaign.



Gabriel Dichaba. Born 1920. A herdbooy till he was 15, and then left school to become a labourer in the railway workshops. Led the first Free State volunteers in the Defiance Campaign.



Abraham Barnett Koutlhao Secchoareng. Born 1924. Ex-teacher, now clerk. Resigned as a teacher when the Bantu Education Act was introduced. Active in the Kimberley ANC.

Leslie Sonny Thuso Monnanyane. Born 1928. Labourer. Came into the ANC during the Defiance Campaign and has been a prominent Free State leader ever since.



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Monty matched his public pronouncements by leading from the front. On 2 December, a few days before his arrest, he told a mass meeting in Riverside, where he was 'greeted with thunderous applause and there was a joyous welcome back,' that white areas were being developed with Indian money, while the City Council neglected Indian areas because of 'a lack of money.' Monty described proposals to uproot Indians from Clairwood and Merebank as 'acts of piracy,' and warned that the Council planned to build locations for uprooted Indians, as was the case with Africans, and that pass laws would follow.³

However, if Monty thought that he would be part of a movement against the Group Areas Act, he was both mistaken, and rudely reminded of the repressive power of the state. His arrest was part of a nationwide swoop on activists – 140 people were pounced upon by plainclothes policemen and SB detectives. The warrant simply said 'Treason.' Sixteen more activists were arrested in the next few days.

The warrants gave police the power to remove the minute books, lectures, and typewriters of 48 listed organisations. These raids followed the adoption of the Freedom Charter in June 1955, and nationwide raids on 27 September 1955 on homes and offices of 400 activists. Justice Minister C.R. Swart announced in Parliament that around 200 activists would be arrested, and activists across the country waited in tense anticipation for the state's next move. In Swart, they were up against a ruthless political operator, who was imbued with a deep ideological commitment to the entrenching of white power. He was the leader of the NP in the OFS from August 1940. With a repressive state apparatus at his command, Swart saw the crushing of the Congress Alliance as a personal challenge. The NP had passed an array of apartheid laws, and Swart was convinced that he could use these legal mechanisms to crush opposition.

The rounding up of opponents of the regime and confiscation of material was clearly designed to produce a sense of shock and awe in both those arrested and the population at large. Of the 156 arrested, 23 were from Natal, among them Chief Albert Luthuli, Dawood Seedat, Kay Moonsamy, Billy Nair, I.C. Meer, Gopalal Hurbans, Kay Moonsamy, Chota Motala, Steven Dlamini, M.P. Naicker,

and N.T. Naicker. None, though, in spite of forewarnings, had expected either the broad national sweep, or the authorities' ruthless determination to convict them of treason.

Kay Moonsamy who worked at Clover Dairies recalls the events that led to his arrest. 'That morning, I still remember it was an overcast sky, it was drizzling, and I walked up Silver Palm Road.' Turning into Mountain Road, Kay saw a strange car with two white males. He sensed that something was wrong, 'so I didn't go to the office, I went to my friend's place and phoned the office and asked my colleagues, "Is there anybody waiting for me?" They said "ya, the SB".' Kay called the homes of Monty and Debi Singh and learnt that they had been arrested. 'I spoke to Comrade R.G. Pillay and he advised that "the best thing to do is give yourself up".' Kay's plight was compounded by the fact that his wife Khendari, whom he had married in June 1955, had given birth to their daughter Tammy a few months previously.

All this was playing on his mind as Kay decided to face the SB. He went to the office at around 10:00 am. The police had already been to his house where 'they took whatever they could find... even office pins.' Kay was arrested and taken to the Central Prison in Smith Street. 'All kinds of thoughts were running through his mind. 'One did not know what was happening.' He was joined by Luthuli, Archie Gumede, and Chota Motala, put on a military aircraft 'at three o'clock in the afternoon. It was my first ever going into an aircraft and I got sick, felt nauseous and terribly ill.' They landed at Pretoria's Zwartkop Airport around 5:30 pm and were driven to the Johannesburg Fort in a 'kwela kwela' (police van). 'When we went there we saw, my God, all the leaders from the various provinces...only black members mind you...because whites were kept separately. There was Dr Monty Naicker; Comrade Nelson Mandela ...'

Chota Motala was chairperson of the Natal Midlands Committee of the COP with Archie Gumede and Chief Luthuli, who was banned and could not address public gatherings, asked him to read out an address on his behalf at a farewell function for Durban delegates departing for Kliptown. Shortly after 4:30 am on the morning of 5 December 1956, according to Choti, they were ...

... awakened by knocking at the door. I thought there were some patients wanting the doctor. Chota opened the door and there were four people. They handed him warrants of search and arrest, searched the house, then proceeded to the surgery where another search took place. After that they took him away. They did not tell me what was going on. Chota was calm and told me not to worry.⁴

A distraught Choti was left to fend for their recently born daughter, Shireen, while Chota was driven to Durban with Archie Gumede, who was also wrenched from his wife and young family.⁵

I.C. Meer's journey to Drill Hall was slightly unorthodox. He was recovering from an appendectomy. Dr Davidson, who performed the operation, insisted that he could not be moved until the stitches were removed, so he was placed under house arrest, and when the stitches were removed six days later, he was put on the train to Johannesburg, accompanied by three security policemen, two white and one Indian, Freddy Moorgas. I.C. would remark that ...

Freddy was a good sort. He had joined the police force but kept his soul to himself. He showed me great respect. He had tipped off someone in the NIC office that I would be travelling by train, and the NIC branches were alerted to be on standby and greet me suitably in the towns where we halted. And it was as he said. There were crowds to greet me at Pietermaritzburg, Ladysmith, and Newcastle.⁶

In Johannesburg, I.C. Meer was whisked into a police van and taken to the Fort where he linked up with old comrades. One of these was Manickum (Mannie) Pillay (1916-2000), the son of indentured parents. Mannie began working for Bakers in 1930 and, showing excellent leadership skills, became General Secretary of the Biscuit Workers Union. He joined the CP in 1938 and NIC in 1940. He was secretary of the NIC, Mayville Branch, and on the National Executive of SACTU at the time of his arrest. After the CP's banning, Mannie remained a member of the underground. Mannie had married Bommie in 1944, and they had a daughter, Maggie, and two sons, Gary and Steve.⁷ Though the case against Mannie was dropped in 1958, he lost his job at Bakers

and was placed under house arrest for many years. After the Treason Trial he was employed by the Durban Indian Child Welfare Society as a bookkeeper.

Another of the treason trialists, N.T. Naicker (1922-2003), was born in Durban to Amakanoo and Narran Naicker, indentured migrants who had settled in Cato Manor. He was one of ten children. N.T. obtained a teaching position with the Reverend Paul Sykes at FOSA in Newlands and subsequently completed a law degree and opened a practice in Valbro Chambers in Victoria Street. He joined the NIC in 1949 and participated in the Defiance Campaign. In the lead-up to the COP, N.T. was General Secretary of the NIC and secretary of the SAIC, was present at Kliptown, and his office was 'the hub of activity' during women's pass protests. The indictment against N.T. Naicker was dropped on 20 April 1959. While N.T. spent most of the 1960s as a banned person, and did a great deal of underground political work, it is ironical that the six years he spent in jail from 1970 was for fraud. He was granted political asylum in the USA in 1992 where he lived until his death.

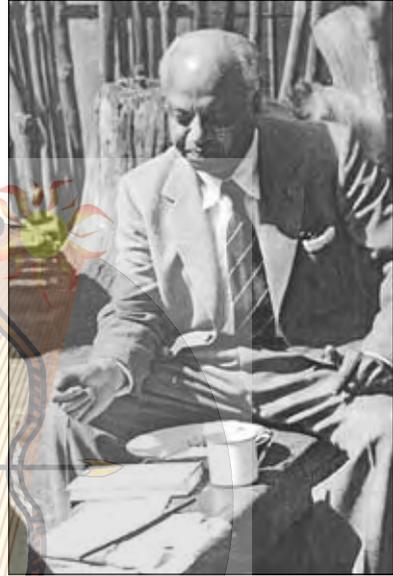
Dawood Seedat's struggle resumé made him an automatic candidate for arrest. From the late 1930s, he had been a member of the NIC, CP, LSG, India League, National Protest Day Committee (1950), and Stalin Memorial Committee. He had been imprisoned in 1940 for his anti-war stance. He was particularly moved by the plight of shop workers who experienced 'merciless exploitation by the business class' and founded the Indian Shop Assistant's Union in 1942. Seedat was secretary of the CP in Durban from 1943 and worked full-time for the *Guardian* from 1948. Banned in 1950, Seedat was listed in the US Congress Report of 500 'most dangerous' communists in the world in 1950. From July 1951 to February 1952, he illegally visited the UK, France, Palestine, East Germany, the USSR, and the People's Republic of China. He returned with Chinese revolutionary songs which were confiscated by Customs officers.⁸ Shortly after his return, Seedat told the NIYC on 21 February 1952 that his visit to the 'Iron Curtain' convinced him that 'the Fascists in South Africa were doomed.' He addressed a meeting in Johannesburg on 1 October 1952 to celebrate the third anniversary of the People's Republic of China and raised the

ire of the police when he asked a meeting of the Stalin Memorial Committee in Durban on 21 March 1953 to observe a two-minute silence to honour Stalin's achievements. He was imprisoned for 14 days in September 1955 for holding illegal meetings at the corner of Grey and Lorne Streets. The charge of treason against Dawood Seedat would be dropped on 20 April 1959.



above: *Cartoonist impression of Dawood Seedat and Yusuf Dadoo*

© Zoni Seedat



right: *Enjoying a break from the tedious proceedings.*

© Kreesen Naicker



Dawood Seedat addressing a rally in Peking, 1951

© Zoni Seedat

Shortly after 4:30 am on 5 December 1956, around a dozen policemen surrounded Billy Nair's home at 483 Randles Road. Some stood guard outside while others rummaged through the house and took away anything remotely connected to the CP, NIC or SACTU. Billy was taken to Durban Prison where he met Monty and N.T. Naicker before going to Johannesburg. It was Billy's involvement in the trade union movement that attracted the authorities' attention. He lost his job at the dairy, where he was earning £24 per month, and became full-time secretary of the Dairy Workers' Union at £6 per month in the early 1950s: 'Seriously. I had to rely on my mother for bus fares, even for food ... just the food and travel expenses used to exhaust that £6.' When Cassim Amra and S.V. Reddy were banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, Billy became the secretary of 16 unions in 1953. In 1953, Billy became an executive member of the NIC, a position he held until his banning in 1961. The union movement was dominated by the Trades and Labour Council (TUCSA), which treated black workers as second-class members. When TUCSA barred African membership, many black workers joined the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) formed in March 1955, a non-racial trade union federation in which Billy, Kay Moonsamy, M.P. Naicker, and Mannie Pillay were key figures.

Debi Singh and M.P. Naicker went 'missing' for a week and only handed themselves in to the police on 15 December. The *Graphic* condemned the 'astonishing method' used by the police to effect the arrests of 'leaders who have never in the past run away from the police.' The fact that Debi and M.P. handed themselves in was a 'perfect example of the readiness to cooperate with the authorities. They have given substance to the claim that it was totally unnecessary for the police to have organised their arrests with all the marks of military precision ... invading the privacy of individuals, transgressing the elemental decencies.'⁹ Debi and M.P. were charged with sedition and treason, and taken to Johannesburg. Officially they said that they were 'out of town', and had no idea that they were wanted. As Billy Nair commented, 'given their lifestyles, we teased them that what they really meant was that they were "out on the town"'. M.P. Naicker's wife Saro points to what transpired:

We were living in Everton Road in the outbuilding. At five in the morning, M.P.'s mum knocks, "Somebody rang, in Hindi they spoke, 'Have they come?'" M.P. quickly put on his trousers and shirt and as he came out, we saw the SB car just there. He quickly got back into the toilet which was right in the back ... in those days we didn't have a sewage toilet, and then he went through people's houses to another parallel street. The police didn't know that there were rooms in the back so they searched but couldn't find him and left. For eight or ten days he didn't come and they [police] came to search whether he's even hiding under the bed and that kind of thing. Eventually M.P. came with Rowley Arenstein one morning to say he's giving in.

Banned under the Suppression of Communism Act in 1952, M.P. Naicker was forced to resign as a paid employee of the NIC and as the vice-president. In 1954, he had joined the weekly *New Age*, becoming its Durban reporter, editor and branch manager.¹⁰

Debi Singh (1913-1970) was an integral part of the battles that propelled Monty to the presidency of the NIC. He was an active member of the LSG, being chairman in 1943, secretary of the PRC, general-secretary of the NIC from 1948 to 1953, and vice-president in 1954. He also served time in jail for participating in the Defiance Campaign in 1952. Debi's family were flower growers in Avoca. Fatima Meer described Debi as a 'tremendous fellow ... dedicated to the bone. He lived for the Congress. He was the secretary of the NIC and served on it without any payment or with negligible payment for many years. He was a solid worker and he sat in the NIC office so you always had a presence when you went there.' According to I.C. Meer, Debi:

... was a giving person. He had the mannerisms of an aristocrat. His father left him several plots of land and he sold these and spent like a lord until he became a pauper ... When relaxed he would entertain us with the one and only song he knew, *Nadie kinare bagla bethe choon choon machlie khai* ['The bagla sits on the river bank and eats fish, choon choon]. Not much of a message but great fun.¹¹

Debi was banned in 1954 and brought to trial under banning orders. In *Long*

Walk to Freedom, Mandela revealed that at the Johannesburg Fort they had a structured program of lectures. Professor Z.K. Matthews spoke on ANC and Afro-American history and Debi gave lectures on the history of Indians. Given that people like Monty, Dadoo, M.P. Naicker, and I.C. Meer were present, this was a high compliment.¹² Debi Singh served a succession of banning orders after the trial until his death in 1970 at the age of 57.

The only Indian woman on the list was Ayesha Mukadam (nee Dawood), who was born in the Cape in 1927, left school in standard eight, and became involved in political work when she volunteered as an organiser during the May 1951 strike to protest the removal of coloured voters from the Common Voter's Roll. She met Ray Alexander and thus began her political journey as she became involved in the trade union movement and ANC activities. By 1953 she was a card-carrying member of the ANC – astonishing, considering that non-Africans were prohibited from membership. She represented South Africa at the Women's International Democratic Federation Conference in Copenhagen in 1953, and her travels also took her to London, Hungary, and Romania. She was charged shortly afterwards under the Suppression of Communism Act. Ayesha met her future husband, Yusuf Mukaddam, in 1953 during a visit to India after the conference in Denmark. Yusuf, the story goes, was love-struck, and got a job on a cargo ship to get to South Africa. He made it to Port Elizabeth in January 1957 just as Ayesha was arrested on treason charges. He had written to her in advance but she did not receive the mail. Thinking that she had spurned him, he returned to India but made his way back to South Africa in 1960 when he learnt of her arrest. Yusuf entered the country illegally and proposed to Ayesha, who accepted. When the police discovered that Yusuf was in the country illegally, they got an order to deport him. Ayesha accepted an exit permit into exile and settled in Bombay in May 1968.¹³

Detainees waited almost two weeks before their day in court. Males were imprisoned in large halls on two floors, which came to be known as 'Upper' and "Lower" House. Whites were kept separately, but Indians, Africans, and coloureds were herded together; women were similarly divided. The day usually

began at 6:30 am with breakfast; lunch was served at 11:30 am; and supper at 3:30 pm. They were locked in for the night from 4:00 pm. Monty seemed to be in the thick of things in prison, joking here, trying to solve problems there and leading the SAIC in joint meetings with other Alliance groupings. One of the problems for warders was that they could not get the counting right by race, because they were not sure how to categorise some prisoners. Joe Matthews, for example, had long hair and would be mistaken for Indian. Monty suggested to the frustrated warder that they leave the counting to the detainees and proposed Mandela. Though this was procedurally illegal, the warder saw merit in the suggestion. Mandela got the count right. True or legend, it is said that Monty remarked to the group that if Mandela ‘can get the counting right here, he will get the whole country right.’ I.C. Meer would remark that ‘Monty never realised how prophetic his words were.’¹⁴

On 19 December 1956, the accused appeared in court for preparatory examination. Thousands gathered on the streets with signs like ‘We Stand by our leaders.’ Court was the Johannesburg Drill Hall, headquarters of the Department of Defence, which one publication described as being ‘in the strictly military, utilitarian tradition of discomfort. It has an iron roof; when the sun shines in summer it is as hot as an oven; in winter, it was bitterly cold and draughty.’¹⁵ The line-up of defendants was the antithesis of apartheid’s desire to divide along racial lines. There were 137 men and 19 women; 105 Africans, 23 whites, 21 Indians, and seven coloureds. Trialists sat according to province, Transvaal, Cape, Natal and OFS, in alphabetical order without distinction of race.¹⁶

The case was postponed to the following day because of poor acoustics. When the accused appeared the following day, they were caged by a five-foot high diamond-mesh wire. Defence counsel, which included Israel (Isie) Maisels, Sydney Kentridge, Vernon Berrangé and Bram Fischer, complained that their clients were made to appear ‘wild animals’, and threatened to withdraw unless the mesh was removed. Magistrate Wessels, who would become the chairman of the Group Areas Board, was forced to order its replacement with a fence between the public gallery and dock.¹⁷ Bail was

granted on 20 December 1956.

The first phase of the trial, according to the *Manchester Guardian*, was 'pursued with pitiless pertinacity',¹⁸ and lasted until January 1958. Preparatory examinations officially began on 9 January 1957 and continued until 17 December 1957, when allegations were withdrawn against 61 accused. The Crown's exhibits totalled over 20,000, most of it notes taken by spies who had infiltrated the organisations or attended meetings, newspaper articles from the *Guardian* and *New Age*, as well as books by Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Engels. The process was tedious. According to I.C. Meer, 'after a month of sitting in the preparatory examination and being dulled by its tedium and stupidity, I came to the conclusion that the worst punishment one could suffer was to have one's own speeches, delivered years back and recorded by near-illiterate policemen, read back to one by equally illiterate readers.'¹⁹

The government showed its intent when Oswald Pirow was recalled from retirement to act as Chief Prosecutor. Pirow, described as 'the second most prominent far-right extremist' in South Africa after Johannes van Rensburg in the 1940s and 1950s,²⁰ had been Minister of Justice and subsequently Minister of Defence. Billy Nair recalled that 'the State even dug up a ... famous fascist. He was a brilliant lawyer they brought him virtually out of his grave, you know, to lead the case for the State.'²¹ Pirow had met Hitler in August 1933 and described him as 'a man of world stature.' In his mind, Indian influence and communist agitation 'increasingly merged to become a single enemy bent on destroying white civilisation'²² [and] a fascist state headed by a strong leader was needed to impose the volk's 'sense of values.'²³ During the 1950s, Pirow kept in contact with a network of fascists including Oswald Moseley, founder of the British Union of Fascists, who visited him regularly.²⁴ Pirow would not see out the trial, as he died in October 1959.

The state alleged that between 1 October 1952 and 13 December 1956, the trialists were involved in activities to prepare for a violent revolution and set up a Communist State. This included the COP and adoption of the Freedom Charter, inciting each other to use violence; organising mass campaigns against

certain laws; causing hatred between races, and advocating the ideas of Marx and Lenin. Pirow sought to show that to achieve the aims of the Freedom Charter 'in their lifetime,' the accused would have had to 'overthrow the state by violence' or at least be involved 'in a violent collision with the State resulting in its subversion.' While the writings and speeches, attendance at meetings, possession of documents, and other activities appeared innocent individually, the 'unifying element' was the Congress Movement, which was involved in a 'reasonable conspiracy.' The provisions of the Freedom Charter relating to public ownership and redivision of land made it a Communist document, the state argued.²⁵

After the Crown had withdrawn charges against 61 accused on 17 December 1957, including Chief Luthuli, Bertha Mkhize, I.C. Meer, Kay Moonsamy, Dorothy Nyembe, Dorothy and Errol Shanley, Mannie Pillay, and Debi Singh of Natal, there was a recess. During hearings from 13 to 22 January 1958, four more cases were withdrawn, including that of Ayesha Dawood. The second phase of the trial began on 1 August 1958 in a converted synagogue in Pretoria. Monty was one of the 91 present when the case resumed. It came at an especially difficult time for him, according to *Indian Views*:

One of the most senior leaders appearing will be Dr G.M. Naicker who, moved by the poverty of his people has become the central figure in Indian politics for almost two decades. Dr Naicker when he takes his seat at the Jewish synagogue, with his usual calmness, will be facing not only one of the most serious charges known to the law but will at the same time be one of the first victims of the recent proclamations under the Group Areas Act. His home in Percy Osborne Road has been declared to be in an area for European ownership.²⁶

The government's case was weak and on 29 September 1958, the charge of furthering the aims of communism was withdrawn and the words 'acting in concert and with common purpose' were dropped from the indictment. The prosecution sought to prove that the defendants were involved in a 'conspiracy, pure and simple.'²⁷ Charges against a further 61 were quashed on 20 April 1959,

including the Natal contingent of Monty, Steven Dlamini, Gopalal Hurbans, Chota Motala, M.P. Naicker, N.T. Naicker, Billy Nair, Dawood Seedat, and M.B. Yengwa. This left 30 treason trialists, including Mandela, Helen Joseph, Ahmed Kathrada, and Mosie Moolla. The situation had become so farcical that the *Times of London* wrote on 5 August 1959 that ‘darkness and confusion prevail.’²⁸ The third phase of the trial lasted from 7 October 1960 to 6 March 1961. The court found the men not guilty and discharged them on 29 March 1961. *New Age* reported:

On Wednesday March 29 the accused came to court with their hearts beating wildly. Their friends and relatives and stalwarts of the congress movement who had stood by for over four years overflowed in the public gallery. The Defence was so confident that even while the judges were delivering their verdict, removal trucks were parked in the streets outside to carry away the heavy tomes of evidence and records ...²⁹

The state’s case was doomed from the outset. Dean Griswold of the Harvard Law School wrote in November 1958 that an indictment against so many people, where no single or group act was alleged, was, ‘as any lawyer can readily see, an almost impossible task.’³⁰ But the state remained obstinate. Minister of Justice C.R. Swart announced on 12 May 1959 that the accused would be pursued ‘no matter how many millions of pounds it costs ... What does it matter how long it takes?’³¹ Tom Karis described the trial as a ‘shamble.’³² On one occasion a police constable, purportedly reading from Monty’s notebook dated 13 June 1952, pointed to what he claimed were Monty’s words: ‘The time has come to shoot Malan’. It was completely out of character for Monty to use this language, and defence counsel Berrange asked the constable to spell ‘shoot’. He spelt it ‘check’ as it was written in the notebook.³³ On another occasion, Solomon Ngubase was presented to court as somebody who would provide evidence of violent intent during the 1952 Defiance Campaign. The witness claimed to know Monty well. When asked to point Monty out, Ngubase singled out Debi Singh!³⁴ At times the trial reached *Monty-pythonesque* proportions.

Professor Andrew Murray was the state's star witness on communism. His line of thought was "aesopism", which, he claimed, 'had been developed by Lenin, in terms of which anything that communists said had the opposite meaning.'³⁵ So when Monty used the word non-violence he was actually calling on people to perpetrate violent acts. Defence lawyer Berrange, according to I.C. Meer, 'after reading a score or so of extracts and Professor Murray's standard response to them, read out a passage from a book. Murray's interpretation, as expected, was "out and out communistic." When asked if he recognised the author, Murray said he couldn't be sure. Berrange said, 'It is an extract from your own book.' That took the wind out of Professor Murray's sails.³⁶

If the treason trialists found court proceedings tedious and boring, they could not complain about going hungry.

Three times a day full meals were brought for all the 'treason' prisoners ... African, Indian and European women took turns at catering ... In Fordsburg, several Indian homes were all but converted into bustling kitchens where the gigantic task of turning out hot meals for the 153 prisoners was efficiently carried out ... Africans in jail who had never before been introduced to curry had an education. Twice a day they ate curried fish or curried eggs or curried meat or curried beans. Water consumption at the fort rocketed.³⁷

Monty found a myriad of ways to pass the time. One of them was sitting for accused No. 84 Ike Horwich, an architect from Cape Town, who produced a bronze bust of Monty after sittings totalling almost 16 hours.³⁸ In spite of the seriousness, one story related by Monty made the helpers at the NIC offices laugh when he related it during one of the breaks in Durban. As Ismail Meer remembers:

Dr Motala returned to the Drill Hall one lunch hour after his shopping, sporting a new pair of goggles. He looked most impressive. The 'goggles' caught our president Dr Naicker's fancy. He asked Dr Motala where he purchased them. Dr Motala, in all seriousness, told Monty he had made his purchase in a shop on 'Hou Links' Street. The next day Monty was still without goggles – he could

not find 'Hou Links' Street as every street in Johannesburg bore the sign 'Hou Links'.³⁹



Bronze bust of Monty by Ike Horwich.

© Kreesen Naicker

Concern about the welfare of trialists and their families was expressed at meetings across the country. A week of prayer for the treason trialists was started on 11 December 1956 at the Gandhi Hall in Lorne Street. It was organised by Dr Mabel Palmer, Swami Nischalananda, Manilal Gandhi, Sheik Ahmed Afriqui, and the Reverend R.D. Adendorff.⁴⁰ And after the Friday prayer on 7 December, the Mehfile-Khawateen-Islam, a Muslim women's organisation, held a special prayer service, following which a resolution was sent to the Prime Minister: 'This meeting is gravely concerned at the sweeping arrests of so many South Africans ... In this dark hour facing the country the meeting prays God for His guidance and desires to convey to the Honourable Prime Minister its deeply perturbed feeling of anxiety.'⁴¹

Hassen Mall established the Civil Liberties Committee on 6 December 1956 to raise funds for the defence of activists, and speakers included Florence Mkhize, Hilda Kuper, and Alan Paton. A meeting of the Pietermaritzburg chapter of the committee was addressed by T.C. Metha of the NIC, Peter Brown and

Dr R.C. Munshi of the Liberal Party, and Selbourne Maponye of the ANC.⁴² Hassen Mall was an important member of the NIC from the mid-1950s and would become Monty's vice-president in 1960. He held things together when the organisation was affected by the lengthy trial-related absences of its leaders. Mall, who was born in India in 1922 and came to South Africa with his parents around 1930, completed a law degree at the University of Cape Town and would become South Africa's first black jurist when he was made an acting judge in 1988, and in the post-apartheid period was chairman of the amnesty committee of the TRC.

A Treason Trial Defence Fund was created under the guiding hand of Canon John Collins of St Paul's Cathedral, London. Alan Paton was one of the trustees and Mary Benson was the secretary. The trial was expected to run a few months, but took years to complete, and the legal costs kept mounting. Monty acknowledged their contribution in 1957:

The Treason Trial Defence Fund has received worldwide support and we must express our sincerest thanks to men like Canon Collins in England and Mr George Houser in America for the wonderful work they are doing. In South Africa too, the Fund has rallied round it men and women of great prominence who have shown that there is tremendous goodwill in our country in all sections of the South African people.⁴³

The trial politicised many young people who were drawn to the struggle, especially as the fund raising drive went to all parts of Natal. Ebrahim Ebrahim comes to mind. Ebie went from house to house in Greyville with a collection box. The trial became a mobilising tool, a pretext for political discussion and outreach that could not easily itself be banned by a government still keen to be seen to uphold the rule of law. Ebie went to the railway station to see off Monty and others leaving for Johannesburg. He carried a placard saying 'We Stand by Our Leaders', and was harassed by railway policemen who destroyed it.⁴⁴ Ebie's commitment to the Congress movement would see him become a legendary figure of the ANC underground.

The involvement of women in the political struggle was crucial. Saro Naicker, for example, went around raising funds with Phyllis Naidoo and Radhi Singh. Being part of an extended family with an archetypal matriarch as mother-in-law, this was an important period in Saro's life and hastened her personal growth. Phyllis recalls going to traders in Grey Street. 'It is remarkable,' she points out, 'how much Grey Street gave ... and for everyone, Indian, African, or white. They would give over and over again.' The stories of two women who were involved in fundraising – Radhi Singh and Choti Motala – are interesting for the contrasting ways in which they were brought into the political sphere.

Radhi Singh was born in 1919 to Dulap and Damodar Singh. She was one of three sisters, the others being medical doctor and author Ansuyah, who married Ashwin Choudree, and Pyriam, who married into the Bodasing family. Dulap, Radhi's father, was a committee member of the CBISA. She attended Girls High, matriculating in 1938, and accepted Pauline Morrell's offer to teach at a primary school for girls from the Railway Barracks. Radhi completed a BA degree in 1946. She was drawn to politics in the early 1940s through the ASC whose chairman, George Singh, was her father's cousin, and got her to do administrative work and campaigning. Radhi married J.N. Singh, her cousin, in December 1947, in the midst of the passive resistance campaign. Radhi was active in the refugee camps during the 1949 riots, helped organise the Defiance Campaign, and raise funds for the Treason Trial. She completed her law examinations in December 1961 and was admitted to the Bar in March 1962. One of her high-profile cases was the 1963 sabotage trial, where she and J.N. defended Sunny Singh, Billy Nair, and Ebrahim Ebrahim. While one can trace early impulses in Radhi's political education, the situation was different in Choti's case.

Choti Motala was born in Kokstad in 1932, and had to leave school at the end of standard six as her father 'was very strict so I couldn't go to high school. I helped in the shop, did dress making, but the urge to study was always there.' Between primary school and marriage she read profusely: 'all novels, anything I could lay my hands on' and accepted a proposal of marriage from the dashing

Chota Motala. They married in September 1951. Chota encouraged her to finish schooling, so she attended night school in Pietermaritzburg from 1952 to 1955, and thereafter enrolled for a BA degree at Natal University. She completed eight courses but the pressures of the Treason Trial, raising a family, and trying to keep the surgery going put an end to those aspirations. Choti had little interest in politics but ‘became immersed in it as Chota was so involved.’ Choti herself was gradually drawn into several organisations. She helped collect funds for the Treason Trial with the likes of M.G. Naidoo, Durga Bundhoo, and Bunty Biggs. She also joined the Banishees Committee in the early 1960s, which provided food, clothing, and schoolbooks to the families of African activists punished by the apartheid regime by being banished to remote corners of the country. Here, she worked with Helen Joseph and Marjorie Fleming for almost 20 years. Choti was also a member of the International Peace Council. The examples of Saro, Radhi, and Choti show the ways in which the trial drew the women into the struggle.

The Treason Trial provided opportunities for camaraderie and cross-pollination of ideas between leading resistance figures in South Africa, at a time when they could not openly meet because of banning orders and the great risks involved. In his Presidential Address to NIC conference on 21 November 1958, in absentia, Monty remarked that the treason trial ‘perhaps more than any other factor has brought South African democrats closer to each other.’⁴⁵ He suggested that mixing with his African, white and coloured counterparts, and engaging in serious discussion, gave them a genuine sense of non-racialism. This observation was reinforced by fellow treason trialist Rusty Bernstein, who pointed out that ‘inter-racial trust and co-operation was a difficult plant to cultivate in the racially poisoned soil outside. It [was] somewhat easier here where racial discrimination and privileges had been set aside.’⁴⁶ Bernstein contends that the trial gave rise to ‘extraordinary fraternity which became the bedrock from which the Congress Alliance was sprung. The fraternal spirit was the core which held together the enduring unity of the liberation movement for the next forty years.’⁴⁷

The initial euphoria of being together, and at being so inexpertly charged with crimes, was followed by a period of long, energy-sapping, procedural slogging. The extended court case brought about great changes in the lives of the accused. They often had to give up their jobs, their families and their social life. The trial was held in Johannesburg and later Pretoria. I.C. Meer and Chota stayed with Goolam and Amina Pahad, parents of Aziz and Essop Pahad. Chota would travel once a month to Pietermaritzburg in his small Volkswagen. M.P. Naicker and Monty lived with the Vandiaris in Fordsburg where M.P.'s maternal aunts were married. M.P. worked as a bookkeeper to support his family. Durbanites visited every few weeks. Monty, Chota, Debi, Gopalal Hurbans and N.T. Naicker travelled to Pietermaritzburg in Chota's Volkswagen and from there to Durban in Hurbans' car. Sometimes they travelled by train, with Marie accompanying Monty. Saro described the trial as 'terrible, terrible, I was just lost and lonely. M.P. used to be busy, very busy with meetings all the time.' As Rusty Bernstein points out, 'the 156 were not quite so fortunate at the end. It was as though the club we had been living in had closed, and flung us out, impoverished and slightly punch-drunk, to wait like unemployed boxers before the next bout. There was little incentive to try and pick up the threads of work and life; the bell might sound for another round.'⁴⁸

But the likes of Monty soldiered on, and he continued to make his voice heard. At the NIC conference on 22 November 1957, for example, he used loopholes in the system, such as: 'I am speaking through a proxy, thereby emphasising the fact that the restrictions which have been imposed on me are still in force, preventing me talking to you in person. But this restriction is no bar to our thinking together and planning for a free South Africa.'⁴⁹ Monty emphasised that the struggle was morally correct and that he would not shirk from his duty: 'We have chosen the superior moral weapon of non-violence in our peaceful struggle to uphold human dignity. Let the white rulers of South Africa know that we are equally interested in upholding their dignity. They must realise that by keeping the non-white people prostrate in the gutter they themselves have to be in the gutter.'⁵⁰

Monty linked the struggle against apartheid to the broader struggle against imperialism. He was president of the SAIC when its 22nd conference was held in Johannesburg on 12 October 1956. Banned, he could not attend, but his speech was read out in absentia: ‘Our struggle against segregation and apartheid is only just one facet of the great international struggle for freedom. We welcome the worldwide support we have received and we unhesitatingly declare as our own the worldwide struggle on the part of colonial peoples everywhere for their liberation.’⁵¹



Freedom Rally, Curries Fountain, 1959

© Local History Museum

Whenever Monty’s ban was lifted, he jumped right back into public life. He addressed a meeting of African women members of the ANC in Durban on 17 June 1959, which called for a beer boycott. On 26 June 1959, he addressed a mass meeting at Curries Fountain organised by the NIC, ANC, and Sactu in support of the potato boycott, which he called ‘not only a political issue but a moral issue as well. Every time I eat a potato I taste the bone, muscle and sweat of the farm labourers.’ He told a Freedom Day Rally the following

day in Pietermaritzburg that ‘no amount of gagging and banning will stop our movement.’ He spoke at an NIC rally at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall on 9 October 1959, at the Surat Hindu Hall on 22 November 1959, and the ANC Congress on 12 December 1959 at Curries Fountain where he warned that to achieve ‘our objective tremendous sacrifices will have to be made. Are you afraid of losing your jobs? Do you know that under job reservation many will be losing their jobs? Are you afraid to die? Do you know that many die daily and are being killed?’ From 23 December 1959 to 2 January 1960, Monty and the NIC organised a “Freedom Fair” at Curries Fountain.

These spurts of agitating were Monty’s attempt to take advantage of the all too brief moments when he could openly engage with the public. He knew that another banning was always around the corner. Should he have been more careful? Billy Nair did not think that this was an option because some may have thought that Monty ‘was a coward’, while younger members of Congress would have been demoralised. Kay Moonsamy concurs – Monty was too much of a symbol of the Congress movement to withdraw. Also, in spite of the repression, there was great buoyancy in the movement, fuelled by the successes of national liberation struggles worldwide. Their own analysis after the defeat of the state in the Treason Trial was that apartheid was in retreat. In any case, by all accounts Monty enjoyed the platform and the imminence of another round of silence only served to release an adventurist spirit in the moments of personal freedom.

Outside of the treason trial new spaces were emerging, creating opportunities for a whole new generation of activists. Some of the crucial spaces were the university, trade unions, and importantly, an organisation largely neglected by historians of the period – the NIYC. For Monty, tactics like shooting Malan could not be contemplated as non-violent resistance remained sacrosanct. Would this new generation of activists be similarly imbued or would they contemplate other options?

New "blood"

When we were flush, we went to the Grand Tearoom where the Berea Centre now stands and bought their hamburgers, and this was our great treat ... When we were starving we read *The Leader* or *Graphic* to find out where weddings were being held. Sometimes as many as 14 of us would attend. No meat featured at these functions. It was usually vegetable biryani and dhal on banana leaves. A sweet pudding would be put on the curry banana leaf and we would wipe the leaf clean. We would wash our hands and go up to greet the bride and groom. They would look strangely at us but our exuberance and backslapping got us through this tricky part. If we had money we would make a trip to the cinema in Victoria Street. It was a bughouse, but they did not let women stand in the queue, you would be called up front. Of course, you told them you were not alone. I remember the steward once counting 14 of us. "Oh, you have African brothers too!" On the way home we had long discussions on the film and politics and anything else. What great times those were!¹

PHYLLIS NAIDOO

Phyllis Naidoo was of the generation that came in the immediate aftermath of the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign and the consolidation of the leadership of Monty and Dadoo. She arrived in a political environment in which constant surveillance, the persistent threat of imprisonment, banning, and the Treason Trial all began to take their toll on the organisations of the Congress Alliance, as well as its leading individuals. Central figures had in different ways suffered state repression, and their ability to play a role in the affairs of the NIC was severely compromised. But there were new impulses in the Indian community throwing up a fresh coterie of anti-apartheid fighters. Important in this was access to higher education, and the progressive collectives that were congealing

in this environment. Phyllis Naidoo was part and parcel of this new urban milieu, enjoying what the city had to offer, developing friendships across the colour line and participating in a political environment that was invigorating in spite of the political repression. It was a life that was to take her into exile and deeply personal tragedy.

Kader Hassim was also of this new time, learning his initial politics from his brothers. But the university became an important place in his political education. His was the story of many activists of his generation:

The “university” was situated at the back of Sastri College. It consisted of a small office, a well-furnished common room for the lecturers; an ill-furnished, flea-infested common room for the black students. We had a library, which we used to call “two-by-two” ... a tiny library and there was a prefab building. That was Natal University Non-European Section. Sum total of it! It only became alive after four o’clock in the afternoon when the part-time students who were mainly Indian teachers, came from school. And we had to wait for the classrooms of Sastri College to be evacuated ... I spent six years at Natal University and only went twice to Howard College.²

The university brought some of the brightest and most committed political minds together. Phyllis and Kader and a host of others debated and just as often harangued each other over the nature of apartheid, and the nature and content of local opposition to it. The university produced many activists who were to shape resistance in subsequent decades, even though Kader described the university as ‘a piece of sordid history’ because of the racism of the authorities. There was a spurt in university registrations after 1958 as it became increasingly difficult for black students to attend Wits and Fort Hare. There were 558 students registered in 1960, including 193 male and 48 female full-time students, and 262 (men and women) part-time students.³

The diverse affiliations of students made for a vibrant political society. Both the Unity Movement and Congress were well represented. Phyllis Naidoo, for example, learnt her politics in the Unity Movement, though she later joined the

CP, and was aligned to the Congress. When Phyllis was awarded an honorary doctorate by the then University of Durban-Westville, she acknowledged this debt in her keynote speech on 14 May 1999: 'I stand here for the Unity Movement of the early fifties, whose I.B. Tabata, Goolam Gool and A.K. Essack opened my mind to the filth of apartheid. As a teacher, politics was a no-go area, but our weekly meetings stimulated my interest.' Phyllis was born in Estcourt in 1928 where her father Simon David was a respected educationist.⁴ She was awakened to the evils of racism at a young age and joined FOSA in 1944 while still in school. During the Treason Trial, while she was teaching and studying part-time, Phyllis joined forces with M.N. Pather and others to raise funds for trialists. She joined the NIC around this time, and worked closely with Steve (Nundha) Naidoo, who was with the first batch of Umkhonto recruits trained in China, George Sewpersadh, Dr E.S. Randeree, and M.D. Naidoo, whom she married in 1958. M.D. was a member of the CP, and Phyllis joined the Party in 1961.⁵

Born in Cato Manor on 26 October 1937 to a father who was a newspaper vendor, George Sewpersadh attended Sastri College and enrolled at Natal University where he completed a BA degree in 1957, studied law from 1958 to 1960, and served articles with Rowley Arenstein. He joined the NIC during the Treason Trial. Sewpersadh started out by selling *New Age* on the streets of Durban and handing out leaflets advertising NIC meetings. He founded the Manor Gardens branch of the NIC, of which he was chairperson, and was to become a key figure in the NIC in the 1970s. Rabi Bugwandeem was born in Mayville in 1933, where his father, Thangree, was a hawker. Rabi attended Sastri College before enrolling part-time at Natal University in 1958. Kader recalled Rabi's role during a march in 1959 at the height of unrest in Cato Manor around beer halls:

We had seen marches previously where middle-class typists walked sedately and gave a petition and walked away. We thought it was something like that. When we got out from the university in Lancers Road the place was loaded with Saracens. And police were everywhere. We walked a short distance and we heard

the sound of guns. They killed about three or four people and the place smelled like a butcher. The police had barricades...about 10 000 people started off, 2 000 escaped the barricades and got to the prison where they demanded the release of their leaders. The prison was like a fort, bristling with arms and the people were given three minutes to disperse. It was at this point that a young student stepped forward and told the officer in charge: "Let me speak to the people first." And he told them: "Look, you have come here. You have done your job. The leaders know that you were here. Now please go back home in peace. Your leaders will not want you to be shot ..." They listened to him and he averted a massacre.

Rabi served articles with the banned Rowley Arenstein, where he teamed up with George Sewpersadh, and their work often took them into the rural hinterland. Here white power was exercised in the most brutal fashion, and Rabi and George never forgot these experiences as they became key figures in the NIC of the 1970s.⁶ Rabi was an executive member of the organisation during the 1970s, member of the Parent Support Group during the 1980 students boycott, and treasurer of the UDF in the 1980s. He died in September 2001.⁷

Thumba Pillay was another who was active in student politics and joined the NIC. Born in Clairwood in 1933 to a policeman father, Thumba matriculated from Sastri in 1954 before proceeding to Natal University. He attributes his politicisation to his father's participation in World War II, which made him 'extremely interested in what was happening in the war. I would listen to all Churchill's speeches because my father was there.' India's independence struggle was also important, and the university experience was crucial. He took up law when he:

... realised the inequities of the system ... that here we were going to a University studying after hours but not being admitted to the University itself ... not sharing the facilities and the classes where whites were tutored. We were being taught in warehouses when there was ample accommodation. So I decided that I must do law.

Thumba came into contact with the likes of Mac Maharaj and Galaki Sello, and was drawn into politics. Black students had their own SRC, and he started as secretary and eventually became president. His close friends, M.J. Naidoo, George Sewpersadh and Paul David, brother of Phyllis Naidoo, would later all be involved in Congress politics. Thumba, in fact, was the youngest person elected onto the NIC Executive.

On the side of the Unity Movement figures like Kader Hassim, Navi Pillay and Sunny Venkatrathnam were emerging. Kader was one of the leading lights of the Unity Movement in the 1960s. Born in Dundee in 1934, he attended Umzinto High, where his principal was Simon David. He joined the leather industry around 1953 and became active in the trade union. Kader's family was important in his political activism:

There is no such thing as *homo politicus*. I became political because my brother was political. I didn't study the philosophies of Marx and Engels and then took a conscious decision to join a political organisation. My older brother [Karrim Essack] was my role model. He asked me to lick envelopes, put stamps on them, address them, post them. I started off that way. That, together with my own life experience, made me political. As a boy, for example, you face the oppressive system. You go to buy a ticket, you meet a white man, and he is rude to you. You are on the train; the train conductor is rude to you. I was beaten by a white youth. So at an early age you feel the whiplash of racial discrimination.⁸

Kader enrolled at Natal University in 1955. While his politicisation came partly from his life experiences and partly from intellectual engagement with his brothers, Sunny Venkatrathnam's entry into politics derived from university and travel. He was born in Sea View in 1935 and attended Sastri but it was only when he attended Natal University that he met Africans for the first time. University was 'a turning point in my life because up until then the same old attitudes were pumped into us. History books referred to Indians as "Coolies", Africans as "Kaffirs", and coloureds as "Boesmans" ... some very derogatory words.' He also met white liberals like Leo Kuper and C.K. Hill ... and I thought, good, because for the first time a white didn't call me "Sammy".'



Unity movement members, early 1960s.

standing: The four women standing (left to right) are Mrs Pillay (mother of Judge Daya Pillay); Radha Tewary; Navi Pillay, and Cooksie Moodliar. The fifth person standing from the left is Vishnu Tewary of Stanger, a SACOS stalwart, while the brothers Ahmed "Amdhi" Essack and Essop Essack are standing to the left and right of Navi Pillay respectively. M.C.M. Moodliar is standing on the extreme right. seated: Theresa Venkatrathnam (wife of Sunny Venkatrathnam) is the second person, while Amdhi's wife Vijee is to her left and Gabby Pillay (wearing spectacles) is seated on the extreme right.

© Kader Hassim

Sunny was initially drawn to the NIC and engaged in political discussions with Phyllis and M.D. Naidoo but disagreed over Stalinism and he quit. He attended the International Union of Students (IUS) conference in Beijing in 1958 as secretary of the Non-European Students Union at Natal University. Beijing, he claims, exposed his political naivety: 'I still remember how politically ignorant I was ... I got to understand the workings of socialism ... and meeting Mao Tse-tung and Chou En Lai and these guys.' When he returned from Beijing, Sunny joined the NEUM because 'I could understand what they were doing and there was no wishy-washyness. The ten-point programme was clear.'

Navi Pillay also found a home in the Unity Movement. She was born in 1941

in Clairwood, one of eight children of a bus-driver father. Her grandparents were indentured migrants, and her paternal grandfather worked in a sugar mill on the South Coast where he lost an arm when it caught in a machine. His reputation, however, was legendary, because he ‘once kicked a white man. That was tremendous in our society because if you said ‘boo’ to authorities, you were sanctioned in so many ways.’ Navi’s family was ‘very poor’ but her parents were determined to provide her with an education and the community rallied to provide bursaries to fund her. She was the first Indian girl to attend Natal University from Clairwood.

University life was a hotbed of politics and Navi was attracted to the Unity Movement because ‘there were members of all race groups and they got you to read the great philosophers and political writers.’ She also felt it was ‘slightly to the left of the ANC’ although she concedes that there was criticism ‘that we were armchair politicians, took no risks, and were just theorists. I struggled with that, of course.’ Navi’s family was apprehensive of her political involvement ‘out of fear ... They would see students being thrown into jail or not being given any jobs. And because they were so poor, they discouraged us from involvement in politics.’ Navi’s political training was to hold her in good stead when she began practising as a lawyer and had to defend banned persons who had to account for the smallest of transgressions.

The university was ‘a beehive of activity,’ according to Kader. This was partly because a large number of students from Fort Hare had registered at Natal University,⁹ but was also connected to the relocation of lectures to Lancers Road, where the university, according to Sunny, ‘hired potato warehouses, separated by hessian bags, and that was that.’ The student body ‘became a very political body ... Ideological debates were very, very intense. It was an invigorating situation.’¹⁰ In addition to the ANC Youth League, NIC, and NEUM, there was the Society of Young Africa (SOYA), formed by Leonard Nikani, Atkin Moleko, Justice Poswa, Don Kali, V.S. Rajah and Pat Naidoo. Politically, the allegiance of students was ‘fairly balanced on campus,’ according to Kader, ‘and we had constant debates.’ Phyllis Naidoo recalls that the ‘debates had Mac

[Maharaj] on his feet against the NEUM ... Kader Hassim and Amanullah Khan and others.¹¹ SOYA produced a scurrilous journal called the *Voice of Student Letter* which attacked university authorities. Students with NEUM leanings formalized their Study Group into the Durban Students Union under the presidency of Gora Ebrahim in the late 1950s.¹²

The graduation ceremony was a hotly politicised issue because of segregated seating. Black students called for a boycott; a few graduated in absentia and were fined £3. Phyllis was one of them: 'We had our own ghetto in the graduation hall [so] we chose to obtain the certificate through the post without the fanfare and insult of graduation.'¹³ But by 1958/59 there was a total boycott and the university offered a compromise – an integrated graduation ceremony with parents seated separately. 'That was a bigger insult,' according to Sunny, 'they thought they were doing us a favour by mixing the students, but not the parents.' In 1960, according to Kader, the authorities offered 'three blocks in the seating arrangement, one for whites, one for blacks, and a mixed area. And we said "No, no, no, no to this Group Areas plan. It is all or nothing." They threatened that if we boycott, the government was going to close the university down. We were not deterred.'¹⁴ When the SRC met with University Principal Dr E.G. Malherbe in June 1958, he gave as one of his reasons for segregated seating that 'Non-European parents were not as yet of the social standard to be seated with European parents.'¹⁵ Students, according to Kader, 'carried on agitating and they finally caved in.'¹⁶

Students were also galvanised by the Golden Jubilee celebrations of 1960. According to Kader, the response of black students was, 'No, for 50 years this was an apartheid university, and we are not taking part. Maybe there is history for you guys, but not us.' The elaborate programme included international celebrities like Edmund Hilary and the Royal Ballet. Kader takes up the story of the protest action:

When they had a show [Royal Ballet at the Alhambra Theatre], we placarded these people and embarrassed them with publicity. It was raining that night, and the long sleek black limousines came, the whites came with their bow-ties

and tailcoats, the women with the fancy gowns, and next thing we unfolded our banners and placards: “The jubilee of an Apartheid University.”¹⁷

The university environment through the 1950s and into the 60s was marked by vigorous debate and protest action. Sunny recalls that students ‘refused to stand when the principal addressed you on the first day of the term...until eventually, they didn’t come to address us.’ Through such activities, ‘student militancy and activism began to develop, began to grow.’¹⁸

Another organisation of significance was the NIYC, which was the incubator for many young people attracted to resistance politics. Several pointed to the powerful mentoring influence of M.D. Naidoo and M.P. Naicker. Both were located at the hub of political activism in the city: M.P. was based on the Sixth Floor of Lodson House in Grey Street, and M.D. Naidoo on the fourth. On the opposite side of Grey Street was Lakhani Chambers where the NIC and Sactu offices were located. M.D. Naidoo was sent to India on behalf of the SAIC and then to the UN, after the 1949 riots. He studied law in London and returned to South Africa in 1956, shortly before the treason arrests. Having been at the cutting edge of the decolonisation movement in London, M.D. was like a breath of fresh air for young activists. His opposition to the apartheid regime would see him spend time on Robben Island.

M.P. Naicker became Durban branch manager of *New Age* and later *Spark*, both following in the tradition of the banned *Guardian*. *New Age* was published from 1954 until its banning in November 1962. Like *The Guardian*, ‘it became the heartbeat of the liberation movement [despite being] constrained by money and physical distance.’¹⁹ While M.P. lacked journalistic experience, ‘his political acumen and energy made him an attractive choice.’²⁰ Under M.P. the newspaper’s office became the hub of left-wing politics in Durban. Ebrahim Ebrahim recalled that even ‘when people came from rural areas they knew *New Age* better than the Congress and headed first for Lodson House. I remember there was a little grousing now and again from some ANC people.’²¹ According to Jacob Zuma, ‘it was in the *New Age* office that the leadership of the Congress Movement met every morning. Moses Mabhida, Stephen Dlamini, Curnick

Ndlovu, Joe Matthews, Billy Nair, Rowley Arenstein, George Mbele and M.P. would discuss tactics and plan the daily struggle.²² M.P. worked tirelessly to expose the evils of apartheid, including near slave-like conditions on white potato farms in Bethal, the Peasants Revolt in Pondoland in 1960, and the impact of Group Areas. The most significant exposé was that of the kidnapping of Anderson Ganyile, which made headline news worldwide, forcing his release in January 1962.

M.P. was a member of the underground CP and was elected to its Central Committee in 1962, and in the emerging debate over the armed struggle and non-violent resistance, he would side with those opting for armed struggle. On the 75th anniversary of the formation of the NIC, he credited Gandhi for 'moving millions upon millions of people into action for freedom and dignity against imperialism,' but reflected that satyagraha 'caused undue power to be placed in the hands of the leadership to curb and take away the initiative of the masses ... To disarm the masses in the face of an enemy determined to rule by force, is a problem Gandhi never really resolved ... History has proved that the masses have generally been patient almost to a fault before resorting to armed struggle.'²³

The critique and then invocation of Gandhi revealed a deepening frustration. The apartheid state seemed stronger than ever, and the internal resistance movement was struggling to recover from the state onslaught. M.P. did not address the contradiction that, like satyagraha, the turn to armed struggle, with its emphasis on secrecy and small clandestine groups of trained personnel, also took away 'the initiative of the masses.' However, to be fair to M.P., he had always supported a more confrontational approach, which was quite clear to those in the NIYC where he and M.D. held great sway. There was clearly a generational difference with younger activists losing patience with the pro-Gandhian approach of the Executive of the NIC. Being young, according to Subbiah Moodley, they wanted 'action and change, and quickly.' The 14 May 1958 edition of *Indian Views*, in fact, carried a story of 'alleged moves' by a 'militant faction' to oust Monty. M.P. was named 'leader of the militant faction.'

However, the NIC dismissed this as rumour-mongering:

The NIC as a whole has a record for militancy and for years now is firmly led by Dr Naicker and to our knowledge every individual connected to the organisation during Dr Naicker's terms as president has given unstinting support to the struggle for liberty and justice in South Africa. In an amorphous organisation such as the Congress one must expect diverse points of view on various issues but we are happy to state that in this diversity the essence of unity is the single factor that gives Congress its lifeblood and strength and has enabled the Congress to put repeatedly the case of the Indian people and other oppressed people for full democratic rights in South Africa. Its leadership at all times had held high the banner of truth and non-violence. In its approach to the problems facing the Indian people and its outspokenness thereto Congress has been subjected to numerous attacks particularly from the authorities, but this in no way has caused any division in the ranks of Congress.²⁴

For M.D. and M.P. and the "new blood", the way out of the slow eating away at the strength of the NIC through repression, was to throw caution to the wind and come out fighting. But there was a realisation that Monty was not a barrier to this: in fact, if the NIC was to galvanise opposition to things like the Group Areas Act, it would need him at the helm, for by now he was an iconic figure in the community, the doctor who had sacrificed much and who was intransigent in the face of persecution. Monty, too, was an important link to the ANC, through his close relationship with Luthuli. His rapport with Dadoo, nurtured over three decades, and whose star in the CP had risen, meant that there was also support for Monty from the left of the Congress Alliance.

It is ironic that the star of one of the most influential NIC leaders among the young radicals, M.D. Naidoo, waned over the Group Areas Act. He resigned as vice-president of the NIC in December 1961 after appearing on behalf of the Greyville Indian Ratepayer's Association before the Group Areas Board. M.D. Naidoo remains an enigma. His was a brilliant mind that could intelligently and effectively articulate NIC positions in public with a wonderful turn of

phrase, and demolish opposition with biting sarcasm. But somehow one gets the sense that he could not gel his independent-mindedness with organisational discipline. He wanted to walk his own path, as well as be an ideologue in a movement and represent its interests. He paid a high price for his beliefs, not only because of the repression of the apartheid state, but also because of tension between him and his colleagues in the various resistance circles. Even when he returned from exile, he was reluctant to engage in the hurly-burly of the post-1990 period, nor was he readily embraced by those with whom he had worked for decades. He was always prepared to engage with activists, and once the veil was pierced, M.D. would reveal himself to be a man of acute political understanding, whose passion for freedom burnt strongly to the end. For many, he cut a lonely figure in Durban, but the years of exile and the shunning by old comrades was something he had long come to terms with.

The NIYC spawned many anti-apartheid fighters, and in attempting to understand the thread of the anti-apartheid impulse within the Indian community, it is important to trace the journey of some of them to understand the routes they chose. One such fighter was George Naicker, who stood little more than a metre tall, and was a clerk in the offices of attorney G.S. Naidoo in Hoosen's Building from 1952. He was born in Durban in June 1919, joined the Youth Congress in the 1940s and then the NIC, serving as its treasurer and on the Executive from 1956. He served 30-day sentences during the Passive Resistance and Defiance Campaigns, was recruited into the CP, and continued his involvement underground when the party was banned. George continued to wear a red tie to show his communist leanings, even after the Party was banned, telling a court in 1963 that he was 'partial to wearing red ties. I always wear red ties.'²⁵ Phyllis Naidoo wrote of George: 'George was stripped of height, weight and width. His whole being fitted the matchstick mode. However, his body was no indication of his moral stature. "Brave", "courageous" are words that do not describe him fully.'²⁶ George was at Kliptown when the Freedom Charter was adopted, represented South Africa at the World Youth Festival in Budapest in 1949, when 10,000 delegates attended from 82 countries, and

visited Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union in 1957.²⁷

Convinced that non-violent means were leading to a dead-end, George was recruited to MK by Billy Nair who, with Ebrahim Ebrahim, were his closest friends. George was involved in several attacks with Billy and Ronnie Kasrils who valued his support in the trenches. His Ford Taurus was found at Rivonia and was produced as evidence in that famous trial. Court records showed that he had been in Johannesburg from 9 July 1963, shortly before the Rivonia arrests. George spent 14 years on Robben Island, and after his release, worked in the legal office of Archie Gumede, before going into exile in Zambia, where he was placed in charge of Chongella Farm, producing food for ANC exiles. He remained there after the unbanning of the ANC and died in April 1998.²⁸

Ebrahim Ebrahim was born in 1937 in Johannesburg but brought up by his grandmother in Durban. Like many Indians, Ebie only gained entrance to primary school when he was ten. He matriculated from Sastri College in 1959 at age 22. During his teens he supplemented the family income by hawking food items from door to door.²⁹ The perennial struggle for survival made him aware of the acute poverty: 'there were times I cried when I witnessed poverty,' he would say.³⁰ The Defiance Campaign, Treason Trial, independence struggle in India, and firsthand experience of the pernicious effects of racism, such as when he could not swim in a public pool, and the campaign of the NP to repatriate Indians, contributed to Ebie's activism.³¹ Ebie's family moved to Greyville in 1950 and he was 'hugely inspired' by Dawood Seedat 'who moulded my political outlook.' Ebie helped him sell *New Age* (also *Advance*) on Friday afternoons and on weekends. He was a regular at Red Square where he listened zealously to Monty, I.C. Meer, Billy Nair, and M.P. Naicker addressing meetings.³² The late 1950s were a turbulent period marked by urban and rural revolts and protests. Members of the NIC, ANC, trade unions, and underground CP did not distinguish among themselves but worked hand in hand to overthrow the apartheid regime and Ebie would be one of the first to embrace the armed struggle. Nurtured in the womb of the Gandhian-inspired NIC, for the likes of Ebie, the heavy-handedness of the state meant that alternate strategies of

resistance had to be considered.

Sunny Singh was another who would join Umkhonto. Born in Cato Manor in 1939, the lack of schools meant that he only began primary school at the age of 12. The terrible living conditions and 'ruthless' landlord gave Sunny a grasp of class oppression. 'My first taste of oppression was not from the white, but from the immediate (Indian) enemy.' Poverty denied him a high school education, and it was during the Treason Trial that 'a kind of awareness was beginning to develop ... an understanding of the real enemy. It was more than the landlord. The bigger enemy was the regime and a kind of consciousness began to grow.'³³ Sunny joined the NIC, which he found to be led by a 'progressive leadership, you know, the Yusuf Dadoos and Dr Naickers of this world. I was young and went searching for an organisation all through town. No one came to my door and recruited me.' Sunny held a series of low-paying jobs and he would tell the court in 1963 that the Sabotage Act of 1963, which curtailed all forms of protest, convinced him that Umkhonto was the answer.³⁴

Subbiah Moodley is probably the most anonymous of the early Umkhonto recruits. He was born in Umgeni Road in 1944, and his father, the son of indentured parents, was a poorly paid waiter at the Durban Country Club. Being ground down in family poverty is an abiding memory of Subbiah's childhood. From Umgeni, the family moved to Wills Road, where neighbours included N.G. Moodley, Phyllis Naidoo, and George Ponnen. It was here that Subbiah honed his politics: he attended Centenary School, excelled academically, and proceeded to Sastri College after passing the entrance examination with distinction. Subbiah thrived academically and also got 'the feeling of politicisation. There were highly politicised students in Sastri College ... very forthright about discrimination in society.' He was invited to an NIC meeting and became a regular at M.D. Naidoo's classes in political economy. Science and socialism were Subbiah's passion – he was chairman of the Science Committee and found Einstein's theory of relativity 'far more interesting than schoolwork.' Ebie recalled that Subbiah was 'a genius ... he was giving tuition to matric students when he was in standard eight.' Subbiah's flair for science,

allied to his political leanings, was to take him on a path that veered far from life in an academic environment.

One of the most fascinating, and tragic, stories is that of Natvarlal Dayalji “Nattoo” Babenia whose political activism traversed national liberation struggles on two continents. Babenia was born in 1924 in Bellair. In 1936, faced with economic hardship, his family returned to India which was in the throes of its own struggle for liberation. Babenia played an active role in the Congress movement in Baroda, and served several terms of imprisonment, before returning to Durban in October 1949. He settled in Beatrice Street and attended NIC rallies at Red Square and the Vedic Hall, being greatly inspired by M.D. Naidoo. He joined the NIYC and later the NIC as a volunteer. He worked as a journalist for the Gujarati section of *Indian Opinion* in 1960, but when that newspaper was shut down in 1961, he became an organiser for the NIC.³⁵

While the universities and NIYC were important sites of recruitment and radicalisation, there were rebellious impulses sprouting in other parts of the city as well, as Ronnie Kasrils remembers:

A dank, run-down building [Lakhani Chambers] housing a maze of seedy companies. On one poorly ventilated floor were the cramped and overcrowded offices of the NIC and Sactu. The place was like a railway station, with workers coming and going all the time. Billy Nair stood out as the most dynamic official and commanded tremendous respect. There were times when I had an urgent message for him but if he was attending to a queue of workers he would order me to wait. Afterwards he would explain that the union office was the one place where the workers must know they came first. He liked tipple after work, and I sometimes popped into an Indian pub with him to knock back one or two rounds of cane spirits, the drink popular with Indian workers.³⁶

The life of Billy Nair indicates that not all of the new generation had access to higher education. Many got their “education” in the trenches of the everyday organising of workers. While many Indian workers would gradually shun the

non-racial unions, that movement had in its ranks outstanding organisers. As the older generation was forced out of everyday organising by the heavy hand of the state, so people like Kay Moonsamy and Billy Nair came to the fore.

Billy, who was an executive member of the NIC from 1953 until his banning in 1961, was a pivotal figure in the trade union movement, which was dominated by the non-racial South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) from March 1955, with links to the ANC and banned CP. Sactu, Lambert points out, saw its role as 'embracing three arenas: the workplace, the community and the political struggle against the state.'³⁷ According to Billy, to secure better work conditions for workers, the union had to link workplace demands with broader political demands. Sactu affiliated to the Congress Alliance as they wanted not only to 'put up the fight for better wages and working conditions, but also oppose various legislation which the government introduced from time to time.' This mixing of politics and economics triggered criticism from some quarters that Sactu allowed itself to be submerged under the leadership of the ANC, whose cross-class complexion diluted working-class leadership and invited repression from the state. This prevented the establishment of strong shop-floor structures, which would have broadened the base of the liberation struggle in the longer run. According to Rob Lambert, the incorporation of Sactu leadership into Umkhonto and their arrests in 1964 'severed an experienced leadership from newly developing factory leaders. Sactu went into an organisational decline from which it was never to recover.'³⁸

Billy, who was one of the first members of Umkhonto and would spend 20 years on Robben Island, disagreed with this criticism. He maintained that the 'political and economic struggles were intertwined.' Workplace struggles were linked to political strikes and consumer boycotts. Large segments of the workforce demanded being part of the Congress Alliance in order to build a strong social movement dedicated to toppling apartheid. Sactu, Billy added, played a crucial role in collecting demands for the Freedom Charter to ensure that workers' demands were reflected in the document. He insisted that 'allegations that Congress imposed its will on Sactu are false.' Black workers

did not have political rights, and to suggest that they ‘confine themselves to factory-floor issues and leave the political struggle to others would be like living in a fool’s paradise.’³⁹

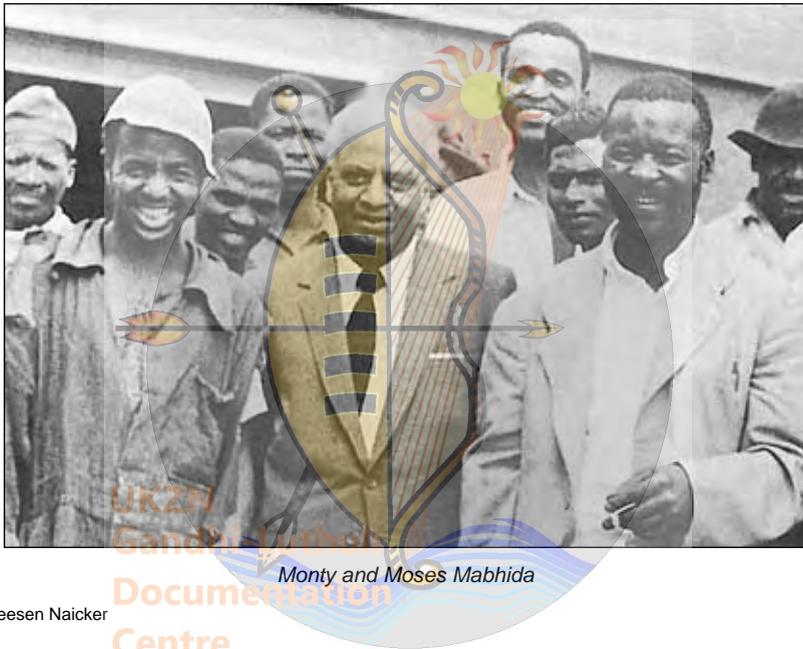
Kay Moonsamy, who was the secretary of the Joint Executive of the Congress Alliance in Natal (ANC, NIC, COD, Sactu) agreed. The dramatic increase in African membership of unions during the 1950s was connected to political issues:

Just to give you an idea, when we were discussing the NP election in April (1958) at Dr B.T. Chetty’s residence, we were reviewing the state of the nation as it were. Now Inkosi Luthuli was sitting there on a Sunday in Overport. He’s saying the ANC’s membership is 800 and only four of them are fully paid. That’s 1958, come to 1959, the potato boycott, boycott of Nationalist products, especially the cigarette companies, Rothman’s and so on. We organised this meeting in 1959 and the membership of the ANC had shot up to 15 000. For the first time it got full-time functionaries ... George Mbele as organising secretary. So that was now on the ascendancy because of political struggles.

Conversely, the involvement of the Indian masses was declining in both the NIC and unions. As Kay points out, the main base of NIC support was the union movement and as ‘some of the trade union unions collapsed; there was a decline in mass membership.’ Kay points to other factors, such as ‘the leadership did not carry out enough work within the Indian community.’ Kay was organising secretary of the NIC and recalls a Congress in 1961 where the Executive accepted that because of bannings and trials, the leadership had fallen short. Monty was aware of the problem and told the NIC annual conference on 9 October 1959 that ‘delegates must spend the major part of their time discussing the organisational problems of Congress in a calm and objective manner [to] give not only our people but the entire country the lead it requires.’⁴⁰

To be fair, Monty was not only caught up in the Treason Trial, but was banned for most of the 1950s. This existence, in a sort of legal limbo, punctuated by periodic court appearances, affected many among the core of those organising

for democracy. Kay points out that Monty and Stephen Dlamini often ‘visited factories. We used to organise factory meetings, address meetings, calling upon people. Monty and Dlamini, if you turn the pages of *New Age* you will see Monty side by side calling upon workers because he said that every member of the Congress, that’s the ANC and NIC, should also be a member of the trade union movement.’ Kay points to other mitigating factors: many working-class Indians had lost their jobs and were becoming wary of militant mass action, and Kay also believes that the dislocation caused by Group Areas was crucial.



© Kreesen Naicker

One result of the decline in Indian membership of unions was that they became re-racialised. Indian workers, according to Bill Freund, felt threatened. At the Hulsar sugar refinery, African workers were replacing unionised Indian workers from 1952. Three hundred Indians were fired and lost their homes at the Magazine Barracks for participating in a strike in June 1953. When Indian workers went on strike at Frame (Consolidated Textiles Mill) in 1956/57, several hundred were replaced with African labour; an agreement to settle the strike introduced African:Indian racial employment quotas. The Frame strike,

according to Freund, was:

... the last great battle in a distinctive history where struggles over the labour market, defined in racial terms, fuelled an unprecedented militancy among Indian workers that has since been lost ... An initially inclusive reaction, that was built around the idea that the future for Indian workers lay in a common anti-apartheid struggle with the ANC, was abandoned in favour of passivity.⁴¹

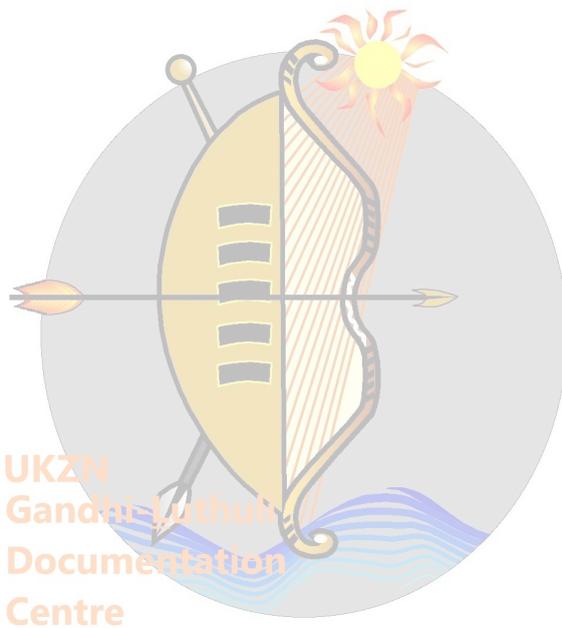
Trade unionist R.D. Naidoo shared these sentiments. He said that Indians, on the whole, 'lived in fear of black domination, just as the whites fear it. I can't say that everybody will go along with my thinking [non-racialism].' R.D. pointed to practical problems which made it difficult to forge unity between Indians and Africans:

It was difficult for us to organise in those days because of the Pass Laws and the discriminatory laws that existed. They didn't give us an opportunity to work openly with the African, but we formed the African workers into our organisations, in our executive, we had African and Indian together despite what the law said. We defied the law. It was there that we were able to propagate that we can work together to achieve our objective of better working conditions for the working class. But the political side, the feeling that one day we will be dominated by a black majority, that fear was there.⁴²

While Freund's assessment about the decline of trade unionism is correct, there was a residue of support from Indian workers for Sactu, and there was a small but dedicated stratum of Indian organisers from whose ranks Umkhonto would recruit cadres for the first stirrings of armed resistance.

The heady days of the 1950s, marked by the Defiance Campaign, the COP, the Freedom Charter, and the extended Treason Trial revealed the depth of commitment of the Congress Alliance, in both everyday resistances and at an ideological level, to non-violent and non-racial civil disobedience. There were some violent responses within the myriad of mobilisations, but these were either snuffed out or the Alliance distanced itself from them. But now a major

change was taking place. Armed resistance was becoming an option within the Alliance. The NIC, the organisation that Gandhi had helped to set up on the principles of non-violent resistance, would witness some of its most active members become the very first recruits into MK. Building MK's capacity from scratch with meagre resources was a monumental effort that consumed the energies of activists, and most abandoned the terrain of everyday activity within the NIC. Their interest in the organisation was mainly limited to checking for potential recruits for Umkhonto.



Diary of a bad year

A “state of emergency” indeed:

Where one must find ways to take cover.

Where one must run

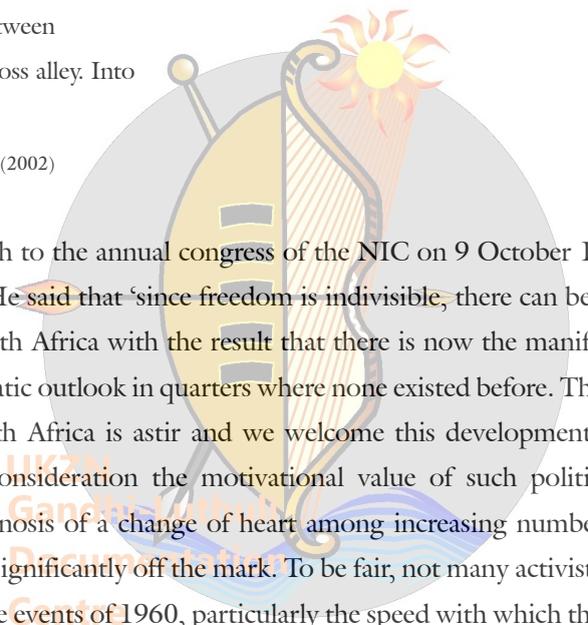
quickly as possible, hoping to catch the

opening between

attacks. Across alley. Into

shelter.¹

JORIE GRAHAM (2002)



In his speech to the annual congress of the NIC on 9 October 1959, Monty was upbeat. He said that ‘since freedom is indivisible, there can be no freedom for white South Africa with the result that there is now the manifestation of a more democratic outlook in quarters where none existed before. The conscience of white South Africa is astir and we welcome this development.’² But even taking into consideration the motivational value of such political rhetoric, Monty’s prognosis of a change of heart among increasing numbers of whites was to prove significantly off the mark. To be fair, not many activists could have anticipated the events of 1960, particularly the speed with which they unfolded. The failure to crush the Congress Alliance through the Treason Trial ushered in a battery of legislation to destroy resistance without recourse to the rule of law. This *state of exception* is usually reserved for exceptional conditions and for a limited time period.³ In South Africa, it became a way of life for over three decades.

Exactly a year after Monty’s speech, white South Africa voted for a Republic in October 1960 and promised to intensify apartheid. The months leading to October were filled with high drama. The year began importantly, though

sedately enough, with the visit of British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. In anticipation of his visit, Monty, Alan Paton, and Chief Luthuli wrote an 'Open Letter' to MacMillan in late 1959, published in *The Observer*, in which they argued in sober language against his visit as it would legitimate apartheid. Macmillan caused a minor uproar when he told the South African Parliament on 3 February that 'the wind of change is blowing through this continent ... whether we like it or not,' but outside, black people demonstrated with placards reminding him that 'Verwoerd supported Hitler.' It was also an opportunity for local anti-apartheid organisations to voice their opposition to the NP, as well as Britain's colonial presence in Africa. Barney Desai, vice-president of the Coloured Peoples Congress, declined an invitation to a luncheon 'which honours the head of a state that supports and defends the policy of apartheid in the UN ... Neither will I be happy to honour Mr Macmillan whose Government is responsible for the detention without trial of fellow African freedom fighters.'⁴

Even while Macmillan was speaking of the 'winds of change', thousands of anti-colonial fighters were languishing in prison. The year would witness the massacre at Sharpeville, Luthuli's call for the burning of passes, the banning of the ANC and PAC, a State of Emergency, armed resistance in Pondoland, the introduction of passes for African women, the detention of thousands of activists, and the arrest of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo (DRC). Monty was a keen diarist, most of which was lost during police raids, but if his diary was around, he may well have titled 1960 'Diary of a Bad Year'.⁵ Fatima Meer, Monty's long-term ally, rightly described 1960 as 'a sort of landmark year in the whole liberation struggle', because it marked the beginning of both heightened political activity on the one hand, and state repression on the other.⁶

March 1960 marked the launch of an international movement to boycott South African goods, while in South Africa it marked the beginning of a three-month call for a boycott of celebrations marking 50 years of the Union of South Africa on 31 May. The first week of March saw hundreds of Indian and African volunteers lining up outside the Durban City Hall, as the Group Areas

Board began its hearings. There was ‘tension in the air,’ wrote M.P. Naicker, as protestors stood with placards bearing slogans such as ‘Homes Not Ghettos’ and ‘Group Areas is Piracy.’⁷

It was in this increasingly hostile ferment that the PAC decided to protest the carrying of passes. On 21 March 1960, a PAC-inspired demonstration of 10,000 men, women and children in Sharpeville, marching to the police station to protest the pass law, while chanting ‘Down with passes, Lead us Sobukwe, Forward to Independence,’ was fired upon by the police. Sixty-seven men, women and children were killed, mostly shot in the back. Robert Sobukwe was arrested along with other PAC leaders. The ANC called for a national strike and brought forward its own pass-burning campaign. People acted without waiting for missives from on high, and pass books were stockpiled and set alight.

The state hesitated, trying to come to terms with the extent of the anger, but soon its repressive machinery kicked in. Verwoerd banned public meetings on 24 March. Monty responded with a statement criticising the actions of the state and calling for an end to pass laws. The state declared a state of emergency on 30 March, and outlawed the ANC and PAC on 8 April.

Mass arrests followed. Monty was one of 2 000 people arrested in dawn raids on 1 April. Monty met I.C. Meer, Dawood Seedat, Billy Nair, Kay Moonsamy, M.P. Naicker, and many more in the familiar confines of Durban Central Prison, and soon his mentor and friend Chief Luthuli joined them. The wily Rowley Arenstein made a *habeas corpus* application on their behalf, on the grounds that the regulations under which they were arrested had not been gazetted. They were freed for a few hours while the technicalities were sorted out.

The Durban group decided that Monty, Rowley, Kay, Stephen Dlamini, and J.N. Singh would go underground to carry on the task of coordinating the struggle, and so before they could be rearrested, they went on the run. It was a run that was to last for five months. Others among them, Chief Luthuli, N.T. Naicker, his brother M.C. Naicker, M.P. Naicker, M.B. Yengwa, and Pitiza Simelane handed themselves in.⁸

Among those arrested was also R.D. Naidoo. For the remainder of his

life, R.D. would be easily identifiable by his trademark long beard. During the state of emergency he spent four months in solitary confinement. He would later point out that his 'beard was a result of the Sharpeville uprising, a remembrance of 1960. Whenever I stroke it I think of Sharpeville. I started growing it when I was arrested and haven't cut it since.' Incidentally, R.D.'s youngest child, a daughter, was named Rivonia in remembrance of Nelson Mandela, Ahmed Kathrada and others who were arrested in Rivonia and incarcerated on Robben Island.⁹

In Pietermaritzburg, Chota Motala, A.S. Chetty, Sheik Hassan, Vasu Chetty, and others organised a historic leather-workers strike. For the first time in the 34-year history of the leather industry, workers of all races struck together. Chota Motala, Archie Gumede and Omar Essack were imprisoned. Chetty was fired from his job. Choti did not receive communication from Chota for two months: 'Chota was in jail with Archie Gumede, Ahmed Sader and three people from the Transkei. We didn't know where they were, whether they were dead or alive, but after two months we saw them ... Chota lost 30 pounds.'

In April 1960, *New Age* was banned. Countrywide, 55 of its staff members, including M.P. Naicker, were detained. This was a massive blow to a newspaper, that though always in debt, was a key source of news and whose journalists had a network of informants that stretched from the urban to the rural.¹⁰

Sushila Gandhi, wife of Manilal, and Fatima Meer organised a week-long protest comprising fasting and prayer, which began on 31 May 1960. As Meer explained, women from the NIC and ANC spent a week ...

... there at the Gandhi settlement and of course the ANC women were great in praying, they prayed to God like nobody can pray to God. And I got involved in this prayer session and the whole night they used to fight with God – "Why are you not giving us freedom?" "Why are you treating us so badly?" "Why are we starving?" "Why haven't we got schooling?" "Why are you favouring the White people?" And you know they would say to God, "You've got to stop all this – we're not going to tolerate it anymore" ... in great passion. It was a unifying situation.¹¹

It irked the SB that during the prayer meeting a portrait of Monty hung from a flagpole. After all this was a man on the run and despite their best efforts, one whom they could not apprehend. According to Fatima Meer this was a deliberate provocation.

Women under the auspices of the Durban and District Women's League saw to it that prisoners in the Durban Central Prison received food. Prison authorities only allowed canned food or food from local restaurants, and the organisers circumvented this by cooking at home, but getting local restaurant owners to deliver the food. They also held prayers outside the prison on Sunday mornings. Fatima Meer recalls that this upset police warders, because whites claimed that apartheid was based on Christianity, yet the women were turning to Christianity for the redemption of their men. They also smuggled reading material into prison.¹²

26 June was observed as Freedom Day, in response to a call by Monty from hiding. It was chosen for its historic significance: the 1950 nationwide protest against the Suppression of Communism Act; the Defiance Campaign; adoption of the Freedom Charter; march against pass laws in 1957; in 1958, 20 000 Indians gathered at Curries Fountain to protest the Group Areas Act on this day; and in 1959 Congress launched an economic boycott of Nationalist products. Thousands responded to the call and marched through the centre of Durban, demanding the release of detainees. They were arrested and released but had to appear in court the following day when the charges were dropped.¹³

Monty, J.N. Singh, Steven Dlamini, Kay and Rowley resurfaced at the beginning of September when the Emergency was lifted. There were reports that they had fled to neighbouring countries and even gone overseas, but all had remained in South Africa. Monty and J.N. disguised themselves as Muslim priests and wandered around Natal to live with friends like George Singh in Riverside, Gopalal Hurbans in Tongaat, and the Bodasings on the North Coast. The image of the two resplendent in Arabic garb, smiling through their false beards with eyes twinkling like naughty schoolboys behind spectacles, is one of the abiding images of this harrowing period.



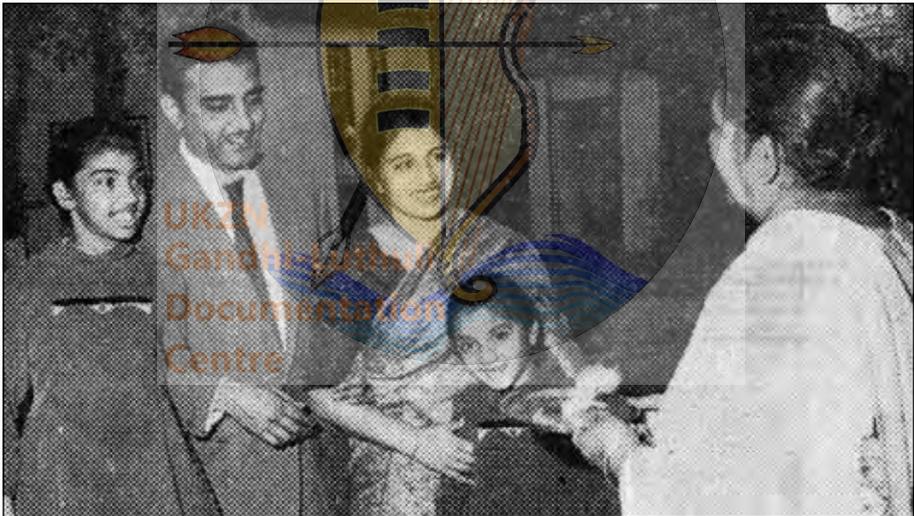
Monty in disguise, during the SOE 1960

© Kreesen Naicker



R.D. Naidu

© UKZN Documentation Centre



J.N. Singh is reunited with Radhi, September 1960

© UKZN Documentation Centre

However, behind the nonchalant bravado, there was constant danger and personal pain. J.N. Singh's brother had died while he was on the run, and within hours of his return, his father died. J.N., glad to be back with his wife

Radhi and daughters Avanthi and Ishana, told reporters that they chose to go underground because they could not accept imprisonment for no reason.¹⁴



Monty is reunited with Marie, Kreesen and Vasugée

© Kreesen Naicker

Monty, described in one local newspaper as ‘immaculately dressed in a silk shirt and grey suit,’ received a ‘typical Indian [Hindu] welcome from his wife Marie and son Kreesen,’ before issuing a statement on 31 August 1960:

The repeal of the Emergency Regulations and the ending of the State of Emergency in all areas of the Union of South Africa after over five months – precisely 156 days, comes as a great relief to the people of this country and particularly to those individuals who were actually detained during the Emergency and their families ... The proclamation of a State of Emergency was an unprecedented measure taken by a Government in peace time. It ousted the ordinary jurisdiction of the law and courts of law. It drastically curtailed the liberties of the people and their freedom of speech, association, organisation and press... These grave inroads into the life and liberties of the people by the Nationalist Government had to be endured for the past 156 days. Our people are to be congratulated on their tolerance and courage in bearing up with these uncalled-for attacks by a Government which has become power drunk and whose policy seems to be that ‘might is right’... Such methods and policies as adopted by the Nationalists cannot be the remedy for our just and urgent demands ... What is required is urgent

consultations with the leaders and organisations of all sections of our multi-racial country with a view to taking rapid measures to bring genuine democracy in this country without distinction of race, colour, creed or language, and make our country march in step with the rest of the nations of the world, instead of being the outcast and pariah that it is today at the United Nations.¹⁵

Monty expressed the appreciation of the Congress to those who had assisted detainees and their families to bear the emotional and financial hardship, singling out the sponsors and members of the Business Welfare Fund, which supported families whose breadwinners were unemployed. In assessing the impact of the Emergency, Monty conceded that the Congresses were hard hit by the detention of officials. The banning of the ANC 'was the final blow to the Congresses, which have been and still are the spearhead of the struggle for a non-racial democracy.' Monty praised the 'courage and energy of the remaining Congressmen and women, who despite the Emergency were able to continue the tasks of Congress as the political mouthpiece of the oppressed people.'¹⁶

It was a subdued statement. Monty knew that the state of emergency had affected the organising capability of the NIC and that the detention of leading members had created some fear in the ranks and the broader community of sympathisers. Despite the regime's increased repression and intransigence, Monty held out the hand of consultation while the regime was intent on placing any form of organising beyond its own limited remit in handcuffs.

The likes of Billy Nair, A.K.M. Docrat, M.P. Naicker, Chota Motala, and others were held in prison for almost five months without being charged with any offence. They faced long bouts of interrogation which aimed to 'grade' them politically, in an attempt to gauge their future threat. The SB also played "mind games", such as threatening that prisoners would be detained indefinitely if they did not provide information or that their families would be harmed.¹⁷ But police harassment often had a converse effect, as one wife wrote to *New Age*:

My experience is quite common to and familiar with that of hundreds of

thousands of other mothers and wives. But now that the ruling class is determined to convert my husband into a habitual, professional Jail-Bird, I am on the other hand, dedicated to convert him into a Professional Revolutionary and consolidate his determination and joy in fighting for the realisation of his political ideals and his complete liberation of his country and people.¹⁸

While the authenticity of this missive must be treated with some scepticism, it did reflect two contradictory impulses: a collective sense of solidarity and feeling that the regime was under pressure, and conversely, a sense that bannings and detentions were sapping the strength of the Alliance.

The belief that international condemnation, especially through the UN, was an important arena of struggle remained strong. The SAIC submitted a memorandum to the UN in September 1960, calling on member states to apply economic sanctions against South Africa and 'outlaw' the country from the organisation. The memorandum pointed to 'police raids carried out with relentless continuity in the middle of the night, daily imprisonment of thousands for trivial offences, inadequate housing, poverty and slum-life.' The UN was called upon to stop passing resolutions noting the problem, and instead take 'positive steps to end the colour bar and apartheid.'¹⁹

After his spell on the run, Monty was back in the thick of things. He told a meeting of the Textile Workers Union in Clairwood on 18 September 1960 that 'repressing people by instilling fear into them and using force to subdue them and declaring emergencies and imprisoning people without trial is not the answer.' On 24 September 1960, he addressed a meeting at the YMCA convened by the NIC and Sactu on the pass laws. 'For years,' he said, 'the Africans have been humiliated with pass laws. They must take immediate steps to erase this slavery and humiliation.' On 23 October, he addressed a meeting of the Cato Manor Indian Ratepayers Council, and told the large turnout that blacks were 'being robbed of everything in the name of Christianity.' The Progressive Party suggested at the beginning of October 1960 that blacks should be given a qualified franchise. Monty rejected this as inadequate in light of the granting of independence to African and Asian countries. He viewed it as nothing more

than an attempt to 'soften the growing demands of the unfranchised majority of South Africa. I associate myself completely with Chief Luthuli in expressing my disapproval of the inadequacy of the proposals.'²⁰

As 1960 drew to a close, whites had to make important choices. On 5 October, South Africa's white minority was asked, 'Do you support a republic for the Union?' By a narrow majority, they voted to become a republic, paving the way for South Africa's exit from the Commonwealth. This coincided with the Indian commemoration in November of their Centenary in South Africa.

How would these be held? What signal would they send out about their place in the evolving state?

One leading Afrikaner proffered advice. Dr C.F. Jooste lectured in Sociology at Natal University and was on the Provincial Executive of the NP. Writing in *The Graphic* on 20 September 1960, he explained that the social distance between Indians and Afrikaners was due to the fact that they were members of fundamentally different civilisations, making the 'deep-seated cultural differences natural and understandable.' Since Indians did not constitute a material threat to the Afrikaner, they could coexist as neighbours, but this was not happening because Indians learnt about Afrikaners from English-language papers, which portrayed them 'as villainous people' and because India's 'actions in the international field are decidedly hostile to our country.' Relations would improve if Indians pressured India to stop campaigning against South Africa and ceased supporting those who were 'prepared to ruin our country economically and otherwise for the simple pleasure of bringing the Afrikaner government to a downfall.' Indians should 'realise that raising their standard of living was more important than the vote ... The Indian will be better off and will get further under the so-called "Afrikaner-government".'²¹

M.D. Naidoo responded in the 14th October issue that Jooste's arguments were 'clothed in sociological language' but were unscientific and failed to take socio-political circumstances into account. Indians and Afrikaners could not be 'good neighbours.' 'Good neighbours,' he said, 'respected each other and were free.' Good neighbours did not use the power of the state to dominate

others or threaten their existing inferior opportunities. By 'good neighbour,' Naidoo added, Jooste wanted Indians to 'meekly accept living without political rights and be thankful for every additional burden imposed on them.'²² M.D. systematically dismantled Jooste's arguments, while laying out the position of the NIC. Promises to improve the standard of living in return for allegiance to the NP would not wash: the NIC was committed to its alliance with those forces dedicated to removing the NP from power and was not interested in piecemeal concessions. M.D. signalled how decisive the break with the old NIC of Kajeer and Pather had been.

But Monty was also keen to heal the rift with those whom he had defeated in 1945 and saw the centenary celebrations as a wonderful opportunity. It was at the Radakrishna Hall in Carlisle Street on 27 April 1958 that the first steps were taken towards commemorating the 100-year arrival of Indians. An Indian Centenary Committee was formed with Monty as President. P.R. Pather was chairman, H.H. Dhupelia and J.N. Singh were secretaries, M.D. Naidoo was the organising secretary, and A.M. Moolla, T.N. Bhoolla, and R.M. Naidoo were treasurers.²³

The committee, which was inclusive across the religious and political spectrum, committed itself to getting public input on whether the commemoration should be 'celebratory' or reflect the troubles of Indians.²⁴ The composition of the committee was remarkable, with old moderates like P.R. Pather and A.M. Moolla, who had regrouped into the Natal Indian Organisation (NIO), joining with their arch rivals in the NIC. There were important discordant voices. From the outset the NEUM, spearheaded by Dr Zulei Christopher, opposed the commemoration because it did not want to divide the population of South Africa into racial and ethnic groups, and also felt that given the level of political repression, there was nothing to commemorate.

The state of emergency immobilised a number of organisers in the crucial months leading up to November 1960, and the committee only met in early September 1960 when the emergency was over. In the two years that had passed since it had first been set up, the apartheid regime had gone on the

offensive, and so when the committee reconvened, the NIC was determined to reinforce its commitment to opposing apartheid, and aligning itself with broader black opposition. The resignation of P.R. Pather for health reasons and his replacement by J.N. Singh as chairman increased NIC influence. J.N. told reporters that instead of 'grandiose' celebrations, they would focus on low-key celebrations and the establishment of a Scholarship Fund for Education. M.G. Naidoo was appointed chairman in Pietermaritzburg; Dr M.C. Meer in Stanger; Gopalal Hurbans in Tongaat; Y.S. Chinsamy in Verulam, and Dr M. Godfrey in Port Shepstone.²⁵ In Ladysmith, Monty delivered a keynote address at the Dhanrama Sabha Hall on 12 November, at an event organised by Vithal Lala and Dr A.H. Sader. Monty told the large crowd:

I regard it as a great honour extended to the organisation to which I belong that I should have been asked to participate in your commemoration of our One hundred Years on South African soil ... When we look back on the hundred years of our life and labour our first duty is to pay a fitting tribute to those pioneers, men and women, who did so much to build Natal and through it the country as a whole ... Many names come to mind when we traverse these hundred pregnant years in the history of our country but one name stands out and that is Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest figure produced in South Africa not only to give guidance and hope but to give guidance to India and the world. The Indian people have written glorious chapters of struggle and endurance in their history and there are various landmarks too numerous to mention ... A century is an important milestone in the life of any people. It is a time to pause, to think of the past and to be inspired by it and by the actions of those who made the past a glorious one. It is a time to rededicate ourselves to make the present such that we can leave to the future a worthy heritage. It is a time to plan for the future not in isolation but with the rest of South Africa so that we can truly say that we have not only made a fitting contribution in a multi-racial society but that we were the joint architects of a truly non-racial democracy.

Indeed it is correct to observe that there are many dark clouds over us in 1960. Not only our community but our country is passing through a most critical

phase of its existence. It is a time when those who stand for higher ideals and true human values are finding life difficult. To some the challenges of 1960 are too difficult to meet. But it is correct to say that though we form the smallest racial group in our multi-racial society, we as a community have never asked for preferential treatment as a minority group nor have we sought to expound any racial supremacy. With the proud heritage which Mahatma Gandhi left with us, with an undying belief in the ideas of democracy we have no hesitation in declaring that what we want in South Africa is equal democratic rights for all her citizens. Unlike the white ruling classes of South Africa we have never believed that in a truly democratic State we will be swamped by the majority. In that respect our community has an important lesson for the white numerical minority in South Africa.²⁶

Try as he may, Monty's speech does belie a guarded despondency, and clearly the Emergency and the spectre of ongoing repression had started to take its toll. Still, Monty stuck to the two themes that were the hallmark of both his own beliefs and the orientation of the NIC: his debt to Gandhi as political mentor and inspiration, and defining the struggle as the achievement of non-racial democracy. Throughout the 1950s he had expounded these views and now, at the centenary commemoration, he returned to them, in the hope that it would cut off attempts by the Nats to draw Indians away from the Congress Alliance, while simultaneously confronting those who wanted to use the occasion for a carnival of ethnic chauvinism.

Chief Luthuli's message to Indians was typically statesmanlike:

The occasion conjures unpleasant memories of hardships and suffering that have plagued the Indians since their arrival in South Africa. They came under the most stringent, oppressive and degrading conditions as victims of British imperialism which have made them serfs of white settlers in South Africa. But this very intense cruelty serves to throw into prominence their achievements and the way in which they so unselfishly and beneficially exploited the meagre resources that came their way. This makes the Indian an effective object lesson

to the rest of the community and prompts deserving admiration for him by all fair-minded people.²⁷

Following on this, the NIC began organising what was described as ‘the biggest political meeting ever held’ in Durban. It was advertised for Curries Fountain on 9 December 1960. Thousands turned up to hear Monty, Steven Dlamini and George Mbele but the meeting was banned at the last minute. Monty issued a statement that the banning was clear evidence that the government was afraid ‘of the broad will of the people’:

I want to say to Dr Verwoerd that you cannot force unpalatable laws down the throat of an unwilling people. You cannot halt peace and progress through stenguns and Saracens; police raids; bannings and banishment. You cannot kill the spirit of freedom inherent in human beings by mental and physical torture. You cannot shoot your way through. History is full of those who tried. History is also full of the fate that befell them.

Reacting to a story in a Sunday paper in December 1960 that red submarines would be landing Moscow-trained fighters in South Africa, Monty said that blacks were ‘not so childish or naïve as to follow bedtime stories. If the purpose of the article was to influence white readers, then all I can say is that whites are in their political childhood ... We non-whites have reached our political maturity a long while ago.’²⁸ Monty was the master of the ironic – one of the arguments used by whites, including Jan Smuts, was that blacks were still children, and needed tutelage and guidance, and Monty inverted this to expose the propaganda of the white minority.

In early 1960, the government proposed a university for the exclusive use of Indians, as part of the apartheid design to prevent Indians from attending white and even “African” universities. They would, in keeping with the philosophy of apartheid, now have one of their own. As more young people were finishing high school, the demand for university education was growing more insistent. Some had forced open the doors of white liberal universities, but this was anathema to the NP. Without prior consultation, the government announced

that a separate Indian university would be established from 1 November 1961. The location for the university was carefully chosen – Salisbury Island, a place that students would have to access by ferry, making it a site where freedom of movement and speech could be more easily controlled.²⁹

Not only did this announcement draw students in protest, but it also brought together the NIO and NIC – both Monty and P.R. Pather rejected the proposal. Monty condemned the ‘high-handed’ attitude of government in not consulting with the community. He said that ‘the university is a temple of truth, and knowledge should be imparted with no regard to a person’s race, colour or creed or financial standing. The sole factor governing admission should be merit.’³⁰ Monty and Pather issued a joint statement ‘bowing our heads in shame for those in Government who contemplate shutting the doors of higher education in the faces of hundreds of eager students of an underprivileged and voiceless community ... There are no two viewpoints in our community ... We are completely unanimous in our condemnation.’³¹

A conference of 200 delegates representing 50 organisations met in Durban on 17 December 1960. Monty, A.M. Moolla of the NIO, Dr A.D. Lazarus of the Natal Indian Teachers’ Society, Ebrahim Ebrahim of the NIYC, Dr Alam Baboolal of the Combined Indian Ratepayers Organisation, Thumba Pillay of the SRC of the University of Natal, Alan Paton, and Professor Leo Kuper were among the speakers. M.D. Naidoo moved a motion, seconded by A.M. Moolla, calling on Indians not to serve on the Indian University Advisory Council; whites to understand ‘the feelings of the Indian people and refuse to serve on the council’; teachers who ‘treasure the true traditions of a University to recognise the importance of not accepting any teaching post’; and parents and students to ‘explore alternate possibilities as far as possible’ for university education.³² When it was announced that Mr Natrass, Principal of the M.L. Sultan Technical College, and Colonel Butler Porter had agreed to serve on the Council, Monty announced that if they had ‘the interest of the Indian people at heart, and knowing that the entire Indian community is opposed ... they should resign from their positions.’³³ While this mobilisation was ultimately futile, it showed

the depth of opposition to apartheid structures. Eventually, many who were opposed to the university would serve on its Council.

In February 1961, amidst rumours that the government intended to create a Department of Indian Affairs, Monty was adamant that 'the people will not accept this fraud.' The Bantu and Coloured Departments, he said, were riddled with 'chaos, insecurity and outright nepotism.' Indians had a proud record as far as such Boards were concerned: when Smuts wanted to establish an Indian Board, they could not find a single Indian to accept the positions offered, even though members were offered salaries of £2 000 a year. 'We ask for nothing less than universal adult suffrage.'³⁴ Monty called for strength in resistance, citing the example of Patrice Lumumba of the Congo who, he told a meeting of the Queensburgh Indian Ratepayers Association, on 19 February 1960, 'was killed because he refused to sell his people for thirty pieces of silver.'

Monty was still holding out for discussions, dialogue and non-violent resistance, in spite of the brutal intransigence of the NP to overtures of negotiation and compromise. In fact, the government had signalled its intention to crush protest and extend the reach of apartheid. Already within the leadership of the Congress Alliance, murmurings were heard that a change of direction was needed. The feeling that a new approach was required was captured succinctly by Dr S. Cooppan when he spoke at the anti-tribal university conference on 17 December 1960. Cooppan, a graduate of Fort Hare, told the conference that 'the torturous, twisted, irrational and cynical thinking of those charged with the implementation of apartheid policy is a tragic commentary on their failure to meet the demands of living in a human society comprising many different physical types.'³⁵ He stipulated the essential ethical conundrum of the times: 'Does one become angry and violent with such people, or does one pity them for their lack of mental and spiritual stature? Perhaps we ought to do the latter, but can we continue to tolerate the exercise of unbridled power by men such as these?'³⁶

That a moderate liberal could consider alternatives to non-violent resistance speaks volumes about the political environment of 1960. Dr Cooppan's dilemma

is one of the themes that Ansuyah Singh, who was on the executive of the NIC at one point, explored in her work of non-fiction *Behold the Earth Mourns*. Singh was an advocate of passive resistance and admirer of Gandhi. Even a staunch Gandhi-ite like her was beginning to despair. *Behold the Earth Mourns* explores satyagraha in the prevailing political context. The father of Krishandutt and Srenika migrated to Natal as an indentured worker and established himself as a relatively successful shopkeeper by the 1930s. While the family was financially stable, the racist policies of the government hung over their heads. Krishandutt is content to bide his time in the hope that the government or higher power will bring about justice. Srenika believes that this is tantamount to compliance and opts to become a satyagrahi, announcing:

It was inevitable. It is becoming infectious. It makes a new era of feeling, of thinking, of living. It is inevitable ... It is with great happiness that I court imprisonment ... Passive Resistance ... is a truth, a love force endeavouring to uphold non-violence, for violence and force have never solved any problems.

But Srenika, militant and radical in comparison to his brother, has to justify satyagraha when the government does not relent. The novel's subtle raising of the debate on violence versus non-violence was prescient, because Ansuyah Singh was on the executive of the NIC, and the moral and ethical questions that she raises are ones that concerned many in the organisation at this time. Even if some were not prepared to cross the barrier from non-violence to armed struggle, they were still forced to contend with the debate.³⁷

Both Dr Cooppan's comments and Ansuyah Singh's novel were written around 1960, when the state was tightening the noose, and South Africans in active opposition to apartheid were faced with a crucial challenge – the call to armed struggle. It was a moment that would define the strategic orientation of South Africa's struggle for democracy for the next few decades.

In speech after speech from the early 1950s, Monty had emphasised the building of Afro-Indian unity and his and the NIC's commitment to non-violence. His position was now challenged by many who wondered how long

those superior in argument and ethical aspiration could tolerate their destiny being determined by the unbridled exercise of power and arrogance by those not only advocating, but entrenching racial domination.

While Monty's leadership of the NIC was unchallenged, leading members of the NIC were debating the armed struggle, as was the senior leadership of the ANC. The events of 1961 would tilt the scale strongly in favour of the armed struggle.



The parting

rage as sharp as blade
to cut and slash
and spill blood
for only blood can appease
the blood spilled
over three hundred years.¹

JAMES MATTHEWS (1929-)

The apartheid state's unrelenting onslaught, and refusal to contemplate any forms of negotiation, put the Congress Alliance under tremendous pressure. At the same time the Alliance increasingly faced a challenge from within. It came from among those who felt that the politics of non-violent resistance had reached a dead end and that the turn to violence had become inevitable. It was a debate that raged throughout 1961.

The repression and deliberation about tactics and strategies did not mean that the public face of the Alliance was neglected. In keeping with Monty's thrust toward an alliance with the ANC, Professor Z.K. Matthews opened the annual conference of the NIC in Pietermaritzburg on 3 March 1961, the first following the banning of the ANC. Monty welcomed him warmly as 'an international figure for whom our people have the highest esteem. Many of our intellectuals have regarded him as their guru when they had the privilege to study at Fort Hare ... His presence here actively demonstrates the solidarity which has been built in Afro-Indian relationships within the framework of the democratic Congress movement.'² Monty supported the call for a National Convention as Nationalist rule 'had resulted in the serious diminution of civil liberties for all in South Africa and only holding a truly national convention could put South Africa on

the road to sanity.' He shared the platform with Steven Dlamini of Sactu.³

The All African People's conference in Pietermaritzburg followed on 25 March 1961. It was advertised to start at the Edendale Community Hall but was transferred to the Arya Samaj Hall in Plessislaer when it was discovered that the SB had installed tape-recording equipment at the original venue. The conference went on late into the night with a surprise appearance by Nelson Mandela, making his first public speech since 1952, because of successive banning orders. Mandela told the 1 400 delegates that the time had come to 'fight back against the tyranny of Nationalist oppression,' called for economic sanctions, demanded votes for all, and called for the convening of a national convention. This was to be his last speech before his arrest in Howick in 1962.⁴ The presence of Mandela signified a changing of the guard, with a younger and more militant generation of leaders taking up the challenge posed by the apartheid state.

The conference resolved that if the call for a National Convention was ignored, mass demonstrations and a stay-at-home would be held on 29-31 May 1961 to protest South Africa's declaration of a Republic on 31 May. Mandela was made head of a National Action Council (NAC) to coordinate the stayaway. The 29 March 1961 verdict that the case against the remaining accused in the Treason Trial had collapsed was a fillip for the beleaguered liberation movement. *Drum* interviewed several leaders about the planned demonstrations. Monty's responses were published in the May 1961 issue:

Question: Do you advocate peaceful demonstrations for May 31?

Answer: The South African Indian Congress is in full support of all-in national talks, and if talks are not held, we feel that demonstrations should take place on the eve of republic day, May 31.

Question: What form should the demonstrations around Republic Day take?

Answer: There are only a limited number of actions non-whites in this country can take. Apart from mass meetings and processions, one means of making the government and the white people see the way we feel would be a general strike.

Question: What should be the aim of the demonstrations?

Answer: Our aim is to rally all our people in support of our big political objectives – the establishment of non-racial democracy based on the United Nations freedom charter.

Monty and the NIC swung into action by distributing thousands of pamphlets calling for a National Convention. Monty was emphatic that the ‘era of the ox wagon as represented by the Broederbond Republic is definitely at an end’ and called on Indians ‘to rally to this call. The time to call a halt to the terror and misery of apartheid is NOW! We cannot and must not allow the Verwoerd regime to continue to stifle our progress any longer.’⁵ He appealed for funding for the campaign to boycott Republic Day celebrations, urging every member of the public to contribute at least one shilling.⁶ At a mass meeting in Clairwood on 11 May 1961, Monty appealed to ‘every Indian businessman and workers, lawyers and doctors, bus drivers and bus owners, market gardeners and market stall holders, sportsmen and sporting organisations, men, women and youth, to rally to this decision demanding a National Convention.’⁷

The SB allocated massive resources to counteract the planned boycott. Offices of Sactu and the NIC were raided and pamphlets confiscated. In Pietermaritzburg, the homes of Harry Gwala, A.S. Chetty, and Archie Gumede were raided.⁸ Kay Moonsamy, who was the NIC organiser at this time, insisted that while the raids were designed to ‘intimidate the people, they only had the reverse effect ... spur people to action.’⁹ As the government mooted new draconian measures N.T. Naicker, NIC organising secretary, issued a statement against:

...the very rapid manner in which South Africa was taking shape as a fascist state. As a loyal South African, aware of the ominous and dangerous path South Africa is taking in maintaining White Baaskaap policy, we want to warn the white rulers of this country that you cannot live with a Saracen or bayonet or revolver at your side all your life. You cannot live in a jungle of fear searching for critics of your apartheid policy.¹⁰

The NIC sought to counter government propaganda aimed at schoolchildren, such as giving children Republic Day medals. Monty issued a statement on 27 April 1961 that the medals and flags should be rejected because they were emblems of oppression: 'We have no cause to be happy for we have not been consulted about the proposed changes in the form of government.' Accepting the medal meant 'celebrating Salisbury Island University, Job Reservation, apartheid and the lack of the most elementary rights. Are we to celebrate Sharpeville, Cato Manor and Langa?'¹¹

So while white South Africa moved inexorably towards a republic, black South Africans pressured for a national convention. Meetings were held in Clairwood, Pietermaritzburg, Mayville, Merebank, and Overport on 14 May, where the likes of Monty, George Mbele, Kay Moonsamy and M.D. Naidoo condemned the intransigence of the government.¹²

There was a buzz of 'will they or won't they accept', when P.R. Pather and A.S. Kajee were invited to the investiture of the State President in Pretoria on 31 May 1961. While Pather declined, Kajee accepted, which made him a marked man in Indian circles.¹³ Monty made it clear that 'no Indian, even to the extent of merely attending the state function, can participate in the state function. Let South Africa and South Africans understand that Mr Kajee is acting as an individual.'¹⁴ There was nothing to celebrate, Monty insisted, because 'thirteen years of Nationalist rule have proved thirteen years of mounting oppression of the non-white people. The granite-like stubbornness of Dr Verwoerd and his colleagues in driving our people inexorably towards disaster is epitomised in the realisation of a Broederbond Republic.'¹⁵

The stayaway was not a success, largely because the government rushed through the General Law Amendment Act and used it to detain around 10 000 people.¹⁶ Sactu secretary Billy Nair was one of those silenced – on 26 May he was served with a notice prohibiting him from attending gatherings. But he was not to be silenced by legal strictures; he went around to factories urging workers to stay at home, and was arrested for 'inciting workers,' fined £50, and banned from entering any factory or entering any African location or hostel.¹⁷

Mandela, for reasons that are still debated, called off the strike after the second day even though it seemed to be gaining momentum.¹⁸

Despite state harassment, around 50 percent of black workers stayed at home in Durban where Indian-owned shops were closed, there was a total boycott by black students at the University of Natal (students belonging to the NEUM opposed the boycott on principle and attended lectures), Indian markets were closed, Indian cinemas cancelled shows; and 'Grey Street – the non-white Eloff Street of Durban – was deserted. 5:00 pm at Durban's three Non-White bus terminals could easily have been mistaken for an ordinary Sunday afternoon,' reported M.P. Naicker.¹⁹ *The Graphic* reported that 'the atmosphere was filled with anxiety and tension. There was an almost 100 percent closure of shops in the city. Only a handful of people could be seen in Grey and Victoria streets, the hub of the Indian business area. Several large European concerns closed early. Approximately 80 percent of Indian children did not go to school.'²⁰

Monty, addressing a Sactu meeting at the Bantu Social Centre on 26 June 1961, warned that 'there must be no Tshombes amongst us. Those who are not with us are rebels. I wish to contradict the newspapers which stated that the stayaway was a flop. If we did not succeed, what caused the government to run short of finances?' Monty was referring to the pro-Western Congolese politician Moïse Tshombe, who declared Katanga's secession from the rest of the Congo (DRC) when it became an independent republic under Patrice Lumumba in 1960.

In response to mounting state repression, anti-apartheid activists debated the various ways of continuing to challenge the regime. Among them were insistent calls for armed struggle. While the tactics and strategies of the proposed armed struggle were vague, for many it was nurtured out of desperation, as the state hunted down and incarcerated leaders, while refusing to listen to the demands of mass organisations calling for respite from the yoke of apartheid. It was in this atmosphere that calls to armed resistance found resonance, even among those whose political life was developed through non-violent defiance. In the aftermath of the stay-at-home campaign of May 1961, Mandela intimated a

change of direction, when he said, ‘we are closing a chapter on this question of non-violent policy.’²¹ He told a reporter for *New Age* that ‘if peaceful protests are to be put down by mobilisation of the army and the police then the people might be forced to use other methods of struggle.’²²

Mandela was by now a popular national leader, and drew many to the idea of armed struggle. Mandela and Sisulu proposed the adoption of armed struggle at the end-June meeting of the ANC’s National Working Committee (NWC), which, in turn, placed the matter before the full National Executive in Stanger in July. The decision to change course was heavily contested. Despite the growing clamour, a strong spine of non-violent resistance still ran through the movement. Monty, according to Billy Nair, remained an implacable opponent of armed struggle. Billy explained in his typical uncomplicated manner why he decided to part ways with Monty, whom he respected tremendously:

Violence was a new form of struggle, Mandela made it quite clear, and I agreed wholeheartedly, not that I was violent and what-not, but because we tried all forms of struggle. The reaction of the ruling class was one of violence, killing, shooting, burning, destroying countrywide. One has to just experience it for a few minutes, what they did. Or you get striking workers. Where a strike breaks out, they go into the factory premises, use their batons and their guns to crack the skulls of the workers. You had many pictures of children being assaulted during the 1976 student uprising. This was a common thing with adults in urban and rural areas during the 1950s. So you had this form of violent repression and that is why there was no alternative to violence. Mandela said there’s a parting of ways in 1961, but Monty and a few others like Debi Singh, N.T. Naicker, and Gopalal Hurbans, they, you know, felt strongly that we should not depart from passive resistance.

At the end of July 1961, according to Billy, the ANC executive met on Chief Luthuli’s farm in Groutville while the NIC executive met on Hurbans’ farm in Tongaat. The intensity of the NIC meeting and the ethical dilemmas facing delegates was summed up cogently by I.C. Meer:

Were we contemplating a shift to violence as an easy way out of the hard task of mobilising the people in the face of repression? Would resorting to violence lead to the neglect of orthodox forms of mobilisation? J.N. Singh put the matter crisply: 'Non-violence has not failed us; we have failed non-violence.' It was a vigorous debate. By turning to violence would we not be giving the regime the excuse to come down on us even more heavily? Would we not be sacrificing the legal space that the Indian Congress, SACTU and CPC still enjoyed? On the other hand, if we did not shift to violent means, would we not be failing our people by not harnessing their rising militancy and providing them with the leadership needed?²³

Monty, and it seems many of his generation, were not prepared to waiver from non-violence as a principle. His opposition had little to do with M.D. Naidoo's accusation that opponents of violence were afraid of going to jail. Monty's courage was not in question, but he and others who opposed the armed struggle did not lay out how an exclusive focus on non-violence in the face of heightened state violence and arbitrary bannings and imprisonment, would lead to the demise of apartheid. Supporters of armed struggle were just as short on how it would unfold, where arms would come from, what the nature of the organisation that would lead this initiative would be, and exactly how the apartheid regime might be destroyed.

While the categories were not neat, there was an inkling of a generational divide. The older guard like Monty and J.N. Singh stood against violent resistance. The generation that came immediately after, like Billy Nair, M.P. Naicker, Ebrahim Ebrahim, and M.D. Naidoo supported armed struggle. The NIC eventually decided that when they met with the ANC executive the following evening, they would express the view that there was still a place for non-violent struggle, but that if the ANC decided otherwise, the NIC would not be an impediment.²⁴ Billy Nair relates what happened next:

You had all the big boys, Moses [Kotane] and others, coming over, addressing Dr Naicker, Chief Luthuli and others where they actually showed them the

ABCs as to why we have to part ways from the older forms of struggle. Ya, then what happened was that we had a joint congress of the whole alliance, Indian Congress, African Congress, SACTU, Coloured People's Congress, the white Congress of Democrats, right in Stanger in the Bodasing's Farm. I was part of that. I represented Sactu. We debated that issue the whole night.

Exactly what transpired continues to be a source of debate. As Ahmed Kathrada reminds us in his *Memoirs*, 'even people involved in the same event remember the details differently,'²⁵ and so it is with the turn to armed struggle. Mandela wrote in his autobiography that the hardest task was convincing Luthuli. Mandela argued that a military campaign was inevitable, and that it would be better for the ANC to control it to ensure that 'symbols' of oppression, rather than people, were attacked. This could not be assured if the ANC became 'followers to a movement we did not control.'²⁶ The matter was put formally to the ANC National Executive which, according to Bernstein, 'recognised that many of its members wished to ... explore the possibilities of armed forms of struggle. Their right to do so would not be challenged, provided they did not do so in the name of the ANC but under the mantle of a separate, independent organisation.'²⁷ Thus was born Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), 'Spear of the Nation'. Unlike the ANC, which was an exclusively African organisation, MK was non-racial. In the minds of most people, of course, the ANC and MK were synonymous.

There was a feeling among many black activists that they were left with no other choice in trying to dislodge the apartheid regime. In October 1960, white South Africans voted for a republic. Under pressure from other countries of the British Commonwealth to rescind the decision, South Africa withdrew from the Commonwealth in March 1961. Verwoerd courted English South Africans, and intimated that his party stood 'for the preservation of the white man.' During the general election of October 1961, the NP, in fact, increased its majority in parliament with growing support from English speakers. Verwoerd's shoring up of 'one white South Africa' was partly a response to the intensification of resistance to white rule within South Africa, and partly to the wave of African

decolonisation. The British Empire was unravelling with the independence of Ghana (1957) and Nigeria (1960). Verwoerd called on white South Africa to close ranks. The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 signalled the era of 'high apartheid'. Africans were to be confined to rural areas in self-governing homelands, and could only live temporarily in 'white' South Africa to labour for the white man and madam.²⁸

As the Nationalists enforced apartheid and met non-violent resistance with armed might, the voices of those calling for a resistance that went beyond non-violence grew more strident. This is reflected in the transition of people like Billy Nair, Ebrahim Ebrahim, and Sunny Singh, some of Umkhonto's earliest cadres. In looking at their reasons for embracing the armed struggle, the same themes feature consistently: the state was intransigent, all avenues of non-violent resistance had been closed, and the turn to violence envisaged by Umkhonto was an extension of non-violent resistance, because they did not want to injure anyone.

By the early 1960s, Billy, his ambitions to become a chartered accountant thwarted by racism and poverty, was a full-time trade unionist and on the executive of the NIC. As he saw it, the main scope of his work was to 'put up a fight for better wages and working conditions ... and also oppose various legislations which the Government introduced from time to time.' He fought against the Industrial Reconciliation Act of 1956 which made job reservation rigid; from 1955, Sactu launched a national campaign for £1 per day for workers because 'there was resistance from employers to pay a living wage.' The exploitative working environment was one arena of struggle. The disenfranchisement of black people was equally important:

Only a person enjoying the vote can right the wrongs being done. Blacks were discriminated against, they were being bullied about, moved from place to place, their homes were being bulldozed. To give you an example, the Indian people of Cato Manor who were resident there for over 60 years were forced to move under the Group Areas Act. Indians were facing the same tract throughout Durban. Africans too were denied the right to own land.

At the same time, Billy reflected, avenues of protest were closed down:

We had mass meetings, protests, demonstrations, the launching of campaigns against particular laws, general strikes, boycotts ... We tried peaceful means but got no results whatsoever ... There was no violence excepting from the Government, the police. Every act, every meeting, strike, in fact every peaceful means of expression of the non-white people was being thwarted with force and violence. When the three-day stoppage of work was called in 1961 the Government used the police, Army ... in fact there was virtually twilight emergency to deal with the situation, and the workers were forced to go back to work. There were no means of expression for non-whites.²⁹

Like Billy, Ebrahim Ebrahim joined Umkhonto because he had come to the conclusion that ‘all non-violent avenues were now closed to implementing the Freedom Charter ... The only way out was clandestine organisation and violent means to counter the violence of the apartheid state.’ Ebie saw sabotage as the first step, followed by guerrilla warfare. He came to this conclusion from studying the Algerian struggle: armed violence, for Ebie, was ‘a painful necessity, not something I welcomed for its own sake. I knew it would lead to a suffering of the enemy as well as the oppressed people. But there was no other way out. One hated the racist system, knew it was violent, and found oneself forced to use force.’³⁰ Loyalty to the leadership was important in Ebie’s decision to join Umkhonto: ‘If they called for armed struggle out of necessity, one followed because one’s whole life had been in the struggle.’³¹

The turn to armed struggle was a light at the end of the tunnel for many. According to Ebie, ‘We felt a relief that something was going to happen – this was our alternative to despair, a fresh hope that our struggle would continue.’ Ebie attended a meeting shortly after Mandela’s return from his African sojourn; he described it as ‘the most inspiring gathering in my life.’ During the recruitment phase and after, Umkhonto cadres emphasised that civilians were not to be attacked, ‘only government installations and economic targets.’ This was important to Ebie, because he ‘deeply abhorred any type of violence,

even physical violence between people. I don't think I ever struck anyone in my whole life.³²

Sunny Singh, who joined Umkhonto in February 1962, argued that the state clampdown left him with no alternative:

I found that it was mutually inclusive, my political struggle and my armed struggle. It was a violent form of struggle but violence is relative. We did not take human lives. We were strictly warned not to injure ... only damage state property. I wasn't exposed to any literature, it was more in the context of our own situation ... South Africa's turning point was 1960 when the ANC was banned. There were no avenues of peaceful protest in the country ... that was a fundamental turning point in our history.

Discussion about armed struggle was academic. Viewed from the tally of violent incidents of suppression and spontaneous resistance, much of the country was already in the throes of armed struggle: there were activities of Poqo, the armed wing of the PAC in the Cape; there was "armed struggle" in Durban when the municipality began the forced removals of 100 000 Africans in Cato Manor in 1958; the onslaught against African women beer brewers led to riots in Cato Manor in June 1959, led by women like Dorothy Nyembe, Ruth Shabane and Gladys Manzi; and the murder of nine policemen in January 1960.³³ Many of those involved in the protest were members of Sactu. M.P. Naicker's comments about Cato Manor applied to large parts of the country:

Underneath this calm surface there is a seething cauldron of hate against those in authority ... among the residents of this disease-ridden, rodent-infested hell of 100,000 people, living in the most abominable conditions imaginable, that the slightest provocation could lead to a bloodbath far surpassing anything that this stormy township has seen in the 15-odd years of its existence.³⁴

This turn to armed struggle was reflected across the political spectrum. The Unity Movement, which enjoyed fair support in Natal, experienced parallel developments. Dr Limbada was one of the first persons banned in Natal under

the Suppression of Communism Act. A member of the NEUM, he had gained a huge reputation that crossed racial divides, because of his fearlessness and tremendous charisma. A voracious reader of political philosophy and the 'science' of revolutions, he became increasingly attracted to the political orientation of the African People's Democratic Union of South Africa (APDUSA), an affiliate of the NEUM, and its work with the African peasantry around the issues of land and Bantu Authorities. For Limbada, debates about armed struggles were superfluous, given rural explosions in the late 1950s in Mpondoland, Zeerust (former Western Transvaal), Thembuland, Sekhukhuniland, and gaMatlala (northwest of Polokwane), which 'were primarily a fight against the intrusion of a hostile government into rural African life', but must obviously be seen as part of the broader struggle against apartheid.³⁵

At the start of the 1960s, the NEUM was comprised of the Cape-based Anti-Coloured Affairs Department (Anti-CAD), the mainly African-supported All Africa Convention (AAC) which drew its support from the Eastern Cape, and the Anti-Segregation Council (ASC) in Natal which was led by Dr Limbada and Karrim Essack. These affiliates were divided over strategy and doctrine, but coexisted until the late 1950s when they split, and each faction claimed to represent the NEUM. Apdusa was formed by some members of the former AAC, ASC and Anti-CAD NEUM umbrella in January 1961. At Apdusa's first national conference in April 1962, I.B. Tabata was elected president. Natal representation came with the election of Enver Hassim as publications officer. The name 'NEUM' was changed to the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) in 1964, because 'Non-European' had become outdated.³⁶

Apdusa's outlook is perhaps best described in I.B. Tabata's 'Presidential Address', which the Apdusa website refers to as 'Africa's Contribution to World Civilisation'. Tabata does not use the term 'urban proletariat', but rather makes reference to 'oppressed workers' or 'toiling masses' to refer to those in the primary industries on which the South African economy depended, including migrant workers and the landless peasantry. Apdusa's constitution states that the 'democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants

shall be paramount in the orientation of Apdusa in both its short-term and long-term objectives.’ Tabata claims credit that this clause was included for the first time in any constitution of a body which was affiliated to the Unity Movement.

According to Kayser and Adhikari, Apdusa did not ‘regard itself as a socialist party with a socialist agenda ... [but] a movement for national liberation with a socialist leadership.’ Tabata felt that mass support would not be achieved through a socialist agenda, but once mass mobilisation had been achieved, the radical demands of the working classes would lead to socialist outcomes.³⁷ The idea that the struggle for democratic rights would grow into a socialist struggle after liberation was a kind of teleology that ran through most of the liberation movements.

Kader Hassim, for one, disputes this interpretation. While he agrees that the majority of Apdusa members may not have been socialist, he argues that those ‘who were socialist were able to influence the outlook and direction the organisation took by their commitment to organisational work and actual work done.’ Important influences in the leadership came from members of the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA). The WPSA recognised national oppression and landlessness as the dominant contradictions in South African society, and it was around these contradictions that they wanted to mobilise the masses. The basic contradiction of capital versus labour, the WPSA argued, was obscured by colour oppression. This analysis probably influenced Apdusa’s commitment to national liberation and liberal democracy as the springboard to socialism. The Ten Point Programme, Kader Hassim insists, was a ‘MINIMUM programme.’ Conceptually, this left the door open to ‘take the struggle to a socialist revolution should the alignment of forces at a future stage be favourable. There was no determinist thinking about the struggle for the socialist state.’ It was anticipated that there would be new battles between those who wanted to stop at the Ten Point Programme, and those who wanted to go further.

Rural revolts, the march of 30 000 in Langa, a march of 10 000 through the streets of Durban, Sharpeville and other uprisings countrywide, convinced the

Tabata leadership that the oppressed population of South Africa had reached a new plateau in its consciousness and understanding of what was required of them politically. As far as they were concerned, Kader points out, ‘the time was ripe for the launching of a unitary political organisation to which people could join directly.’ Tabata, Jane Gool and Honono left the country illegally sometime after the first Apdusa Conference in April 1962, to get acceptance by the Liberation Committee (so as to be eligible for aid), set up offices to publicise the Unity Movement, and prepare for training facilities for recruits. They visited Tanzania, Kenya, Nyasaland, Southern Rhodesia, England, Yugoslavia and Algeria, but were refused permission to visit the Soviet Union. When Tabata returned in December 1962 Apdusa members met him near Paarl in the Cape and he reported that Algeria had promised military training. The executive agreed to launch an armed struggle, and Tabata, Jane Gool, and Nathaniel Honono left for Dar-es-Salaam in June 1963 to establish training facilities for cadres.³⁸



*Phyllis Jordan, Wilhelm van Schoor, Saul Jayiya, Goolam Gool,
Dan Neethling and Jane Gool*

© Kader Hassim

In Natal, the Unity Movement was prominent in Dundee, Pietermaritzburg and Durban by the early 1960s. Shaik Hassan, a leather worker and member of the Maritzburg Progressive Study Circle, played an important role in recruiting a militant stratum of leather workers into the organisation. Many were young and had been politicised through the Society of Young Africa (SOYA). Karrim Essack was involved in the Durban branch of Apdusa and on the national executive, and Dr Zulei Christopher was chairperson in Durban.³⁹ Essack was involved in Mpondoland during the 1960s. He recruited the likes of Benjamin Madikwa and Samson Mabude. Posselt Gcabashe, a former school principal from Northern Natal, was recruited by Dr Limbada, and these recruits worked among peasants in Bizana, Lusikisiki and Flagstaff, where branches were launched. Cadres were recruited from here as well as Mount Ayliff, Umzimkulu, Libode in the Transkei and Izingolweni on the South Coast of Natal.⁴⁰ Apdusa members argued that while the ANC focused on sporadic acts of sabotage, they hoped to train an 'army'. However, the state nipped these aspirations in its infancy by banning and detaining the leadership of the organisation.

During November and December 1964, Posselt Gcabashe was banned. Karrim Essack and Enver Hassim were first detained under the Ninety Day law, and then banned. Dr Limbada was banned for five years in February 1965. Arrests were also carried out in Mpondoland, and Enver Hassim and Zulei Christopher were detained. Christopher was subsequently banned. A number of others were served with banning orders – Sunny Venkatrathnam, Clive Vawda, Yusuf Jacobs and Jeevan Desai. In Pietermaritzburg, Shaik Hassan was first banned and later imprisoned, Kader Hassim was placed under house arrest and banned, and Nina Hassim and Tim Pillay were served with 'warnings', the prelude to banning orders. This effectively muted the Unity Movement for the next few years.⁴¹ A large section of the active leadership of the Unity Movement would flee the country in 1964.

As the story of the Unity Movement shows, activists both inside and outside the Congress Alliance were attracted to the idea of armed resistance. Inside of the ANC more and more cadres who once espoused non-violent resistance

came over to the side of armed struggle. As Rusty Bernstein put it, non-violence 'had always been a hard course to steer in a violent country. Now the tide was turning against it. Yesterday's non-violent activists were becoming today's trainees in sabotage and armed struggle. Yesterday's non-violent ANC had spawned today's armed struggle.'⁴²

The supreme irony is that it was in the midst of these debates news was received that the most public face of the Congress Alliance and Monty's great friend and ally was to be awarded the 'Prize of Peace'.



Explosions of peace

Ours is not a marriage of convenience but a political alliance based on a common record for true democracy, and is resulting in a growing spirit of friendship ... Except for a few insignificant voices of dissenting response to the invitation "Away with the Indian", all shades of responsible African public opinion have replied that inasmuch as Africans were never responsible for the coming of the Indians to South Africa, so they shall never be a party of efforts to repatriate them.¹

LUTHULI (1953)

Two months after the formation of MK Chief Albert Luthuli, the leader of the ANC, was formally informed on 23 October 1961 that he had been awarded the 1960 Nobel Prize for Peace. Some would argue that there was irony in Luthuli's award given the debate raging within the ANC about violence and non-violence. Ezekiel Mphahlele would observe the paradox that Luthuli found himself 'invested with a prize for a religious-political creed his organisation now found irrelevant.'²² However, a non-violent strand still ran strongly through Congress lines, and Luthuli's popularity was incredibly strong and went way beyond the ANC.

The awarding of the Nobel prize occasioned a spontaneous outpouring of joy and celebration. It came at a time when black people had been under the cosh of apartheid for well over a decade and the anti-apartheid forces, after the heady days of the mid-1950s, were reeling from waves of repression.

For Monty, it was an important moment both politically and personally. His speeches attest to his great faith in the leadership of Luthuli, with whom Monty developed a close bond, and who he admired greatly. The first sight that would greet visitors to Monty's home in Percy Osborne Road was a large portrait of

Luthuli in the lounge. Monty's presidential address to the NIC in 1958 signalled the importance of Luthuli's leadership, when he observed that the ANC 'has completely rejected narrow tribalism and is today under the leadership of one of South Africa's greatest democrats, Chief Albert J. Luthuli.'³

Luthuli was born in 1898 in present-day Zimbabwe, where his father John was an evangelist at the Seventh Day Adventist Mission near Bulawayo. His mother, Mtonya Gumede, was from the Zulu Royal House of Cetshwayo. After his father's death, Luthuli returned to Natal to live with his uncle Martin, who was the chief of the *Abasemakhohweni* (converts). Luthuli completed his schooling at Adams Mission, and took up a teaching position at the school. He would write in 1960 that his days at the mission were ones of optimism, and that he did not expect racism to intensify to the point where 'young Africans know from infancy upwards ... their striving after civilised values will not, in the present order, ever earn for them recognition as sane and responsible civilised beings.' He left Adams when he was elected chief of the Umvoti Mission Reserve in 1936, the year in which the Hertzog Bills took away the franchise from the few Africans who still had it.

Luthuli joined the ANC in 1945, and was elected to the Natives Representative Council in 1946. He was co-opted to the Executive Committee of the ANC in Natal a year later, and in 1951 replaced A.W.G. Champion as President of the ANC in Natal. After the Defiance Campaign was launched in August 1952 in Natal, Luthuli was summoned to Pretoria where the government warned him to abandon the campaign. On 14 November 1952, Luthuli issued his famous 'The Road to Freedom is via the Cross' statement, in which he said that a 'chief is the voice of his people ... and not a local agent of the government ... Any chief worthy of his position must fight fearlessly against debasing conditions and laws.'⁴ In a sermon delivered at Adams College on 9 November 1952 he said: 'What the future holds in store for me I do not know ... The wisdom or foolishness of this decision I place in the hands of the Almighty.'⁵ He was deposed as Chief a few days later and responded:

Who will deny that thirty years of my life have been spent knocking in vain,

patiently, moderately and modestly at a closed and barred door? Has there been any reciprocal tolerance of moderation from the Government? No! ... It is with this background ... that I have joined my people in the new spirit that revolts openly and boldly against injustice and expresses itself in a determined and non-violent manner.⁶

In December 1952, Luthuli replaced Dr James Moroka as President of the ANC.

Monty praised Luthuli for his approach to the chieftainship. At the opening of the NIC conference on 21 February 1953, he said that Luthuli had been dismissed 'because of his courageous stand in the political life of this country, where courage is so often absent.' Together with respect came calls for unity. Monty invited Luthuli to open NIC conferences in 1952 and 1953, describing his presence at the 1953 conference as ...

... an indication of the desire of the African and Indian peoples to work in close cooperation...Unity of the oppressed people is not something reserved for academic discussion; it is ... created in the process of united action in struggles against the injustices perpetrated under the policy of segregation and apartheid.⁷

Luthuli also opened the SAIC conference in Durban on 9 July 1954 and two years later on 12 October 1956. Monty, in turn, delivered the opening address at the ANC's congress in Durban on 16 December 1954, but his banning meant that he could not be present. He sent a message regretting missing the historic occasion as he 'would have liked to have sung with you the songs of freedom, led by Chief Luthuli, and to hear his voice which has moved so many in so short a time.'

As Luthuli's popularity grew, and the ANC gained in strength and showed greater forms of national coordination, so did the state's attention turn to him, not to hear his moderate voice, but to silence it. In 1954, Luthuli was banned and restricted to Stanger for two years. He was a Treason Trialist and reflected on the irony that the government helped to bring leaders together from all

over the country: 'Here we all were, met together and with time on our hands. What distance, lack of funds and police interference had made difficult, frequent meetings, the government now insisted on.' Unable to make charges stick, in 1959 the state confined him to his rural home in Groutville.⁸ He was formally out of prison, but lived the life of a prisoner.

Luthuli was not only a political ally of the leading lights in the NIC, but enjoyed a social relationship with the likes of Fatima and I.C. Meer, Monty, J.N. Singh and other activists who often visited him in Groutville. According to Fatima Meer:

He was a very special individual, a tremendous orator and he had an inner strength. We used to have meetings of the Congresses in the house and I noticed one thing. The COD was already in existence and some of its members wanted to dominate and Luthuli knew how to tone down their domination in a most remarkable manner without hurting anybody's feelings. The other thing is that he was a tremendous singer and singing was a very important part of all ANC meetings. I didn't find anybody else as charismatic as Luthuli. He was a highly moral person, very Christian in his approach, but very outgoing and very sharing, a magnetic personality.

Once the government granted Luthuli a visa to go to Oslo, Monty helped to organise a farewell worthy of the moment. A mass meeting to honour Luthuli was held at Curries Fountain on 9 November 1961. The ground was packed to capacity as 15 000 Indians and Africans sat through a heavy downpour to celebrate the moment. According to *New Age*, 'scenes reminiscent of the great meetings held in Durban during the Defiance Campaign were re-enacted. Monty led Mrs Nokukhanya Luthuli to the platform, which contained a huge six-by-four foot portrait of Chief Luthuli, amidst tremendous applause.' NIC vice-president Dr Nad Padayachee opened the meeting by announcing that Luthuli had been refused permission to attend. A cable from Nehru followed: 'I send my congratulations and good wishes to Mr Luthuli on award of the Nobel Prize to him.' N.T. Naicker passed on a message from Luthuli in which

‘he appreciated the good wishes that have come from so many people.’

Other speakers included Steven Dlamini of Sactu; Florence Mkhize of the Women’s Federation; Vera Ponnen of COD; C.K. Hill of the Liberal Party; and M.B. Yengwa. Then it was Monty’s time:⁹

The calm and dignified manner in which our chief reacted to the campaign reviling and belittling him with virulent and vicious words demonstrated to the democrats of the country and the world why our Chief – a devout Christian not caring about glory and whose character is not sullied by envy or arrogance – deserves the award. The SABC began this campaign of vilification by quoting at length from the records of the Treason Trial to prove how misguided and wrong has been the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to our Chief. The Treason Trial lasted five years. At this trial all the resources of the State were mobilised. Experts from overseas and SB members were brought as Crown witnesses to prove a convenient conspiracy of violence. The Court, after five years in session, proved the opposite. Allow me to quote part of the evidence of a Crown witness – a Head constable in the SB (Security Branch). This is what he had to say: ‘I am personally acquainted with Chief Luthuli. He is a sincere and religious man and advocated non-violence.’ Chief Luthuli, he said, was one of the most respected men in South Africa among the Congress members, both Indian and African. It is not accident or emotion that so many of us hold him so dear; it is not hero worship that so many of us admire him; it is not some kind of witchcraft that leads us to follow him. The Nationalists more than our Chief are experts at witchcraft as recently they have converted ‘Asiatic Japanese’ to ‘Europeans’. The reason why so many respect and follow Our Chief is because of his humility, his dignity, his service to better race relations through peaceful methods and his service to Mankind. The whole world, East and West, acclaim him with this award. Only the White Nationalists are against this signal honour to our country ... This is certainly a case of megalomania as dangerous as rabies.

In spite of their being no answering response by the Nationalists and the bulk of the whites to his policy of moderation and peacefulness; in spite of loud thinking from the angry young blood in the Congress Alliance for other forms of struggle,

Our Chief stood firmly on the question of non-violence. In spite of racialism of the white voters who solidly voted the Nationalists into power with greater majority, Our Chief stood solidly to the basic policy of the Freedom Charter that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.' Where every avenue of peaceful negotiation is closed; where every democratic leader is banned and banished; when the foremost organisation of the African people – the ANC – is banned, Our Chief was firm for a peaceful solution to the problem of South Africa and called for a National Convention of all races.

When the ex-Minister of Defence, Erasmus, said, 'We are willing to shoot down the black masses,' Our Chief sat at his home in Groutville armed with a ballpoint pen appealing the hope of arousing the Christian conscience of the white people so that they might help him in the calling of a National Convention to find a peaceful solution rather than a shooting solution. When the Nationalists were busy arming the white civilian population and encouraging the formation of Pistol Packing [groups] all over the country, Our Chief with a prayer book in one hand and the same ballpoint pen in the other was desperately trying to send some democracy into the granite hand of the Trigger Happy rulers and their gun-toting followers.

This is the man to whom is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The people responsible for the awarding of the prize just don't award it to any Tom, Dick or Harry without proper investigation and consideration ... The Nationalists think Eric Louw should have won the Peace award for winning so many friends at the UN; De Klerk for his job reservation and the misery in its wake; Maree for his 'don't shake the hands of a black man', and the Minister of Bantu Administration for wanting to exterminate those who want real freedom.

The whole of South Africa including the Nationalists should be proud for the great award coming to South Africa for the first time.

On 5 December 1961, the day of Luthuli's departure, lunch was served at the Himalaya Hotel in Grey Street. Guests included Monty and Alan Paton. The 'screaming, jostling, good-natured crowd which jam-packed the entrance to the hotel and overflowed into busy Grey Street during the peak lunch-

hour held up traffic for over an hour.’ The 4,000 strong crowd thronged Grey Street singing *Somlandela, Luthuli!* (‘We will follow, Luthuli!’).¹⁰ Luthuli’s wife, Nokukhanya, remembered that when they left the hotel, ‘people picked him up onto their shoulders. They wanted to carry him all the way to the airport ...’¹¹ A cavalcade consisting of a hundred cars accompanied Luthuli to Louis Botha airport. He was driven in Habib Rajab’s silver-grey Cadillac; incidentally, the very car that took MacMillan around Durban during his 1960 visit. With Luthuli were Nokukhanya, daughter Hilda, and Monty. Alan Paton wrote that at the airport:



The leader of the African National Congress (ANC), Albert Luthuli (L), leaves the Dorchester Hotel in London on the 8th December 1961 with his wife as he heads to the airport to catch a plane to Oslo, where he is to receive the 1960 Nobel Peace Prize.

© Gallo Images/AFP

... the crowd surged into the main concourse, and when the flight was announced, it threatened to surge onto the tarmac. The authorities were afraid of this and wanted to control the crowd. Who did they get to control it? Why Luthuli, of course. He stood on a chair and told them that no one was to go

onto the tarmac. And no one did.¹²

Paton's 'Praise Song for Luthuli' was read out before his departure for Oslo:

You there, Luthuli. They thought your world was small.
They thought you lived in Groutville. Now they discover it's the world you live in.
You there, Luthuli, they thought your name was small
Now they discover your name is everywhere
You there, Luthuli, they thought that you were chained like a backyard dog
Now they discover they are in prison, but you are free
You there, Luthuli, they took your name of Chief
Now they discover you are more Chief than ever
Go well, Luthuli, may your days be long. Your country cannot spare you
Win for us also, Luthuli, the prize of Peace.¹³

The farewell was significant. The apartheid state was bent on crushing resistance, had locked up thousands in wave after wave of countrywide sweeps, and yet the leader of the movement was off to receive a prestigious accolade for peace. In his acceptance speech on 10 December 1961, Luthuli received the award 'for the whole continent of Africa':

Quite long ago my forefathers extended a hand of friendship to people of Europe when they came to that continent. What has happened to the extension of that hand only history can say, and it is not time to speak about that here, but I would like to say, as I receive this prize of peace, that the hand of Africa was extended. It was a hand of friendship.

In his Nobel lecture, 'Africa and Freedom', at the University of Oslo on 11 December, Luthuli said:

It would have been natural for the feelings of resentment at white domination to have been turned into feelings of hatred and a desire for revenge against the white community. Here, where every day, in every aspect of life, every non-white comes up against the ubiquitous sign "Europeans Only" and the equally ubiquitous policeman to enforce it – here it could well be expected that a racialism equal to

that of their oppressors would flourish to counter the white arrogance toward blacks.

That this did not happen was due to the leadership of the ANC which:

... had set itself steadfastly against racial vaingloriousness ... In so doing we passed up opportunities for an easy demagogic appeal to the natural passions of a people denied freedom and liberty; we discarded the chance of an easy and expedient emotional appeal. Our vision has always been that of a non-racial, democratic South Africa which upholds the rights of all who live in our country to remain there as full citizens, with equal rights and responsibilities with all others.¹⁴

Three days later, South Africa's Foreign Minister Eric Louw condemned Luthuli's acceptance speech as 'propaganda and incitement.' Prime Minister Verwoerd commented on 'the spirit of enmity toward a country which has not in any way harmed Norway.'¹⁵ But the people of South Africa spoke back to the Nats, as they gathered in large numbers to welcome Luthuli home on 15 December. Luthuli used part of his prize money to buy two farms in Swaziland for ANC refugees.

More accolades followed after Oslo. Monty was central to some of these. In 1962, Luthuli was made the Rector of Glasgow University. In October 1962, Monty wrote to Stirling Moss in London to thank him for his role in the appointment, as Luthuli was under house arrest. A law student named Donald Dewar, president of Glasgow University Union, his Labour Club friend John Smith, a future leader of the Labour Party, and the university's leading Liberal Party member, Menzies Campbell, fought to get Luthuli elected as rector, a post traditionally reserved for prime ministers like Lord Gladstone, Herbert Asquith and Andrew Bonar Law. Candidates included the Earl of Roseberry, Ted Heath, who was to become Tory Prime Minister, and Stirling Moss, world-renowned racing driver. In response to lobbying from Monty, Moss pulled out and supported Luthuli, who got 1291 votes to Heath's 733.

Luthuli's appointment made headlines around the world, but he could not

attend the inauguration because his passport had been confiscated by the apartheid regime. Moss thanked Monty on 23 October 1962 for his 'kind telegram. It is very nice of you to show me your thanks regarding the Glasgow University Rectorship. May I take this opportunity of wishing yourself and Chief Luthuli a very successful campaign.'

While Monty and Luthuli were talking peace and celebrating the Nobel Peace Prize, important developments were taking place outside the public gaze. Walter Sisulu visited Durban around the end of September 1961 to create an effective Umkhonto network. Mandela himself visited in October. Umkhonto was largely a creation of the ANC and CP, and Joe Slovo of the CP's Central Committee was recruited to serve as Mandela's Chief of Staff. Other CP members on the Umkhonto High Command included Walter Sisulu and Raymond Mhlaba, while M.P. Naicker and Jack Hodgson were recruited to regional commands. Tom Lodge suggests that Umkhonto members were recruited 'disproportionately' from the CP, because 'Party members were better prepared for clandestine work and they tended to be more disciplined than ANC rank and file.'¹⁶

Walter Sisulu met with M.D. Naidoo, M.P. Naicker, Ronnie Kasrils, Billy Nair, Curnick Ndlovu, Bruno Mtolo, Solomon Mbanjwa, and Eric Mtshali in Clermont. Subsequent to this Ronnie, Billy, Curnick, Bruno, Solomon, and Eric Mtshali were appointed Regional Commanders ('controlling body'). Ronnie was liaison officer ('contact') of the Natal Regional Command, serving as a link between the Regional Command, Technical Committee, and cells. He channelled orders from higher to lower ranks and generally held the operation together regionally, as well as serving as the linkman to National Headquarters. By the end of November 1961, regional commands had been set up in Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.

One of the key figures in creating the first network of Umkhonto fighters was M.P. Naicker. As editor of *New Age* and in the inner circle of the CP, he was in an ideal position to facilitate people into networks dedicated to armed struggle. It was a parting of the ways for the two cousins, Monty and M.P. They had

different upbringings, but had shared the same trenches in major battles over almost two decades. Their objective remained the same, defeat of the apartheid regime, but their methods now differed. M.P. recruited key cadres like Ronnie Kasrils, Eric Mtshali and Curnick Ndlovu. Kasrils was recruited in July 1961, and would recall that M.P. ‘took me for a walk along the beachfront. He confided that ... we were forced to answer the regime’s violence with revolutionary violence. “I’ve been asked to approach you,” he said, above the roar of the surf smashing against the rocks.’¹⁷ Curnick Ndlovu also said that M.P. ‘recruited me and...other people.’ Eric Mtshali met M.P. and Steven Dlamini, secretary of the Textile Workers Union, at the offices of *New Age*, where they explained the turn to armed struggle and invited him to join.¹⁸

Ronnie Kasrils was born in Johannesburg in 1938 and moved to Durban in April 1960, where he lived with Jacqueline, his mother’s first cousin, and her husband Rowley Arenstein. Vera Ponnen, Jackie’s friend, recruited him to the then outlawed CP and he joined an underground cell with Rowley and Vera.¹⁹ The bearded and bespectacled Curnick Ndlovu was Secretary of the Railway Workers Union. Solomon Mbanjwa joined the ANC in 1950, was on the ANCYL Provincial Executive and a fulltime organiser of Sactu, and secretary of the Match Workers’ Union. Eric Mtshali was secretary of a Sactu branch in Pinetown and secretary of the ANC, Somtseu Road branch. Billy was a magnet that drew many recruits because of his influence in both the unions and Congress. Kasrils remarked that Billy’s presence ‘on the command added to my confidence.’²⁰ Key spaces for recruiting were Sactu, the CP, ANC and NIYC. Billy spent considerable time at the Textile Workers Union hall in Dayal Road, Clairwood, where the likes of Kisten ‘Zulu’ Moonsamy, ‘Dip’ Doorsamy, and Curnick Ndlovu were recruited.

The Regional Committee worked closely with the Technical Committee, which came to include the likes of Ronnie Kasrils, Bruno Mtolo, Nattoo Babenia, Ebrahim Ebrahim, Billy Nair, Ganesan “Coetsee” Naicker, and Siva Pillay. They provided training in making and using explosives and other materials for sabotage. Bruno Mtolo was included because of his bomb-making skills. He

was born in Richmond in 1927, and worked on the mines in Johannesburg, where he spent four years in jail for attempted robbery in 1948. He returned to Durban and worked as a handyman at McCord's Hospital. Joining the political economy classes run by Sactu, he proved to be an excellent student and this, together with his skill in explosives, made him an attractive recruit. Billy and Curnick were enthusiastic supporters of Bruno,²¹ but would pay a huge price for their confidence in him.

Below the Technical Committee were cells (the rank and file) that usually comprised four members.²² There were cells for example in Hammarsdale (under Solomon Mbanjwa), Durban (Ebie), Clairwood South ("Zulu" Moonsamy), and Pietermaritzburg (Harry Gwala). Mbanjwa was also a platoon leader, meaning that a number of cells reported to him. Cells were racially segregated to avoid suspicion and logistical problems related to pass laws and curfews.²³ The threat of infiltration was great, and cadres were sworn to secrecy to ensure that cell members only knew members of their cell. Cell members did not know the identity of their superiors or members of other cells. But divisions were not always water-tight, as some individuals overlapped in their functions. Nattoo Babenia told the court after his arrest that recruits had to be 'politically mature' and understood that 'it is not worthwhile talking loose ... because always the Special Branch is there to take down what you say.'²⁴ Secrecy was so highly valued that even someone like Kay, who worked closely with Billy in Sactu and the NIC, was not aware of his involvement in sabotage. The Durban Central cell met at the home of Nattoo Babenia in North Street; a flat rented by George Naicker in Fountain Lane; a house rented in Kloof by Ronnie Kasrils, and the offices of *New Age*.

While an impressive network was created in a very short time, they were operating under dangerous conditions, as the police built up an efficient system of informers. *New Age* warned with some hyperbole on 29 March 1962, that 'beautiful women were being hired by the police to inform on the leaders of the people.'²⁵ While Billy and Ebie emphasised that great care was taken in recruitment, most cadres broke down shortly after their arrest and informed

on former colleagues. Funding was another problem. They lacked money for procuring explosives and vehicles, and had to be resourceful, as the story of accessing dynamite, which follows below, shows. It is noteworthy, too, that most of the recruits held jobs and were involved in MK operations part-time. Joining the underground was a massive risk, and yet many did. It was the overwhelming feeling that all other avenues had been exhausted that drove them to Umkhonto. They felt, in “Zulu” Moonsamy’s words, ‘we had to back our words with actions and make our threats count.’

A man would come to the backyard and whisper:

30 ignitors

And John Matthews would make 30,

To be delivered to X.

And a man would come in the dead of night

These need storing comrade, some things

Wrapped in waterproof cloth.

TERRORISTS BOMB POWERLINES

He would read in the bourgeois press, or

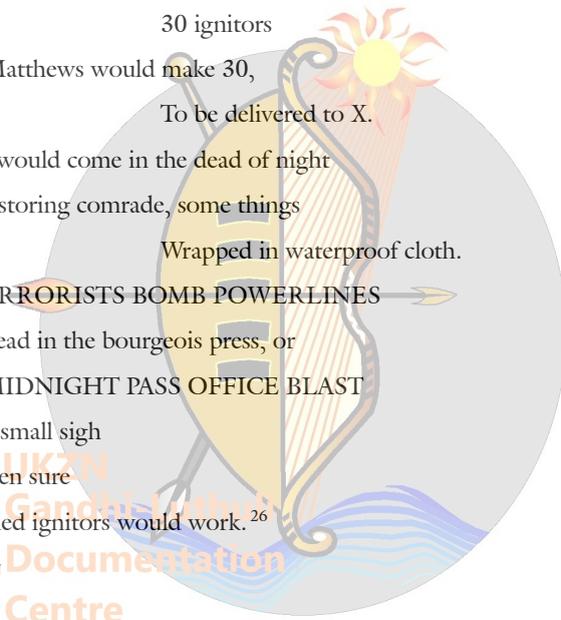
MIDNIGHT PASS OFFICE BLAST

He’d sigh a small sigh

– Hadn’t been sure

These damned ignitors would work.²⁶

JEREMY CRONIN



The Regional Command drew on the skills of Jack Hodgson of the COD and Harold Strachan, who had fought in World War Two. Hodgson, who was a treason trialist, gave Billy and Ebie their first training lesson. According to Ebie, Billy:

... told me that our visitor had fought the Germans in North Africa and his nickname was Desert Rat. We drove to a small sugar cane farm outside Durban, and gathered in an outhouse. Billy ushered in a man in an open-necked shirt and sports jacket. Although a code name was used, I recognised our visitor from a

Treason Trial photograph.²⁷

Hodgson taught them the rudiments of manufacturing explosives. He placed a chemical mixture in a condom, and acid was put in an Eyegene bottle and placed in the condom. When the acid ate through the bottle, after approximately 50 minutes, and came into contact with the powder, an explosion was produced. Like students at a science class, they watched eagerly.²⁸ Phyllis Naidoo attended a training session with Harold Strachan ‘in one of the houses up here [Glenwood] ... and we had to all go through the back door. When he said, “Okay, now, when I count to three you’ll all get on your stomachs,” we did that ... I had my lit cigarette and he was angry and says, “stop, for fuck sake, stop!”’ Notwithstanding the courage, the turn to sabotage was marked by some naivety and bungling too!

Ronnie and his future wife Eleanor Anderson borrowed books from municipal libraries to read up on bomb-making and would experiment to see if it worked. For example, after reading how to make a petrol bomb, Billy, Ronnie, and Bruno went early one Sunday morning to Tongaat, and stood close to the surf so that the waves would muffle the sound. They expected a large explosion but, as Billy pointed out, ‘after lighting the fuse nothing happened, it just fizzled... We went through experimenting over and over again until we got the quantities right. A small difference in the quantity and it would fail.’ They passed on their discoveries to various cells which trained independently. As D.V. Perumal testified, through trial and error they eventually became adept at making petrol bombs, dry bombs and Molotov cocktails.

Coetsee, Naicker and Bruno also built a gadget to cut telephone wires by attaching a sickle to a broomstick. Coetsee gave it to Ebie who, in turn, handed it to Steven Seshemane to cut the telephone cables in Walter Gilbert Road. Trusting the judgement of the Technical Committee, Seshemane tried to cut the thick cables with what was essentially a grass cutter, and failed hopelessly as the sickle detached from the handle and remained on top of the cable. Seshemane tried using a chopper instead, but that too failed.²⁹

These were the first inauspicious days of MK. Some of it may seem laughable,

but these were essentially dedicated amateurs trying to defeat a vicious regime without adequate resources and with limited knowledge. The rudimentary tools and clumsiness of the actions should not hide the fact that these were the very first of the urban guerillas, prepared to take on the might of the state, knowing that they could face imminent death. Neither were they simple adventurers – many had cut their teeth in the campaigns of the 1950s, had read voraciously, and spent time in apartheid prisons.

Emmanuel Isaacs was secretary of the Textile Workers Unions and a friend of Billy Nair. At midnight, 13 April 1962, he received a call in Merebank from Billy who told him that his car had broken down and that he needed help to tow it. Isaacs moaned that it was late and that his wife was alone at home, but Billy's desperate plea and charm worked. Isaacs met Billy in Musgrave in his Vauxhall Victor 1958. When they turned into St Thomas road, Billy told him to pull over. Ronnie and Bruno were waiting next to a black Austin. They got in and told Isaacs that the car was at 45th Cutting. When they got to 45th Cutting, there was no broken-down car to be seen. An anxious Isaacs was told that they had to pick up leaflets from Pinetown instead.

Isaacs waited while Billy, Ronnie and Bruno went to collect the leaflets. They returned 20 minutes later with a number of cartons, each about a foot high and a foot wide. Despite his protests, they put some of them in the boot of the car and held the remainder on their laps. Isaacs was told that the "pamphlets" had to be dropped off at George Naicker's house in Malvern. Isaacs did not have reason to disbelieve Billy since he had been helping distribute Sactu and Congress pamphlets for many years. They got to Malvern around 2:00 am and began to unpack the boxes. Isaacs noticed the word 'explosives' on the box and got into an argument with Billy, who told him that he was tired of his complaining: 'Why are you so fussy? They are only leaflets. Don't get excited. They are not dangerous.' Isaacs dropped Billy, Ronnie, and Bruno off in Musgrave and went home.

Billy recalls that on Monday 16 April 1962, Isaacs looked at placards of the *Natal Mercury* which read 'Dynamite Stolen in Pinetown.' Isaacs would later

relate that his eyes were so fixed on the lamp post that he nearly crashed into it. After reading about the incident, he rushed over to Billy's office, and Billy admitted that it was dynamite after all that had been transported. Isaacs later told the court that he kept this to himself as 'Billy was a friend of mine and if I had to report such an incident, I would be squealing on my friends. That's how it was.' The dynamite had been stolen from a road building operation in Pinetown. Petrol bombs were not effective enough, and they wanted something 'bigger for the bigger operations.' In Johannesburg, MK operatives stole dynamite from mines. It was more difficult to find explosives in Natal and Ronnie and Eleanor drove around 'hunting' for explosives until they came across the road works and devised a plan to break into the storeroom.

M.V. Naicker, brother of George, was at the family home in Malvern when Billy arrived with 'goods' for George. He saw Billy, Ronnie and Bruno carry six cartons into the garage and that the cartons had the word 'EXPLOSIVES' on one side and 'ONTPLOFBAAR' on the other. Billy assured him that George was aware of the contents, which were not dangerous and that they would pick up the cartons the following day. Instead, Billy arrived with a brand new fan and switched it on in the garage. M.V. Naicker became suspicious, but could not say anything as his brother was involved. His worst fears were confirmed when he read about the theft of dynamite in the newspapers. The fan was bought on the instruction of M.P. Naicker who advised them that the garage had to be kept cool to prevent the dynamite from exploding. The cartons were removed on 21 April 1962 in George's van.

George hid the cache at a relative's home in Reservoir Hills. Unfortunately, she was in the habit of burning scrap every fortnight and on 5 September 1963, while burning the scrap in the yard, there was a loud explosion. She was standing close by and 'something hit me in the lower side of the leg. The blood just started shooting.' In addition, her two-year-old son was hurt on the elbow and her daughter was cut on the right cheek by shrapnel and had to be treated at McCord's. The police found 15 detonators which the children were playing with. George had wrapped the dynamite in brown paper and placed it on a

fir tree about five feet above the ground. When this was produced in court as evidence, there was some consternation from Justice Milne, who said, 'Do you mean it might go off? We don't want to be blown up. Can't someone handle it in such a way that it won't explode?' Nattoo Babenia was more careful despite the rudimentary tools at his disposal. He hid part of the cache on 'a ridge on the Bluff in two tins.' He dug a hole about 30 inches deep with 'a ladle from my place ... a big white enamel spoon.'

While preparations were being made for the armed struggle, Monty, oblivious to many of these developments, was busy putting in a bewildering number of public appearances and calling on people to heighten mass non-violent resistance.

As 1961 blurred into 1962, he had a message for South Africans: the apartheid state was on the defensive. It had escaped 'by a hair's breadth' the imposition of sanctions by the UN, where it faced the 'bitter wrath of the world;' South Africa was forced to withdraw from the Commonwealth because of 'the torrent of justified reprimand of the Commonwealth powers;' Chief Luthuli was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and the white South African Soccer Association was suspended from membership of the International Football Federation. These victories he argued 'must strengthen our resolve to galvanise our struggle against racial discrimination and launch further attacks against apartheid in all spheres ... We must demand of the so-called defenders of Western civilisation and Christian brotherhood a sharing in the economic riches of this country.' Monty called for a National Convention where 'we can express our thoughts and desires with clarity and without fear.'³⁰

On 14 January 1962, Monty addressed a meeting of the Liberal Party in Stanger, where he said that 'the ruling class must realise that denial of freedom is the cause of violence.' This was after the first Umhonto explosions and he was signalling to the government that its policies were to blame. On 21 January, addressing a meeting in Clermont, he called for the immediate lifting of the ban on Luthuli and the ANC, 'to enable it to carry out its function for the liberation of the people.' On 8 February, accompanied by a 'named communist',

A. Maharchand, he spoke under the banner of Sactu at Consolidated Textiles in Jacobs, where he called on 'every Indian, coloured and African to join the trade union movement and unions must in turn link up with Sactu. Only if you have a strong trade union organisation will you get freedom.'

Addressing a meeting of the NIC at the Andhra Hall on 1 March 1962, Monty called on Indians to reject government-created bodies and fight for common citizenship. Addressing the Cato Manor and District Rate Payers Association on 6 May on the Group Areas Act, he was adamant that 'we will fight to the bitter end for Cato Manor. It will only be taken away over our dead bodies.' On 19 May, he led a protest through West Street against the General Law Amendment Bill, and on 23 May, together with A.K.M. Docrat and A. Maharchand, he addressed a meeting of the Progressive Party at the Durban City Hall. On 1 June 1962 Monty addressed another mass meeting against the impending General Law Amendment Act at Curries Fountain: 'The nationalists have destroyed freedom of speech and many other things. So this meeting is determined not to accept Vorster's Bill. We have no guns or Saracens but with our bare hands we can stop this. All freed countries in Africa are with us.' Addressing a meeting in Prince Edward Street on 26 June, where he was accompanied by A.K.M. Docrat, Monty accused the government of moving 'in the line of the Nazi Government. When the oppressed can stand for non-violence no further, when they cease to cry, then anger sets in, then the Saracens will go to the wind.' On 26 August, he addressed a NIC meeting at Allison Clothing Co., where he again attacked the curb on freedom.

Monty called for the unbanning of Helen Joseph when he addressed the Federation of South African Women on 19 October 1962. 'The only crime Helen Joseph has committed is to stand up for truth, freedom, and democracy. Mr Vorster, let me tell you there are 13 million Helen Josephs and Mandelas in this country. Even if you house arrest these 13 million you cannot stifle this spirit.' On 1 December, he addressed a Sactu meeting in Clairwood where he said that all that was expected from the Nationalists was 'oppression. You all know that the ultimate result of that is war. Even though Dr Verwoerd arms

himself with armoured cars, history has shown that it is the people who win.’

Much of recent history emphasises the exploits of armed struggle in the early 1960s. But as the diary of Monty’s attendance at meetings suggest, the Congress Alliance continued to try and organise in the open. These, though, were two impulses that sat uneasily alongside each other.

Exactly a decade before, the likes of Billy Nair and M.P. Naicker would have been inspired by the Defiance Campaign, and integral in planning its open non-violent disobedience. Now they were planning armed struggle as a result of the intransigence of the state. The turn to sabotage required secrecy and networks of disciplined support. Clearly, as the struggle for explosives reveals, support networks were completely underdeveloped. This added to the pressure and constant tension that the saboteurs experienced – they lived on the edge, expecting to be arrested at any moment.

Still, as the next chapter illustrates, they persisted, and boldly announced the presence of MK in the city. This first group of Umkhonto cadres targeted government facilities, with strict instruction to avoid casualties. Emerging from decades of principled non-violent protest that had seen a Congress leader achieve the highest world honour for Peace, it was understandable that the cadres who took up arms against the apartheid state, did so at first hesitantly, and without wanting any loss of life.

The attacks of 16 December 1961 were to have a dramatic impact on both the individuals involved and the struggle to defeat apartheid.

'... a dog who had to be taught a lesson'

'Were you involved, Mr [Billy] Nair?'

'Ya, ya. I went for the Indian Affairs Department.'

'Did you tell Monty about this or did you just keep it secret?'

'No, no, it was kept a secret. We told no-one, told no-one, not even the wives, children, beloved, no-one. It was a secret.'

'Who were you involved with?'

'Well, there were different groups. The maximum in a particular group was three or four. Then you had a leader. I was a group leader, you do a particular job. Immediately you dive into a car for exiting, off you go, back home, get into your pyjamas, you know, and pretend that you've been asleep because the police are going to come for you.'

'You must have been very nervous.'

'No, no, not at all. I used to absolutely cope with it. If you are nervous, forget it, forget it, don't do any of this, get yourself to the hospital and sort yourself out. No, it's a waste of time if you're nervous. You see, you have to have guts.'¹

'Bomb attacks open new phase in South Africa' screamed the newspaper headlines on 17 December 1961. There were ten successful explosions, five in Johannesburg and five in Port Elizabeth, and three partially successful attacks in Durban where the targets were symbolically chosen: the Indian, coloured, and Bantu Affairs Departments which were seen as the main props of apartheid. Posters across the country announced the birth of a new organisation: Umkhonto we Sizwe. The attacks took place on 16 December, a day filled with symbolism: it was the white Day of Covenant commemorating the Boer triumph over Black resistance at the Battle of Blood River in 1838 while the liberation movement marked it as "Heroes Day". It was thus 'an appropriate symbolism for MK's

dramatic entry into the fight against white supremacy.² There was another compelling reason for waiting until the 16th, according to Billy:

Chief Luthuli returned to South Africa on 15th December. We could not launch Umkhonto in his absence ... he had to return. So he landed in Durban at about 7 or 8 o'clock that evening from Johannesburg, and drove with a convoy to Groutville. At about 9:00 pm the next night we launched Umkhonto.³

The timing of the attacks must have created difficulties for Luthuli who, throughout his European tour, had preached the mantra of non-violent protest.

Ronnie Kasrils led the attack on the Bantu municipal office, Billy Nair on the Indian Affairs building, and Curnick Ndlovu the Coloured Affairs Department. Bruno Mtolo, who prepared the timing devices, had put too little chemical and the explosive charges failed to detonate to maximum effect.⁴ B.M.S. Chaitow, a chemist on the Berea and member of the COD, would tell the court that he taught Ronnie, Bruno, Billy, and 'one other Indian' to make bombs. That 'other Indian' was Subbiah Moodley, who was in standard eight when he met Billy at a Congress meeting. Billy told him that there was an organisation with 'a lot of science in it' and recruited him to MK. Subbiah, who was 17 and in matric, learnt from Chaitow to make bombs with aluminum powder, iron oxide, and detonators with Condy's crystals and permanganate of potash.

Subbiah was involved in the attack on the Bantu Administration Building in Ordinance Road with Bruno and Ronnie. They spent a few nights observing the movement of the blackjacks (guards). On the night of the 16th, they prepared the bomb and placed sandbags against it. 'And then I heard a thud, you know, explosion, I knew at last we've launched Umkhonto. I was full of excitement ... for I realised we were going to be pioneers.'⁵ They made their separate ways home. The significance of his actions had not fully dawned on Subbiah: 'I realised the seriousness of it [but] I mean it's hard for you to predict how one incident is going to affect your life.'⁶ When Subbiah reached home:

... making sure that nobody followed me, I lay in bed with my heart pounding,

thinking about every knock on the door...that would be a policeman coming to arrest me. I washed myself thoroughly, left no traces of iron oxide or aluminum powder, and I realised that after a week if we were not arrested we were safe. And we dared not talk about it ... it was an absolute secret.⁵

A month after the attacks, Mandela was mandated by the ANC to attend the African heads of state meeting in Addis Abba to request training facilities and weapons. He found that the ANC's non-racialism sat uneasily with the popular language of 'negritude' across the continent. African leaders wanted the ANC to take the lead in the Congress Alliance. Mandela conveyed this to Dadoo and Vella Pillay in London.⁶ When he returned to South Africa at the end of July 1962, he informed the ANC Working Committee of this, and went secretly to Natal to explain the sentiments personally to Luthuli and Monty. In Mandela's words, Monty and I.C. Meer were 'disturbed' that the alliance was being unravelled, while Luthuli expressed dissatisfaction that the ANC was being dictated to by foreign politicians and diluting its commitment to non-racialism.⁷ The turn to armed struggle meant that this debate receded into the background.

On 4 August 1962, Mandela had a 'welcome-home and going-away party' at the Asherville home of photojournalist G.R. Naidu. Monty, I.C. Meer, J.N. Singh and Masabalala Yengwa were among the guests, and several young Umkhonto cadres were also present. Mandela arrived in his dustcoat on the pretence of being the driver of Cecil Williams. What Mandela described as his 'first night of relaxation in a long while,'⁸ would be his last for a long time. On his way back to Johannesburg he was arrested. Three days after Mandela's arrest on 5 August 1962, he was charged with inciting workers to strike in March 1961 and leaving the country illegally, and sentenced to five years in prison on 25 October 1962.

There were 28 attacks in Durban in the 12-month period from 22 June 1962 to 21 June 1963, involving, amongst others, Ebie, Bruno, Steven Dlamini, Eric Mtshali, Billy, Ronnie, Sunny, George Naicker, Natoo, Riot Mkwanzu, David Perumal and Alfred Duma.⁹ Ebie's Durban cell included Natoo Babenia, D.V.

Perumal and Sunny Singh. During the Treason Trial, M.P. was away from the *New Age* office for long periods, and Ebie assisted after school. He became part of the inner circle and when recruited by Ronnie, had no hesitation in joining, seeing the turn to violence as the only way to secure freedom.¹⁰ In July 1962, Ronnie approached Natoo Babenia on the recommendation of M.D. Naidoo who knew him through his work at the Greyville branch of the NIC and was aware of his involvement in the liberation struggle in India. Natoo was also a member of the NIYC and spent considerable time at the offices of *New Age*. He shared offices with Curnick Ndlovu and sold the newspaper with Riot Mkwawazi.¹¹ Babenia joined Ebie's cell. Sunny Singh was recruited by Ebie in February 1962 'in a very subtle and clandestine manner. It was done like talent scouts looking for people suitable for that type of work,' according to Sunny.

They were joined by David Perumal, who lived in Darby Street and worked at College Clothing in Albert Street. He was educated to standard six, joined the NIYC at 17, and was recruited by Ebie. He had joined the NIYC, he said, because 'the Government was not treating Indian people fairly.' Ebie explained to him that 'the political struggle was taking a sharp turn and after years of non-violence the people were starting to rise ... This would spark off a revolution.'¹² Perumal was also a good friend of Sunny.¹³

One of their first successful attacks was at the Victoria Street Bridge, which Ebie's cell blew up on the evening of Sunday 21 March 1962. They prepared the dynamite at Natoo's house, Perumal and Sunny placed it on the tracks along Brook Street, while Ebie and Natoo worked on the cable on the Victoria Street Bridge. This was the main South Coast line that ran from Durban to Rossburgh and had high traffic volume. The attack also damaged the signalling gear.

The office of A.S. 'Khosaan' Kajee was a coveted target. According to David Perumal, Ebie told them that 'Kajee was a dog who had to be taught a lesson.' Billy Nair explained that Kajee was targeted as he 'was looked upon by the Indian people as a collaborator'¹⁴ for 'proudly taking the salute in Pretoria on Republic Day ... not jointly with the NP ... He was in a separate (Indian) stand and hoisted the Republic Flag. This picture was posted in his office. What

happened was symbolic. We did not want him personally.’¹⁵ The bombing of his office was meant to deter others from participating in apartheid structures. Ebie, Perumal, Natoo, and Sunny went to Kajee’s office in Alice Street on 14 October 1962. Perumal and Natoo stood guard in Alice Street while Ebie and Sunny went into the passage leading to Kajee’s office. After a few minutes Ebie and Sunny came running out of the passage and the four cadres ran in different directions. As pre-arranged they met an hour later at the corner of Commercial Road and Soldiers Way. The attack, Ebie explained, had been aborted because they were disturbed by the nightwatchman. They decided that since the explosives had been prepared, they would ‘blow up a train.’ They caught the 8:45 pm train to Effingham, jumped off at Churchill Station, and set off the petrol bomb near Duffs Road. The empty cabin caught on fire but there were no casualties.

The attack that attracted the most headlines was the 1 November 1962 bombing of pylons in New Germany, Montclair, and Sarnia. On 29 October 1962, Billy, Ganesan “Coetsee” Naicker and Ebie met at the corner of Pine Street and Cathedral Road. Coetsee, M.P.’s brother, was 29, married, a clerk at Coronation Brick & Tile, and an Executive Member of the NIYC when he was recruited into Umkhonto by Ronnie in June 1962. Shortly after being approached by Ronnie, he met with Bruno and Natoo at M.D. Naidoo’s office in Lodson House. Bruno was accompanied by another African male whom they did not meet again (Michael Masuko). Bruno told them that they were part of the Technical Committee and had to ‘carry out experiments to produce better methods to carry out explosions.’

Billy, Ebie, and Coetsee took the bus to the Moon Hotel in Clairwood and made their way to Umhlatuzana Road. Led by Ebie, they went to the pylons at the top of the hill at around 6:00 pm and estimated how much cordtex and dynamite would be needed. Once that was done, they returned to the Moon Hotel, where Billy and Coetsee had a few beers before going home. The mission was to be carried out the following evening. Ebie, Coetsee and Moonsamy arrived at the appointed time at the Moon Hotel but Billy arrived an hour late

and explained that the operation had been aborted because he could not find a car to transport the explosives. They met at the Mobeni Indian School the following evening, 1 November 1962. Billy arrived in a black Morris 1000 and drove them to Umhlatuzana Road. They took turns to carry the explosives, which were heavy, and, working with red rubber gloves, taped dynamite sticks to the pylons with black insulation tape. They laced the dynamite with cordtex and placed putty over it to ensure that it blew inwards. As reported in the newspapers the following morning, the mission was a success. Almost simultaneously, Ronnie blew up pylons in Sarnia, and Bruno in New Germany. The attacks plunged Durban into darkness. Ebie cheekily covered the story for *New Age*. As its photographer he was on the scene with police, and his photographs were published in *New Age* and circulated to the world.

A.S. Kajee did not get away. On Sunday 9 December 1962, the same cell carried out a dynamite attack on Kajee's office, causing an estimated £150 worth of damages. Kajee would appear in court for the prosecution when the men were caught. Ironically, he seemed to understand the frustration of the cadres. He said that while the 'extremists believed in a full loaf or no loaf ... we believe in taking half a loaf also.' Asked if his approach was succeeding, Kajee, to the astonishment of the court, replied, 'I personally can say it is not successful as far as I am concerned.' Most Indians felt that they 'would not get a thing' and frustration was 'building up.' The majority of Indians did not have his optimistic outlook, he said, because they were constantly foiled. Anger was reaching boiling point, Kajee warned, and 'you do feel the treatment is not right. It is very unfair and unjust.'

Kisten Moonsamy was commander of the Clairwood cell. Moonsamy was close to Billy through Sactu and was recruited by him. Married with five children, he worked for Durban Confectionary Works (Beacon) from 1956 until March 1961 when he lost his job. He was a committee member of the NIC, Clairwood branch. While he had 'great admiration for Monty as my leader,' Billy's stance resonated with Moonsamy. After the first "job", Billy told Moonsamy to form his own cell with Solomon Mbanjwa as his immediate

superior. Moonsamy turned to people that he knew well – Deva Padayachee, Kisten ‘Dips’ Doorsamy, and Ragoowan ‘Dan’ Kistensamy.

Ragoowan lived in Clairwood and worked at Bakers, Dips had lived on the same road as Moonsamy (Collingwood Road) until August 1962 when he moved to Merebank, while Deva also lived in Clairwood and worked for a chemical firm in Mobeni. Moonsamy recruited all three to the NIC, and they were members of Sactu and the same underground CP cell. They met regularly to discuss the national situation, distribute leaflets, and study the Communist Manifesto under Billy. There was a strong link and overlapping membership between the CP, NIC and Sactu. Moonsamy had to coordinate the team, ‘keep up their spirits,’ allocate responsibilities, carry out reconnaissance, and make sure that cell members ‘kept their discipline.’ After they left Durban in darkness, Moonsamy ‘felt happy when I read the papers the next morning ... when they were screaming, “The Cubans are here, Russians are coming.” We were “on the go”.’¹⁶

Moonsamy, Doorsamy and Deva blew up telephone cables in Umlazi on 5 December 1962. Their experience highlights some of the logistical difficulties facing cadres. They travelled by bus to the corner of South Coast and Pendlebury Roads, carrying the bomb-making equipment in a paper carrier bag, dug holes with a chisel, prepared the bomb, ran all the way to the Navy Camp in Himalaya Road, and from there took the bus home. Their next attack was at Beacon Sweets, their place of employment. They travelled by bus around 8:00 pm, walked across a river and railway line, through the Clairwood Racecourse to the South Coast Road side of the course where the manhole was situated outside Beacon’s main gate. They planted the bomb and proceeded to Moonsamy’s house ‘to celebrate. We drank a bottle of cane,’ according to Moonsamy.¹⁷ After their arrest, Moonsamy and Doorsamy were imprisoned on Robben Island; Ragoowan was acquitted because of lack of evidence; and Deva confessed under torture, but in court refused to testify against his comrades and was imprisoned in Pietermaritzburg.

While the cadres were active, the state was also busy. The apartheid network

of spies was flung wide, and with the ability of the state to use torture and detention without trial, this meant that the cells unravelled rapidly once Umkhonto cadres were arrested. According to Kasrils, there was a degree of fortuitousness in the arrests. The disaster began when Steven Mtshali's wife was arrested after they had an argument, and she told police where he was hiding. He, in turn, led the police to Bruno, who led them to Ebie in Kloof.¹⁸ Shadrack Maphumulo, on the other hand, maintained that the problems began when police arrested a recruit attempting to leave the country. He led them to Solomon Mbanjwa, and most cadres were arrested as Mbanjwa, Bruno and Steven Mtshali turned state witnesses.¹⁹

Ebie was staying with Bruno and Ronnie in Kloof at the time. He had accompanied Ronnie to Pietermaritzburg, from where Ronnie left for Johannesburg. When Ebie returned to Kloof station the following morning, 'the place was infested with police.' He was arrested and beaten severely before being taken to the police station. There was concern because no one knew what had happened to him. According to Phyllis Naidoo, 'we knew who was detained. We knew because Poomani [Moodley of Sactu] was detained, Sunny was detained ... but we didn't hear of Ebie.' Phyllis eventually tracked him down to Point Prison where he was 'locked up in a toilet-sized cell, and no buckets. When they opened that cell to me to see him, it was stinking.'

Within days, many activists, including those with no idea of Umkhonto activities, were under 90 Days Detention. People like Perumal (7 August), Kisten Doorsamy (23 July), Kisten Moonsamy (19 July), Isaacs (5 August), Sunny Singh (7 August), and Nattoo Babenia (5 August) were arrested in quick succession. The cadres had little idea of the treatment that awaited them and some broke down. Billy does not agree that they were not prepared: recruits had been taught what to do when arrested. Sunny concurs. He was taught to be 'as strong as steel, there were possibilities of people breaking down and so forth.' But the laws and tactics had no precedence. 'We were still young and learning ... we had never experienced anything, this was a first time, so when it happened it came as a shock.'²⁰ The problem, Billy points out, was that the

‘cream of the crop let go ... and the game was up. There was no point in those at the lower end holding out as their role was immaterial.’ There was, Billy added, a ...

... bit of inevitability. We were convinced that at some stage or other, we’d be arrested, but also, to some extent, that the people would be able to hold out and not collapse under the pressures that the police were putting on them in detention. Unfortunately, they were unable to withstand the torture and this constituted a problem for us in that the pledge not to divulge any important information was broken. [It] was unbecoming of a person occupying a top position to become state witness.²¹

Rusty Bernstein makes an important point about changes in the interrogation strategies employed by police. The state felt that interrogation methods had failed during the state of emergency in 1960 and sent personnel for CIA training on torture-based techniques of ‘counter-insurgency’. As torture became routine, ‘some of our best comrades cracked. We were not prepared for institutionalised torture.’²² Joe Slovo concurs: ‘No matter how firm the old type of policemen ... they were not torturers ... There was still a rule of law. You had a fair trial in the courts. Nobody could be held in isolation.’²³ A.S. Chetty pointed out that in the 1950s, ‘the police were simple fellows ... you know ... it must have taken the police force four or five years after the COP to become the sophisticated fellows they were.’²⁴

‘Sophisticated’ is not exactly the word to describe methods of interrogation which ranged from electric shocks and whippings, to vulgar language and psychological interrogation such as threats to family. Those who were captured were at the mercy of their captors, who used brutal methods to obtain evidence. Jeremy Cronin captures the mix of physical and psychological pressure:

They only made him stand
On two bricks
for three days
and three nights and

When he asked to go to the lavatory
they said:

Shit in your pants.

But the State needed witnesses

So they changed their tune.

Tried sweet-talking him round.

Think of your career ...

Think of the shame of going to jail ...

You really want kaffirs to rule?

Think of your wife ...

And there they had him ... ²⁵

This is borne out by some of those who confessed. Emmanuel Isaacs was arrested on 5 August 1963. He initially denied knowledge of the dynamite until interrogating officer Klopper told him 'who was with him, when it happened, and about the telephone call, and about where it was eventually offloaded.' Klopper warned that he faced the death penalty if he did not cooperate. Kept in solitary confinement, he 'was run-down ... couldn't eat well ... Mentally, I felt depressed ... I felt this 90 days is going to go on, and on and on,' he told the court. After three days, he gave a written statement. Isaacs was released on 7 October. David Perumal testified that he felt let down when senior members 'sold out.' Perumal was arrested on 7 August 1963. Police found aluminium powder and books on communism and guerilla warfare at his home. He was taken to Wentworth, where he met Natoo and Sunny Singh. He was kept in solitary confinement and informed by the police that the others had confessed. 'They were questioning me and I was getting scared and they were threatening me and threatening me, like if I don't speak up, I am going to hang and all that.' After four days, he signed a written confession, followed by a statement to the magistrate (three pages) and a complete statement to Lieutenant Steenkamp (15 pages) when they told him that he would be pardoned. N. Padayachy was also kept in solitary confinement under the 90 Days Regulations, as he told the court:

I have been an asthmatic patient and the police constantly told me that I will die if I don't do according to what they tell me to do. That was in Durban North. And when I landed there, the place was cold. Although I was heavily wheezing, I contracted double pneumonia and suffering ... my eye was swelling and I had to land in hospital [King Edward] where I stayed there for four days. Although I was not better, I was taken back to the cells ... The police told me all types of things. They told me that I will be hanged ... They pulled me by my hair and I was wheezing, even if I asked for water, nobody cared. I was very sad and very angry with what the police did with me. They told me that if I don't do according to what they tell me to do that my poor old Mother would also be detained under the 90 Days Detention. A brother will be fired from his work. Neither my brother nor I will get work anywhere in the country.

Under these conditions, many caved in quickly. The police recovered large quantities of cortex, dynamite, fuse, gelignite, detonators, and potassium chloride, and knew the details of every attack. Very few withstood the physical and psychological punishment. As Ahmed Kathrada would write, 'I'm learning to tackle fear. I'm deciding to fight it. I drum up enough courage to confront the brute – police-interrogator Swanepoel – in his own language. I remind him of the words of the Afrikaans poet, Cilliers, who powerfully pronounced his admiration for the man who has the courage to stand up for himself and to stand by his fellow men.'²⁶ And there were some exceptional people like Kathrada – Billy, Ebie, Moonsamy, Dips, who stood their ground. Sunny Singh was arrested on 7 August 1963 at the Blue Moon tea-room where he worked. The police searched his house and took away his reading materials and press cuttings 'of Chief Luthuli, Nelson Mandela ... and told me I was arrested under the 90-day law ... They mentioned, "You, David Perumal, Ebrahim, blew up Kajee's office," and he also mentioned Babenia's name.'²⁷ Sunny was kept in solitary confinement, interrogated, and beaten:

They wanted to know whether I was involved in treason. All I said was try me on whatever evidence you got but I am not going to agree with you that I did it.

You say the other colleagues from my cell broke down and said I was involved in the operation, well then try me. I am not going to confess to that.²⁸

According to Sunny, 'Lieutenant Prins gave me details with so and so I was involved in and said that Perumal implicated me; he was giving me details ... just like reading a story ... "We know all about you, Sunny, we will start off from the top of the ladder and we will come to the bottom."' ²⁹ Billy, the story goes, 'taunted police to kill him if they liked, but he was not going to open his mouth.'³⁰ After the trial, according to Ebie, the investigating officers told them, 'we admire you for your principles and courage.' It was little consolation. According to Billy, 'artists in the torture methods were the Afrikaner police – more crude. They were simply ruthless.'³¹

The story of Nattoo Babenia is important in revealing the complexities of the struggle. He was arrested by Prins, Steenkamp, Grobler, Van Schoon, and van Dyk on 5 August 1963. At the flat he 'was kicked, punched and thrown to the ground and jumped on. They dragged me by the hair and started kicking me. Prins got hold of my testicles and started twisting them. I was in severe agony. I started to scream as loudly as I could.' More of the same awaited him at the Greenwood Park Police station.³² He was beaten by Prins and Francois Steenkamp. 'I was all over the floor with my nose bleeding ... I found myself huddled in a small bundle on the floor in the corner looking up at two walls ... pain slowly started all over my body.'³³ He was placed in solitary confinement. The cycle of social isolation, physical punishment, and then back to the loneliness of the cell took its toll. Self-doubt started to cause anxiety as he realised that police had access to information beyond that gleaned from normal surveillance. Nattoo slowly began to break down:

When you sit in your cell in solitary you try to find some meaning for your predicament. Some can say "I will not talk!" but sooner or later you are beaten and you talk. And you need to talk! The only way you can find scraps of information to feed your brain on is by talking. And the only ones who will talk are the SB's. So you try and listen to their questions and their responses to you

to gather things around you. You are yearning for knowledge which can give you safety ... That is why those very first few days in detention are so crucial for the police. Because soon you find that all you have really done by chatting is to give the police even more than they had when they take you in. This is a terrible thing to realise. Then you are finished.³⁴

While Coetsee Naicker, David Perumal and Padayachy received amnesty, Nattoo was not given amnesty even though he appealed to the Minister of Justice on 26 August 1963:

Honourable Sir, for your kind consideration. I am at the moment detained under the 90 days Detention Clause at Point Prison. I was detained on the 5th August 1963 ... Honourable sir, for my part, I merely ask to be repatriated to India under the repatriation scheme for Indians. In India, I have an old ailing mother of 76 years of age. I don't ever want to return to this country again. Honourable sir, I know it is a great favour I am asking for, but I hope your honour would consider my merciful pleas.

Natvarlal Babenia.³⁵

Nattoo also wrote notes on the back of a De Maurier cigarette packet while he was in Point Prison between 13 August and 21 October 1963, and handed it to the Security police as points he wished to discuss. Item 2 states that he wished to be charged under the Explosive Act: 'I was desperate; I wanted to come out anyhow, so I thought under the Explosives Act I might only get two or three years. I might get a suspended sentence.'² Babenia is open and honest in his memoirs of how events unfolded. Torture and isolation were incredibly difficult and in retrospect he was of the view that his actions were ...:

... a political miscalculation and a cowardly act. My senses were out of control. Deep down I knew I could probably never do it. We were going fucking nuts in solitary. If I try and look back over the whole thing I think it was a note that I wrote to try and order things in my own mind, to clarify things. Whether I intended to actually give it to the SBs or whether I just needed it for my own

head I cannot say. I still do not know if I actually did give it to them.³⁶

On 21 October 1963, Nattoo was released from 90-day detention and charged under the Sabotage Act. The state threw the book at him and others and was determined to secure the harshest of sentences. Looking back, Nattoo would reflect, ‘there is a lot that happens in these circumstances. We were in it up to our necks and they got us. The struggle does not happen cleanly and according to order. It is always messy and brutal. So be it.’³⁷

In the matter of The State versus Ebrahim Ismail, ...³⁸

Accused	1. Ebrahim Ismail (5 counts)	11. Alfred Duma (3 counts)
	2. Girja “Sunny” Singh (3)	12. Shadrack Mapumulo (3)
	3. Natvarlal Babenia (7)	13. Bernard Nkosi (2)
	4. Billy Nair (6)	14. Zakela Mdhlalose (2)
	5. Kisten Moonsamy (3)	15. Matthews Mayiwa (2)
	6. George Naicker (3)	16. Joshua Zulu (2)
	7. Kisten Doorsamy (2)	17. David Mkize (1)
	8. Curnick Ndlovu (4)	18. David Ndwonde (1)
	9. Ragoowan Kistensamy (2)	19. Siva Pillay (1)
	10. Riot Mkwanzu (4)	

The group of 19 was formally charged under the June 1962 Sabotage Act on 21 October 1963. They were accused of acting in common purpose to obtain explosives to violently damage the property of other persons and the State, and were charged with carrying out attacks using petrol bombs, pipe bombs, dynamite, and cutting instruments. Billy Nair and Curnick Ndlovu were additionally charged with being part of the Regional Command, and Babenia of being part of the Technical Committee. There was little chance of not being found guilty, since the Act defined sabotage widely to include any act that affected the ‘health or safety of the public, the maintenance of law and order, the supply of water, light, power, fuel or foodstuffs, sanitary, medical or fire extinguishing services.’ Punishment could include the death penalty.³⁹

Rowley Arenstein received a call from the Security Branch on 21 October

1963 that 16 of the 19 persons charged under the Sabotage Act wanted him to represent them. He could not represent Billy and Curnick because they, like him, were banned and could not communicate with him. The accused appeared in court on 22 October and the case was remanded to 11 November. J.N. and Radhi Singh appeared for Sunny Singh, and George Sewpersadh for Billy and Curnick. Rabi Bugwandeen subsequently replaced Sewpersadh. As a result of his subsequent role with the Inkatha Freedom Party, Arenstein's incredible contribution to the liberation struggle has been rendered almost invisible in post-apartheid South Africa. But the historical record reveals that time and again he played a crucial role during the 1950s and 1960s in defending activists involved in resistance politics.

Arenstein was born in Ermelo in 1918, studied law at Wits, and joined the CP in 1938. After completing his studies, he was sent to Durban to help organise workers, and remained there until his death in 1996. He began practising as an attorney in Durban in 1947. He was banned under the Suppression of Communism Act from 1953-55, worked closely with Sactu, the Congress movement, and was the legal advisor of Chief Luthuli. He was detained during the state of emergency in 1960 and went underground after his release. For over three decades, from 1953 to 1986, he was effectively under arrest of one kind or another and was imprisoned from 1966 to 1970 for his work in the underground CP and, as a communist, was struck off the roll of attorneys. As soon as he was released from prison in 1970, he was banned for five years; his banning orders were renewed in 1975, 1980 and 1983. The restrictions only lapsed in 1986. Arenstein married Jackie Lax in 1943, an activist who herself was banned or under house arrest for almost 15 years.⁴⁰

Phyllis Naidoo emphasised that Arenstein never turned anybody away. On one occasion she and Brenda Worthington, a clerk at his office, went from shop to shop in Grey Street to raise money for arrear rents; on another occasion, Sewpersadh paid the rent while Rowley was in prison. Arenstein fell out with the CP because he opposed the armed struggle. As Ronnie Kasrils, who was staying with Arenstein at the time, recalls, 'Rowley was completely against the

Movement's change in strategy. Debates raged about the "adventurism" in the Movement. He was avidly consulting the texts of Lenin and produced screeds of criticism which declared that the actions were "anarchistic".⁴¹ When Kasrils suggested that state repression was disheartening the masses, Arenstein's riposte was: 'The people! That's just the problem. We fail to organise the masses, so we turn to firecrackers.'⁴¹ Arenstein, following Lenin, argued that terror shifted the focus from raising the political consciousness of the masses, and led to a rupturing of contact between the revolutionary organisation of the Party and the masses. This did not stop Arenstein from defending MK members. 'As far as I'm concerned,' he once said, 'I will defend anybody who was in the Struggle, whether you agree with me or not.'⁴²

Arenstein responded to the call. He went to the prison on 23 October and interviewed the accused. In view of the urgency, he wanted to interview them in three groups, but was told that he had to speak to each person separately. He took four articled clerks to expedite the process but, as a delaying tactic, the authorities barred this as it 'posed a security threat.' Shortly after he began interviewing his clients, they were moved to Pietermaritzburg and he could not visit them since his banning order restricted him to Durban. His application to be allowed to visit his clients in Pietermaritzburg was refused. A telegram to the Minister of Justice by the accused for Arenstein to be allowed to visit them in Pietermaritzburg or for them to be kept in Durban was refused on 8 November 1963.

The state decided on a 'summary trial' because the Attorney-General ruled that there was a risk of intimidation of witnesses and danger to the safety of the public unless the case was concluded expeditiously. The defence was given a few days to prepare for a case where the accused faced up to 28 charges each, with 900 alternative counts in all. Arenstein submitted an affidavit on 11 November 1963, that in the time at his disposal, he had not been able to go into the actual defence with the accused, but this was ignored.

The next problem was finding Counsel, since the accused did not have funds. M.D. Naidoo and Hassen Mall offered to take on the case, but both were

banned and restricted to Durban, and their application to be allowed to go to Pietermaritzburg was also turned down. Arenstein arranged for R.N. Leon, P.W. Thirion, A.B.M. Wilson, and J. Gurwitz to appear for the different accused. The state also refused to give Arenstein copies of the statements made to the police by the accused. Further, Arenstein could not communicate with Counsel on weekends because his banning order placed him under house arrest. C.C. Rees, C.H. Bornman, and J.H. Combrink appeared for the State.

Despite the logistical and legal problems, the game was really up when, as Billy explained, 'the cream of the crop let loose' and were offered immunity from prosecution. They included Solomon Mbanjwa, Bruno Mtolo, Michael Masuko, Michael Mvula, Ganesan "Coetsee" Naicker, Steven Mtshali and David Perumal. The state knew how Umkhonto was organised, who its members were, where and when attacks were carried out, and who was involved in each attack. The law, too, was on the side of the state, as activists could be held for 90 days, and rearrested when that period was up. Billy was not apologetic about Umkhonto, and told Justice Milne that their campaign had a political objective: 'to appeal to the conscience of the white man for a change of heart; our principal objective M'Lord was that. In fact we wouldn't have through mere acts of sabotage brought about the downfall of the Government ... Sabotage was a political weapon.'⁴³

Billy insisted that police violence left them with no alternative. Prosecutor Rees tried to use the trial to justify police violence. He pointed to Sharpeville and the killing of policemen in Cato Manor, and asked Billy: 'Did you not expect the police to be apprehensive of the activities of large mobs of Africans? If you yourself had been a policeman and ... a number of your colleagues had been killed, how would you have reacted when you saw a mob if you were at Sharpeville?' Billy insisted that 'it was just revenge to shoot down people. The police were actually intimidating the people.' Justice Milne appeared irritated by Rees's line of questioning and told him, 'I don't think we can spend time trying to persuade this witness about things like this.'⁴⁴ Billy treated the court proceedings with 'bravery, political astuteness and steadfast cheek,' Natoo

would later say.⁴⁵

Sentence was handed down on 28 February 1964.

There has been, there is, no silence like the silence in a court when the judge lifts his head to hand down judgement. All other communication, within and without, is stilled; all is ended. This is the last word.⁴⁶

NADINE GORDIMER

Ebie was imprisoned for 15 years; Billy 20; Nattoo 16; Sunny 10; Kisten Moonsamy 14; George Naicker 14; Kisten Doorsamy 12; Siva Pillay 8; Curnick Ndlovu 20; Alfred Duma 10; Shadrack Ndlovu 13; David Nkosi 5; David Ndawonde 8 and Matthews Meyiya 8 years.⁴⁷

Sabotage did not bring the economy to a halt, nor did it affect the mindset of the government to see the virtues of a negotiated settlement. In fact, GNP growth rates averaged 8 percent during the 1960s, based on foreign capital inflows and state investment in the armaments and synthetic fuel industries.⁴⁸ The limited impact of sabotage was, in retrospect, to be expected, given the inadequate resources at the disposal of cadres, the absence of proper training facilities, and the inexperience of the recruits. Their initial efforts were poorly conceived and they were outnumbered and outmanoeuvred by a repressive state machinery that very quickly and effectively organised to counter them. The white minority, Brit and Boer, despite historic differences, were united in one thing: defending white rule and privilege, even if it meant using long periods of detention without trial and sustained torture, and ignoring just about every human right protected by the UN charter.

The fact also that key organisers like Billy Nair wore so many hats, being known communists, union organisers, and militants of the NIC executive, made it easier for the security forces, as Michael Stephen points out, 'to roll up whole sections of the liberation movement at a stroke.'⁴⁹ In this way the internal opposition to apartheid was decapitated. On 11 June 1964, Mandela was found guilty with regard to his activities in Umkhonto. After Mandela's initial imprisonment, police arrested prominent ANC leaders on 11 July

1963 at Rivonia, including Ahmed Kathrada, Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Andrew Mlangeni, Raymond Mhlaba, Elias Motsoaledi, Walter Mkwayi, Denis Goldberg and Lionel 'Rusty' Bernstein. This was a huge blow to the movement nationally.

In the ways they operated, the cadres often appeared as unsuccessful revolutionaries and sometimes amateurish, but, as Lodge points out, 'such criticisms are not very telling: most guerillas are amateurs and successful ones are often more lucky than skilful.'⁵⁰

Those found guilty 'In the matter of The State versus Ebrahim Ismail' were the earliest Umkhonto warriors in Natal. Many of them were young, and it was their youthful years that they would spend on Robben Island. Given the distance to Cape Town, the fact that the internal resistance movement was in disarray, and the external mission had not yet found its feet, meant that the first few years would be spent in isolation from family, and devoid of other forms of support. There was also the pain of loved ones, who not only had to endure years of separation, but also economic deprivation. Kisten Moonsamy, for example, had five minor children, who had no means of support and relied on the Durban Child Welfare for support. In addition, there were few checks during this early period on the abuses carried out by prison warders, making life on Robben Island a horrific experience for the first group of prisoners. Above all, the heavy optimism of what the armed struggle would achieve did not meet reality.

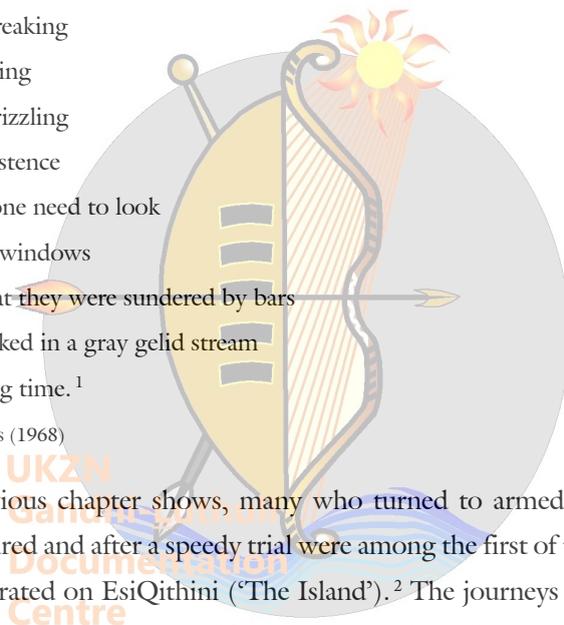
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Centre

'EsiQithini'

Cement-gray floors and walls
cement-gray days
cement-gray time
and a gray susurration
as of seas breaking
winds blowing
and rains drizzling
a barred existence
so that no one need to look
at doors or windows
to know that they were sundered by bars
and one locked in a gray gelid stream
of unmoving time.¹

DENNIS BRUTUS (1968)

As the previous chapter shows, many who turned to armed struggle were arrested, tortured and after a speedy trial were among the first of the Umkhonto cadres incarcerated on EsiQithini ('The Island').² The journeys of these urban guerillas provides insights into life on the Island, while also allowing us to look beyond the prison walls at the lives of families and friends, and their struggles to stay in contact with loved ones. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), Michel Foucault argued that corporal punishment was produced with elaborate theatricality to serve as an example to society. The 'monotonous tumbling of locks and the shadow of the cell block,' he wrote, 'replaced the grand ceremonial of flesh and blood.' The condemned were concealed to 're-educate' them. Space was regulated, the use of time was tightly controlled, and 'bodily movement



was carefully supervised.³

Ahmed Kathrada's description of prison life suggests that many of these characteristics were present at Robben Island:

When the metal grille slams shut I am alone, like I've never been in all my life. The cell is small, there are two thin soiled mats on the floor to sleep on, a bucket for ablutions, a metal plate and spoon, a window too high to see out of and a single naked light bulb, like a demented Cyclops, staring impassively and relentlessly at me day and night ... This is life stripped to its barest.⁴

Established 'for the reception, deception, confinement, training and treatment of persons liable to detention in custody,⁵ Robben Island would become a symbol of apartheid terror. The late poet activist Dennis Brutus, who spent time on the Island, experienced the brutality of the warders firsthand. Indres Naidoo decried the assault of Brutus while he was still recovering from a police bullet lodged in his stomach:

There had been 20 in his group, including Billy Nair, Curnick Ndhlovu and George Naicker. They were all ordered to pull out seaweed, and as they waded in knee deep water they were mercilessly set upon by the warders who beat them black and blue with batons and rubber pipes ... Dennis, who was particularly weak was their main target, receiving more blows than anybody else, until he virtually lost consciousness. Normally, Dennis had a rich, cultivated voice, he was one of the most articulate of all of us, but as he lay suffering on the bed he could barely get the words together; they came out in a groaning whisper, broken up and harsh, hardly making sense.⁶

While the state continued to perpetuate the brutality of apartheid in prison, the confined found ways to confront. Resistance, as Nato Babenia put it, came in 'many guises.' There were the overt collective resistances like hunger strikes and petitions, as well as subtle individual acts:

After eating we used to line up in four rows. Each row was counted and sent to its respective cell. While in the line this sadist used to go up and down with

his baton and approach an Indian comrade and say 'Koelie, jou ma se moer'. He would say this every time he passed an Indian comrade. After some time the Indian comrades from Durban, who did not understand Afrikaans, came to know what it meant and they retaliated in vernacular *Tari Ben-ni bosadi*.⁷

Also intriguing is the ways in which lives were changed by the Island. Some, like Ebrahim Ebrahim, taught fellow prisoners to read and write while embedding themselves more deeply into ANC structures. Far from being broken by the brutal conditions, Ebie returned more determined to serve the movement. The same could be said of Billy Nair. However, while Ebie left the country and operated from the frontline states, Billy chose to remain within the confines of Durban and played a seminal role in the United Democratic Front (UDF) during the 1980s. Kisten Moonsamy and Kisten Doorasamy returned to Durban only to come to terms with the extent of their families' suffering through the years, made all the worse by the fact that the Group Areas Act had destroyed the community of Clairwood that would have given them support through those lonely years. Both emerged from the Island only to fade into the folds of everyday living, trying desperately to pick up the threads of lives scarred by incarceration.

Political prisoners were not sent directly to Robben Island. Their first stop was Leeukop. The almost forgotten man – Subbiah Moodley – served his time there. He had participated in the first sabotage attacks and thought he had escaped the long arm of the apartheid law, but when Billy and the others were brought to trial, Bruno Mtolo informed the state about Subbiah's involvement in the attack on the Bantu Administration building. A brilliant student at Sastri, Subbiah wanted to study science at university but could not afford the cost of attending Fort Hare and instead got a bursary to train as a teacher at Springfield. It was on 15 April 1964 that Subbiah's world turned upside down when three security policemen arrived at the College and whisked him away to his flat. 'I can still see the look on Mum's face, you know, of shock ... the way the Security Police rushed in and her flat was turned upside down.'

Subbiah was interrogated at Wentworth. Grobler was 'was quite a vitriolic

man, aggressive ... Grobler, as a matter of interest, was sent to the then Rhodesia to hunt Umkhonto cadres, where he turned the gun on himself.’⁸ Subbiah was denied access to a lawyer and viciously assaulted. ‘They knock you in the ribs, your solar plexus ... kick the chair from underneath you ... pummel you with a rubber truncheon while they make you stand absolutely still and you dare not move.’ Subbiah complained to a visiting magistrate who replied that he was ‘not there to entertain frivolous excuses.’ Despite refusing to give information, his game was up when Bruno identified him. His former principal, Dr A.D. Lazarus, gave evidence in mitigation of sentence, and Subbiah was sentenced to three years imprisonment, two of which were suspended because he was a youth at the time of the bombings. Subbiah was ‘clapped in leg irons and handcuffs ... shoved into a truck’ and after a nightmare journey lasting five hours, reached Leeukop Prison. He was met by Warden Magalies whose message was clear: ‘Julle hoor, die plek se naam is tronk, die plek se naam is nie hotel nie.’ He was stripped naked, fingered up his anus to ensure that there was no contraband being smuggled in, and put into ‘D Seksie’ with rapists and murderers.

Leeukop was for short-term political prisoners only, and Subbiah was sent to Kroonstad in the Free State. When he got there, however, the warden told him in Afrikaans, ‘Hey, we do not keep “charras” (Indians) here’ and he was returned to Leeukop where he spent the year. He met many prisoners destined for Robben Island as this was their stopover. At the end of the year he was given a third-class rail warrant and made his way to Durban, where his ‘mother cooked some nice mutton curry. I had one loaf of bread and was still feeling hungry.’

This was not the end of the matter. The Security Police hounded him but Subbiah eventually completed a diploma in engineering. He continued to engage in scientific experiments, gave mathematics tuition to matric students, and married on 16 December 1970, ‘a symbolic day ... the same day that I carried out the act of sabotage.’ Subbiah found little going on politically, ‘everybody was banned; all the organisations were banned; everybody was wary to communicate; so you never really made contact with anybody unless you did

it surreptitiously. As far as the political struggle was concerned, there was no direction at all coming.’ Subbiah’s story is important in illustrating how the life of a potentially brilliant scientist was destroyed; in contrast, another young man who also took part in the early campaigns, Perumal, who was a factory worker at the time of the campaign, managed to somehow graduate as a medical doctor in exile, one undertaken by a long list of political prisoners.

Indres Naidoo wrote of the ordeal of his journey from Leeukop to Cape Town:

We sat crowded together on the floor of a speeding van, a dozen pairs of people, legs linked by chains, wrists by handcuffs, bumping along in an increasingly hot atmosphere ... Sweat poured down our bodies ... some prisoners made their way to the back and tried to piss through a gap under the van’s door; that turned out to be all right when the van was travelling uphill, but the minute it started moving downhill the piss would pour in and we would find ourselves sitting in it...The worst moment was when one of the comrades said he had to have a shit...After having his shit near the door, he suddenly realised that he had no paper or anything to wipe himself with. After a long discussion he tore the bottom part of his shirt and used it to clean himself, but unfortunately there was no way he could push the shit out ...⁹

The boat trip from Cape Town to Robben Island was equally difficult, especially for those who had not been on a boat before. Sea sickness compounded their ordeal and it was made worse by the fact that their hands and legs were manacled.

Robben Island initially housed political and common-law prisoners. The latter were routinely encouraged by warders to taunt and beat political prisoners. It was only around 1968 that common-law prisoners were moved off the Island, when the authorities felt that they were getting too close to political prisoners. Neville Alexander described the years from 1962 to 1966 as ‘years of hell ... of extreme harshness and physical pressure on prisoners ... with the peak of brutality in 1962-1963 and again from August 1966 onwards.’ There

was 'relatively civilised treatment' from 1967 to 1970, 'a relapse' during 1971 and 1972, and a change from 1973. Thereafter, 'overt physical pressures were eliminated ... but other problems were manufactured in order to harass the political prisoners.'¹⁰

Some prisoners, mainly leaders, were kept in single cells and others in communal cells. There was no communication between them, even when they were put to work. The square compound around which the cells were built included a kitchen, hospital, and punishment cells for those in solitary confinement. Cells were tiny and tall prisoners like Mandela were barely able to lie down. There was a 30 centimetre square window in each cell, and prisoners slept on the floor on a sisal mat. They remained in their cells from 4:30 pm to 6:45 am. When the cells were opened, they emptied their buckets, ate breakfast, underwent an inspection, and did manual work until noon. Lunch was followed by more backbreaking work, and then supper before they were locked up for the night. They had to sleep at 8:00 pm even though the lights were kept on.¹¹

It was during the early years, when conditions were at their most brutal, that Ebie, Sunny, Billy and Natoo arrived on the Island. As Sunny Singh pointed out, 'we were still in our youth [and] they were out to deal with us physically, psychologically ... the food, the medical side, the bedding, and the working conditions were terrible and on top of that torture and assaults.'¹² Prisoners were assaulted, given terrible food, and forced to sleep on cement floors as part of an 'organised campaign,' Billy felt, 'to bring us under prison discipline.'¹³ The Kleynhans brothers represented the worst in warders. Natoo Babenia recalled his early encounters:

We had to push the wheelbarrows through the line of the Kleynhans warders. As we moved along each of them would let fly with the baton. At the end of the journey was a small incline where Karnakamp waited for us ... Baton flying around he would scream 'Ek is nie jou Sir nie, ek is jou Baas!' ... The Big Five would be waiting. Come slowly and they would leave their spades and beat us. Or they would overload the wheelbarrow so you could hardly push it ... Piet

and Jan will sit on the wheelbarrow and ask us to push. If the wheelbarrow fell from our grip they would fall on us with their batons shouting 'Julle wil ons seer maak! Julle wil ons dood maak!...' Karnakamp, the sadist ... once even pushed an exhausted George (Naicker) into the sea and we had to pull him up.¹⁴

Natoo remembered the brutality of the quarry:

Zed [Kisten] gasps to me, "Natoo, they are going to kill us!" I had tears in my eyes and was limping with only one sandal. Riot, just behind me, was also crying. It was such a quick glimpse into tragedy. But the next moment we heard Piet shouting "Wat doen daai twee Koelies daar?" Quickly we took our wheelbarrows and went our separate lonely ways ... We had been selfish and separate during detention, then one after being charged, one again through Leeukop, but now we split up again. The oneness disappeared and no one seemed to know how to find it again. It would take us two years to really find our bearings.¹⁵

The cold climate was another shock to prisoners. 'In 1964, I still remember, South Africa had experienced its worst winter in 36 years, 1964, and we had bare minimum clothing, no underwear,' said Sunny.¹⁶ Many prisoners commented on the cold. Ahmed Kathrada, for example, wrote:

If I had to use a single word to define life of Robben Island, it would be 'cold'. Cold food, cold showers, cold winters, cold wind coming in off the sea, cold warders, cold cells, cold comfort ... It was as if the cold had somehow permeated our very bones, and we never quite managed to thaw out again.¹⁷

According to Sunny Singh, 'due to pressure, hunger strikes, protests, and so forth, conditions did begin to improve slightly [from 1972].'¹⁸ The Red Cross, according to Billy, played an important role by taking their demands to the government.¹⁹ Gradually, they won the right to play sport, as the hunger strikes, the court challenges and small subtle resistances created spaces for the prisoners to share their lives. This was important for, as Natoo Babenia put it, 'if you do not watch out, prison can put your brain to death.'²⁰

On Saturday afternoons we were embalmed in time
like specimen moths pressed under glass
we were immobile in the sunlit afternoon
waiting
Visiting time
until suddenly like a book snarled shut
all possibilities vanished as zero hour passed
and we knew another week would have to pass.'

DENNIS BRUTUS (1968)

Prisoners were graded from A to D. As a Group D prisoner, Sunny was allowed two visits per annum. It was the one contact that he had with the world of Durban, and he waited with increased anticipation of a visit. It was his mother who usually made the long trip across the country and then onto the ferry to Robben Island, and for both it was emotionally draining. His mother saw her young son aging before her eyes, while Sunny found it difficult to deal with her anguish: 'It was very emotional for her, standing and seeing the conditions; seeing me cut off.' Sunny was released in 1974. He had served ten years and was 33. Though glad to be free, he found it 'very touching leaving your friends and colleagues and comrades behind.'

Prison, according to Sunny, 'hardened one ... in a positive way. They tried to turn us into animals but we turned it around to become better human beings.' He spent a few days in Durban Central Prison before being released and 'had my first taste of curry in ten years. Wow, it was divine!' Sunny returned to the city of his birth and his MK exploits and was immediately placed under house arrest, having to report twice weekly to the police station and abide by a host of restrictions. He got a job as a bookkeeper. While the city was rocked by the 1973 labour strikes, there was 'a political vacuum ... the prime of the leadership was arrested.' For Sunny, the liberation of Angola and Mozambique in the midst of the apartheid state's continuing repression was a welcome inspiration. He worked informally with the resurgent union movement and some community structures, but felt the 'dragon closing in on me. The enemy was active and they

had informers.’ This prompted him into making the difficult decision of going into exile on Christmas day 1976.

He crossed into Swaziland, then went to Maputo, to Angola, and from there to East Germany for military training, before joining the Natal Command in Maputo under Jacob Zuma. The SADF bombings were a constant fear. His close friend, Krish Rabilall, ‘a soft spoken, brilliant mathematician,’ for example, was murdered by the regime. However, Sunny’s political understanding matured in exile and he was sent to Holland as ANC Representative from 1988 to 1992. His role in the movement was evolving all the time; the struggle was no longer ‘technical or bureaucratic’ and he had to read avidly and research extensively as he ‘addressed solidarity meetings, appeared on TV and debates, radio programs and organised anti-apartheid groups in Dutch villages ... a quite remarkable new career for me.’

Ebrahim Ebrahim served his full 15-year term on Robben Island. His cellmate for almost ten years was Jacob Zuma, whom he helped learn to read: ‘He had had no formal education but was exceptional. In six months he was reading Tolstoy. Once, I gave him a cheap thriller but he got bored with that and said that it was trashy.’²¹ Ebie completed his BA and B.Com degrees through UNISA. He described the years at Robben Island as ‘very rough, hard.’ His abiding memory was being made to ‘stand naked in the yard in mid-winter’, which he said was the making of him. Ahmed Kathrada has written vividly of this experience:

It is July and knife-cold. There’s an open courtyard and showers. The senior police and prison officers are arranged around the courtyard watching, gleeful, mocking. The master race at play. This is the blunt end of the weapon the state brandishes to deprive people of their self-respect ... It is also a critical moment. At stake is the freedom of my mind ... I walk slowly into the shower and stand there under a cold indifferent sky for as long as it takes to remove the smirk from their faces and for me to steel my independence.²²

Robben Island tried to create the archetypal apartheid society with ‘white

and powerful' warders and 'defenceless and servile black' inmates. Prisoners responded by 'strengthening ourselves' and emerged 'more dedicated, and determined to destroy the entire system which the prison had exemplified.'²³ Ebie recalled with anger that for 15 years he 'was not permitted to see a Muslim religious worker and was not even allowed a copy of the Holy Quran. If the prison authorities intended to break the backbone of political prisoners, it has in reality achieved the exact opposite.'²⁴

Released in 1979, Ebie was banned and restricted to Durban. He was prevented from entering any workplace, seeking employment in a factory, or entering a place of education, and was 'under constant police harassment.'²⁵ Greyville, where Ebie had spent a considerable part of his life, had been destroyed by apartheid; 'my whole history had been laid flat.' There was no turning back, however, as 'life would have no purpose otherwise ... I had to continue what I began, whatever the sacrifices.'²⁶ Under instruction from the ANC, Ebie went into exile in 1980. He worked in the frontline states of Swaziland, Mozambique and Angola as a senior ANC organiser with Ronnie Kasrils, Jacob Zuma and Joe Slovo,²⁷ and was a member of the Swaziland and Maputo Regional Politico-Military Committee.²⁸ In December 1986, Ebie was abducted from Swaziland by the SB and detained in Pretoria for six months under the Terrorism Act. He points out ruefully that 'at least I was detained in terms of something. A lot of my comrades who were abducted simply disappeared.'²⁹

Ebie described his torture as 'excruciating.' He was placed in a sealed cell into which noise was piped all day and the light never switched off. He was 'cut off for days on end and never allowed to sleep. I almost went mad.'³⁰ He was eventually charged with treason and sentenced in January 1989 to 20 years on Robben Island. He was 51 at the time. At the same trial, Mandla Maseko was sentenced to 23 years, and Simon Dladla given 12 years.³¹ The sentencing judge explained that he had given 20 years to Ebie because 'clearly, your earlier 15 years didn't do you much good.'³² Ebie was released in 1991 after the Appeal Court ruled that because he was kidnapped in a foreign country, the Court did not have jurisdiction to try him. That same year, he was elected to

the National Executive Committee of the ANC, and to the National Assembly in 1994. Ebie married Shannon Field at the beginning of 2005 and they have a daughter, Sarah.



Billy and Elsie Nair

© Elsie Nair

One of the few “normal” moments in Billy Nair’s life was when he attended his wedding with Elsie on 10 December 1960. Barely three years later and he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. These years were filled with being on the run, undercover operations and detention under the state of emergency regulations. It was a 24-hour world of intrigue and tension. Billy readily conceded that if it was not for Elsie, ‘during all my battles I would not have been living.’

Kader Hassim spent several years with Billy on the Island and described him affectionately as ‘the Stalinist with a human heart.’ Billy had ‘wonderful qualities. He had an excellent grasp of accounting, and successive waves of prisoners were tutored by him. More important, he mastered communication. He would have been a brilliant teacher.’ Another little-known fact is that he

had ‘the most perfect set of teeth.’ He carried three brushes at all times and would brush his teeth every time he drank tea or coffee.’ Billy’s cell ‘was always immaculate. He cut up old blankets and used these as rags. When he had a visitor, he would shine the spot where they sat as soon as they left.’ Billy was also the champion lunch hour catnapper. Prisoners usually spent their break pulling out seaweeds in the hope of catching limpets, shellfish and occasionally crayfish and perlemoen (abalone) for a seafood lunch. Billy, however, would simply take off his socks, place his rubberised macintosh on the ground and doze off!

Billy not only survived the Island, but completed his BA and B.Com degrees through UNISA and part of his LLB. On his release, he said:

I believe in a disciplined and orderly response to apartheid. I do not intend seeking revenge on the Afrikaner. All we intend doing is dismantling and ending apartheid. Imprisonment is not a cure for the cause of our people. We are not intimidated by the threats of detention. We are cogs in a massive wheel, not because the cause is some superior force, but because of the inner conviction that keeps us in the struggle for a non-racial, non-exploitative, democratic South Africa. We are proud to be in it.³³

The use of the phrase ‘we are cogs in a massive wheel’ is an interesting choice of words. Billy saw his role as “carrying out orders” from on high. This, he argued, was the discipline of the underground. But it also meant that those who wanted to debate instructions from “headquarters” in exile were often marginalized, and broader political issues like the Soviet Union’s relationship with Eastern Europe and internal democracy in the Soviet Union itself were not critically interrogated. Life was the “party line” for some, and the role of the foot soldier was to implement that line.

Billy became active in the UDF in the 1980s as a member of the Natal regional executive committee and served on the national executive as well. He was detained in August 1984, just before the Tricameral elections, with Archie Gumede, Mewa Ramgobin, Paul David, George Sewpershad and M.J. Naidoo.

They occupied the British Consulate until 12 December. Billy was detained again in August 1985 after presenting a memorandum to foreign embassies calling on them to take action against the South African government. He was released on 9 October 1985 and went underground until the unbanning of the ANC and CP in February 1990.

Billy was detained once more on 23 July 1990 following police allegations of an MK plot, code-named Operation Vula, to seize power if negotiations failed. He suffered a heart attack in detention and underwent a by-pass operation. While recuperating, Billy was charged with nine others but granted indemnity from prosecution. When the CP was relaunched as a legal body on 29 July 1990, Billy was elected to the Central Committee. He was also a member of the interim leadership group of the ANC in 1990 and was elected to the National Assembly of the South African Parliament in 1994, being 39th on the ANC list of 400 nominees.³⁴

Billy made a crucial point when he said that wives bore the brunt of the pressure and made huge sacrifices. It was 'exceptional,' he maintained, 'what wives went through.' The story of Elsie Nair exemplifies this. Elsie born in Newcastle in 1927, completed primary school and joined her mother who was already working in Durban. She was around 15 at the time and got a job at a clothing factory, and worked part-time as a dressmaker to supplement her income. She met Billy by chance, because he was a "comrade" of activist Poomoney Moodley, who lived in the same building as her:

When he used to visit he always passed my flat. I was usually in the passage washing or something. I used to be fond of going to see Poomoney's sister Peggy. So when Billy was there, I used to walk away. This happened a few times so Billy, one day, stops me. He says, "Tell me, why is it that every time I come here, when you see me, you walk away?" I say, "No, I got no reason, I don't really know you, I just came to visit my neighbour, that's all." So he says, "Please don't do that." One day he just walked into my room and he did the funniest thing, he hugged me.

Thus began a friendship that turned to marriage. Elsie visited Billy at the Sactu offices and was impressed by the way he ‘took up those cases – how workers are treated and how they are paid and all those things.’ Billy, in turn, often visited Elsie at the factory or took her ‘to the bioscope, you know, *Shah Jehan*.’ Their marriage, like Billy’s life, was a simple affair:

We got registered. No ceremony, no gown. I was a dressmaker and made the dress I wore for the wedding. I was working at that time. I got a suitmaker in town to make a suit for him. I paid for the suit because he did not have money. A few working friends came, four or five, no big thing. One of my friends, Nancy, did the cooking. We met in the flat at Himalaya House. And then Billy came and stayed at my place.

Elsie knew Billy ‘was already in trouble, always in and out and, you know, everyone said, “why you are interested in this man?” Billy lived in jail all his life.’ They rarely discussed his activities: ‘I understood his life, his politics. It was for me to get used to that because I’ve got no idea about it. But slowly I learnt because I used to go to the meetings.’ The Robben Island years were difficult and Elsie supported herself in various ways. Aside from dressmaking, she sublet a room to friends, and got an evening job as a cashier at a fast food outlet in Clairwood. She described the experience as ‘hard, but when we were affected, you don’t feel that it’s hard, as long as you know it was a struggle that meant good for the people of South Africa.’ She visited Robben Island at Christmas. ‘I worked and saved so that at the end of the year I’ll have money to get my ticket and go.’ What sticks in her mind is that ‘they were very strict. There were gates, you’ll find them all lined up, you can’t talk to them, you can just say “hello, how is everything?” but no shaking hands, nothing ... We didn’t worry about it because at least you’re seeing the person you married.’

The reaction of the community compounded Elsie’s plight. Family and friends became scared ‘and you don’t blame them because you may get arrested for no reason at all.’ She found it difficult to go to the cinema with friends, ‘because you have the family saying, “See, their husband is in jail, now they are doing

this and that.” Here you were working hard to look after the man who’s in jail and they want you just locked up in that house.’ But Elsie has no regrets. She emphasises that she never stopped Billy from doing ...

... what he wanted to do. I say, “You carry on”, it made sense because he fought for the people against this racism. Billy didn’t like those things. He wanted the country to be a country in which we all must live happily. It doesn’t matter what race you are, white, Indian, coloured, anything, it’s your country and you must live in it. The only thing he said is you must look out for your country, build your country, have working places for the workers, pay them well. Billy and them handled those things, that was their job.

As the stories above reveal, there were many roads travelled.

If you ever go visiting in Capetown
and look across that blue and silver bay
spare a thought for those who ploughed
the gray miles of water
salt and bitter as their tears
who stir in graves as restless as the surge
and wonder if they gave their lives in vain.

DENNIS BRUTUS

Many who went to Robben Island cut their teeth in the NIC or the NICYL. MK did provide a non-racial base, but this was for a limited time and occurred under abnormal circumstance. Prison put “non-whites” together, and this became an important incubator for the building of comradeship across the colour line. The costs, however, were immense.

George Naicker spent 14 years on Robben Island. After his release, he worked for a year in Archie Gumede’s legal firm, before going into exile in Zambia, where he managed Chongella Farm. He remained there after the unbanning of the ANC, and passed away on 8 April 1998. As per his will, George’s body was donated for medical research.³⁵ Locals paid their tribute to

him at a traditional Hindu service at the Arupa Khargan Temple in Chatsworth. Sunny Singh finally saw Durban again in 1974. Ten years had passed, and while many in Durban were starting to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by university education, Sunny's life in politics was also his education. Sunny loved Durban, but he could feel the state's repressive tentacles stalking him. He left on a journey that was to take him across the frontline states and then to Holland. By the time he arrived there his years in the movement had given him the experience and confidence to be the public face of the ANC and represent the organisation in the media.

Ebrahim Ebrahim's 15 years on the Island were used to strengthen both his resolve and his networks in the ANC. After the Island, he was reintegrated into the armed wing and was at the forefront of those fighters trying to hang on to an existence in the frontline states. As he became more effective, so the apartheid regime was determined to either capture or kill him. Abducted and tortured, he was returned to Robben Island. His is a biography of someone who went from street to the prison, to the trenches of the frontline states, to the benches of parliament, and back to the wilderness during standoff between Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. He is back in the political mainstream. After the 2009 elections he was appointed a deputy minister in President Zuma's cabinet.

Billy Nair took a similar route out of prison, straight into the humdrum of struggle. It is interesting that he never went into exile. He was there at the formation of COSATU and the UDF, and the state was constantly on his trail. Detention, escape to an embassy and, finally, the engine room of Operation Vula was the diet of Billy's post-Island life. His wife, Elsie, epitomised what so many of the struggle wives went through in holding things together. She was not exaggerating when she remarked that Billy was 'an absentee husband', because he spent so much time working clandestinely in underground structures or in prison, while she held down two and sometimes even three jobs to make ends meet. She waited patiently while he did his time, but on his release in February 1984, after 20 years on the Island, he 'hardly spent time at home [but] went

straight on to work for the movement.’ The best person to sum up Muna’s life, as Elsie fondly referred to Billy, is Elsie herself. At her eulogy to Billy on 16 November 2008, she said:

I wondered what Muna would have wanted me to say. He would not want me to sing his praises. He never placed any importance on himself in all that he accomplished, whether in the trade union movement, the political structures he served, the community struggles that he fought, or as a husband, a father, grandfather or as an academic and parliamentarian. If we want to keep Muna’s legacy alive, the least we can do is lead a principled life like him. Lead a life that recognises the self-worth of others, particularly the poor and the downtrodden, the children and the aged.

Billy was given a state funeral, testament to the esteem he was held in as a fighter for liberation.



Curnick Ndlovu and Kisten Moonsamy

© Kisten Moonsamy

Others like Kisten Moonsamy and Kisten Doorasamy did not reintegrate themselves into the political movements and its networks. However, their stories are as important to tell, for they gave the best years of their lives, in the most difficult of times, as pioneers of MK in Durban. Doorasamy, who spent 12 years on the Island, and who Moonsamy described as having a wonderful

sense of humour, was given a camera by friends and became a photographer. He lived a quiet life in Merebank, giving expression to his creative side, until his death in 1988.

Kisten Moonsamy had to endure his long years on the Island with occasional visits from family because of the cost. Sensing his loneliness, other prisoners ensured that he had visitors, and the likes of George Peake, a sympathetic councillor in the Cape, James Marsh, who spent ten years on the Island, and Achmat Cassiem of the PAC, arranged for their family members to visit Moonsamy. Moonsamy's joy of release was tempered by a marriage that was under incredible strain. His beloved Clairwood had all but vanished under the hammer of the Group Areas Act, and his home was now Chatsworth. He was banned for five years and restricted to Chatsworth, and tried unsuccessfully to look for work until some comrades bought him a truck, and he picked up scrap to scrape a living.

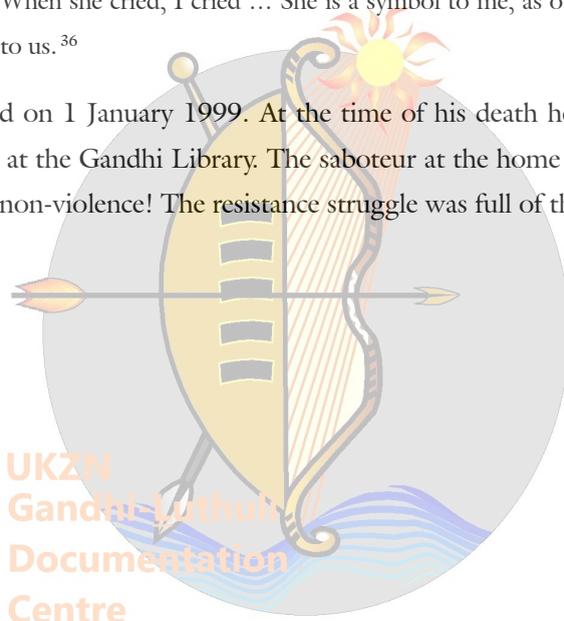
There were many in the community who rallied around him, none more so than Barry Kistensamy, who would subsequently become a Professor at the Medical School. Barry even took him to the old Transvaal once, in contravention of his banning order. Moonsamy singled out Billy for seeing him through some of his 'darkest moments, the trial, the journey to Cape Town, Robben Island. That's why we're living. Billy kept us going, kept up our spirits, and told us to keep going, a versatile comrade he was.' The cold of Robben Island and brutal treatment took its toll on Moonsamy, who became severely ill with asthma. His only means of survival is a small grant.

Siva Pillay was a B.Sc student at university when he joined Umkhonto. After serving eight years, he went into exile to East Germany and qualified as a civil engineer. He continues to live in Germany. Then there were those like Babenia who tried to rebuild their lives with their families, in his case especially with his daughter, and tried to earn a living. He arrived at Durban Central Prison at the end of February 1980:

I had left my daughter when she was nine years of age. I had only seen her once since then and that was in 1973 when we had to talk through a telephone

with a thick glass between us. For most of that time my baby and I cried ... I carried my cardboard box and went in ... I heard footsteps. It was Pravina. I was out! I was free! And here was my cute little granddaughter Anisha. After a few days I started treading the streets of the Grey Street area looking for work. A saboteur does not get a job easily. I still believe in the principles of our vanguard organisation ... In a struggle like ours, pessimism is the belief of a coward ... On 5th January 1987, I was detained under Section 29. I was released on the 21st of March 1987 from Wentworth Hospital ... a triple bypass operation. It was successful ... I have learnt to love my daughter ... Whenever she was hurt, I was hurt. When she cried, I cried ... She is a symbol to me, as our ANC flag is a symbol to us.³⁶

Babenia died on 1 January 1999. At the time of his death he was working as a volunteer at the Gandhi Library. The saboteur at the home of the greatest proponent of non-violence! The resistance struggle was full of these ironies.



The scattering

The child is not dead
neither at Langa nor at Nyanga
nor at Orlando nor at Sharpeville
nor at the police station in Philippi
where he lies with a bullet through his brain ...
the child who wanted just to play in the sun at Nyanga is everywhere
the child grown to a man treks all over Africa
the child grown to a giant travels through the whole World
Without a pass. ¹

INGRID JONKER

It is ironic that a man once labelled a terrorist and who served time as a political prisoner became one of apartheid South Africa's most notorious jailers – B.J. Vorster. After the Second World War, Vorster rose up the ranks of the NP and was elected to parliament in 1953 and became Minister of Justice in 1961. One of the most powerful weapons at his disposal was the 90-Day law of May 1963 which allowed for detention without trial or access to a lawyer of anyone suspected of committing sabotage or thought to possess information about sabotage. This gave the security apparatus wide licence. Detainees were often held for a further 90 days when their detention expired. Alan Paton would write of the 90-day clause:

[It is] a temptation to torture human beings, to smash their jaws, to break their limbs, and to bring some of them to the point where they would rather jump to death than face torture any longer. These things are bad enough. But the most abhorrent thing is that it can be used to destroy or maim or change the human personality, so that decent men and women can be persuaded to betray their

friends for the sake of themselves or their children or their liberty ... This is ... a kind of law and order that many white South Africans like, not because it is lawful ... but because it reserves their power and privilege. It is futile to suppose that one can preserve the law by going outside the law.²

Under Vorster's watch, the security establishment grew dramatically as he appointed figures imbued with the same ideological zeal as him. General van den Bergh, who like Vorster had been a member of the OB, became head of the security police in 1963. In 1962 sabotage became punishable by death. M.P. Naicker wrote in *New Age* that the bill 'is not only a threat to saboteurs, but to everybody who loves freedom.'³ Vorster once said that anyone considered a threat should 'be taken out of circulation one way or another if there are valid reasons for not bringing that person to trial.'⁴ When Vorster became Prime Minister after Verwoerd's assassination in 1966, he appointed Van den Bergh to head the Bureau of State Security (BOSS) and the security establishment became the NP's 'political protector with unfettered power.'⁵

With the repressive powers of the state inscribed in a myriad of laws, spaces for anti-apartheid forces to mobilise were increasingly circumscribed. Under the 90-Day law, members of the Congress Alliance in Durban were swept up in the police dragnet in the second half of 1964. They were locked in single cells, made to sleep on cement floors with a single, often vermin-infested, blanket as protection, and beaten physically and psychologically. It not surprising that some cracked under this pressure and 'confessed'. From these confessions, the police pieced together the underground activities of the CP, Sactu, and Umkhonto cells, where membership overlapped and included many in the NIC as well. The core of the underground included the likes of Rowley Arenstein, R.A. Pillay, Dr Masla Pather, George Naicker, Jack Singh, G.R. Naidoo, Dr S.A. Randeree, Kay Moonsamy, Bevandra Rajah, Sam Pillay, Steve Naidoo, Poomoney Moodley, Phyllis Naidoo, Steven Dlamini, Griffiths Mxenge, Vera Ponnen, Arvin Desai, Jerry Khumalo, M.P. Naicker, and M.D. Naidoo.⁶

Meetings were held at Valbro Chambers, Dr Randeree's surgery in Victoria Street and his house in Asherville, Dr Masla Pather's surgery in Cross Street,

and M.D. Naidoo's flat in Victoria Walk. Here, deep into the night they read banned materials, discussed Marxism, debated capitalism, guerrilla warfare, sabotage, the nature of the apartheid regime and the ways to topple it. Cut off from outlets to inform the masses of the latest political developments, leaflets became their main means of communication. Activists would meet late at night and go from street to street, or place large batches at bus and taxi ranks, or go to the top of high-rise buildings and throw the pamphlets from the rooftop. It was risky, but it was one of the few ways to disseminate anything political, according to Swaminathan Gounden, who was involved in many of these discussions.

M.P. Naicker and M.D. Naidoo were key figures in the communist structures in Durban, and information from the various structures filtered its way to them. They in turn recruited Sililo Ndlovu, who shuttled between Durban and Johannesburg, where he met with Wilton Mkwayi and Welsh Ndlovu, and gave them an update on Party activities in Durban, while also bringing back instructions. Because M.P. was carefully watched, a key go-between was Dr Randeree. Ndlovu usually met Dr Randeree in the Berea area or with M.D. Naidoo at a tea-room at the corner of Prince Edward and Cross Streets. The arrests of 1964 had virtually brought CP activity to a standstill, and MK became inactive in Durban, while contact with Johannesburg also ended.

The state felt that it had enough evidence against the Durban "underground" for a conviction. At the end of November 1964, George Ponnen, M.D. Naidoo, Kay Moonsamy, Steve Naidoo, Dr Randeree, M.P. Naicker, Eric Singh, and several others were charged under the Suppression of Communism Act. The signs were ominous, but then the group got lucky – they were granted bail. Faced with the possibility of lengthy jail sentences, many chose to flee into exile. Dr Randeree left around the end of January, Jack Govender and M.P. Naicker over Easter, and Kay Moonsamy, George Ponnen and others in May and June. With activists who had agreed to testify unavailable, it was difficult for the state to prosecute those who remained.

Choosing exile was not an easy decision, but activists were aware of the bleak alternatives. The brutality of the state became all too evident in the light of the

death of Babla Saloojee. Twenty activists died in detention between 1964 and 1969, with Looksmart Ngudle the first, just three months after the 90-Day law was introduced. Babla Saloojee, a 32-year-old attorney's clerk, was detained on 6 July 1964, two years into his marriage to Rokaya. Rokaya was only allowed 10 minute visits, and during one of these, she noticed that he had a makeshift bandage on his head. When she queried, the police terminated the visit without allowing her to speak to Babla. On 9 September 1964, she was told that Babla was in hospital after 'falling' from the sixth floor of the police headquarters while being interrogated.⁷ Abdulhay Jassat, who was also in detention at this time, told the TRC on 2 May 1996:

It's a lie. Babla was supposed to have jumped from the sixth floor of Gray's Building, falling on the parapet which was barely a metre wide. Now if you jumped from the sixth floor you would fall onto the road or pavement. Babla's body was actually on that parapet. I don't think any sane person, when there are 10 or 12 bulky policeman around you, would escape through a window on the sixth floor.⁸

According to Rokaya, the subsequent inquest lasted five minutes. Magistrate Kotze did not allow questions and responded 'that is all' when she asked why Babla's clothes were soaked in blood.⁹ The TRC found that 'in all probability, these persons tortured Saloojee during his interrogation, thus directly causing his death.'¹⁰

It was under these circumstances that many chose to go into exile or were instructed to do so by their respective movements. For security reasons, most left without as much as saying goodbye to family or friends. The route to exile was traumatic. Support structures were rudimentary and this was compounded by the fact that the movement had few resources in the frontline states. Then there were more personal traumas – children, lovers, friends, comrades. Once in exile there may have been a sense of relief from the persistent surveillance of the apartheid state but that relief was often temporary for the life of exile was difficult and the reach of the apartheid state into the frontline states was palpable.

It was to Botswana that most political refugees fled. When Treason Trialist Fish Keitsing was deported to Botswana in 1959, Walter Sisulu asked him to establish a safe-house in Lobatse. From Lobatse, exiles would go through Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) to Livingstone in Northern Rhodesia (Zambia).¹¹ When Southern Rhodesia began cooperating with the apartheid regime, exiles travelled across the Kalahari Desert to Kazangula, where the borders of Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia's Caprivi Strip meet, and took the "Freedom Ferry" across the river to Zambia.¹² Tanzania (Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Morogoro, Tunduma) and Zambia (Lusaka) were the most important ANC bases in Africa, while the CP set up base in London.¹³

Banned under the Suppression of Communism Act in 1952, M.P. Naicker was forced to resign from the NIC. He had been vice-president from 1945-1952, was secretary of the Joint Action Council in Natal with M.B. Yengwa during the Defiance Campaign, was a treason trialist, and was imprisoned for four months during the 1960 State of Emergency. In between he worked for *New Age*, and in August 1963 was arrested and accused of writing pro-ANC articles under the pseudonym 'Mandla Nkosi.' He was released after eight months as the state failed dismally to prove its case. M.P.'s imprisonment affected the family, according to his wife Saro, 'especially my daughter Suganya was very close to M.P.' M.P. had discussed exile, but Saro did not have an inkling that he was leaving. On Easter Friday 1965 he told Saro that he was going to play tennis and did not return. It was only after lunch the following day that she got a call, 'I'm safely in Lobatse' and 'jumped for joy.' He left because he couldn't take it anymore ... in and out [of jail], the torture, the 90 days, the 180 days ... He just couldn't take it anymore.' Saro followed two years later. Her application for a passport was refused and she left on an exit permit, 'which means you go one way.'

M.P. made his way to Tanzania and in May 1966 was instructed to go to London where he worked alongside Dadoo, Joe Slovo, Rusty Bernstein, and Brian Bunting. Oliver Tambo appointed him editor of *Sechaba* ('the Nation'), which was launched in January 1967 as the mouthpiece of the ANC in exile.

Sechaba, according to the ANC, was a critical tool ‘to bring before world public opinion every known instance of injustice committed in apartheid South Africa.’¹⁴ M.P. did a sterling job and the International Organisation of Journalists (OIJ) awarded him the gold pin in 1971 on its 25th anniversary ‘to recognise the services rendered to peace, freedom and democracy by *Sechaba*.’ In 1976, he received the prestigious Julius Fucik award, named after the journalist who was killed by the Nazis during the occupation of Czechoslovakia in World War II.



M.P. Naicker, Saro Suganya and Prin

© Dr Prin Naicker



M.P. in Moscow

© Dr Prin Naicker

Saro and M.P. found it difficult in London financially. M.P., according to Saro, ‘hated London. He wanted to return to South Africa by going underground and begged his mother who said, “if you are going, serve your politics honourably ... If you go underground we don’t know whether you are dead or alive. Even if you are in prison, we know you are there. If you go underground ... I’ll shoot myself.”’ Vladimir Shubin, the Soviet official who worked closely with the ANC, writes of M.P.’s homesickness: ‘After one long friendly dinner in Moscow he virtually begged his Soviet friends to help him reach Natal; he was sure he could survive and operate on his home turf.’¹⁵

It was en route to East Germany on 29 April 1977 that M.P. suffered a heart attack and died. Waiting for him at Schoenefeld Airport in Berlin was old friend Eric Singh of the NIYC who conveyed the news to Saro. M.P. would never get to see his beloved Durban. For him, 'London was duty but Durban was love.'¹⁶ Oliver Tambo, Dadoo, Brian Bunting, and other high-ranking members of the ANC and CPSA attended his funeral in London on 8 May 1977, where Tambo gave the keynote address.¹⁷ There was some irony in the eulogies, according to Shubin, who states that M.P. was both 'a popular and somewhat controversial figure in the ANC and SACP ... Limitations were imposed on his role in the SACP leadership, something about which he was particularly bitter.'¹⁸ Despite his seniority in the Party, he was never invited to sit on the Central Committee while in exile. Rumours of trust and issues of race have surfaced at different times, but this is one of those issues of exile that remains shrouded in mystery.

George and Vera Ponnen had long endured the vicious arm of the apartheid regime. Both had been served with multiple banning orders, the effect of which was to forbid them to speak to each other. Their 16-year-old daughter, Marsha, told reporters in 1964 that Vera refused to apply for permission to speak to George for 'it would make a farce of the marriage laws if she were to ask the Minister of Justice for permission.'¹⁹ Vera was not perturbed by the bans. 'We spring from the people, and as quickly as they ban us more rise to take our places. Banning action will not deter me.'²⁰ But life was becoming increasingly unbearable and in 1965 Ponnen went into exile, following the well-worn road from Durban to Lobatse, where he joined M.P. Naicker and Nanda Naidoo, who were living with another old comrade, Moulvi Cachalia.

Ponnen had been arrested in 1964 under the 90-Day law, was released and rearrested for a further 90 days. In all, he served 114 days without being charged. He was summoned to give evidence against Leonard Mdingi. He refused, and was imprisoned for 12 months. He appealed and skipped the country in May 1965 before the appeal could be heard. He was joined by Vera and their daughters in 1967. From Lobatse, they went to Zambia, and in 1975 joined

their daughters Indira and Marsha in Canada. They wrote to Alfred Nzo, the Secretary-General of the ANC on 21 October 1975:

Dear Comrade Alfred

With the permission of our organisation we are leaving Zambia to spend the rest of our time with our children. We realise that we are the most fortunate comrades to be able to do this as there are many comrades who have not seen their beloved ones for years. As you know, we have given 45 years of our life to the freeing of our beloved South Africa. It is our firm conviction to continue to fight, no matter where we are, for a free and democratic South Africa for all who live within her borders. It is with a deep sense of sorrow that we wish goodbye to all our comrades here, but we have enough faith in our young comrades to believe that we will live to see a Free South Africa in which we shall meet again. Written with all our love.

AMANDLA

Vera and George Ponnen.²¹

Vera did not live to see a free South Africa. She died on 1 March 1979 in Edmonton, Canada. Ponnen remained a faithful servant of the ANC and in October 1980, was sent to Amsterdam to assist the Holland Committee on South Africa establish a clothing factory in Tanzania to provide vocational training for ANC refugees. The factory was functional by 1983 and manufactured nurses' uniforms, blouses, shorts and maternity clothes. Returning to Canada, Ponnen and Yusuf Saloojee formed a Sactu Solidarity committee. Though ill, Ponnen insisted on returning to South Africa in February 1994 to vote in the country's first democratic election. He continued to suffer ill-health but found support from his old comrades Billy Nair and Phyllis Naidoo who paid regular visits until his death in January 1996.



Kay Moonsamy, 10th wedding anniversary 19 June 1965. He went into exile 10 days later.

© Kay Moonsamy



Kay Moonsamy and family reunited – Chatsworth, 16 November 1990.

© Kay Moonsamy

Kay Moonsamy was an executive member of the NIC. State repression and the arrest of key personnel took their toll on organised resistance: ‘Rivonia ... the ANC having gone underground and all the movements were more or less incapacitated ... the individuals too ... so everything was done underground and there was a big setback for any open work.’ Kay had married Khendari in 1955 and though they had four children, after he was charged in 1964 under the Suppression of Communism Act, the movement decided that he should go into exile:

You know the trial is a very complicated thing. Lionel Meskin defended us ... addressed the court for three solid hours ... made a brilliant case. They withdrew the charges but then they charged us individually. I was the first one to be charged and the underground movement said, “Go!” Imagine ... I did not know whether I was going to return home...you cannot discuss anything with anyone, not even my wife. When I left that morning, I can still picture them in Red Fern Road in Springfield – four children, the youngest Rajen was just about nine months old, Tammy was nine, Ragini was six, Saroj was two and a half.

The date of his leaving – 29 June 1965 – is etched in his memory.

Kay went to the place of rendezvous, the Hindu Tamil Institute, where Mewa Ramgobin pointed to a vehicle with two strange occupants. He went empty-handed, ‘just what I was wearing. Not a single thing on one’s self.’ He was taken to the ...

... Zeerust road. All I could see is just a forest and it is a winter’s morning, couldn’t even see your palms, it was pitch black, pitch dark ... scary. I had never been in a forest before and all kinds of thoughts were going through my mind, like snakes, wild animals ... Some of my other colleagues had harrowing tales, you know, how they lost the road and so on.

Kay eventually jumped the South African fence, entered a short space of no-person’s land, then jumped the Botswana [Bechuanaland] fence. He declared at the police station that he was a political exile. ‘Then of course they took

photographs, you know, they were in collusion with the South Africans so they sent all the photographs to South Africa.’ Strict conditions were imposed on him. He could not leave Lobatse or attend gatherings, and had to report to the police weekly. He shared a house with Moulvi Cachalia, M.P., Ponnen, Steve (Nanda) Naidoo, and Eric Singh.

Kay remained in Lobatse for three years, taking over from Ponnen in a clerical position at an electrical firm owned by one “Jambo”, an expatriate from Holland. In October 1968, Kay was transferred to the ANC’s office in Zambia. One of his abiding memories is the Morogoro Conference when they travelled 1 800 kilometres in a truck. This was the “Hell Run” “because Tanzania was not developed, so we had breakdowns and ... travelling in trucks ... it was hell.’ They reached Morogoro on 25 April 1969 as Oliver Tambo was opening the six-day conference. Kay spent a decade in Zambia, commuting often between Morogoro and Lusaka. At Morogoro, he pioneered the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College with Henry Makgoti, Dennis Oswald, and Spencer Hodson. In 1978, he was involved in a serious motor accident that shattered his left hip. He was in hospital for nearly four months and was only able to walk after 18 months. In the early 1980s, Kay was sent to India to replace Mosie Moolla for six months.

Kay carries the scars of a serious accident, the separation from his family and the murder by the apartheid regime of some of his closest comrades, like Cassius Make, with whom he had forged a close bond. This reinforced how close an apartheid bullet was. ‘They [apartheid regime] had such a network ... you cannot even make a telephone call.’ But exiles developed their own networks, often based on old ones nurtured on the streets of Durban. Kay spent time with George Ponnen in Zambia, and with Phyllis Naidoo and Steven Dlamini in Lesotho when working for the Swedish Development Agency. It was ‘this that kept me going.’ During his decades in exile he met his family only twice, in Swaziland in 1980 and in Durban in 1990 after the unbanning of the ANC.

Exile is very difficult, not only for the individual but imagine now being separated from your family ... from your kith and kin ... from your dearest and loving

family and what they have to go through and then the harassment, you know, for all those who went in exile it was continuous harassment. SB would visit the family every now and again wanting to know what letters had been received and who comes here. That was a continuous harassment.

Kay returned to a much changed South Africa. Many of his old friends and family had passed on, and his immediate family had moved from Springfield to Chatsworth, a township that barely existed at the time of exile. Kay has been a member of parliament and the highest decision-making bodies of the CP since his return.

The Unity Movement was also decimated by bannings, house arrests, and persecution in the post-1960 period. The arrests in 1964 were a signal for the leadership to flee the country, including Ahmed Limbada, Alma Carolissen, Leonards Nikane, Diliza Lande, Eddie Ncalu, Cassim Kikia and Mannie Pillay. Mannie Pillay settled in Lobatse and was the unofficial Unity Movement representative in Botswana, while Cassim Kikia settled in Serowe and entered formal politics in his adopted home. Hassan Shaik, who led the 1960 leather workers' strike at Eddels, was dismissed from his job and survived by hawking samoosas. Banned in 1964, he refused to buckle to the discipline of the banning orders, and was jailed for a year for reporting late to the police station. The usual sentence for such a misdemeanour was seven days for the first offence. Hassan appealed, and the sentence was reduced to seven days. But the episode made it clear to him that he faced perpetual persecution, so he took an exit permit for England, where he spent 25 years. He returned, literally, to die in his home country, because the day before he was due to return to England, he passed away in Pietermaritzburg.²²

Ahmed Limbada went to Botswana and from there to Zambia. Aside from the struggle to set up a political base in exile, he was struck by personal grief when his daughter, Cookie, was killed in a motor accident in 1972. It was a blow from which he never recovered. He cut an increasingly isolated figure until his death from a heart attack in 1998. The biggest disappointment for the Unity Movement, however, was its failure to get recognition from the OAU,

which handicapped efforts to build a political mission.

Both Zuleika Christopher and Enver Hassim were banned in 1964 and subsequently detained under the 90-Day law. In 1966, they were charged with breaching their banning orders and given suspended sentences. The Provincial Administration dismissed Zulei from her position as Senior Medical Officer, which she successfully challenged in the Supreme Court. Enver was detained under the 180-Day detention law for allegedly forging passports for exiles. They were also subject to routine persecution: surveillance, telephone tapping, threatening calls and police raids, euphemistically called 'visits'. Exile was difficult, but was the only way for them, in Kader's words, 'to escape the wrath of fascism ... Those who remained viewed such departures as fighters who, after being wounded, tactically take themselves away from the battlefield.' Zulei Christopher died in exile in 1992.²³

Karrim Essack, intellectual mentor of many in the Unity Movement, fled after being granted bail in 1966. After falling out with the Unity Movement leadership in exile, he went to Zambia, and from there to India to study journalism at the age of 55. His classmates included future Tanzanian president Benjami Mkapa. In Mkapa's words, we 'became instant friends. There was an easy meeting of minds between us.'²⁴ In 1970, Karrim relocated to Tanzania and wrote for *News Line*, *Daily News* and *Sunday News*, while his voice was frequently heard on radio. He wrote around 20 books, the last being *Struggle for Democracy in Zaire*. Karrim was well known in government circles in the DRC, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana. He died in Dar es Salaam in April 1997. Journalist friend Makwaia wa Kuhlenga of *The Express* in Tanzania described him as a man of 'immense energy and stamina ... His mind was in a race, in a hurry. To him, there was so much to do within so little time.'²⁵ Mkapa described him as a 'model worth emulating...His hatred against any form of colonialism, oppression, segregation, injustice and despotic rule was legendary ... He has left a large void in the Tanzanian literary and intellectual scene.'²⁶

Essack was rare among South African exiles in focusing on the politics of

Africa. He did not only liberate himself from the exclusive focus on South Africa by taking a deep interest in national liberation struggles across the continent, but got involved in these struggles. While some in his old political home may have heaped scorn on his “conversion”, his vision may, in retrospect, be seen as more forward-looking than those who hung on to Marxist precepts, but failed to venture beyond the confines of *their* national liberation struggles.

The enigmatic M.D. Naidoo, a powerful influence on a generation of young activists in the Congress movement, faced persistent state repression. He was banned in 1963, detained under the 90-Day Law from September to November 1964, and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act on 25 November 1964 (the charges were dropped in February 1965). While he led a precarious existence, the state could not pin him down on any serious charge until 1966, when he was charged with being a member of an unlawful organisation (CP), recruiting and providing logistical support to MK; obstructing the course of justice by assisting George Ponnen, Kay Moonsamy, Basil Leach, and Eric Singh escape into exile during May and June 1965, and being in possession of banned material, Che Guevara’s *Guerilla Warfare*. M.D. was arrested on 2 June 1966, four days after the birth of his daughter Sakthi. When the prosecutor tried to influence M.D. to act as a state witness in return for leniency, he bristled with indignation. On 8 June 1966 he provided a written statement:

I have made no statement to any of the officers concerned. I have moreover made it plain that I will not make a statement. I have previously made it quite clear that this declining to make a statement is to me a matter of principle despite detention and pressure having brought on me... There are no grounds whatsoever for any reasonable belief that I am likely to be a witness for the state.

The trial began in September and judgement was given on 5 December 1966 against M.D. who was sentenced to five years imprisonment which he served on Robben Island. Unfortunately for M.D., “comrades” like Jack Govender, J.T. Matseke, H.N. Mgobosi and Jethro Ndlovu testified against him. Hassim Seedat, N.T. Naicker, and Poomoney Moodley gave evidence in M.D.’s defence

but to no avail.²⁷

The journey of Jack Govender reveals the predicament of those called upon to give evidence against comrades. Jack had refused to testify against Kay Moonsamy. This was a brave move, for not only had he endured torture, he now faced a prison sentence. He sought refuge in Lobatse. He left with hardly a goodbye, and abandoned his wife and several small children. But soon the fate of his family gnawed into his conscience as they were without financial support. He wrote to Seedat, Pillay & Co. on 11 July 1965 for assistance to sell his home for £7 000 and deposit:

... the cash in a Building Society, and use the interest for paying rent, etc ...
You will no doubt appreciate my concern is the welfare of my wife and children
... As far as my future is concerned I have no definite plans as yet. Lobatse is a small place and my impression is that there is not much scope in the way of employment, but I have put my feelers for something temporary at least.²⁸

Jack's attempts to help his family were unsuccessful, and with them facing destitution, he was ridden with guilt and returned to South Africa, not to serve his prison sentence, but to turn state witness and his evidence was crucial in sending M.D. to the Island for five years.

M.D.'s release from Robben Island was not the end of his release from the clutches of the state. On the day before he was freed, he was handed a five-year ban, which included house arrest and 24-hour surveillance. A brilliant lawyer, he was prevented from practising and was struck off the roll. He tried his hand at being an estate agent, but with Group Areas being implemented with religious fervour, Indians were relocating to townships and suburbs beyond the immediate confines of the inner city and surrounding neighbourhoods, where M.D. was not permitted to travel. Further, as he noted, 'when you're obviously under police surveillance, people are not very keen on being seen with you, especially the kind of people who have money.' His marriage to Phyllis failed to stand the strain of imprisonment.

Financially strained, emotionally drained and with the state keeping a

watchful eye on him, M.D. found life in Durban increasingly unbearable and as Soweto 1976 erupted and the state responded with a massive clampdown, he slipped into exile. That M.D. opted for exile is an indication of how intolerable conditions had become – after all, he had told the court in 1966 that he could have fled into exile with other activists, but refused on principle:

My belief is that any person, whether he is a leader or a humble musket bearer, his duty, if he hopes to make any impact in his country, is his own country, and I may add that had I not felt as a South African that it was my duty to be here, I would not have returned in 1956, because at that time the conditions in this country were substantially similar, with the same Government in power, as it is today.²⁹

M.D. made his way to London, where he was the ANC representative on the International Committee Against Apartheid, Racism and Colonialism in South Africa. He returned to South Africa in 1991 and lived here until his death in 1995. His was a sad end to a great life, according to Dr Goonam:

He was a wonderful fellow, a tremendous brain, a kingpin ... When he died nobody came from the government, not one soul. He was working for the ANC in London for that matter. Other people spoke but not one from the ANC, and he gave his life for the ANC, his life. M.D. was a very good thinker ... He was the best speaker after Dadoo. And not only that, but a thinker. So I was shocked ... not one word from the ANC, not even a telegram.³⁰

Somehow one got a sense that M.D. would not have cared about this. He had long got used to this kind of treatment from fellow travellers in the liberation movement. But despite the best efforts of many to write M.D. out of the anti-apartheid struggle, history will record his debating skills and incisive thinking. The fact that he died unheralded was symptomatic of the way he lived his life, having the ability to walk his own road.

Phyllis Naidoo's banning for five years in 1966 (extended by a further five years in 1971) coincided with husband M.D. Naidoo's imprisonment on Robben Island and the birth of Sakthi.

Overnight my job as a teacher was ended because you couldn't enter educational premises. And with a husband on Robben Island, I was expected to care for three children. It was a horrendously punitive measure. I asked in a letter to the Minister of Justice how could an unarmed pregnant mother threaten the military might of the regime. They boasted they were the greatest army from Cape to Cairo, until of course they met the Cubans at Cuito Cuanavale (1988), and thank God for that! So, for ten years I had to report my presence to the police every Monday. One morning I failed to report when Sha had an asthmatic attack. I was sentenced to ten days imprisonment [June 1967], ten days that shook my world.³¹



Phyllis Naidoo with Sadhan, Sharadh and Sakthi

© Phyllis Naidoo Collection, UKZN Documentation Centre

While M.D. was on Robben Island, Phyllis took care of the children, worked, and completed her law degree. She served articles and had to apply to the Supreme Court in 1972 to be admitted as an attorney. She worked for Archie Gumede from 1973 and was involved in the 'Harry Gwala Ten Trial' from 1975.³² This drew attention from the security police, and she was forced into

exile. The hardest part was not telling Archie Gumede: “How do you leave a friend, a partner and a comrade without bidding farewell?” The struggle forced awful decisions that were non-negotiable.³³ With the help of people like Dr Suleman Ismail, Omar Badsha, and an anonymous African woman from Clermont, she made her way to Ficksburg where she ‘waded across’ the bridge.³⁴ Rick Turner, who was assassinated by the regime in 1978, mapped her trip to Lesotho, which required her to cross the river at its narrowest point:

But they didn’t know that the walls were about five metres high. I lost my gloves, shoes, and the blanket I had. When I hit the water it was 23 July 1977, freezing cold in the icy river. Get to the other side and some *tsotsis* see me. I had R150 in my pocket. I remember looking up at this grey old man who whistled and they dropped me and ran. And he said, ‘where are you going to?’ and I said, ‘Maseru.’ ‘Go that way’.³⁵

She went to the nearest home where the locals gave her a pot of tea, and took her to an Indian shop in Maputswe where the local shopkeeper put her in contact with friend and lawyer Khalakhi Sello.³⁶

Phyllis and M.D. Naidoo had separated, and the boys went with him to England. From there, Sha went to study in Cuba where he completed a doctorate in Physics and Sadhan studied agricultural engineering in Hungary. Sha, a lecturer at Wits, died of a liver disease in 1995. Phyllis’s mother and a brother also died while she was in exile. Her daughter, Sakthi, was living with her in Maseru when she was injured in a bomb attack on 6 July 1979. The bomb was concealed in a package containing copies of *Sechaba*. Phyllis lost seven teeth and her hearing in one ear, but she refused to leave. In September 1983, however, she was forced to leave Lesotho at 24 hours notice by the government. Forty-two people had been killed in the previous year and to avoid more casualties she heeded the call.

Phyllis went to London but missed Africa very much and relocated to Zimbabwe, where she knew the Minister of Home Affairs, Ishu Kunzi, who had studied medicine in Durban.³⁷ She returned to South Africa on 26 June

1990. Exile was a ghastly experience for Phyllis:

Exile for me was from 23 July 1977 to 26 June 1990. The date, time, place is remembered. Exile sticks in your mind like nothing else does.³⁸ You remember the jacaranda tree and the flowers on the road or a smile on somebody's face, meeting them on a Saturday morning in Grey Street ... There is also the realisation of being further than ever from the home front. Were we to die of old age in exile?³⁹

But Phyllis suffered a fate that she described as 'worse than exile. I thought exile was the ultimate punishment until I lost my son.' Sadhan was assassinated on 15 April 1989, shot while watching television on an ANC farm in Zambia. That explains partly why the end of apartheid was received with mixed feelings: 'We went into the struggle for our children and they are not here. So there's no pride, just sadness.' Now in her eighties, Phyllis lives close to her old neighbourhood in the Warwick Triangle area in Durban. She is a prolific writer and has spent a considerable time capturing the period from the 1950s when the Grey Street quarter was filled with political intrigue and action.

Much changed, inside and outside South Africa, in the period covered in this chapter. The decades from the 1960s to the 1980s were the height of the Cold War, and US and British support for South Africa was crucial in propping up the apartheid regime; the other side of the coin was that the independence of Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia was a boost for anti-apartheid activists. These changes also meant that the countries in which exiles were located and the liberation movements which were favoured at powerful particular points in time, fluctuated.

The most conspicuous feature of this period was the emergence of the ANC as the pre-eminent liberation movement by the 1980s, garnering massive support inside the country with the help of the trade union movement (COSATU) and the United Democratic Front (f. 1983), as well as building a global network of support inside and outside government structures. Discussion of these, and other crucial developments such as the internecine conflicts that riddled the

PAC, the fragmentation of the Unity Movement, and the violence that became a feature of life in the ANC camps in Angola, fall outside the scope of this chapter, but this has been covered elsewhere as new oral and documentary sources become available.⁴⁰

Exile was crucial in shaping the post-apartheid landscape. As Sapire points out, it was in exile that ...

... the battered remnants of a resistance movement were reconstituted into a universally recognised custodian of South African freedom through its diplomacy, propaganda and material and moral support of international solidarity movements ... It was in exile that annual budgets of \$50 million were raised; in exile where the anti-apartheid movement's moral capital was traded for sub-machine guns, the solidarity and the sanctions ... It was in Lusaka, a byword by the 1980s, for the movement in exile, that the political hopes of black South Africans were formalised into institutions, hierarchies and bureaucracy, a virtual government in exile.⁴¹

For South African anti-apartheid fighters, exile produced both a physical and metaphysical restlessness and movement. Karrim Essack eventually found a home in Tanzania, but left his ideological one to do that. He became a Pan-Africanist and spent his life in the service of that broader cause, effectively putting on the back-burner the cause of his exile. Others like Phyllis and Kay moved across the frontline states, leading peripatetic lifestyles as they crossed borders and helped to build the ANC in exile. "Home" was around the corner, but as the years passed by, the return seemed ever further away. George Ponnen also felt a burning desire to return to Durban, but by now his daughters had a new home in Canada, and are unlikely to return. In a sense they never left, because they were too young to grow roots.

M.P Naicker died on his way to print another edition of *Sechaba*, his yearning for home unfulfilled. H.A. Naidoo died disillusioned, far from his roots on the sugar plantations of the Natal coast where he was the Sirdar of freedom, and even further from his ideological base. Ahmed Limbadia was left to regret his

inability to translate his energy into a solid organisation in exile, and slowly his life ebbed away.



Dr Goonam

© Dr Goonam

What of Monty's ship- and class-mate in Edinburgh? As the 1950s unfolded, Dr Goonam found a niche in social welfare and women's organisations, but by the 1970s, as the political climate heated up, she went into exile in England, working with Asian migrants from Pakistan and Uganda. Footloose and refusing the discipline of exile party politics, she escaped to Australia and then, as Africa called, moved to Zimbabwe. She returned to South Africa when the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela freed. On hearing the news, she wrote...

I was drunk with joy in sheer ecstasy. I am sure all exiles felt the same. Personally, I didn't feel I would be alive to see that day, to experience that incredible feeling of happiness ... And so here I am, at home. I will stay in my country till death do us part.⁴²

She got her wish and died in an apartheid-free South Africa. The Indian community could somehow never come to terms with the chain-smoking “Coolie Doctor”, even though she was both respected and feared for this potent mix of qualities.

Monty’s other class-mate Yusuf Dadoo also went into exile. Dadoo was a person of magnetic appeal in South Africa. His speeches some five decades later are still remembered by the few remaining activists of his time who are still around. His ability to cut across ideological divides was to be seen in his leadership of the Nationalist bloc and bond with Gandhi. He played a pivotal role in breaking the boundaries of racial politics and the transition of the Indian Congresses into an alliance with the ANC. In exile he was cut off from a mass base and in a sense reinvented himself. A central figure in London for both the ANC and CP, he took on the task of stitching the relationship between the ANC/CP and the Soviet Union. This saw him sometimes become a praise-singer of the Soviet Union, the antithesis of the free-wheeling, mould-breaking, boundary-crossing activist of the 1940s and 50s.

While some who went into exile returned home, many did not. Pope Gregory VII is reported to have said in the eleventh century, ‘I have loved justice and hated iniquity: therefore I die in exile.’ The quest for justice was what took many from the streets of Durban and towns across Natal into exile. Some like M.P., George Naicker and H.A. Naidoo never got to return. Some have chosen to stay in their adopted countries. Eric Singh lives in Germany, Dr Randeree in Canada and Saro Naicker in England: too many years have probably passed, the memories jarred by the loss of family and friends, and their roots are planted elsewhere. Those who returned have not necessarily chosen similar paths; Kay Moonsamy is still “inside” the Party and was in Parliament until 2009, while Phyllis has chosen to be “outside” from where she continues, sometimes with a sense of humour and at other times with biting invective, to challenge those who have power.

People like Mac Maharaj and Ebrahim Ebrahim have had a topsy-turvy post-apartheid life. Mac was to play a central role in the negotiations and became a

cabinet minister in South Africa's first democratically elected parliament. His star dimmed under the leadership of Thabo Mbeki. But with the coming to power of Jacob Zuma in 2009 he has returned to the political fray, acting as special envoy. Ebrahim Ebrahim's star also waned under Mbeki. But with his old cellmate's ascension to the Presidency he has become a Deputy Minister. On the other hand the Pahad brothers, who played a central role in Mbeki's administration, have both followed him into internal political exile. The intrigues and battles of exile still have resonance in the open formal politics of post-apartheid South Africa.

We began this chapter with a poem by Ingrid Jonker. Jonker, a white Afrikaner poet, was moved by the story of a baby shot dead in his mother's arms in Nyanga during the 1960 anti-pass law uprisings. She went to the Philippi police station to see the body. She wrote in 1963 that the poem 'grew out of my experiences and sense of bereavement. It rests on the foundation of all philosophy, a certain belief in "life eternal", a belief that nothing is ever wholly lost.'⁴³

Mandela recited Jonker's poem in his first speech to the South African parliament in 1994. It was a haunting reminder of the brutality of times past and gave evocative credence to Jonker's assertion that 'nothing is ever wholly lost.' One of the ironies is that while Mandela survived to preside over a South Africa without passes, Jonker did not. She ended her life by walking into the ocean in Cape Town.⁴⁴

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The personal and the political

Bannings are a severe attack on the civil liberties of the individuals concerned. Banning is used as a weapon to stifle the anti-apartheid voice of the country. In the face of this onslaught it is the duty of all politically conscious South Africans on both sides of the colour line to speak with a united voice ... If individuals have committed a breach of any law they should be tried and convicted by the courts of the country.¹

MONTY NAICKER (1963)

The repression of the early 1960s had a cancerous effect on struggle organisations as thousands of activists came under the hammer of the apartheid state. There was both an ideological as well as a physical parting of ways. Some opted for armed struggle and the likes of Billy Nair, Ebrahim Ebrahim and Kisten Moonsamy were among those incarcerated for many years on Robben Island. George Ponnen, Kay Moonsamy, Ahmed Limbada, Karim Essack, Phyllis Naidoo, M.P. Naicker and a host of others were forced into exile. Others rejected the armed struggle, or at least were not active participants in acts of sabotage, and chose to remain in South Africa. They were mostly silenced through draconian measures like “listings,” bannings, and banishment. They included the likes of Monty, M.D. Naidoo, Fatima Meer, Debi Singh, George Singh, and others who had been at the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle for decades.

The state passed legislation which gave it unbridled power to commit people to house arrest and even prohibited the quoting of any statement made anywhere at any time by those who were banned from attending gatherings. Between 1950 and 1966, 568 persons were listed as communists and around 900 were banned.² By 1978, 1 358 people had been subjected to banning orders, with

bans being renewed in most cases.³ Anyone could be banned without the Minister of Justice having to justify the decision.

Bannings took their toll on personal lives and decades-old friendships, cutting off activists from their families, organisations and communities. Talented leaders were forced to mark time as the years ticked by and memories of their exploits and leadership faded and their own sense of purpose eroded. Those “listed” as communists could not work for organisations involved in publishing or state educational institutions. They had to inform the police when they moved house or changed jobs. “Listed” lawyers could not practise their profession. Bannings signalled the political death of most activists. Bannings affected individuals as well as their organisations. The multiple bannings of NIC leaders meant that both its internal organisational structures as well as its ability to respond to the afflictions faced by its constituency were severely compromised. While new people were drafted in, many of them courageous given the fate of their predecessors, they were often inexperienced and struggled to win the trust of ordinary members. At the same time, given the high costs of bannings, many shied away from leadership responsibilities because of the severe repercussions.

For most of the years from 1952 to 1973, Monty was either a prisoner awaiting trial, a detainee, or banned person. He was served with a five-year banning order in 1963 which, on expiry in 1968, was extended to 30 April 1973. During these years he was confined to the magisterial district of Durban; could not enter a factory; go into an African area; communicate with another banned person; prepare, print, publish or assist in the publication of any newspaper, magazine or handbill; give educational instruction to any persons other than his own children; attend social and political gatherings; enter any university, college, or school. An article in *Drum* reported in 1968:

Less than 20 years ago the names of Dr “Monty” Naicker and Chief Luthuli were on the lips of most South Africans. Both men were able to hold audiences spellbound, no matter what their colour and no matter how big they were. The once portly and now greying Dr Naicker would receive a thunderous ovation each time he went to the rostrum to make a speech. He was at home while leading a

political rally at the “Red Square” or talking to a group of diplomats at a foreign embassy. But the world has changed for Dr Gangathura Mohambry Naicker. Another five-year ban has been imposed on him in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act. For the next five years this man who was the life and soul of any party, be it social or political, will live in a world of loneliness, a world which will be as foreign to him as India would be to an Eskimo ... Monty Naicker can only eat, drink, dance, and have social intercourse with his wife and children. As both his optician daughter [Vasugee] and student son [Kreesen] are overseas, his social world is limited to that in which he and his wife live. ⁴



Happier times. Monty and Marie's silver wedding anniversary.

© Kreesen Naicker

These restrictions had a terrible effect on Monty, for at heart he loved to party and mix socially with family, friends and colleagues alike. He was the originator of “The Bellair Club” with the likes of Dr B.T. Chetty, and Dr M.N. Padayachee. Here, at No. 68 River Road, song, dance and wine was consumed with gusto by fellow activists. But slowly the banning shored up the boundaries of Monty’s

ability to join in any form of socialising, let alone political work. Families and friends described how the bannings deprived Monty of social interaction and condemned him to live under constant surveillance. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, Monty's exuberance ebbed away. The effect on his personality was exacerbated by the persistent harassment, unannounced visits, and occasional legal action for frivolous transgressions.



Silver wedding anniversary. Seated next to Marie is her brother, Dr Shannugam Appavoo. Nyani, Shannugam's wife is seated next to Monty. The young lady dancing is Suganya, M.P. Naicker's daughter.

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Monty was charged with contravening his banning order when Alan and Anne Paton had dinner at his house. The incriminating evidence was led by Lieutenant Stander, who testified that on 19 January 1966 he was “spying” on Monty's house when the couple visited. Stander entered the house a short while later and found Monty having dinner with Marie, Vasugee, and the Patons. Monty was given a two-month suspended sentence for attending a “social gathering.” He appealed in November 1966 that he could not “attend” a gathering in his

own house. As he owned the home, it was in fact the others who “attended”, and there was no law preventing them from doing so.⁵ Justice Milne dismissed the appeal on 11 December 1966. The invitation to the Patons, as far as he was concerned, constituted a “social gathering” which Monty “attended” by his presence. He could have eaten a solitary meal elsewhere in the house but chose to be “deliberately present” and was therefore guilty of attending his own dinner party.⁶ When Monty’s banning ended in 1973, an editorial in *Graphic* recounted this episode:

For the first time now in eight years, Dr Naicker can entertain his friends and relatives to dinner in his own home. Terrible is it not, that someone sitting somewhere in a closed office had the power and used it, to make it illegal for a citizen of South Africa to provide ordinary hospitality. For it was simply because Dr Naicker provided hospitality – the kind of action which is enjoined by the teachings of Christ, and the Buddha, and Mohammad and every Hindu sage – it was because of such ordinary decent human conduct, when Dr Naicker sat with a meal with Dr Alan Paton, that he was charged like a criminal and convicted.⁷

The Suppression of Communism Act defined a “gathering” as two persons who should have a “common purpose”: that is, they should be seeking to achieve a common objective through concerted action rather than merely coming together by chance. Banned persons were often uncertain as to what constituted a “gathering”. As Rusty Bernstein pointed out, ‘life had become like an expedition through a minefield without charts or white taped lines to delimit where one can tread and where one cannot.’⁸ Monty loved dancing and often went to The Island and Himalaya hotels. Did this constitute a social gathering? He sought legal advice on mundane matters such as playing golf and dancing. His counsel advised on 6 March 1967 that he could not attend a public dance to which guests were invited but could attend the Island Hotel, for example, provided he had not pre-arranged to meet anyone. Monty could view a movie at a public cinema but not at a private home; he could attend a sports match alone but not with friends. He was once denied permission to play

badminton at a Community Centre because there was a kindergarten nearby. One of Monty's few pleasures in life was golf, a game that he loved but had to play in isolation and could not go to the clubhouse for refreshments.



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A lonely road

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In addition to the limitations inside of his home, including whom he could break bread with, Monty had to seek permission from the Ministry of Justice for virtually every movement outside his house. For example, on 4 November 1963 he sought permission to attend his own appeal hearing in Pietermaritzburg; in September 1963 he obtained permission for his wife's brother from the Eastern Cape to stay with him as a guest as he was on his way abroad; on 11 February 1964 he was given permission to consult with his defence counsel M.D. Naidoo; in February 1965 he requested permission to attend his daughter Vasugee's engagement; and in June 1965 he was given permission to attend her wedding. On 18 November 1970, he asked to be allowed to visit his ill brother,

Loganathan, in Pietermaritzburg. He was allowed to go on 22 November, but had to leave home at 10:00 am and return by 6:00 pm. All of this in addition to reporting to the local police station weekly. There were economic consequences as well.



Monty had to get the state's approval to attend Vasugee's wedding.

© Kreesen Naicker

On 8 June 1967 Monty submitted a request to the Minister of Justice for permission to enter Chatsworth. He explained that he had been practising in Durban since 1935 among ...

... the Indian employees of the Durban Corporation and their families residing at Depot Road, Durban. Practically all these Indians are now residing in the Chatsworth Township. Though Chatsworth is within the boundaries of the Durban Municipality, it is in the magisterial District of Pinetown. Hence it is not possible for me to enter this area to attend to my patients. These people have to travel 10-14 miles each way on every occasion when they call at my consulting room at Short Street. Since the Municipal workers are in the lowest income

group, they are finding it extremely difficult to pay for transport to and back from Durban. My fees are very moderate and some of the patients who have been attended to by me over the last 32 years are reluctant to go to any other medical practitioner ... May I be permitted to apply to you for authority to enter the Chatsworth Housing Scheme?

The police reported to the Minister on 25 July 1967 that 'Dr Naicker's political history gives a clear indication of the type of security risk he is, and it is recommended that his request for greater freedom of movement not be acceded to.' The application was declined on 8 August.



A dog's life?

© Kreesen Naicker

Bannings forced a fundamental change in the way activists conducted their everyday lives and how resistance was organised. While these forms of repression were affecting the lives of individuals, other laws dramatically changed the geography of urban South Africa. One of the most draconian was the Group Areas Act (GAA) which swept up tens of thousands of Indians, coloureds

and Africans and relocated them to the periphery of cities in huge dormitory townships. Group Areas 'was apartheid': these were the chilling words of Prime Minister D.F. Malan when the act was passed. It constituted the cornerstone of a policy aimed at securing the most privileged spaces for whites, while the rest of the population were to be corralled into their own group areas, often at some distance from the city and their places of work.

Monty had spoken out against the GAA with great emotion and gusto from its inception in 1950. On 13 December 1951, for example, he told an NIC meeting:

I know how you have slaved and saved in order to build your shanties. Today they want to take them away from you. I emphasise it is legalised robbery. Their objective is quite clear. They first want to put you in Reserves and ultimately take away your shops, schools, mosques, etc. They want you to die of starvation and those that are left will be repatriated.⁹

He told a conference of the NIC on 5 May 1956:

We oppose the uprooting of any peoples from their homes. The application of this policy has accentuated racial tension, conflict and bitterness on an unprecedented scale ... In relation to the Indian community, it is clear that the real motives behind the Group Areas Act are (a) to deprive the Indian people of their long established ownership of land and homes; (b) to facilitate the uprooting and expatriation of South African citizens of Indian origin; (c) to ruin the Indian people economically; and (d) to confine them to ghettos as a source of cheap labour.¹⁰

The Act soon came knocking on Monty's door. He was evicted from his home of 20 years while he was banned, making him one of the thousands of victims of Group Areas. In introducing the Act, the Minister of Interior stated that 'the dangers of residential juxtaposition between members of different races is not a newly discovered danger ... The Durban Riots show the dangers of residential juxtaposition for the peace and quiet of the country.' The very

policies of segregation which were taken up with gusto by the apartheid state and underpinned the 1949 riots were now used as a justification for those policies.

W.A. Maree, leader of the NP in Natal, warned in 1956 that ‘the Indians would be only too pleased to get out of South Africa after the effects of the Group Areas Act had been felt.’¹¹ Like the proverbial sword of Damocles, the threat of repatriation hung over the heads of Indians. A government committee of 1950 was emphatic on this point:

There appears to be an ever-growing belief in the public mind that the only satisfactory solution of the Asiatic question is repatriation, and whatever is done by legislation should be such as not (to) deprive the public of its most cherished hopes. The fundamental theme of the evidence has been and still is “repatriation, or, failing which, compulsory segregation” ... with boycott (of shops) to induce repatriation.¹²

Monty described the Act as ‘the high-water mark of the Union’s legislation against non-European land rights in South Africa.’ Apartheid, he said, was based on perpetuating white domination by creating a reservoir of cheap Black labour through territorial segregation. The Land Act of 1913, Urban Areas Act of 1923, and Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 were directed against Africans. The Ghetto Act of 1946 and GAA targeted Indians:

The object of the Act is to convert non-European workers into a low-paid and highly exploitable labour force and to reduce them to a position where they are unable to compete on the labour market with the European worker. The standard of living of the workers will be considerably reduced by imposing on them additional transport costs when their place of residence becomes removed ... far away from their place of employment. The worker who hitherto was able, by careful saving, to buy a small plot of land or little house, will no longer be able to do this because the prices of properties available to non-Europeans will rise beyond all proportions on account of the fact that inadequate areas will be set aside for non-European ownership.¹³

NIC objections before the Group Areas Board (Board) were summarily dismissed. From 1954, the Board refused the NIC the right to appear before it on the grounds that it was not an 'interested person.' When the Supreme Court ruled that the NIC could represent its members, the law was amended so that, in the words of Monty, 'the only persons or bodies welcome to attend the Board hearing are those who have an apartheid plan to put forward.'¹⁴ The City Council refused to countenance any argument or intervention from the NIC.

Some Indians considered cooperating with the Board to get a more equitable settlement. But Monty insisted that the Board would not ...

... hear impartially the case of those unjustly treated and come to a decision based on factual evidence and justice ... The folly of the line adopted by the collaborators has been fully exposed at the hearings [where] the recommendations made by the Board do not vary one iota from the proposals put forward by the City Council.

Monty felt that the all-white Boards serving the vested interests of their white constituencies would not give serious consideration to black representations. He said that the Act had been conceived under the policy of "baaskap" by a Parliament devoid of black representation. Given this, the law served 'only in the interest of the white dominating section of South Africa. A law which is manifestly unjust cannot be applied justly. We declare our total opposition to the law and at no stage will we be a party to its implementation,'¹⁵ The principled position of the NIC is reflected in the treatment of M.D. Naidoo, who was forced to resign as vice-president of the NIC for representing the Greyville Ratepayers Association in its struggle to proclaim the area "Indian" as opposed to "white".¹⁶ M.D. was discarded even though he had served the NIC with distinction and maintained that he was giving evidence in his legal capacity. While the expulsion of M.D. reflected the anger that the Act evoked, the NIC never made it clear how the Act could have been confronted by a complete boycott, given the inability of the NIC to mobilise because of state repression.

The GAA was crucial to Indians since half the Indian population of South

Africa lived in Durban. According to the 1951 census, of Durban's population of 432 670, a third, around 150 000, were Indians. While a detailed discussion of the GAA falls outside our scope, the failure to successfully resist the Act demonstrated the brute power of the state, but also exposed the limits of non-racial resistance in a context where social engineering and historical legacies divided blacks into 'competing factions.' Monty was aware of this and implored people to organise across racial lines. On 13 December 1951, for example, he told an NIC meeting that he was pleased at the mixed gathering:

This huge gathering demonstrates the iron will of the people not to be shifted like cattle to a said area ... It also demonstrates that the non-Europeans are not blind and have the gumption, courage and determination to fight for their homes and families The Government and the City Council of Durban have always played up the coloureds and told them not to fraternise with the stinking *coolies* and savage *kaffirs* because they have white blood in their veins. This gathering will be a shock to the City Council.¹⁷

Although there were divisions between Indians and Africans, the NIC and ANC, led by Monty and Luthuli respectively, tried to forge joint resistance. Group Areas, however, aggravated existing tensions because it affected Indians and Africans differently. Africans were already subject to stringent urban segregation through the Urban Areas Acts of 1923 and 1945, so the threat of forced removal lacked the urgency that it had for Indians. While every NIC conference from 1950 was dominated by the issue of Group Areas, it was less so at ANC conferences. The implementation of the GAA also divided blacks. For example, over 10 000 Indians were moved from Sparks Estate to make way for Coloureds, not whites. Indian protest was also muted by large-scale poverty which made the masses wary of the consequences of fines and imprisonment, and the fact that the Act impacted on Indians differently. For example, while those in Cato Manor were affected by the GAA and could be mobilised, Indians living in Springfield were not affected.¹⁸ Many families who lived in the shacks of Tin Town for decades welcomed homes in Phoenix.

A rally at Curries Fountain on 26 June 1958 drew 15 000 protestors and was the largest single protest against the Act. It was organised jointly by the NIC, NIO, and Durban Combined Indian Ratepayers Association. Aside from political and civic leaders, leading religious figures addressed the meeting. Indian schools closed for the day as did businesses to allow employees to attend. But it was an almost all-Indian protest. The irony was that ‘in focusing on Indian fears and concerns,’ the meeting showed that ‘Group Areas worked as planned; it divided South Africa’s racial groups into competing factions, each fighting for its own economic and social survival.’¹⁹ The protests were ignored by the government and the removal of Indians from areas they had occupied for generations began in earnest in the early 1960s. By December 1983, 25 160 Indian families (over 60 000 people) had been relocated. In contrast, a mere 817 white families were resettled, mostly to better areas.²⁰

It is in this context of a losing battle against the GAA that we view Monty’s own struggle to remain in his home of many years.

Monty and Marie lived at 189 Percy Osborne Road in Morningside, one of the first areas to be declared for the exclusive use of the white group. They were given notice to quit their home by 31 December 1962. When police visited on 11 January 1963 they found the ‘accused being members of the Indian Group ... wrongfully and unlawfully without the authority of a permit to occupy the said premises.’ The case was set for 26 April 1963. Monty refused to apply for a permit to live in a “white” area. He said that as a follower of Gandhi, he would ‘rather go to prison than go against a principle for which [I] have fought so long at great sacrifice’ and that he was ‘too much of an old campaigner to be intimidated.’ He added:

The Indians, in the main, who have contributed so much to the development of the province are being asked to vacate their premises and generally kicked around while [European immigrants] who have not contributed in any way to the development of the country are welcomed and even financed – all because of their white skins. Our only crime is that we do not have white skins.²¹



*Happier times. Marie and Monty, Sylvia and Hassen Mall,
Dr and Mrs Nad Padayachee, I.C. and Fatima Meer*

© Fatima Meer

As President of the NIC, Monty knew that his reaction to the threatened eviction would be closely watched. In spite of already living under the cloud of banning, he faced down the Act. But for once there were also deeply personal reasons and motivations. Monty had a strong attachment to his home. He told a reporter for *Leader* that the home had 'become part of our lives. But now, in the evening of our lives we are being asked to leave. I cannot imagine living anywhere else.' The house was also close to his surgery and the offices of the NIC. Alternative Indian areas like Reservoir Hills, Merebank, and Chatsworth were further from the city centre and would force a considerable change of lifestyle.²²

Monty and Marie were given the option of a fine or three months imprisonment and asked to vacate the premises. Monty's defence was made difficult by the fact that he had to obtain permission to speak to his attorney N.T. Naicker, a request sometimes denied because both were banned. Monty's appeal was

heard on 1 November 1965 and his chief witness was his friend Yusuf Cachalia. Monty challenged the definition of himself as a member of the “Indian” group. The Act defined “Indian” to include ‘any person who is generally accepted as a member of a race or tribe whose natural home is in India or Pakistan.’ Cachalia testified that he had made an in-depth study of racial matters in South Africa, and that while Monty and Marie were both born in South Africa to Indians who had migrated to this country, their way of life was ‘completely different from the Indian way of life’ and they considered themselves South African. From a ‘scientific-sociological’ point of view, Cachalia went on, Monty and Marie belonged to ‘a race or tribe which have come to be culturally, economically, sociologically, spiritually, and historically distinct from the race or group of people who inhabit the sub-continent of India and Pakistan’ and could not be considered “Indian”. Cachalia was a persuasive character but on this occasion the Court rejected the argument and ruled that although Indians in South Africa may differ from those in India and Pakistan, this did not make them a different race.

Monty was given a three-month suspended sentence on 8 November 1965, provided he vacated the premises by 8 February 1966. Monty stuck to his guns and was literally thrown out on 11 February 1966. He moved into the Island View Hotel in Isipingo. The vindictiveness of the authorities was shown when they charged him for not formally notifying the police of his new address and he was handed a one-year prison sentence in August 1966. Except for four days, the sentence was suspended for three years.²³ Monty appealed in November 1966 before Judge President Justice Milne on the grounds that he had not taken up “residence” at the hotel as understood in the English language. The court dismissed his appeal and he spent four days over Christmas in prison.²⁴

Monty and Marie’s personal battle against Group Areas eviction illustrates that despite the price paid by the banning orders, they were still prepared to engage in resistance. They lived in perpetual tension of the “knock on the door” and Monty was prepared not to cooperate to the extent of being imprisoned. Even though he brought his accumulated cultural and political capital to bear in

this struggle, it undoubtedly took a lot of courage. However, once Monty was prepared to defend himself in court, principled opposition to the Act became a bit blurred. Rather than arguing that he simply did not recognise the Act, his defence centred on technical details. Clearly, notwithstanding his personal attachment to his house, Monty was trying to use the platform afforded by the court to attack the legislation. But in the absence of mass agitation, it became an individual struggle that was largely ineffective in stalling the state's ability to re-write the racial map of Durban. While Monty was caught up in his court battle, thousands of Indians were put on the move. The barest outlines of Chatsworth were taking shape and already places like Cato Manor and Riverside were becoming memories of times past.

Meanwhile, bannings and house arrests were used increasingly to control the lives of activists. These stories of callous repression often barely make footnotes in the historical records, but are a crucial window into understanding the devastating impact that these measures had on personal lives and political organisation.

Dawood Seedat was indicted on charges of High Treason in 1956 and arrested during the state of emergency in 1960. When Monty appeared in court on 26 April 1963, Seedat, according to police reports, was 'amongst several known subversive elements who attended the hearing.' Dawood and his wife Fatima were banned for five years in January 1964. She had been imprisoned during the Defiance Campaign, and once released, threw herself into activism as a member of the Federation of South African Women; NIC, Natal Peace Council, Civil Liberties Defence Committee, and Society of International Friendship, among a host of organisations. She often shared the platform at Red Square with the likes of Monty, Dadoo, and J.N. Singh. On 10 October 1966, Fatima Seedat applied for the withdrawal of restrictions confining her to the magisterial district of Durban and requiring her to report to the central police station weekly. The grounds of appeal were that her husband Dawood was also banned and it was difficult to see to the education, welfare and upbringing of their eight young children; she hoped to visit her ageing parents in Cape Town,

and as a chronic diabetic who received treatment at the Beatrice Street clinic, she was sometimes too ill to report to the police station. The Ministry rejected her application on 9 December 1966. Commissioner Blygnaut felt that 'it is freedom of movement that Seedat desires and not the opportunity to assist in their [children's] education. It is a well-known fact that she fosters the same political views as her husband ... Should she be allowed freedom of movement it will give her the opportunity to start her activities afresh as courier.'

The double bannings made life incredibly difficult for the couple. Unable to carry out any activity or work for a union, and with the wider community afraid to employ persons under the obvious gaze of the police and who could be detained at any time, the decade was extremely long and difficult for the family, who lived a frugal and increasingly isolated life in Hampson Grove.

Dawood Seedat's bosom friend Debi Singh was also banned. Through the 1960s Debi was the public face of the NIC, ever-present in its office. When Debi died in 1970, Ahmed Kathrada sent a letter of condolence to Fatima and Dawood Seedat, dated 4 July 1970. Addressed to 'My Dearest Mamie and Daddy', the letter illustrates the bonds built in the trenches of struggle and how the state destroyed this:

Tonight, as on so many nights since I got the news, I shall be thinking of Debi Singh and my heart goes out to you Daddy, for I know how much you meant to each other. When one spoke of Durban one automatically thought of the two of you together, who over the years shared life's joys and the hardships; two inseparable brothers. What makes it worse – if what I hear is true – is that his life could have been saved were it not for a bit of bureaucratic red tape that prevented an operation. A measly signature and Debi might have been alive today! Anyway he is gone and he has taken away a little bit of each of us. How true the words of John Donne: "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind ..." Time is a great healer, and I hope by now you will be well on the way to adapting yourself to life without Debi. How the endless procession of death moves inexorably on! A few days after our arrival on Robben Island in 1964 we were shocked by the news of Molly; then Babla – and the tragic

way he met his death; A.I. [Meer]; Arthur Letele; “G”; Chief; Prof Matthews; Nanabhai; and now Debi. What a great happy family we were! We remember each other and every one of them and think of our association with great pride. Please, if you get a chance, convey our condolences to members of Debi’s family and to the friends.

It was in the same casbah complex that another formidable opponent of the system lived – A.K.M. Docrat, a popular activist who was particularly adept at recruiting young people into the struggle. Doc’s troubles began in 1950 when he was named under the Suppression of Communism Act. He was jailed for thirty days during the Defiance Campaign and detained under the State of Emergency in 1960. He was first banned in 1962. His second banning ran from 22 December 1964 to 31 October 1969, and his third from 31 October 1969 to 31 October 1974. The terms of his banning orders included house arrest of 22 hours per day (later reduced to 20) and complete house arrest from 2:00 pm on Fridays to 10:00 am on Mondays. He served a fourth period of banning from October 1974 to October 1976 and a fifth when this was extended to October 1978. From 1978 to 1990 he was bound by the restrictions of his 1950 listing. Journalist Vasantha Angamuthu once described Doc ‘as much a Durban institution as the City Hall. Some would argue that he was just as old, just as solid and just as unshiftable ... Doc was the city’s political conscience.’²⁵ He was reduced to eking out a living selling books during these difficult years. Rusty Bernstein described powerfully how bannings altered people’s lives:

We were struggling against a new assault – house arrest. A spate of ministerial orders had turned many leading activists into permanent prisoners in their own homes – and into warders over themselves ... House arrest cast a shadow on everyone in the house. They would fidget and worry as six o’ clock approached and [we] were not yet home.... SB men would arrive at any hour of the evening, demanding to be allowed in to prowl around and check that [we] were home, and not “receiving guests” ... Phones could be tapped; we stopped using them. Letters could be intercepted, homes watched and car numbers noted ... One

drew back slowly until social contact beyond the family circle withered away to nothing. Even inside the home, social paralysis settled in after dark and at weekends.²⁶

The spread of bannings also enveloped activists in Pietermaritzburg. A.S. Chetty, who was chairman of the Pietermaritzburg branch of the NIC, was served with a five-year banning order in 1973. He reflected that when the SB served the banning order, his immediate reaction was one 'of dejection and resignation. You resign yourself to a fate of isolation, where you realise that you cannot perform as a free individual and that everything you do, meetings, weddings, campaigns, lectures, is all gone. House arrest is somewhat like being in prison, only it is an open prison.' His wife Saras reflected that after Teddy's banning, 'life became very tense, since his house arrest meant that we were also under house arrest. Every weekend we remained at home. If Ted wanted to go to school functions, funerals, or family weddings we had to apply for permission. On one of the raids, a Security Branch member told me that even if I cook fish curry, they will be aware of it.'²⁷

Some experienced both bannings and Robben Island. While Apdusa was still a legal organisation, in the repressive political climate they did not hold mass meetings but mostly engaged in individual activities. A member like Kader Hassim was under constant surveillance and placed under house arrest in Pietermaritzburg on 22 June 1964, shortly after he and his wife Nina had their first child. House arrest confined Kader to his home from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am on weekdays and from 2:00 pm on Saturday to Monday morning. 'If Monday was a public holiday, then it was Tuesday morning, and if Friday was a holiday, then house arrest would begin on Friday. No visitors were allowed.' Kader's home in Newholmes, he points out, 'was built deep in here and we've got walls because they used to hurl petrol bombs ... they called me "the short Communist bastard." Those were days [when] people were terrorised by white terror.' Despite the odd flicker of resistance, the Unity Movement 'was pretty dormant. This was a time of nasty vicious fascism. People were cowed; intimidated ...' At the end of May 1969, Kader's house arrest and banning was

extended for a further five years.²⁸

This became academic when he and fellow APDUSA members like Armstrong Madoda, Gaby Pillay, Morgam Moodliar and Sunny Venkarathnam were detained on 17 February 1970 under the Terrorism Act. After a long period of solitary confinement they were formally charged on 16 June 1971 with conspiracy to overthrow the state, recruiting members for the armed struggle, and falsifying reference books. Kader spent eight years on Robben Island. He returned to his home only to find that the organisation that he had built and supported had eroded in the face of state repression and the difficult terrain of exile politics. The Natal Law Society struck Kader off the roll when he was convicted, and now wanted him to apply for re-admission. He refused. It was one of the first public signs that prison had not broken him. It was however a hard and often lonely road back. But the likes of Kader continued to display incredible endurance and belief in the human quest for freedom. Part of this ability to sustain himself, Kader reveals, was what he took to prison. A political education that was a strong mix of activism and theory.

A.S. Chetty's close friend, Chota Morala, was also banned for five years in 1964. As his wife Choti points out, it placed a 'huge strain' on the family:

I mean you can't have a knock on the door and have to be careful because three people is a meeting ... The police were really nasty. They didn't let him go to somebody's funeral, like his sister's husband. It was hard for Chota because he loved being involved with people ... he was quite a public speaker and missed this. He was a meticulous note-taker and in one of his diaries he wrote something like "the measure of a man is by what he does for others".

That being true, then Fatima Meer must have been a woman beyond measure. A lecturer in Sociology at the University of Natal and national president of the Black Women's Federation before its banning, she was served with successive banning orders that lasted from August 1971 to July 1981. While she was given permission to lecture, her academic writings could not be published. Her passport was withdrawn in 1975 and permission to accept a lecturing

fellowship in London in July 1976 was declined. Fatima Meer was more cavalier than husband Ismail about the banning: 'I was careful, she was not only careless, but took deliberate chances and did the things she ought to do regardless of her banning order.'²⁹ For example, she attended a dinner party on 22 December 1977 at photographer Andrew Verster's home where several banned persons were present. Security policemen hiding in the gardens "spied" on them through the window and after three hours entered the house and photographed her. Rather than accept the penalty, she challenged the power of the Minister. Ismail Mahomed argued successfully that the police should have acted to stop the crime being committed and that the definition of "gathering" was too vague.³⁰ While she may have stretched the law in certain ways, she too had to suffer separation from her son Rashid who fled into exile after the Soweto 1976 uprising. She would not see him for over a decade. She herself was detained without trial for six months, part of it in solitary confinement, along with Winnie Mandela and other members of the Black Women's Federation at the notorious Fort Prison in Johannesburg, and her house was petrol-bombed and fired upon in December 1976, shortly after her release.

J.N. Singh, who, with Ismail Meer, opened the door to collaboration with the ANC while studying at Wits, was a popular figure in Congress circles and it was inevitable that he would come under the repressive gaze of the state. He was imprisoned under the 180-day detention rule in 1963 and banned for a decade from 1964 to 1974. It was while J.N. was in prison that the family was given a week's notice to quit their Riverside home, which had been declared a "white" area and had to move in with wife Radhi's mother in Ritson Road. Radhi recalls that it was during Diwali 1964 that the SB arrived with a notice that J.N. was being struck off the roll. She noticed that the authorities had spelt his name as Naseeb and not Nasib and hence the order was invalid. She never heard from them again. J.N. continued to practice but was confined to Durban, which created a problem because he was a criminal lawyer who was required to work all over Natal. The banning prevented him from visiting his clients and this forced Radhi to take on these cases.³¹

Banning orders created some ludicrous situations. Thumba Pillay's banning, for example, resulted in him missing his wedding reception. After graduating in 1961, Thumba became the youngest member of the NIC executive. Within 18 months, on New Year's Day 1963, he was served with his first five-year banning order. It was extended for another five years in 1968. As Thumba ruefully reflected, 'so I served ten years virtually out of politics, officially out of politics.'³² That was not the only problem:

Three years after I was banned, I got married in 1965 and had to get permission to have a wedding. They allowed me a fixed number of guests. I had to give them a list of all the people I invited and they [police] were present at my wedding. They allowed me one hour at my wedding and refused me permission to attend my own reception. It was destructive insofar as family life was concerned in that you couldn't go out with your children and do the things that people normally do with their children.³³

As the state's repressive hand took effect on the organisation of the NIC, Monty, banned, had limited contact with long time friends and comrades who were also banned. Some passed on, chief among them being Albert Luthuli and Debi Singh, while others went into exile. Many of them he would not see again. State repression took a heavy toll on the NIC. The far-reaching tentacles of the state machinery, which included more effective forms of information-gathering, meant that activists had to re-assess the way they conducted their politics. As Advocate Hassen Mall, who was on the executive of the NIC when he was banned in 1962, observed, by the mid-1960s Congress activity 'had literally died because people were banned, scattered all over the show. The NIC and TIC had never been banned. What they [state] did was that they took all the officials and banned them and that effectively silenced the activities of these organisations.'

Bannings and house arrests remained an effective instrument of control for the state. The feisty and fiery oratorical skills of Dawood Seedat, whose motto in life may well have been "fight like hell for the living"; the outspoken

social and political agitator “Communist Amra”; the two Fatima’s, Seedat and Meer, who did so much to bring women into the public arena; the ultimate organisation man, Debi Singh; the suave but always incisive J.N. Singh; the exuberant George Singh; the principled Kader Hassim; the Nehru-like I.C. Meer and many others who had fought to mobilise their communities and, more importantly, worked hard to transcend racial differences, were sidelined and cut off from the pulse of the movement in the face of the state’s prolonged attack on all forms of opposition.

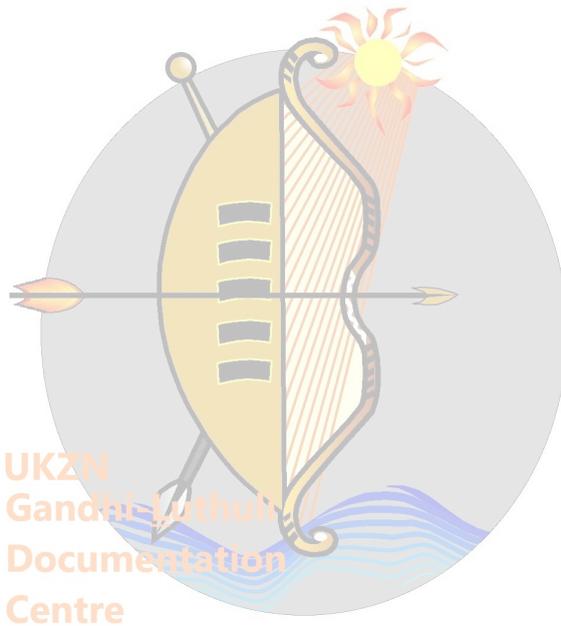
Some like Monty tried to stretch the spaces under their banning orders, but the state was unrelenting in bringing them to book. Minor infractions like that of Phyllis Naidoo were dealt with harshly, while appeals for a relaxation of aspects of banning orders, like that of Fatima Seedat, mostly received an unsympathetic ear. And far too little attention has been paid to the toll that bannings took on personal lives. As R.D. Naidoo reflected, his marriage was ‘very deeply affected by my restrictions and all that, because my wife died a very disappointed woman, you know, not having the best of the marriage. What little we could give, no material comforts, and things like that ... [The struggle] had a bearing on our lives.’³⁴ R.D. Naidoo’s assessment of the struggle is haunting:

I always believed that I’ll be a worker and I’ll die a worker. I never lived [in the hope] that one day I will be the owner of the means of production. Other than the status of worker I can’t see myself being anything else ... I am convinced socialism is inevitable. Right from 1938 up to now (1986), I want to say, that even at mass meetings, at May-Day Committee meetings, at various trade union meetings [where] I used to speak, I always used to say “freedom in our lifetime”; “The workers shall take power”. But up to now I’m very disappointed. I’m over 70 now and, I’ve seen very little change taking place, except for new buildings, streets, schools, offices, transport systems, communications, all these advanced but other than that I’m in the same position I was 69 years ago.

R.D. did live to see a democratic South Africa but one wonders what he would say about his conviction that ‘socialism is inevitable’, given the trajectory

of politics and economics in post-apartheid South Africa. Monty, unlike R.D., did not live to see the end of apartheid. But in many senses the lifeblood of Monty's life, the open public political life, was drained through the 1960s. The bannings, surveillance, the exile and imprisonment of comrades all conspired to effectively remove Monty from the political scene.

By the early 1970s, the terrain in which Monty and the NIC sought to organise had changed substantially. Would they have the capacity and wherewithal to respond to the changes, which included a challenge from a new generation of activists who embraced the philosophy of black consciousness?



Back from 'a living death'

The long banning period endured by Monty finally came to an end on 30 April 1973. Monty gave his first press conference in a decade on 1 May. It was a poignant personal peek into the “regime” imposed by his banning:

One had to remember such things as not taking tea with people as that constituted a social gathering and infringement of the banning order. The absence of friends took some getting used to especially for an active man like myself who led a full social life. That was a heavy blow ... But I found it fruitless thinking about the things I would love to do or where I could go ... The tragedy of it all was that my wife Marie, who had not been banned, was compelled all the same to suffer a life of restrictions because of the restrictions on me. But she has been a wonderful support to me and I am thankful for her. After a long trip out of the magisterial district of Durban, I want to be of service to the black people of this country.¹

Around a thousand people packed the Tamil Vedic Hall on Friday, 11 May 1973, to welcome Monty into the community. A reporter for *Post* described the scene:

Everyone was there. Old colleagues who had also tasted the bitter banning pill. Others were there who have closely followed the doctor's political career in the forties and fifties, and who remembered him throughout the long 16 years as a banned person. Children who have heard stories of the doctor and his fight for a better life for his people. For a brief hour or two all differences were forgotten and as people from all walks of life and all shades of political opinion joined together to celebrate Monty's unbanning.²

Among the crowd were Alan Paton, Fatima Meer, Ismail Meer, George Singh, Hassen Mall, J.N. Singh, the oldest living Congressman S.M. Mayet,

Nelson Mandela's daughters Zeni and Zinzi, and the Mayor of Umlazi, Solomon Ngobese, who read greetings from Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi to 'one of Africa's greatest sons.' Dr Goonam sarcastically welcomed members of the Special Branch planted in the crowd as 'our special guests.'³ Fatima Meer reminded the audience that membership of the NIC was at its peak under Monty, that he had served the longest term in prison for his part as a passive resister, and the longest period of banning of any NIC member to that point.⁴ The stage décor beneath which the dignitaries sat included two Vinaiga (elephants) on either side of a column and a dove on top. Fatima Meer explained that the Vinaiga was the Indian symbol of strength (Monty) and the dove that of peace.⁵ The symbols summed up Monty's life: strong, fearless in the face of multiple forms of repression; and a lifelong commitment to non-violent resistance.

There were 'moving scenes' when Monty and Marie entered the hall. The crowd spontaneously burst into salutes of 'Monty!' According to one report, this 'was a fitting welcome for a man who had spent the best of his days campaigning and toiling unselfishly.' After a traditional welcome of Hindu custom, burning camphor on a brass tray, Monty spoke his first words on a public platform:

How can I be thrilled when so many are still banned by Government orders or are still serving sentences on Robben Island? By banning, the Government wants to crush the spirit of the people ... I am disliked because I sincerely believe in a non-racial democracy. This will come no matter what Vorster or his police like. It is stupid to think that today, even the most apolitical of South Africa's non-white – black – people, are not inspired by the black prime ministers running countries on our borders. In India a woman [Indira Gandhi] is running the country far better than the British ever did. The political atmosphere has changed, but the history of colonialism has shown that colonialists don't give up easily and I despair that there will be no easy solution to South Africa's problems. The Nationalist Government is politicising non-white South Africans into radical opposition to their policies. It is ironic that this politicising role is denied to non-white leaders.⁶

Alan Paton saluted Monty with a poem:

Congratulations on your freedom Naicker,
Preserve it with most tender care
And if you overuse it or abuse it
Then paf! One day it won't be there
It is a privilege, not a right
And that is true for all the Naickers
Be careful of those politicians
Be careful of those strikers
Now choose your way with due decorum
Listen to what your letters say
Amid the fierce debating forum
Then Naicker you will be O.K.
I close with the advisory words
Naicker, be good and be clever
Then you will have a happy life
And dwell in peace forever.⁷



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The poem was Paton at his most sarcastic. Monty, after all the years of hardship, had to display the servile attributes of an “apartheid coolie” to survive, rather than the principled disobedient life he had chosen since the 1940s, in order to remain unbanned.

Monty described the 16 years as ‘A living death’, and asked for time to readjust. ‘It’s been such a long time. I will need time to think about many things, time to meet and talk to people, and make up my mind about very many things. It will probably take two or three months before I am back to normal existence again.’ It was his work, he said, that kept him busy and ‘helped immensely to get over this lonely period.’ He paid special tribute to Marie, whose ‘comfort helped to blunt the frustration [of] the long and tedious years.’⁸ Forced ostracisation had made him asocial, he said: ‘I am not foolish enough to say I’m the same old chap. One becomes asocial after being denied social intercourse for so long. It

will take time to readjust.⁹ Being out of politics was tough, he said:

I used to pick up the papers, and read such disturbing news about the destruction of the Indian Market, the attempts to take away Chatsworth buses and many other things. I was frustrated at not being able to be with my people at their hour of crisis. It is so difficult to describe the frustration. It can only be felt.¹⁰



The embrace of old friends

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Gandhi Luthuli
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Monty kicks off a match at Curries Fountain between Berea and Blue Bells.

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Monty made it clear that he would enter the fray again 'sooner or later. It is difficult to suddenly disappear from the scene after being in the field of politics for so many years. I want to play my role.'¹¹ In an interview with the *Daily News* on 22 May 1973, he said that he would return to active politics and 'risk another banning order. You are not on this earth just to make money. There must be some purpose in life.' He recalled that when he returned from Edinburgh he wanted to be a surgeon, but was 'dragged into active politics by the extent of poverty and frustration around me.' Monty realised, too, that much had changed in politics during his exile. For example, attitudes among the younger generation were 'more radical', and there was also a generation gap. Monty used the word 'non-white' and was quickly reminded that it had negative connotations and had been discarded, and that the word to use to describe those disenfranchised was 'black' people'.¹²

There were also other differences that the emergent Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) brought to the fore. The old Congress-style politics of minute-taking, meeting procedures, debating and acting out of mandates, and painstaking organisational development was not their priority. Rather, they sought confrontation with the apartheid regime that relied largely on spontaneity, and used mass rallies as a weapon to mobilise and conscientise. They also wanted to mobilise under the general rubric of black (Africans, coloureds and Indians) and viewed the continued acceptance of 'Indian' as an endorsement of apartheid thinking. Monty did not express any public opinion on the BCM, but one gets the sense that if the adoption of the identity 'black' meant the need to jettison his Indianness, he may have balked at this.

If Monty thought he had weathered the storm of repression, he was mistaken. Somewhere in the system there was a logic that conspired to treat him with a particular vindictiveness. He made five applications for a passport to visit his sister in Scotland, whom he had not seen for three decades. The first application was made in June 1973, a month after the banning order had been lifted, but the police reported to the Secretary of Justice on 19 June 1973 that Monty had told local newspapers and the audience at Vedic Hall that he would continue

with his political activities. More troublesome for the police was that he gave the armed fist salute of the ANC to deafening cries of 'Amandla' (Power). Minister of Interior Connie Mulder turned down the application in August 1973. Monty reacted with typical candour that murderers were 'truly free' after serving their sentence, but political prisoners continued to be victimised: 'I have served my sentences for the crimes that I was supposed to have committed but yet I am not a free man. The refusal of the passport is a first-class form of intimidation for not being a "yes man".'¹³ Marie 'is paying the price of marrying me.'¹⁴

While some anti-apartheid campaigners in the community, including those who were in the trenches with Monty, were issued with passports, Monty's applications were persistently refused.

Passport applications were turned down on 14 May 1974 and 18 August 1975.¹⁵ Monty applied for the fourth time on 7 January 1976. This was officially declined on 3 March 1976 after the police reported to the Secretary of Inland Security on 19 January 1976 that Monty had addressed a mass meeting on 12 October 1975 in support of Winnie Mandela, in which he made reference to 'his great friend Nelson Mandela' and said that South Africa 'was one big jail where the black people were crying for their freedom.'¹⁶ However, Monty persevered with his desire to visit his sister in Scotland – family members speak of this being one of his last wishes – and he made a final application on 13 April 1977. The Crime Intelligence Unit reported to the Secretaries of Justice, Indian Affairs and Inland Security on 25 May 1977:

From statements made in speeches by the abovementioned during 1976, one at the funeral of _____, who while in detention committed suicide, and in the previous year of unrest in front of students of the University of Durban-Westville wherein he encouraged them to strike, it is clear that he has not changed his viewpoint ... This department abides by its recommendation of 19.1.76 that travel facilities should not be made available to him.

It was law student Riaz Meer who smuggled Monty onto the Westville campus, together with Gobin Reddy. Now an attorney in Stanger, Riaz recalled

that students were buoyed by Monty's presence and responded positively to his call. Monty received an official reply from F.R. Salmon, Secretary for the Interior, on 8 June 1977 which stated simply and starkly that 'the applications were not successful.' No reasons were given and Monty's wish to meet his only living sister would remain unfulfilled. Writing in *The Leader* on 16 August 1974, 'Faquir' (Ranji Nowbath) took issue with the refusal of passports:

Amazing, isn't it, that a passport should become such a valuable thing? At one time it was a document which a citizen got on application. It was a document which afforded him safe conduct in countries he was visiting. Today it seems to be some kind of good conduct medal given to those people who please the government or to those who make sure that they do nothing at all to displease the government. If you are a faceless one in the community you have no passport problems. If you are "involved" in the wrong side then you have problems ... The passport as a weapon of political blackmail in the hands of an authoritarian government.¹⁷

While the continued repression of the leadership of the Congress movement dominated the headlines in the decade that Monty was banned, there were important political impulses. These included the arrest and imprisonment of Apdusa members on charges of sabotage, the emergence of the BCM, the creation of apartheid structures like the South African Indian Council (Council), and the revival of the NIC which sparked intense debates over the continued retention of the ethnic 'I' in 'NIC'.

The precursor to the Council was the establishment of a Department of Indian Affairs in 1961. As the "Indian" was finally made into a 'South African', the state sought to ensure that they were represented in separate structures from those of Africans and Coloureds. Monty, as president of the NIC, saw it as 'a logical development under Apartheid ... which would not be possible under multi-racialism, for there would be one department, non-racial in character, dealing with all internal problems and avoiding financial wastage.'¹⁸ The NIC, struggling to survive under the tentacles of a repressive state, failed to mount

a serious challenge to the creation of the Department. The Council became a statutory body in 1968. Local Affairs Committees (LACs) were also created to advise local authorities on matters “Indian”. The Council was partly a response to the emergent non-racial opposition of the 1950s. Indian demands were not to be expressed in opposition to, but through state institutions.

These developments took place against the backdrop of arrests and bannings of opponents of apartheid, and a period of unprecedented economic growth. While the apartheid state was at the height of its power, resistance to apartheid rule continued to emerge, the work of Apdusa in rural Transkei being one significant example. Another source of resistance would come from the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) which became a factor in resistance politics after the mid-1960s. After a period of relative quiescence in South African politics, Steve Biko (1946–1977) led a resurgence of political activity with the founding of the BCM. With Biko, a medical student at the University of Natal at the helm, a group of black students established the South African Students’ Organisation (SASO) in 1969. Biko argued that blacks oppressed themselves by accepting the second-class status accorded to them by the apartheid system, and had to liberate themselves mentally and physically, and should start by running their own organisations, rather than relying on the paternalism of white liberals. In Durban, Strini Moodley and Saths Cooper were among the movement’s two most visible faces.

With the banning of the ANC and PAC, Strini Moodley argued, blacks relied too heavily on liberals to speak for them. The time had come to stop ‘sitting and watching ... black people have to take their future into their own hands ... other people are not going to give you your liberation.’ Black Consciousness, Strini continued, was based on the philosophy that the world was ‘designed and coordinated by white people who made the assumption that they were superior ... Their riches, wealth, privilege, was all built on the sweat, blood and tears of black people.’ The BCM, according to Strini, differed from Congress in their belief that the Freedom Charter did not ‘go far enough ... in the interests of black people, it was too accommodating ... we had to take it a step further.’ On

the other hand, the PAC had a 'too narrow concept of Pan Africanism' and failed 'to embrace the notion of socialism.' Since capitalism was the dominant regime, it was necessary to establish 'a socialist system in which the working class would control the industries, government and state and primarily the economy.' Both Strini and Saths argued that the ANC and PAC 'might be older, might have a little more history behind them ... [but] in their thinking, in their intellectual definitions, are still living in the past.'

The revival of the NIC was debated in a context of strengthening apartheid structures, political quiescence, and new political configurations. As the Council began to take shape, there were fears from old Congress stalwarts that conservative voices would alienate Indians from the wider struggle. Mewa Ramgobin initiated a meeting at the Bolton Hall on 25 June 1971 to revive the NIC. The establishment of government structures, according to Mewa, forced them to take 'a very active position to say [that] as a community you must reject these government offerings because they are designed to keep us divided.'¹⁹ An executive elected under the chairmanship of Mewa came mostly from middle class professionals; there were no equivalents of the H.A. Naidoo and George Ponnens. The terrain had changed as apartheid consolidated, and the heady days of the early 1940s when trade union membership was burgeoning, had gradually been eroded as Indian workers were brought into formal bargaining structures. The CP, such a vital school for the production of trade union organisers, was banned, and Sactu, while not banned, was hounded out of overt organising. The break-up of old Indian neighbourhoods by Group Areas meant the loss of local level leaders and networks.

There was opposition to the revival of the NIC. Most of it came from individuals aligned to the BCM, like Biko, Barney Pityana, Saths and Strini, who picketed the Bolton Hall because they felt that the revival of the NIC reinforced the divide and rule tactics of the NP. The BCM rejected an organisational structure that divided the oppressed into apartheid racial categories and sought to have all black people united under a single umbrella. It established the Black Peoples' Convention (BPC) in 1972 as a political umbrella organisation for the adherents

of Black Consciousness. While not integrally involved in the 1973 Durban strikes, the BPC, buoyed by the general upsurge in protest, sought a head-on challenge with the apartheid state. The victory of Frelimo in Mozambique generated new-found optimism, and Saths and Strini helped organise a “Viva Frelimo Rally” at Curries Fountain on 25 September 1974.

Leaders were arrested and held incommunicado for four months. They were charged on 31 January 1975, and after a lengthy trial, nine were sentenced to periods of imprisonment ranging from five to ten years on Robben Island: Saths Cooper, “Terror” Lekota, Muntu Myeza, Aubrey Mokoape, Nkwenkwe Vincent Nkomo, Pandelani Vincent Nefolovodhwe, Strini Moodley, Zithulele Cindi and Gilbert Sedeba.²⁰ The BPC breathed fresh impetus into the anti-apartheid struggle but its structures failed in any substantive way to move much beyond universities and training colleges. Among Indians, its influence was seminal in that a generation of students grew up espousing the idea of “blackness”. But by failing to interrogate what this meant for Indian cultural practices, honed over generations, BC met with skepticism from many within the Indian community and failed to gain a foothold in community and sporting structures in any substantive way.

Despite opposition, the NIC was revived, and within a month the new committee established 29 branches all over Natal and scheduled a convention on 2 October 1971 for the official launch. The venue and date were symbolic: it was held at the Phoenix Settlement, established by Gandhi, with whose birthday it coincided. Two weeks before the conference, Mewa Ramgobin was slapped with another five-year ban, and missed this historical moment.²¹ He was replaced as president by George Sewpersadh who, in turn, was banned in 1973. This was the modus operandi of the state. The hounding of leaders immobilised the opposition and created a climate of fear, and forced Indians to at least consider the Council as a means for representation. The revived NIC did not immediately capture the imagination of the community. Clearly, the banning of key leaders had a debilitating effect but there were other challenges as well. From the late 1960s, the core areas of NIC support were systematically

destroyed. The working-class residents of Magazine Barracks were mostly moved to Chatsworth; the people of Tin Town to Phoenix in the mid-1970s; and the destruction of Clairwood, one of the strongest bases of NIC support with its population of 25 000, had begun. There was little infrastructure or organic community leadership in Chatsworth and Phoenix in the beginning, which added to the leadership vacuum created by the state clampdown.

While the BC trial exposed the repressive arm of the state, another arm continued to foster representation through organs like the Council. As the Council began to be seen to be “delivering” on housing and education, some in the NIC, sensing marginalisation, raised the issue of participation in government-created structures. An editorial in *The Leader* on 30 August 1974, for example, called on the NIC to clarify its position on the Council instead of hedging. NIC General Secretary Ramilall Ramesar admitted that there was a ‘general apathy prevalent in the Indian political scene’ due to ‘substantial fear of the Government because of the massive power it wields.’²² There was a growing view that if the NIC did not exploit the platform provided by the Council, it risked being sidelined. For example, at the NIC’s 1974 conference, some members called for a change in tactics since those who were in the Council were coming to be seen as leaders of the community. Fatima Meer argued most strongly against this view and the conference decided by a slim majority of 22 to 17 to reject participation.²³ The issue of government-created bodies continued though to create tension within the NIC. Amidst the rumours and innuendoes, the NIC convened an emergency meeting in June 1975, mediated by the calm figure of Advocate Hassen Mall, to thrash out a position ‘once and for all.’ At the end of tense and animated exchanges, the NIC rejected the Council and LACs as well as those who contested elections in these organisations.²⁴

Monty’s voice was silent for a time but he was soon to make his views clear. Addressing a meeting of the Merewent Indian Ratepayer’s Association on 17 November 1974, he attacked Prime Minister John Vorster’s announcement that in six months he would begin changing the racial situation in the country, Monty warned that Vorster was still thinking in terms of an exclusively white

Parliament and Group Areas. He condemned the Council as ‘nothing but an advisory body’ which Indians should shun.²⁵ Monty made another rare public appearance at the YMCA where a reception was held for Winnie Mandela in October 1975. He shared the platform with Fatima Meer and Vino Cooper. According to one report ...

... there were deafening cries of “Amandla” (Power) when Monty Naicker said: “As black people we all pledge our support for one another’s freedom. For too long have we been crying out in this big prison and we will only stop crying when we get our freedom. If we had a thousand Winnie Mandelas, freedom will be around the corner.”²⁶



Monty addressing a meeting of the Merebank Ratepayers Association. M.R. Moodley is seated to his right.

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As Monty was gradually starting to find his voice in these debates, news was received that M.P. Naicker had died on 29 April 1977. M.P. remained an immensely popular figure despite being in exile for over a decade, and plans were made to commemorate his death. Monty immediately got involved in the preparations for a public commemoration on 24 May 1977 at the Gandhi Library. It was convened by Monty, Florence Mkhize, D.K. Singh, A.H. Randeree, and Thumba Pillay.²⁷ Three former Treason Trialists who were

subsequently banned or house-arrested, shared the platform: Monty, Helen Joseph and Archie Gumede. Monty paid tribute to M.P. who ‘never wavered from his principles or compromised his beliefs. He had been an implacable opponent of apartheid in every way. Although he was in exile for the past ten years, he had not lost touch with the freedom movement in South Africa.’ And then Monty chose the moment to put his stamp on the continuing debates in the NIC and the stance toward the Council:

M.P. was a most loyal devotee to the aims and object of the Congress Alliance to work towards a non-racial democracy in South Africa; M.P. stood for First Class citizenship, not the Third Class citizenship accepted by leaders of the SAIC (Council) and LAC; M.P. would have campaigned for non-participation in the SAIC (Council) even if forced to register as voters in an organisation that aims to enslave us; M.P. stood for voters on the common roll to vote, to be voted into all the organs of the government to help to make laws, and to implement them so that we would not be subjected to the ignominy of being banished to the ‘boondos’ of the Free State as our beloved leader Winnie Mandela has been confined, for no rhyme or reason, at the whim of someone or another and no electricity, running water, proper toilet ... this to a refined woman with blue blood in her veins, descendant of chiefs. M.P. stood for all this and the best tribute we can pay to him is to emulate his ideals without question. MP would have told the SAIC why they are agents of the government to sell apartheid.

Monty was referring to the decision to make the Council fully elective and to make it compulsory for Indians to register to vote.

The Soweto uprising of 1976 renewed optimism of resisting apartheid through extra-parliamentary means and most in the NIC became convinced of non-participation in the Council. Speaking to *The Leader* in August 1977, M.J. Naidoo described the proposals as ‘the same old wolf in a new sheepskin.’ He described the Council as a farce that had been created because the government was under pressure from its Western friends, and was ‘rehashing apartheid structures with new dressings to make it palatable for its few remaining friends.’

The government, he said, wanted to placate moderate black opinion and use Indians and Coloureds as a first line of defence against the African majority. M.J. warned those ‘who are so blind as not to see the dangerous situation into which they will drag the people if they consider accepting such a monstrosity.’²⁸



I.C. Meer, Monty, M.J. Naidoo, Fatima Meer, George Singh.

© Kreesen Naicker

Monty was not just into “speechifying” when he expressed his opposition to the Council. The “disobedient” principled veteran geared for battle once again, and at his side would be an old comrade. The NIC formed an Anti-SAIC Committee in November 1977. It went by the acronym ASC, with Monty as chairman, Dr Goonam as treasurer, M.J. Naidoo as vice-president and A.H. Randeree as secretary. The clock was turned back when the ASC stood for Anti-Segregation Council. The Edinburgh mates once more joined hands to take on what they saw as the “sell-outs” and the appeasers of apartheid. Dr Goonam remained the slugger, sometimes arguing and at other times haranguing that because Indians constituted the smallest minority in the country, they had the ‘greatest need for political integration.’ Indians, she pointed out, were being asked to elect representatives to the Council ...

... who themselves had no representation. Their function will be to serve the Nationalist Government as an intelligence agency into the Indian people and to stuff up their mouths with a dummy. Indians, understanding this all too well, have

rejected this dummy and the hand, the SAIC which plugs it ... Indians are being offered the right to vote for a wholly powerless body, alienated from parliament and without any influence. The generality of Indians see it as nothing, and in rejecting it, they reject "nothing"... The Nationalists' tragedy is their obstinacy, for in refusing to share, they may lose all.²⁹

The first meeting of the ASC was held on the 26th November 1977 at the Kajee Hall. In the lead-up to the meeting, the ASC issued a statement that in its ten years of existence the Council had achieved nothing of note, and that they intended applying pressure to get members to resign.³⁰ In addition to Monty and Dr Goonam, Dr Jerry Coovadia, Rabi Bugwandeem, and Dr Y. Variawa, chairman of the Transvaal Action Committee, also addressed the meeting. Members of the Council were invited to share the platform but did not turn up.³¹ Monty's speech would be one of his last acts of defiance. He insisted that he would 'not register as a voter for the dummy Indian Council elections. They can come and arrest me.'³²

There was a second meeting on 11 December 1977 at David Landau Community Centre in Asherville, where Monty shared the platform with respected educationist Dr A.D. Lazarus, who said that he was 'not fooled by the government's phoney councils. If I am a South African citizen then why am I not given equal rights as my white counterparts?' The ASC and NIC issued a statement that 'the role of the Council is clear. Its members are there at the request of the government and as paid agents, it rubber-stamps government plans and passes them on to a voteless and voiceless people.'³³

But just as Monty's comeback was gathering momentum, he took ill, and was admitted to St Aidans Hospital, where he died on Wednesday 12 January 1978 at the age of 68.

His body lay at the Vedic Hall in Carlisle Street from 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm on 13 January for the public to pay its respects, after which he was cremated at the Clare Estate Crematorium. Among those who paid tribute at Monty's funeral were Nokukhanya Luthuli, widow of his great friend and inspiration Chief Albert Luthuli, I.C. Meer, Dr Goonam, Norman Middleton, executive

member of the Coloured Labour Party, Archie Gumede, M.J. Naidoo, Jane Turner, mother of slain activist Rick Turner, and Dr Jerry Coovadia.



The funeral of Monty Naicker, January 1978

© Kreesen Naicker

Monty's coffin was draped in the colours of the ANC – green, gold, and black.³⁴ 'A politician of rare honesty' is what 'Faquir' titled his tribute, and people from all walks of life, including those of liberal and more radical persuasions, shared this sentiment.

Monty had described his unbanning as coming back from a 'living death', and it took him a while to get back into the political humdrum. But the urban geography had changed considerably and the years of repression had taken their toll on him and his generation. His age, and the strain of the years passed in the political shadows, showed. Still, the NIC hoped that his stature and accumulated political capital through over three decades of struggle could be used to oppose the Council.

While he was not personally to be at the helm, the political tradition he had helped inspire was still alive.

*'My life is my message'*¹

Monty, as he was affectionately referred to both by political foe and friend alike, arrived on the South African political scene in 1945 when he became President of the NIC...Monty Naicker was an honest leader of the people. He chose his path and followed it with conviction. His return to politics was not eventful. His political era [largely] ended with his banning ... He did valuable work; he did honest work; he was never the political philosopher ... Monty Naicker served well. Monty served honestly. There was no double talk or double standards in his political activity. He did not invest overseas. Monty died in South Africa. That is the test of his honesty and loyalty.²

THE LEADER, 20 JANUARY 1978

Monty became president of the NIC in the 1940s at a time when there was a strong feeling that the policy of appeasement was untenable, and that it was time for someone committed to mass action to take the helm. The choice of Monty raises questions, given the powerful influence of the CP and trade unions in mobilising workers, and the presence of strong and charismatic leaders like H.A. and M.D. Naidoo. When speaking to activists from that period, it is clear that Monty's access to cultural capital, which came from his Edinburgh experience and contact with Dadoo and Indian nationalists, was one factor, but his medical degree and the status accorded to the emergent professional stratum in the community were just as important.

What also came through strongly was his tenacity in pursuing justice in the face of seemingly irresistible odds, his sense of honesty and decency, and the calm way in which he worked across political tendencies. In leading the NIC, Monty took the approach of keeping things together, as long as this supported the objectives of the campaign. And unlike some who had come before and after,

Monty did not use his high profile in the community to accumulate wealth – for Monty, politics was not about personal power or self-interest.

The Leader's editorial points to Monty not being a 'political philosopher'. He was not a political philosopher if this meant that he was beholden to a set of ideas, and acted them out in a dogmatic manner. Nor was he a political philosopher in the sense of one who deeply studied abstract questions about government, property, justice, liberty and law. He did not write about the nature of these in any systematic way, but he articulated over and over again what constituted legitimate government' he was clear on the rights and freedoms that governments should provide to their citizens, and he also stated clearly that people had the right to challenge an illegitimate government. He saw the power of nationalism but was clear how it could turn in on itself. Monty's political beliefs were clear, as were his views about politics, even if his writings may not be categorised as belonging to the technical discipline of philosophy, because he did not analyse political questions through the perspectives of metaphysics and epistemology.

And did it matter whether he was a political philosopher?

In *The Politics of Moral Capital*, the philosopher John Kane suggests that 'moral reputation' can serve as an important resource to enhance the political effectiveness of actors and organisations, by providing them with legitimacy. But to be effective, moral capital must be complemented by political capital, such as the resources of organisation and intimate knowledge, and should be deployed skilfully.³ As Lodge points out:

Leaders who command moral authority achieve their position through action and behaviour, through appearing consistent to a widely shared cause, through undertaking actions that are perceived to advance their cause, through exemplifying the values that they represent in their behaviour ... Leaders who mobilise support through the deployment of moral capital need not be philosophical visionaries or grand strategists; they lead through example, through scripting and acting out a narrative that embodies the passions and aspirations of those whom they seek to attract as followers. They may draw upon their moral prestige ... to

bring coherence to previously disparate social forces, and in doing so extending exemplary influence across a range of political constituencies.⁴

Monty walked and talked with some of the greatest political figures of the twentieth century – Gandhi, Luthuli and Mandela, to name just three. He was intimate with many other freedom fighters and intellectuals whom history knows a little less well, but who were no less formidable: Yusuf Dadoo, Walter Sisulu, Moses Kotane, and Sarojini Naidu. He crossed swords with the ogres of segregation and apartheid, whose names are, unfortunately, just as indelible – Smuts, Malan, Strijdom, Verwoerd and Vorster. He (over) saw the building of a movement whose initial focus was on Indians living in South Africa, into a movement that not only sought to build an alliance with Africans, but demanded full citizenship rights for all.

Monty was witness to the flow of Indians into urban areas, and the brutal living conditions during the 1930s and 1940s, but he was more than a mere witness or simply the “medicine man”. He drifted into the emerging cauldron of Indian politics that pitted a younger, more confrontational coterie of activists against those who had long held leadership and who sought to placate the white ruling class in the hope of winning concessions and mitigating more aggressive racial policies. Monty might have drifted into that ring, but once he was in the political fight, he never thought of leaving it. It was a decision that fundamentally changed the course of his life and had a significant impact on Indian South African responses to apartheid. He was propelled into the frontlines, and from 1945 led the NIC through the inauguration of apartheid and into the Congress Alliance.

In doing so, he went beyond Gandhi, who eschewed an alliance with Africans for reasons that are well known. Of course, Monty lived in another era. He was several generations removed from India, and did not contemplate going back to the motherland, but he had the political acumen to stare down existing leadership that still sought an ethnic enclave and appeasement with the white ruling class, and he had the courage to seek an alliance with the ANC, in the process putting his own body on the line. This seminal move in striving for

a universal franchise in a non-racial South Africa was Monty's and his fellow fighters' important contribution to the liberation movement. They broke new ground. The Defiance Campaign was path-breaking when it is viewed in the context of prior separate racial resistances and the memory of 1949. Through Monty's stewardship, a united front was created that saw him and Luthuli and Indian and African take defiantly to the streets together, however tenuous the bonds.

Monty also bore witness to the enveloping Group Areas Act which, as it unfolded, corralled 'non-whites' into separate ghettos. He was a personal victim and mounted a spirited and sometimes amusing defence, but that battle also exposed how the state had eroded his power base. He was banned, cut-off from the workings of the NIC, and in the end his challenge was limited to a court case. While highlighting the inequities of the legislation, the courts were by then an ineffectual terrain in which to achieve redress, and the episode revealed how much the influence of the NIC had been diminished. Monty, the leader of a movement that had taken on the Ghetto Act and later the pillars of the legal edifice of apartheid, and in the process put thousands on the streets, had to fight for his own house as an individual.

Monty's lived philosophy was that the way the struggle was conducted should reflect the kind of society that would emerge after the collapse of apartheid. He believed in non-racialism, and lived out these ideas in the relationships he maintained with a diverse circle of friends. His scathing criticism of white power never deviated into narrow racism. Monty used the terms 'white' and 'black' to denote political positions. His world distinguished democrat from racist, and he held liberal ideas about political democracy, and more radical ideas about the economy and upliftment of the disadvantaged. Concerning the latter, his ideas were not as clearly expressed as with the former: he did not articulate thought-out economic models and mechanisms for the upliftment of the disadvantaged, even though he knew it was a shortcoming and tried his hand at studying economics.

What of the attempt to reach beyond the Indian community and build joint

campaigns with the ANC? It has been argued that the Congress Alliance's non-racialism of the 1950s was limited and did not draw people into a single organisation that was able to capture the imagination of more than a coterie of activists. While conceding that the non-racialism of the 1950s has been romanticised and over-written, the critique must be measured against the terrain in which people like Monty were operating. People, after all, do not simply make history; they organise under particular circumstances. In Natal it was a time wrought with division and suspicion that fed into racially charged quotidian practices. Mphahlele, for example, writing in the late 1940s reflects that he was left 'with a nagging memory of the strong spirit of tribalism that prevailed in Natal. Natal had two tribalisms: the English and the Zulu brands, with the Indian at the butt-end of both.'⁵

People like Monty were acting against this historical grain. The limitations of the time, the positions of contending impulses, some of which we have highlighted, must be measured against the signposts of the time: the pioneering 1952 Defiance Campaign, the promise of Kliptown, and the symbolism of the Treason Trail, signposts that were to light up and influence the struggles to come. While the likes of Monty were trying to mobilise the forces of opposition, the state was organising the geography of apartheid. One gets a sense that in the South Africa of the 1950s nothing stood still.

If state repression had a debilitating effect on the liberation movements, this was compounded by the state's ability to restructure the city in a way that had a profound effect on inter-racial relations. An "outsider" to the City, CP luminary Brian Bunting, reflected on the "gains" that had been made in Indo-African relations between 1949 and 1959 when Monty was arguably at the zenith of his political influence. Referring to the Beer Hall Riots in Cato Manor in 1959, Bunting remarked in his keynote address at the NIC's provincial conference that while 'it would be wrong to pretend that no cause for friction remains we can claim that in ten years, brother no longer strikes brother. We have learned to recognise the real enemy.' Bunting was pointing to the fact that African frustration in Cato Manor in 1959 was not vented against Indians as was the

case in 1949, but against the symbols of white authority – Bantu Administration offices and municipal vehicles and buildings.⁶

Bunting's approach emphasised the reduction in tension between Indian and African by pointing to the fact that in 1959 Africans turned their anger on the state rather than Indians. But this was too narrow a focus. Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s there were limited but significant political and social relations between Indians and Africans. Newspapers like *Leader* and *Graphic*, and periodicals like *Drum*, were pointing to increasing contact between Indians and Africans at university, in sports stadiums, and at jazz clubs. A non-racial cricket team toured Kenya in the late 1950s, and Indians and Africans began competing against and with each other in football and cricket. Curries Fountain, for example, was host to hugely popular football games, whose teams consisted of both Indians and Africans.

Forced removals into racially segregated townships shattered this and also the networks and local leaderships that Congress politics had built through the 1950s. Settled communities were evicted from suburbs like Clairwood, Greyville, Riverside, and Cato Manor, which had some of the strongest NIC branches. This double blow of political repression by the state and the destruction of community muted the effectiveness of the NIC. By the end of the 1960s, the NIC was a shadow of the organisation that had through the Defiance Campaign, the Freedom Charter, and the growing bond of the Congress Alliance, felt that it was making history.

It is noteworthy that Monty did not join the CP when all his closest comrades were communists. Monty was not interested in making those gestures that could win influence within the Left, although this did not stop him from making financial contributions to the Party.⁷ He could argue against liberals like Alan Paton, but also felt free to dine with them – his was a broad, open soul that did not live according to dogma. He invested in struggle because it was an investment in a future of joy.

Throughout Monty's life, his strategy of non-violence as a response to apartheid was inviolable. His was not a tactical call of the outgunned, and neither does

it strike one as some sort of softness. At some level of deep moral principle, Monty saw violence as detracting from the righteousness of a cause, not adding to it. The place of non-violence in the anti-apartheid struggle, particularly during the 1950s, has been minimised because of the centrality given to those who embraced armed struggle. Non-violent struggle was extremely crucial in the apartheid years, as the level and type of violence of the anti-apartheid forces who embraced the armed struggle was hopelessly inadequate to bring down the regime on its own.

In the last years of his life, Monty tried to return to the fray. His re-entry into political life was widely welcomed and the community's admiration for him was captured in an editorial in *The Graphic* (11 May 1973) when his ban was lifted:

Gangathura Mohambry Naicker. Medical doctor. Friend of the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted. A leader of his people. Politician of the highest integrity coupled with the greatest simplicity. Monty once again has his freedom from arbitrary deprivation of liberty; freedom from banning, which even in the South African scene, with all its curtailments and infringements of democratic concepts, is almost akin to liberation. Together with all the people of goodwill we rejoice at [his] liberation from his partial-jail-without-walls, for that is where a banned person is incarcerated. Naicker is a good man, a devoted South African, patriotic and loyal to South Africa and its people ... His integrity and devotion to the peoples of South Africa none can question. All that he has ever wanted for his people was ordinary decency, elementary democracy.

But Monty was to find that the terrain had shifted. Networks had evaporated as old neighbourhoods fell to the Group Areas Act, and many people saw their tasks of rebuilding religious and sporting organisations as a priority. Some of the new professional class, having taken advantage of access to higher education, were less inclined to sacrifice their economic gains on the altar of political activism, and their elitism was markedly different from that exhibited by Monty's generation. That he was born into relative privilege is beyond doubt, and that

he was one of Durban's first Indian doctors, trained in Scotland, which afforded him community status, is also true. But the trajectory of the movement best espoused by Luthuli when he held that 'there comes a time ... when a leader must give us a practical demonstration of his convictions and willingness to live up to the demands of the cause he expects of his people,' meant that Monty led from the front, and suffered the consequences.

By the 1950s, Monty was afforded a status not only because he was a doctor educated overseas, but because he was a tried and trusted fighter for justice. However, a certain aloofness still clung to him. In terms of charisma, Monty was no H.A. Naidoo or Dawood Seedat; he did not attempt to proletarianise himself in demeanour, nor did he romanticise "the masses" or the working class as the inevitable harbingers of justice. Social justice depended on a personal commitment to a set of ideas, and these ideas were democracy, non-racialism and non-violent struggle against oppression. It was a combination of aloofness and humour that kept him going through the jailings, bannings, friends locked up for years, others fleeing into exile and the seeming invincibility of the apartheid state. There are moments when the struggle may have been his entire world, but the biographies of so many activists show that the meanings generated by struggle did not succeed in filling the human soul. Monty took other satisfying things into his political life: like his sartorial style, his friendships, his singing, and his humour.

As time went by, however, the political world that he had helped build was crumbling. J.N. and I.C. were banned; Goonam was roving between continents; H.A. and Ponnen had left; M.P. was exiled in the bitter cold of London; Billy was on Robben Island. The new Black Consciousness leaders, Saths and Strini, had started to make waves, but were quickly packed off to join Billy. Luthuli was dead. The strongholds of the NIC were decimated by the Group Areas removals. Fighting apartheid seemed to necessitate killing.

Monty lived through the charge of treason, the stinging wound of bannings and restrictions, and the pain of separation from his closest comrades and friends. Sixteen years of bannings, ten of which were consecutive, took their

toll. He loved his socials, the mass meetings and the frontlines of struggle. Now life was conversation restricted to single visitors, movement day in and day out, between four walls.

The day is breaking
but my room
is composed of a long night.⁸

NIZAM HIKMET

Monty also lived through the parting of comrades still committed to the defeat of the apartheid state; the dividing line of the movement being between those who took up violence, especially acts of sabotage, while others like him refused to budge from the principle of non-violence. As Billy Nair attests, he understood the turn and respected the courage of those who took up arms, while they never saw Monty's repudiation of violence as a sign of cowardice. Whether strategically sound or not, his insistence on non-violent disobedience was a principle that he remained steadfast about.

Unlike his great friend Yusuf Dadoo, Monty did not join the CP. Dadoo's eminence in the Party took him into exile and its chairmanship in the early 1970s. Because of the different roads they travelled, Dadoo was more visible as the exiled movements built global networks. Monty, on the other hand, banned and closely monitored, was forced onto the margins of the political struggles of the 1960s. The name of Monty, the everyman's activist, hardly features through the re-telling and recovery of South African liberation history, yet he was the glue that kept things together at difficult times from the 1940s to the 1960s, giving the best years of his life to the struggle.



The home as prison.

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youth I lost here, and grace
i gave to this island place.
what more than a man's age
can one give to history's outrage?⁹

SATENDRA NANDAN

A comrade who visited Monty in hospital shortly before his death would record the following:

I last spoke to Monty in the intensive care unit at St Aidans Hospital shortly before his death. His operation was successful, but other complications had set in. His mind was rambling, but that afternoon there was a brief return. 'Monty,' I called. 'Hello,' he replied, coming out of the dark. 'How are you?' 'Well,' he said, 'getting on – but things in this country – they are moving too slowly – too slowly for change.' He appeared to be drowsing off again, but then his hand went up in the clenched fist, and it stayed there quivering. *Amandla,* I called. The clench grew firmer and the arm stayed up. I had to return it to the bed. So lived Monty.¹⁰



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Did Monty really live like that? Was he really a man who, even on his deathbed, was obsessed with politics and political power? Or is that to inscribe an ideology in death so that we can remember him in a particular, emancipatory way?

The picture that emerges through all the facts of Monty's life is much fuller, and in a sense much grander, than a cardboard cut-out figure of a pristine fighter for liberation. Monty had a sense of fun and irreverence in his life so vividly described by Alan Paton and Goonam. These vignettes by Dr Goonam, in a way, sum up his life:

Whenever Monty arrived at a party the sedateness of the atmosphere would immediately disappear as young and old would suddenly liven up. Looking

around the room, he would sidle up to the oldest lady, perhaps an aunt or one old enough to be one. He would ask her if her husband was good to her. This remark would sound out of place in Tamil as the Tamil language does not lend itself to frivolous banter. Then as the music started playing he would lift her almost bodily and wheel her on to the dance floor assuring her that her husband would henceforth show more affection to her after seeing her dancing with him ...

Monty loved his Tamil songs that he learnt in his school days but his repertoire included barely two lines of three or four songs. Our Saturday night weekly get-together would see him squatting on the floor with shoes off and upturned 'dekse' in front of him and with his two fingers pushed into an empty match-box, playing thubla to keep time, not only to his vocal talent, but to the others as well. Even when V.I.P.s were invited, Monty would go into our kitchen and come back armed with a pot and sitting cross-legged ... start off with his musical contribution as boisterous as any uninhibited schoolboy who was given a drum for a present ...

Monty was a great protagonist of the 'club', which meant for him a continuation of the good life he had in Edinburgh. Accordingly, he persuaded a group of 20 of his closest friends to purchase a rambling cottage on two acres of land in Bellair. There in between gaol going, Red Square speaking, congress directing and his medical practice, he spent his leisure time in the convivial company of his friends ...

Fatima Meer would record:

Thirukutu – the six-foot dance – was brought to the City Hall by Monty in the early fifties. This was the first and last time that this dance graced that august hall. For months Monty raved about this great South Indian heritage. The entire congress executive was marshalled to honour this shining contribution to Desi excellence. *Thirukutu* was to be staged in all its purity. It was, but not in the purity Durban's sedate audience was accustomed to. The dancers from the sugar plantations of Mount Edgecombe ran riot on the City Hall stage with their pornographic jokes and spontaneous time schedule. There was no restraining

them as they nipped backstage for a cane spirit refresher, and reappeared, bawdier than ever, with the barroom jokes that raised the well groomed hair of the specialised canvassed Durban gentry. The Congress executive blushed, but Monty enjoyed the bawdy brawl.¹¹

In his approach to life beyond the political, there was a touch of the fun-loving; a lover of parties, an occasional gambler and tease; player of the *tabla*, lover of Tamil songs, builder of the Congress Alliance, medical doctor, gambler, convenor of a social club, dancer-with-aunties, convict, activist delighting in the underground, and leader from the front in the face of state repression and the constant threat of violence.



Marie continues the legacy

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In many ways Monty's life is summed up by the letter that he sent to Marie from prison in 1948:

Dear Marie. Yours to hand. I hope you had a good trip to prison? How is Goonam? Give her my regards and tell her how glad I am that she is released

and ask her to look after her health. I am glad you were able to get a car before my release. That's one worry over. The other worry is the remission. It should be here by the end of the month, so it won't be long now and as you can imagine we are looking forward. In health I am as fit as a fiddle and being kept busy so time passes quickly. The weather too has not been too bad. I am glad you like the colour of the car. We will have to see about the radio as I will miss it a great deal. When you come over take a chance and bring some, say, chocs. How's the July fever? I would like you to take a combination if you have the money, say £1 on Arundle (1st), Tactful (2nd), Sona Rusk (3rd), and £2 win on No. 7 just a fancy. One morning we saw clouds in the formation of a V which soon after took the form of No. 7 so that's the tip. I hope the jacket Dad left behind is seeing you through. Don't forget to remind Harry about the place I told him to fix up in Booth Road – whatever Dad says. If George is convicted see Debi and tell him that if they arrange a meeting for us on our release to give it wide publicity as this would let my public know I have begun work. The big posters should be well displayed in the following areas: Isipingo, Clairwood, Mayville, and Overport, 2nd River, Mayville, Springfield, Clare Estate, Umgeni, Avoca, Mount Edgcombe, Greenwood Park, Magazine Barracks, Point Barracks, Point, Verulam, Booth Road, Wiggins Road. Tell them early and to pay someone to see that these areas are covered. If George is not there, Patel or Debi will see to it. Tell Kreesan and Vasugee that I am looking forward to the day when I can cuddle them and be with them, not to mention yourself. Warmest regards to all friends, and Love to you and family.

Monty.

The message of Monty's life, from the way he conducted his politics, is his absolute commitment to non-racialism and non-violent disobedience. He was insistent on this because for him it was not just about the defeat of apartheid but the way struggle was conducted that would determine the future society. The letter though also brings vividly home that Monty was – more than this – beyond the political agitator, he was a gambling man, the subtle flirt, the lover of chocolates, above all a person who even behind prison walls could exude

the love of life. His message was to live life simply, but with joy, and a sense of humour married to steely conviction and courage.

We hope that this biography has enriched your understanding of this reasonable time, the contradictory and often conflicting motivations and understandings of those who were striving for freedom, in the belief that ‘the past no longer belongs to those who once lived in it; the past belongs to those who claim it, and are willing to explore it, and infuse it with meaning for those alive today. The past belongs to us, because we are the ones who need it.’¹²

Now, more than ever, it is that time.



A (t)reasonable life.

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INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER 1 PASSAGE TO EDINBURGH

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44. Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 114.
45. Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill*, 114.
46. Wits interview.
47. Website, Centre for South Asian Studies, Edinburgh. <http://www.csas.ed.ac.uk/index.php>.
48. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 42.
49. Dr Goonam, 'Vignettes of Monty,' *Leader*, 27 January 1978.
50. Dr Goonam, 'Vignettes of Monty,' *Leader*, 27 January 1978.

CHAPTER 2 A TALE OF TWO WEDDINGS

1. On 16 December 2008, Nadarasan "Kukri" Appavoo was honoured by the House of Traditional *Leaders*. His son Dr Daya Appavoo received a scroll on his behalf at Kidds Beach just outside East London.
2. Based on information obtained by telephonic interviews, person-to-person interviews, and e-mail correspondence from Dr Daya Appavoo, Mohambry Appavoo (Brisbane), Vasugee (Sydney), and Dr Kreesen Naicker.
3. The annexure to the Agreement had what came to be known as the uplift clause. The South African government accepted that it was the 'duty of every civilised government to devise ways and means to take all possible steps for the uplifting of every section of their permanent population to the full extent of their capacity and opportunities ... Indians who remain part of the permanent population should not be allowed to lag behind other sections of the population.'
4. Sastri, 'Cape Town Agreement,' 190.
5. Sastri, 'Cape Town Agreement,' 193.
6. Kuper et.al., *Study in Racial Ecology*, 81 and 157.
7. Palmer, *Indian as a South African* 135.
8. Joshi, *Tyranny of Colour*, 112.
9. Naidoo and Bramdaw, *Sastri Speaks*, 21-22.
10. *Indian Opinion*, 27 November 1931.
11. Kajeje, Pather and Christopher, *Treatment of Indians in South Africa*, 21.
12. Tinker, *C.F. Andrews and India*, 224-5.
13. Joshi, *Tyranny of Colour*, 138.
14. Joshi, *Tyranny of Colour*, 135.
15. Corbett, 'Cape Town Agreement,' 68.
16. See Sannyasi and Chaturvedi.
17. Cheddie, 'CBSIA,' 27.
18. Cheddie, 'CBSIA,' 31.
19. *Indian Views*, 14 July 1933.
20. *Indian Opinion*, 28 July 1933.
21. *Indian Opinion*, 29 September 1933.
22. Cheddie, 'CBSIA,' 42-45.
23. Calpin, *Kajeje*, 27.
24. *Natal Mercury*, 6 July 1936. SAB, GG6, 85.
25. *Daily News*, 20 July 1936.
26. Calpin, *Kajeje*, chapter 3.
27. Pahad, 1972.
28. *Indian Opinion*, 4 May 1938.
29. *Indian Opinion*, 23 June 1935.
30. *The Call*, June 1940.
31. *Indian Opinion*, 20 August 1937.
32. V.S.C. Pather, S.R. Naidoo, A.I. Kajeje, and Sorbjee Rustomjee represented the Congress and Albert Christopher, P.R. Pather, S.L. Singh, and P.B. Singh the CBSIA.
33. Sorbajee Rustomjee, J.W. Godfrey, P.S. Aiyar, S.R. Naidoo, and A.E. Shaikh of the NIC met with P.B. Singh, Albert Christopher, P.R. Pather, S.L. Singh, and D.S. Chetty of the CBSIA.
34. See Bramdaw (1935), 124; Naidoo, V.R. (1986); and Pather, R. (1998).
35. Lecture in Johannesburg to the South African Institute of Race Relations. Wits University, SAIRR, 1944 RR157/44
36. *Indian Opinion*, 6 May 1938.
37. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, orig. 1961.

CHAPTER 3 FROM THE CANE FIELDS TO THE CASBAH

1. Lalla, *Ugly duckling*, 12-13.
2. For more detailed studies on Natal see Ballard and Lenta, 'Agriculture in Colonial Natal,' Guy, 'Zulu

society,' and Marks, *Ambiguities*. For a general debate on the South African case, Bundy, *Peasantry* and Lewis, 'Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry. Although an African free peasantry thrived in many parts of southern Africa in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there was a decline because of the imposition of taxes by the government, unfavourable market prices for raw commodities, natural disasters between 1890-1910, tension within African society and land appropriation by whites. The crowning moment was the Land Act of 1913 which reserved just 13% of South Africa's land for its African population. The availability of African labour rendered Indians superfluous in farming, mining and the public sector. Employers turned to African labour and the number of Indians dropped in most of the major sectors; on Natal's mines the number fell from 3,739 in 1911 to 488 in 1945; on the railways their numbers decreased from 6,000 in 1910 to 400 by the mid-1930s; and in general farming the percentage of Indians in the labour force fell from 32 in 1911 to 11 in 1936. The situation was especially dramatic on sugar estates where Indians as a percentage of the labour force dropped from 88 to 7 between 1910 and 1945. In numerical terms, the number of Indian employees dropped 18,270 to 4,500 during the period. For employers, African migrant labor was cheaper because wives and families did not have to be accommodated and fed, they were spared importing expensive staples like rice and dhal and Africans could be employed seasonally.

3. Source: University of Natal, *Durban Housing Survey*, 35.

Racial Composition of Durban's Population

YEAR	Whites	Coloureds	Indians	Africans	Total
1904	31 302	1 980	15 631	18 929	67 842
1911	31 903	2 497	17 015	17 750	69 165
1921	46 113	4 000	16 400	29 011	93 515
1931	59 250	4 240	17 860	43 750	125 100
1936	88 065	7 336	80 384	63 762	239 547
1949	129 683	11 280	123 165	109 543	373 771

4. Burrows, 'Durban's Growing Pains,' 29.

5. TBD, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1297, 25/193. Chief Constable to Town Clerk, A.O. Jones.

6. *Fiat Lux*, April 1977: 23.

7. Lalla, *Black Coolie*, 4.

8. Halliday, 'Indian Market Gardeners,' 42.

9. Report of the Assistant Estates Manager to Town Clerk, 6 July 1946. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1884, 35/540^A.

10. Natal Indian Association, "Memorandum Submitted to the Secretary for Public Health setting forth its Objections to the Expropriation Proposals of the Durban City Council", 22 December 1941. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1880, 643.

11. City Valuator and Estates Manager to town Clerk, 14 December 1945. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1881, 30 540.

12. Lalla, *Black Coolie*, 9.

13. Guest and Sellers, 'Introduction,' 10.

14. They increased from 5,237 to 13,711. In 1936, only 3.3 percent of employees were women. Indians were concentrated in the following industries in 1946: Food (27 percent); Clothing and Textile (26 percent); Leather (11 percent); Furniture (7 percent); Paper and Printing (6 percent). See Padayachee et al., *Indian Workers*, 33-36.

15. Kuper et al., *Racial Ecology*, 243.

16. *Leader*, 1 June 1946.

17. *Indian Views*, 29 November 1931.

18. *Indian Views*, 29 November 1931.

19. *Indian Opinion*, 16 October 1931.

20. *Indian Opinion*, 11 September 1931.

21. *Indian Opinion*, 25 September 1931. The officials were E.M. Paruk, B.M. Patel, Ismail Moosa, B.A. Meghraj, R.K. Khan, I.M. Bobat, Albert Christopher and Sorabjee Rustomjee.

22. *Indian Opinion*, 19 August 1932.

23. *Indian Opinion*, 25 November 1932.

24. NIO, "Memorandum," 1949.

25. *Leader*, 9 July 1949,

26. Interview with Dr Goonam, 31 May 1989,

27. Ginwala, 'Class,' 303.

28. Source: *Mayor's Minute*, 1951.

29. Author's interview with Saro Naicker.

30. Lalla, *Ugly Duckling*, 6.

31. Interview, Julie Fredericks (1984).

32. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/2052, City Health Dept. to Town Clerk, 09/01/1949. The 'Old Borough' refers to the original boundaries of Durban. In 1932 the boundaries of Durban were extended from 13 sq. miles to 70 sq miles. The population of Durban increased from 125,100 to 239,547, the number of Indians increased from 17,860 to 80,384. There were 88,065 whites and 63,762 Africans. Source: University of Natal, *The Durban Housing Survey*, 35.

33. *Indian Opinion*, 3 December 1926.
34. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/2045, Minutes of DTC Minutes, 17/07/1947. The municipality supported its sirdars. For example, Veerasamy complained that on 11 December 1933, after he had a quarrel with his neighbour, Sirdar Valir took him into the office where 'six Indian Hooligans got hold of me, and gave me a hiding saying I gave them trouble. I screamed and was saved by my son and Konjee Nair.' When Veerasamy complained to his Supervisor he was told to 'drop the matter, otherwise he will have to sack me.' No action was taken against the Sirdar or Supervisor for 'lack of evidence.' [NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1381, Correspondence between Veerasamy (Badge #1481) and Acting Town Clerk, December 1933]. In another incident, Mariemuthu was assaulted by Sirdars Nagiah and Doorsamy on 3 June 1947. Although Mariemuthu produced medical evidence indicating that he had been assaulted with a sjambok, and Doorsamy was found to be in possession of a sjambok, Mariemuthu was found guilty of creating a disturbance and the sirdars cleared of any misconduct. It was ruled that the 'cuts and bruises were mostly brought about by his own exertions.' [NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/2045, H.A.Smith, City and Water Engineer, to Town Clerk, 01/09/1947].
35. Naidoo, 'Survey,' 45.
36. Naidoo, 'Survey', 48.
37. Naidoo, 'Survey', 50.
38. "Howdah" refers to a seat with a canopy placed on the back of an elephant.
39. Naidoo, '156 Hands,' 307.
40. Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 46.
41. Interview with Dr Tensing Singh.
42. Interview with Dr Tensing Singh.
43. Report of Acting M.O.H., Dr G.D. English, to Town Clerk, 11 May 1933. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1297, 540.
44. University of Natal, *Durban Housing Survey*, 91.
45. Pamphlets published by the Durban City Council and Joint Wards Committee, c. 1946.
46. See Maylam (1980).
47. See Edwards (1989); Edwards and Nuttall (1990); Freund, *Insiders and Outsiders*, 53-60; Hemson, 'Dockworkers of Durban,' 210-220; and Kirk (1983).

CHAPTER 4 THE HAMMER AND THE SICKLE

1. *Leader*, 28 November 1947.
2. *Indian Opinion*, 7 December 1928.
3. *Indian Opinion*, 14 October 1927.
4. *Indian Opinion*, 30 November 1928.
5. *Indian Opinion*, 7 December 1928.
6. *Indian Opinion*, 7 December 1928.
7. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 70-71.
8. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 86-87.
9. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 86-90.
10. Edwards, 'Recollections', 71.
11. Legassick, *Towards Socialist Democracy*, 146.
12. Raman, 'Being an Indian Communist,' 162.
13. Pinnock, *Writing Left*, 17.
14. For a fascinating perspective on the CPSA during this period, see Legassick (2007) and Bunting, *Moses Kotane* (1975).
15. Padayachee et al., *Indian Workers*, p.89.
16. Ponnien, Interview with Edwards, 1985.
17. *Indian Opinion*, 11 June 1937.
18. Reprinted in *Indian Opinion*, 25 June 1937.
19. *Indian Views*, 18 June 1937.
20. *Indian Opinion*, 16 July 1937.
21. Interview with Iain Edwards.
22. Ponnien, Interview with Edwards, 1985.
23. *Indian Views*, 11 June 1937.
24. *Indian Views*, 11 June 1937.
25. *Indian Views*, 11 June 1937.
26. *Indian Views*, 2 July 1937.
27. *Indian Opinion*, 2 July 1937.
28. *Indian Views*, 18 June 1937.
29. *Indian Views*, 19 February 1943.
30. Ponnien, Interview with Edwards, 1985.
31. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 69.
32. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 71.
33. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 76.

34. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 92.
35. Zug, *The Guardian*, 48.
36. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 107-108.
37. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 45.
38. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 45.
39. In Zug, *The Guardian*, 53.
40. Zug, *The Guardian*, 54.
41. Zug, *The Guardian*, 55.
42. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 44.
43. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 44.
44. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 44.
45. Padayachee, *Indian Workers*, p.57.
46. The new Leaders included A.P. Pillay (Iron and Steel Workers Union and Sugar Workers Union); L. Ramsunder (Laundry Cleaning and Dyeing Workers Union); P.T. Coopen (Sugar Workers Union); S.V. Reddy (Box Workers Union); M. Ramcheran (Tobacco Workers Union); Sam Pillay (Food and Canning Workers Union); N.G. Moodley (Brick, Tile and Allied Workers Union); R.R. Pillay (Natal Coal Miner's Union); E.I. Moola (Chemical Workers Union), R.D. Naidoo (Bakery Workers Union); Cassim Amra (Indian Distributive and Clerical Employee's Union); Mannie Pillay (Biscuit and Confectionary Workers Union); R.S. Tommy (Bag Workers Union); S.A. Mahomed (Tobacco Workers); and M.D. Naidoo (Food and Canning Workers Union and Coffee and Chicory Workers Union). African union organisers who came to the fore during this period included Christopher Mbonambi (African Distributive Workers Union), Gladman Nxumalo (African Engineering Workers Union), Steven Dlamini (Textile Workers Union), Albert Mkhize (Brick, Tile and Allied Workers Union), Danton Mngadi (Twine and Bag Workers Union), and Harry Gwala (Textile Workers Union, Municipal Workers in Pietermaritzburg).
47. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 53.
48. "Voices of Resistance" Interview.
49. Edwards, 'Recollections', 76.
50. Podbrey, *White Girl*, 70-71.
51. Interview with Ian Edwards, 1986.
52. Documentation Centre Interview.
53. Interview with Iain Edwards.
54. *Leader*, 23 January 1943.
55. *Indian Views*, 19 February 1943.
56. Raman, 'Being an Indian Communist,' 178-183.
58. See, for example, Padayachee et al., *Indian Workers*, 115.
59. *Leader*, 12 January 1946.
60. *Indian Views*, 6 February 1943.
61. Interview, Julie Fredericks.

CHAPTER 5 THE "EDUCATION" OF MONTY

1. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 47.
2. 'Sastri College Brochure', 1980.
3. *Call*, Feb. 1940. The officials for 1940 were Fay King Goldie (chairperson), A.S. Kajee (vice-president), M.I. Timol (secretary), and S.M. Limbada (assistant-secretary). The committee comprised of C. Rose, H.A. Naidoo, J. Zoutendyk, P.D. Mashao, and Steven Dlamini. I.C. Meer (chairman), S.N. Moodley (deputy chair), J.P. Soni (assistant-secretary), E.I. Moola (treasurer), and A.K.M. Docrat (secretary) were the officials for 1941.
4. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 58.
5. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 58.
6. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 99.
7. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 58.
8. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 85.
9. Brown, *Gandhi*, 270.
10. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. 76, 327.
11. Julie Frederickse interview.
12. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 36.
13. Julie Frederickse interview.
14. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 42.
15. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 99.
16. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 94-95.
17. *Call*, July 1940.
18. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 37.
19. *Sunday Times Extra*, 12 October 1980.
20. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 38.

21. Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 49.
22. *Call*, June 1940.
23. *Call*, February 1940.
24. *Call*, June 1940.
25. *Call*, July 1940.
26. *Call*, July 1940.
27. Wits interview.
28. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 38.
29. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 48-49.
30. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 85.
31. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 81.
32. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 81.
33. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 59.
34. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 6.
35. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 143-144.
36. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 78-82; Murray, WITS, 96-99.
37. Berman interviewed with Donald Pinnock. In Pinnock, *Writing Left*, 14.
38. In Pinnock, *Writing Left*, 15.
39. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 78-82
40. G. Ponnen interview with I. Edwards, 1985.
41. *Call*, July 1940.
42. Podbrey, *White Girl in Search of the Party*, 61.
43. Meer, UDW, 1021/89.
44. Rand Daily Mail, 1 December 1933.
45. TBD, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1394, 30/284D 1939.
46. *Natal Witness*, 8 October 1938
47. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 10.
48. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 14.
49. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 19-22.
50. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 29-32.
51. Wits interview.
52. Wits interview.
53. Wits interview.
54. *Indian Opinion*, 17 June 1938.
55. *Indian Opinion*, 6 May 1936.
56. *Indian Opinion*, 10 June 1938.
57. *Searchlight* 1 Nov. 1946.
58. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 101.
59. Report by SAIC delegate, V. Lawrence. In *Indian Opinion*, 23 June 1927.
60. *Indian Opinion*, 17 June 1927.
61. *Leader*, 2 April 1941.
62. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*, 53.
63. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 100.
64. Guardian, 2 October 1941. In Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 28.
65. Interview, Julie Fredericks.
66. UKZN, 'Life and Times of George Ponnen,' 22.

Centre

CHAPTER 6 SHOWTIME AT CURRIES

1. *Indian Opinion*, 10 May 1940.
2. NIC Pamphlet, *ANC Papers*, ICS, No.18. This was a sentiment that voiced by CP members, colonial born Indians and merchants alike, as well as the Broome Commissions and government bodies. In Raman, 'Communist Party,' 288.
3. NIC Pamphlet, *ANC Papers*, ICS, No.18. In Raman, 'Communist Party,' 290.
4. Reddy, *Yusuf Dadoo*, 371.
5. *Call*, July 1940.
6. *Call*, July 1940.
7. *Call*, July 1940.
8. *Leader*, 22 December 1942.
9. Pather, 'Grand Old Man.' Accessed at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/pather-riashee/chapter-two.htm>
10. Bagwandeem, *People on Trial*, 100-102.
11. *Leader*, 21 January 1994.
12. Bagwandeem, *A People of Trial*, 50-57.
13. Pather, 'Grand Old Man.' Accessed at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/pather-riashee/chapter-two.htm>

14. Bagwandeem, *A People of Trial*, 50-57.
15. Bagwandeem, *A People of Trial*, 142.
16. Caplin, Kajee, 145-146.
17. Lloyd, 'Family Quarrel,' 712.
18. *Leader*, 13 May 1944.
19. Bagwandeem, *A People of Trial*, 142.
20. G. Ponnen. Interview with I. Edwards, 1985.
21. Wits Interview.
22. *Guardian*, 14 July 1945.
23. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 101.
24. *Leader*, 22 December 1945.
25. *Leader*, 12 January 1946.
26. Documentation Centre.
27. *Dimes Monthly Bulletin*, December 1941
28. *Dimes Monthly Bulletin*, July 1942
29. Murugan, *Lotus Blooms*, 43.
30. Padayachee, *Indian Workers*, 216.
31. *Dimes Monthly Bulletin*, December 1944
32. *Indian Views*, 14 November 1945.
33. *Indian Views*, 9 February 1945.
34. *Indian Views*, 2 February 1945.
35. Quoted in *Indian Views*, 2 March 1945.
36. *Indian Views*, 16 March 1945.
37. *Indian Views*, 29 June 1945.
38. *Indian Views*, 12 September 1945.
39. *Indian Views*, 19 September 1945.
40. *Leader*, 20 October 1945.
41. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 101.
42. *Daily News*, 26 February 1948.
43. *Natal Witness*, 1 March 1948.
44. *Leader*, 19 January 1946.
45. Naidoo, 156 Hands, 242-244.
46. C.D. Moodley. Interview with authors.
47. 'The Life of A.S. Chetty,' Alan Paton Centre, 161/2/1/1/2.
48. C.D. Moodley. Interview with authors.
49. *The Life of A.S. Chetty*. Manuscript at the Alan Paton Centre, UKZN. APC 161/2/1/1/2.
50. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 149-151.
51. *Indian Views*, 12 January 1945.
52. Interview, Kader Hashim as well as a 'Tribute' prepared by Kader Hashim and passed on to authors electronically.
53. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 149.
54. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 150.
55. Hassim interview; Hassim, 'Tribute to Zuleika Christopher,' 1992.
56. Hassim, 'Tribute to Zuleika Christopher,' 1992.
57. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 149.
58. Kader Hassim interview with authors.
59. '50 Years Ago in *The Leader*,' *The Leader*, 4 July 1997.
60. *The Leader*, 5 July 1947.
61. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 102.
62. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 89.
63. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 89.

CHAPTER 7 'BOLD, SENSIBLE AND DECISIVE'

1. *Leader*, 27 October, 1945. Accessed at University of Fort Hare Archival Collections. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_president.
2. *Indian Views*, 31 October 1945.
3. *Indian Views*, 14 November 1945.
4. Julie Frederickse interview, Wits University.
5. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 113.
6. Julie Frederickse interview, Wits University.
7. Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 327.
8. Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 327.
9. Lake and Reynolds, *Global Colour Line*, 328-29.
10. Singh, *Asiatic Land Tenure Act*, 18; In Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 43.
11. *Leader*, 23 March 1946; in Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 44.

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12. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 91.
13. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
14. 'That week of decision 30 years ago,' *Leader*, 13 February 1976.
15. The *Leader* 23 February 1946. Accessed at http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/pdf/l_remember_IC_Meer.pdf.
16. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>.
17. *The Leader*, 20 April 1946. Accessed at http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/pdf/l_remember_IC_Meer.pdf
18. The NIC proclaimed 20 February 1946 a "hartal", that is, 'a day of protest, pledge and prayer with a cessation of normal working activities.' See Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, 72.
19. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 229. Accessed at http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/pdf/l_remember_IC_Meer.pdf.
24. *Leader*, 6 April 1946; in Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 45.
25. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 95 and *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 231.
26. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 95.
27. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/reports-13%20jun%2046-13%20May%2047.htm>. June 1947.
28. *Passive Resister*, 2 February 1947.
29. Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, 72-73; 159.
30. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/reports-13%20jun%2046-13%20May%2047.htm>. June 1947.
31. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>.
32. *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 233. Accessed at C:\Documents and Settings\user\My Documents\Articles In Process\Monty Naicker\Shuter_Final.
33. *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 237.
34. Troup, *In Face of Fear*, 127.
35. *Passive Resister*, 11 December 1947.

CHAPTER 8 'ABAFANA BAKA GANDHI'

1. Sampson, *Treason Cage*, 181.
2. The women were Miss Zainab Asvat, Miss Zohra Bhayat, Amina Pahad, and Mrs Zubeida Patel of Johannesburg, and Mrs Lakshmi Govender and Mrs Veeramah Pather of Durban. Male resisters were Monty, M.D. Naidoo, R.G. Premllal, V. Patrick, V. S Chetty, P. Poonsamy, Shaikh Mohammed, R.A. Pillay, Abbai Soobramoney T.J. Vasi, S. Abdul Kader, and M.N. Govender.
3. *Leader*, 14 June 1946. Accessed at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
4. *Leader*, 15 June 1946.
5. *Flash* No. 100. 26 July 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
6. Dhupelia-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner*, 311
7. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/reports-13%20jun%2046-13%20May%2047.htm>. June 1947.
8. Troup, *In Face of Fear*, 128-129.
9. Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 51-52.
10. In *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 235.
11. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
12. In *I.C. Meer Remembers*, 238.
13. Interview with Mr Kenny Naidoo, 8 June 1994.
14. *Leader*, 14 September 1946.
15. *Leader*, 27 December 1946.
16. *Leader*, 26 October 1946.
17. *Leader*, 29 June 1946.
18. *Flash* No. 36. 28 June 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
19. *Flash* No. 41. 29 June 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
20. *Flash* No. 45. 30 June 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
21. *Flash* No. 50. 2 July 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
22. Podbrey, *White Girl*, 62

23. Mrs. Kara, Mrs Nelly Peters, Miss Salatchee Moodley, Miss M. Pather, Mrs Sellappen Naicker, Miss S.G. Khan, Mrs Rajmoni, Mrs L. Govender, Mrs Papaam Pillay, Mrs Ismail Cassim, Mrs Anita Passmore, and Mrs A. Naidoo.
24. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 108-09.
25. *Flash* No. 81. 18 July 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
26. Documentation Centre.
27. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 113-116.
28. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 113-128.
29. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
30. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 113-128.
31. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
32. Yates and Chester, *The Troublemaker*, 54-55.
33. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-NIC%20meeting.htm>
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Leader*, 13 July 1946.
36. *Leader*, 13 June 1946. 36.
37. *Leader*, 14 September 1946.
38. *Flash* No. 91. 21 July 1946. Issued by the PRC of the NIC.
39. *Leader*, 14 September 1946.
40. Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, 76.
41. Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, 75.
42. *Passive Resister*, 11 December 1947.
43. *Passive Resister*, 7 February 1947.
44. Report of the Passive Resistance Council, *The Leader*, 21 June 1947.
45. PRC was made up of Monty, Debi Singh, M.P. Naicker, Manilal Gandhi, J.N. Singh, A.E. Patel, S.V. Reddy, R.G. Pillay, R.A. Pillay, Billy Peters, Jackie Pillay, Ashwin Choudree, M.D. Naidoo, Dr Goonam, Dr R.M. Pather and A.I. Meer.
46. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/reports-jun%2047-May%2048.htm>
47. *Passive Resister*, 28 February 1947.
48. *Leader*, 15 March 1947.
49. *Leader*, 22 March 1947.
50. Johnson, 'Indians and Apartheid'; In Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 49.
51. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 93.
52. See Padayachee, Vawda and Tichmann (1985) for a comprehensive discussion on the growth of trades unions among Indian workers, their role in the NIC, and growing competition with African workers. Freund (1995) also deals with this issue.
53. *Indian Opinion*, 17 January 1947; In Cachalia, 'Radicalisation,' 51.
54. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/passive.html>
55. Documentation Centre.
56. Sisulu, *In our lifetime*, 110.
57. Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 126.
58. Bunting, *Moses Kotane*, 127.
59. Accessed at http://everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1060911.
60. Sisulu, *In our lifetime*, 110.
61. Speech in Durban 16 September 1948 In Shukla, *Reminiscences of Gandhiji*, Accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/gm1948.html>.

CHAPTER 9 IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE MOHATMA

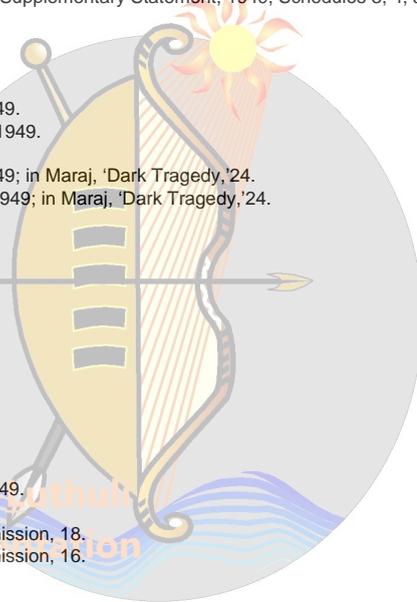
1. T.K. Swaminathan, Secretary of the Indian Colonial Society, Madras, *The Indian Emigrant*, 1914; quoted in L. Subramanian, 'Reflections on the 'Overseas Indian': At home in the world,' presented at the conference on 'Print Culture in the Indian Ocean, Wits University, 15-17 January 2009.
2. Tinker, 'Review,' 525. Quoting Bridglal Pachai.
3. *Passive Resister* (Johannesburg), 5 March 1948.
4. All three quotes accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/solidarity/artic-bk.html#NEHRU>
5. *Leader*, 27 February 1943.
6. *Leader*, 29 August 1942.
7. *Leader*, 30 January 1943.
8. Malley, *Shades of Difference*, 56.
9. Judd, *Empire*, 338.
10. Mountbatten, *India Remembered*, 22.
11. *Leader*, 2 September 1947.

12. Pachai, *International Aspects of the Indian Question*, p.186.
13. *Leader*, 16 June 1946.
14. Bennett-Smyth, 2003. Also <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1946-1947-1948.htm>
15. Bennett-Smyth, 2003.
16. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 108.
17. Zug, *The Guardian*, 82 and 275.
18. *Leader*, 13 December 1946. Timothy Bennett-Smyth, 2003.
19. A copy of the letter was sent to S.M. Paruk of Durban whose daughter Manna Rajah gave us the letter.
20. 'Report by A.I. Meer to the Joint PRC of the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congresses,' 9 January 1948. Accessed at <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/passive-resistance/International%20support-1948.htm>
21. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 149.
22. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 152.
23. Avy Mallik, 'Women Presidents of the General Assembly. An Uneven Past,' UN Chronicle Online. Accessed at <http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2006/issue3/0306p06.htm>.
24. Press statement by the South African Indian Congress, Johannesburg, 21 November 1950. <http://www.sacp.org.za/docs/history/dadoo-40.html>
25. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 154.
26. *Passive Resister* (Johannesburg), 28 August 1947.
27. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 154-55.
28. Bennett-Smyth, 2003.
29. Bhana and Pachai, *Documentary History*, p.193.
30. The area in brackets was accessed at 'Drs Naicker and Dadoo in India, Pakistan and Cairo,' <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/passive-resistance/1947-naicker%20and%20dadoo.htm>.
31. Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 154.
32. Mansergh, 'Asian Conference,' 295.
33. Mansergh, 'Asian Conference,' 298-99.
34. Altbach, 'Transformation of the Indian Student Movement,' 448-460.
35. *The Leader*, 7 June 1947,
36. Monty Naicker on his return from India in 1947. Read in the Treason Trial by the Prosecutor. (Treason Trial Transcript, pages 3729-32). Exhibit G.M.N. 13.
37. 'What I Owe to Mahatma Gandhi,' 16 September 1947. Accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/gmindex.html>.
38. See Guha, *Dominance without Hegemony*, 1998.
39. See Chandra (1983), Sinha (1965) and Owen (2008) for some of the debates. Owen's focus is on the failed attempts of the British Left to forge an alliance with the Left in India but nevertheless throws important light on the Left movement in Indian politics leading up to independence.
40. See Jaffrelot, 2004.
41. Gandhi, M.K. "The Law of Suffering" *Young India* 16 June 1920. Accessed at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyagraha#cite_note-9.
42. Babenia, *Memoirs of a Saboteur*.
43. Couper, 'Silencing of Chief Albert Luthuli,' 335.
44. *India News Chronicle*, 25 September 1949. Accessed at <http://www.sacp.org.za/docs/history/dadoo-38.html>.
45. Pachai, *International Aspects*, 247.
46. *India News Chronicle*, 25 September 1949. Accessed at <http://www.sacp.org.za/docs/history/dadoo-38.html>.
47. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 157-58.
48. Mukherji, *Indian Minority in South Africa*, 160.
49. 'Pandit Nehru and the unity of the oppressed people of South Africa,' Accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/solidarity/nehru-unity.html>.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 10 'OH, THEY HAD BECOME ARROGANT'

1. Presidential address, NIC Annual Congress June 1949.
2. Quoted in Naidoo, *Reflections on the Two Indians in South Africa*, 103.
3. Quoted in Van Rensburg, *Guilty Land*, 19-20.
4. Kies, *Background to Segregation*, 5.
5. See Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting*, 97-125.
6. Prashad, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting*, 104.
7. Presidential address, NIC Annual Congress June 1949.
8. Van den Heever Report,3; *Indian Opinion*, 11 February 1949.
9. Van den Heever Report, 4; Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 49.

10. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 49.
11. Raman, 'Indian Communist,' 244.
12. In Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 51.
13. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 53.
14. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 53.
15. *Daily News*, 14 June 1949. Accessed at http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/articles_papers/karis-cartervol2/document44.htm.
16. *Indian Opinion*, 4 February 1949.
17. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 54.
18. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 55.
19. *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.
20. 'Van den Heever Report,' 4; in Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 56.
21. *Sunday Post*, 16 January 1949; in Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 56.
22. *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.
23. For a detailed account of the riots, see Nuttall (1991) and Kirk (1983).
24. Van den Heever Report, 5.
25. *Indian Opinion*, 4 February 1949.
26. *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949.
27. Van den Heever Report, NIO. Supplementary Statement, 1949, Schedule 1.
28. Van den Heever Report, NIO. Supplementary Statement, 1949, Schedule 2.
29. Van den Heever Report, NIO. Supplementary Statement, 1949, Schedules 3, 4, and 5.
30. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 60.
31. In Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 50.
32. In Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 59.
33. In Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 60.
34. *Natal Mercury*, 17 January 1949.
35. *Sunday Tribune*, January 19, 1949.
36. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 21.
37. *Natal Mercury*, 17 January 1949; in Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 24.
38. *Sunday Tribune*, 23 January 1949; in Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 24.
39. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 82.
40. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 26.
41. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 27.
42. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 47.
43. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 32-39.
44. Maraj, 'Dark Tragedy,' 40-44.
45. Van den Heever Report, 1.
46. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 68.
47. Van den Heever Report.
48. *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949.
49. *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949.
50. 3 DBN 4/1/3/1583-1585, 227.
51. *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.
52. *Leader*, 22 January 1949.
53. NIO Statement to Riots Commission, 18.
54. NIO Statement to Riots Commission, 16.
55. 3 DBN 4/1/3/1583-1585, 433.
56. 3 DBN 4/1/3/1583-1585, 434.
57. 3 DBN 4/1/3/1583-1585, 443.
58. 'Van den Heever Report, 2.
59. 'Van den Heever Report, 6.
60. 'Van den Heever Report, 10.
61. 'Van den Heever Report, 13.
62. 'Van den Heever Report, 15.
63. 'Van den Heever Report, 5.
64. 'Van den Heever Report, 12.
65. Title of Kirkwood (1949).
66. Raman, 'Indian Communist,' 259.
67. Report of Debi Singh, NIC General-Secretary, NIC June 1949.
68. Letter from R. Naidoo, Secretary, Cato Manor Indian Economic Housing Scheme, to Major Bosman, 10 December 1948. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1581, 35/323B.
69. Interview with Dr Goonam, 31 May 1989.
70. 'Statement', Reddy, Yusuf Dadoo, 145.
71. KCAV 7/21/80.
72. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 138-9.
73. Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 55.
74. *Daily News*, 15 January 1949.



75. Reprinted in *Indian Opinion*, 21 January 1949.
76. Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie*.
77. *Indian Opinion*, 4 March 1949.
78. Edwards and Nuttall, 'Seizing the Moment.'
79. Durban became particularly significant during the Second World War as it was a stopping point for British ships taking troops to the east.
80. Nuttall 'Class, Race and Nation,' 226.
81. Nuttall, 'Peace,' 10.
82. Nuttall, 'Peace,' 12.
83. *Leader*, 22 January 1949.
84. See Maylam, 1996.
85. *Indian Opinion*, 21 April 1944.
86. *Indian Opinion*, 1 Dec. 1939.
87. Tunywa Dlamini, interviewed by Bonginkou C. Mkhize, 2 November 1981, KCAV.29.
88. Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 98.
89. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 88.
90. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 121.
91. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 141.
92. Interview with Eddie Webster; quoted in Kirk, 'Durban Riots,' 132.
93. Edwards, 'Mkhumbane Our Home,' 193.
94. Drum, May 1953. In Pillay, *Voices of Liberation*, 14.
95. Clingham, *Bram Fischer*, 191.

CHAPTER 11 THE FANATICS

1. Monty Naicker's Presidential Address, NIC Congress, June 1949.
2. Worden, *Making of Modern South Africa*, 93.
3. There are contrasting perspectives on the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. Dunbar Moodie (1975) examined the roots of the 'civil theology' of Afrikaner nationalism; Patrick Fulong (1991) argues that Fascist tendencies within NP were not a deviation from some "proper" and pristine policies were but part and parcel of the swing to the right as a result of the influence of European fascism; adopting a Marxist analysis which was popular at the time and which rejected the liberal idea that capitalism was incompatible with racism, Dan O' Meara (1977, 1983) argued that Afrikaner nationalism was used to mobilise Afrikaner capitalism. While monocausal in part, his work is important in pointing to the economic basis of Afrikaner nationalism as well as underscoring social and regional differences among Afrikaners. Marx (2008) provides a social history of Afrikaner nationalism and examines the plethora of factors that transformed it into a radical political movement. The newer perspective in this book is its focus on the popularity and importance of the Ossebrandwag in the context of radical Afrikaner nationalism and the influence of its extreme right-wing ideology on the National Party.
4. Korf, 'Podium and/or Pulpit?,' 222.
5. <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/biographies/blbio-dfmalan.htm>
6. Structural changes in the economy included the commercialisation of agriculture, expansion of the railways network which made Afrikaner transport riders redundant, and competition from African workers in the mines and manufacturing industry. See Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 125-136.
7. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 131.
8. See Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 156-162.
9. <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/glossary/bldef-ossewabrandwag.htm>
10. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 303.
11. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 383.
12. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 360.
13. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 389-395.
14. <http://africanhistory.about.com/library/biographies/blbio-dfmalan.htm>
15. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 531.
16. Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 203.
17. Mukherji, *Indian Minority*, 161.
18. Legislation included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act No 55 of 1949, the Immorality Amendment Act (1950), the Population Registration Act No 30 of 1950, the Group Areas Act No 41 of 1950, Suppression of Communism Act No 44 1950, Separate Representation of Voters Act (1951), the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act No 52 of 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act No 68 of 1951, Native Laws Amendment Act No 54 of 1952, the Abolition of Passes Act No 67 of 1952, and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act No 49 of 1953, and the Bantu Education Act of 1953.
19. Mukherji, *Indian Minority*, 161.
20. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/congress/gm1950.html>
21. Palmer, *History of Indians in Natal*, 177-178.
22. Harvery Day, 'These Mad Men Rule South Africa,' *Hindustan Daily*, 13 July 1958. Quoted in Mukherji, *Indian Minority* in South Africa, 190-191.

23. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 38.
24. Tiryakian, 'Apartheid and Politics in South Africa,' 683.
25. Recently declassified document from the Commissioner of Police to Secretary of Justice, 20 October 1954, containing a number of Monty's speeches. SAB, S.2/2. Vol. 2, 444.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. See Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 238-39.
30. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 257.
31. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 479.
32. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 509.
33. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven page letter from the Ministry of Justice to Monty's attorney J.N. Singh detailing extracts from Monty's speeches at over 20 meetings between 1946 and 1954.
34. Bernstein, *Memory against Forgetting*, 109.
35. Bernstein, *Memory against Forgetting*, 109.
36. Bernstein, *Memory against Forgetting*, 116.
37. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. See note 41 above.
38. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 130.
39. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. See note 41 above.
40. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 131.
41. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, 132.
42. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. See note 41 above.
43. Address to Twenty-First Congress of the SAIC, 9 July 1954. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_21st_south_african_indian
44. Podbrey, *White Girl*, 145-155.
45. Interview with Pauline Podbrey. In Suttner, *Cutting through the Mountain*, 58-63.
46. Interview with Pauline Podbrey. In Suttner, *Cutting through the Mountain*, 58-63.
47. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre.
48. http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/D_0059.htm
49. Interview, Julie Frederickse.

CHAPTER 12 'THE FUTURE IS OURS'

1. Lodge, *Mandela*, 46.
2. Agenda Book of the 20th Session of the SAIC Conference, 25-27 January 1952.
3. Sisulu, *In our Lifetime*, 142.
4. Wits University Interviews.
5. Lodge, *Mandela*, 51.
6. Lodge, *Mandela*, 52.
7. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven-page letter from the Ministry of Justice to Monty's attorney J.N. Singh detailing extracts from Monty's speeches at over 20 meetings between 1946 and 1954.
8. TBD, 3/DBN, 4/1/4/281. 'Town Clerk's Memorandum for General Purposes Committee: Proposed New Bye-Laws for Regulating, Restricting and Prohibiting Processions, Displays, Performance or Gatherings in Public Streets and Places.'
9. Lodge, *Mandela*, 47.
10. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven-page letter from the Ministry of Justice to Monty's attorney J.N. Singh detailing extracts from Monty's speeches at over 20 meetings between 1946 and 1954.
11. Sisulu, *In our Lifetime*, 153.
12. *Daily News*, 2 September 1952.
13. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 145.
14. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 146.
15. *Daily News*, 10 September 1952.
16. Letter from the Commissioner of Police to the Secretary of Justice, 18 March 1953. There are 18 persons on this list. Monty is reference S. 2/2. Though the documents are now declassified, except for Monty all names have been blacked out. SAB C.6/2568 (B).
17. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven-page letter from the Ministry of Justice to Monty's attorney J.N. Singh detailing extracts from Monty's speeches at over 20 meetings between 1946 and 1954.
18. Bhana, *Gandhi's Legacy*, 84.
19. Dhupelia-Mesthrie, *Gandhi's Prisoner?*, 355.
20. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 146.
21. TBD, 3/DBN 4/1/4/282, 50/134.
22. TBD, 3/DBN 4/1/4/282.

23. TBD, 3/DBN 4/1/4/282, 50/134.
24. TBD, 3/DBN 4/1/4/282, 50/134.
25. TBD, 3/DBN 4/1/4/282, 50/134.
26. TBD, 2/DBN, 4/1/4/282. J. 24/3.
27. TBD, 2/DBN, 4/1/4/283. S.90/663.
28. Special Report of the CID, Dundee, 28 November 1952. Provided by Kader Hassim.
29. Quoted in Suttner, *ANC Underground in South Africa*, 22.
30. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 141.

CHAPTER 13 'A KNOCK ON THE DOOR'

1. R.D. Naidoo described the Freedom Charter as a 'knock on the door'. Interview, Julie Frederickse.
2. Monty's address read out at the ANC national conference in Durban, 16 Durban 1954. He was banned and could not attend. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_anc_conference.
3. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven-page letter detailing Monty's utterances at over 20 meetings.
4. Ibid.
5. Accessed at http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_7th_natal.
6. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_anc_conference
7. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 141-42.
8. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 17.
9. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_anc_conference
10. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. See note 2 above.
11. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 23.
12. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 40-43.
13. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 44-46.
14. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 46-47.
15. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 82.
16. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 82-84.
17. Orkin, "Democracy knows No Colour", 648.
18. Orkin, "Democracy knows No Colour", 647.
19. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 154.
20. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 154-155.
21. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 158
22. *Indian Opinion*, 1 July 1955.
23. Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 103.
24. 'The Freedom Charter and its relevance today.' Article Written by Mzala on the Occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Freedom Charter. Accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/campaigns/cop/relevance.htm>.
25. See Couper, 'Bound by Faith,' 135-140.
26. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_new_year_1955
27. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 158.
28. Luthuli, Let My People Go, 142; in Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 80.
29. Luthuli, Let My People Go, 142; in Suttner and Cronin, *30 Years of the Freedom Charter*, 115.
30. See Lodge (1986) and William (1988) among others.
31. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 154.
32. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 160
33. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 163
34. Wits University Interviews.
35. Interview, Julie Frederickse.
36. Presidential address, 22nd Conference of the SAIC, Johannesburg, 12 October 1956. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_22nd_south_african_indian

CHAPTER 14 'HOU LINKS'

1. Treason Trial Defence Fund, *South Africa's Treason Trial*, 4.
2. *Indian Views*, 5 December 1956.
3. *Graphic*, 8 December 1956.
4. *Indian Views*, 5 December 1956.
5. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/motala,m.htm>; Naidoo, 156 Hands, 307-309.
6. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 177-78.
7. Naidoo, 156 Hands, 157-158; Leader, 17 November 2000.
8. Personal correspondence from Ray Simons to Fatima Seedat, 30 January 1998.
9. *Graphic*, 15 December 1956.
10. http://www.anc.org.za/people/naicker_mp.html.

11. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 89.
12. Naidoo, *156 Hands*, 187-189.
13. See Jaffer (1991) and (2008) for a full-length manuscript on Ayesha Dawood's life.
14. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 179-80.
15. Treason Trial Defence Fund, *South Africa's Treason Trial*, 15.
16. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 181.
17. Treason Trial Defence Fund, *South Africa's Treason Trial*, 6.
18. 15 November 1958. In Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 234.
19. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 184.
20. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 557.
21. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre.
22. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 263-65.
23. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 497.
24. Marx, *oxwagon Sentinel*, 557.
25. Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 227.
26. *Indian Views*, 23 July 1958.
27. Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 224.
28. Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 222.
29. *New Age*, 6 April 1961.
30. Quoted in *Indian Views*, 5 November 1958.
31. Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 226.
32. Karis, 'South African Treason Trial,' 234.
33. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 198
34. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 197
35. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 209
36. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 211
37. Forman, and Odendaal, *Lionel Forman*, 107.
38. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 212.
39. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 207-208
40. *Indian Views*, 12 December 1956.
41. *Indian Views*, 12 December 1956.
42. *Indian Views*, 12 December 1956.
43. Presidential Address to the 10th Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, Durban, 22 November 1957. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_10th_natal.
44. Orkin, "Democracy Knows No Colour", 648.
45. Presidential Address to the 11th Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, Durban, 21 November 1958. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_11th_natal.
46. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 179
47. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 181
48. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 181
49. Presidential address to the tenth annual conference of the Natal Indian Congress in Durban on 22 November 1957. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_10th_natal
50. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_10th_natal
51. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_22nd_south_african_indian

Documentation

CHAPTER 15 NEW "BLOOD"

1. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 131-32.
2. Kader Hassim, Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
3. *Graphic*, 4 November 1960.
4. *Fiat Lux*, September 1978, 25
5. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/bios/naidoo-p.htm>; <http://literature.kzn.org.za/lit/58.xml>.
6. Hassim, 'On Rabbi Bagwandeen,' 2-7.
7. *Leader*, 14 September 2001.
8. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
9. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
10. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
11. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 132.
12. Interview with authors.
13. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 133.
14. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
15. *New Age*, 31 March 1960.
16. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
17. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
18. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre, 'Voices of Resistance Project.'
19. Pinnock, *Ruth First*, 79.

20. Zug, *The Guardian*, 155.
21. Quoted in Zug, *The Guardian*, 155.
22. 'Jacob Zuma on the launch of the M.P. Naicker Collection, 7 June 2003. Accessed at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/03060913461002.htm>.
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25. NAB, RSC, 1/1/443-354, 2896.
26. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 90-94.
27. NAB, RSC, 1/1/443-354, 2897.
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31. Orkin, "'Democracy knows No Colour";' 647.
32. Authors' interview.
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37. Lambert, 'Agent of the Market, or Instrument of Justice?,' <http://www.global-labor.org/lambert1.htm>
38. Lambert, 'Trade Unionism, Race, Class and Nationalism,' 289.
39. Interview with Billy Nair. *SASPU National*, May/June 1984: 4-5.
40. *Monty Speaks*, 135-37.
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42. Interview, Julie Frederickse.

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2. *Monty Speaks*, 135-37.
3. Raulff, 'Interview with Giorgio Agamben,' 2004.
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5. Title of J.M. Coetzee's *Diary of a bad year*, 2007.
6. Interview, Alan Paton Archives, 99APB6.
7. *New Age*, 10 March 1960.
8. Fullard, 'State repression,' 344.
9. Interview, Julie Frederickse.
10. *New Age*, 8 September 1960.
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14. *Post*, 4 September 1960.
15. *Post*, 4 September 1960.
16. *Post*, 4 September 1960.
17. *New Age*, 8 September 1960.
18. *New Age*, 29 December 1960.
19. *New Age*, 8 September 1960.
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22. *Graphic*, 14 October 1961.
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24. *Indian Views*, 30 April 1958.
25. *Graphic*, 11 November 1960.
26. Monty Naicker Collection.
27. *Graphic*, 15 November 1960.
28. *New Age*, 15 December 1960.
29. *Graphic*, 4 November 1960.
30. *Graphic*, 4 November 1960.
31. *New Age*, 10 November 1960.
32. *New Age*, 5 January 1961.
33. *Graphic*, 25 November 1960.
34. *New Age*, 16 February 1961.
35. *New Age*, 5 January 1961.

36. *New Age*, 5 January 1961.
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CHAPTER 17 THE PARTING

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2. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_13th_natal.
3. *New Age*, 9 March 1961. Fortunate Man
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5. *Graphic*, 28 April 1961.
6. *Graphic*, 5 May 1961.
7. *Graphic*, 19 May 1961.
8. *New Age*, 27 April 1961.
9. *Graphic*, 19 May 1961.
10. *Graphic*, 12 May 1961.
11. *Graphic*, 28 April 1961.
12. *Graphic*, 19 May 1961.
13. *Graphic*, 26 May 1961.
14. *Graphic*, 2 June 1961.
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17. *New Age*, 15 June 1961.
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19. *New Age*, 8 June 1961.
20. *Graphic*, 2 June 1961.
21. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 224.
22. *New Age*, 27 April 1961.
23. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 225.
24. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 223-224.
25. Kathrada, *Memoirs*, 143.
26. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 260.
27. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 225
28. Magubane, 'Political Context,' 36-39.
29. NAB, RSC 1/1/448. See cross-examination of Billy Nair, 2901-2905.
30. Orkin, "Democracy Knew No Colour", 650, 652-53.
31. Orkin, "Democracy Knew No Colour", 650, 652-53.
32. Orkin, "Democracy Knew No Colour", 650, 652-53.
33. See Edwards 1989.
34. *New Age*, 4 February 1960.
35. See Zondi, 'Peasant struggles,' 147; Matoti and Ntsebeza, 2004.
36. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 320-321. Also see Adhikari 2005 and 2005a (chapter 4).
37. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 324-325.
38. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 326-327.
39. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 325.
40. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 328-332.
41. Kayser and Adhikari, 'Land and Liberty,' 334-335.
42. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 232

CHAPTER 18 EXPLOSIONS OF PEACE

1. Minutes of NIC Sixth Annual Provincial Conference, 21/22 February 1953.
2. In Woodson, 'Chief Luthuli,' 354.
3. Presidential Address to the 11th Annual Conference of the Natal Indian Congress, Durban, 21 November 1958. http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_11th_natal.
4. In Couper, Chief Albert Luthuli, 85-86.
5. In Couper, Chief Albert Luthuli, 84.
6. In Woodson, 'Chief Luthuli,' 354.
7. Accessed at http://www.liberation.org.za/naicker_6th_natal.
8. See Woodson, 1986.
9. *New Age*, 16 November 1961.
10. *New Age*, 14 December 1961.
11. Rule, *Nokukhanya*, 122.
12. Paton, *The Long View*, 266.
13. Paton, *Songs of Africa*, 76.
14. Accessed at 'The Legacy of Albert Luthuli,' <http://www.southafrica.info/about/history/albert-luthuli.htm>.

15. Woodson, 'Chief Luthuli,' 354.
16. Lodge, *Mandela*, 90-95.
17. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 98.
18. Magubane et al, *Armed Struggle*, 107-08.
19. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 37.
20. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 39.
21. Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 220.
22. There were too many members to mention in this study. The first group that was arrested in 1963 included, in addition to those we have mentioned, M.B. Nkosi, M. Meyiwa, J.T. Zulu, Z. Mdhloso, Alfred Duma, Riot Mkwazi, and R. Mapanga.
23. Babenia, *Memoirs*; http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/natoo_babenia.htm
24. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454; Natvarlal Babenia 15-16: 2788-2863.
25. Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 192.
26. Cronin, *Inside and Out*, 9.
27. In Magubane et al, 'Armed Struggle,' 110.
28. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 37-38.
29. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454.
30. *New Age*, 21 December 1961.

CHAPTER 19 '... A DOG WHO HAD TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON'

1. Extract from 'Voices or Resistance' interview and interview with authors.
2. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 234
3. Only this paragraph is from Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview; the rest of the quote is from interviews conducted by authors.
4. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 41.
5. 'Voices of Resistance' Collection. Housed at the Gandhi-Luthuli Centre.
6. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 280-310.
7. Lodge, *Mandela*, 102.
8. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 300.
9. Ebie and Natoo's cell placed an explosive in a railway passenger coach between Durban and Verulam (14 October 1962); Bruno, Billy and Ronnie were involved in attacks on pylons in New Germany, Montclair, and Sarnia (1 November 1962); K. Doorsamy, and R. Kistensamy attacked the Umlazi Bridge (5 December 1962); Ebie and Sunny detonated dynamite at the offices of A.S. Kajee in Alice Street (9 December 1962); Natoo, Billy, Ronnie and Bruno attacked the home of C. Mbutso in Kwa Mashu (12 December 1962); Ebie attached a pipe bomb to a telephone communications cable chamber on Victoria Embankment (23 December 1962); and Ebie, Natoo, and Sunny were involved in an operation on the Victoria Street Bridge (21 March 1963). Babenia, *Memoirs*, 102-104.
10. Interview with authors.
11. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454; Natvarlal Babenia 15-16: 2788-2863.
12. See NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454; D.V. Perumal. 381-470.
13. See NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454; Girja Singh, 14: 2589-2604.
14. NAB, RSC 1/1/449, 3019-3020.
15. Interview with authors.
16. Interview with authors.
17. Statement of Kisten Doorsamy, 24 July 1963. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454.
18. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 68.
19. Shadrack dictated his biography to Joe Pillay. Ebie also helped reconstruct events for this manuscript which was not published. Shadrack was murdered in Swaziland in 1986. See Stephen, 'Ronnie Kasrils, 335.
20. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
21. Interview by Julie Frederickse.
22. Bernstein, *Memory Against Forgetting*, 240
23. In Fullard, 'State Repression,' 356.
24. 'Life of A.S. Chetty.' Alan Paton Archives, PC 161/2/1/1/2.
25. Cronin, *Inside and Out*, 9.
26. In Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 26.
27. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454, 2610-11.
28. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
29. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454, 2610-11.
30. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 68.
31. Interview by Julie Frederickse.
32. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 91.
33. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 91.
34. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 93.
35. NAB, RSC 1/1/449.

36. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 98-99
37. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 111
38. See NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454. Evidence and cross-examination of B.M.S. Chaitow (vol 3; 294-316); D.V. Perumal (vol 3, 381-470); P. Lazarus (vol. 4, 483-487); Ganesen Naicker (vol. 4, 493-599), M.V. Naicker (vol. 5, 600-645); N. Padayachy (vol. 5, 648-657); E. Isaacs (vol. 5, 658-701); A.K. Naidoo (vol. 5, 701-724); N. Naicker (vol. 5, 724-732); Nevanithun Naicker (vol. 5, 732-736); N. Moonsamy (vol. 5, 741-745); V. Reddy (vol. 5, 758-759); G.S. Naidu (vol. 6, 760-761); A.S. Kajee (vol. 6, 797); M. Pather (vol. 6, 797-805); Moonsamy (vol. 6, 806-809); R. Moosa (vol. 6, 810-813); Kisten Moonsamy (1350-1395); P.R. Pather (vol. 9, 1447-1451); Girja Singh (Vol. 14, 2589-2604); Billy Nair (vols. 16-17, 2901-3061); Natvarlal Babenia (vols. 15-16, 2788-2863); and Govinsamy Naicker (vol. 16, 2863-2882).
39. Fullard, 'State Repression,' 356.
40. Suttner, *Cutting Through the Mountain*, 371-72.
41. Kasrils, *Armed and Dangerous*, 44.
42. Suttner, *Cutting Through the Mountain*, 387.
43. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454, 3014-15.
44. NAB, RSC 1/1/443-454, 3020-21.
45. Edwards, I Introduction to Babenia, *Memoirs*, xx
46. Nadine Gordimer. *The House Gun*. Penguin, 1999. In Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 39.
47. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 100-112.
48. Lodge, *Mandela*, 152.
49. Stephen, 'Ronnie Kasrils, 334.
50. Lodge, *Mandela*, 88.

CHAPTER 20 'ESIQITHINI'

1. Brutus, *Poetry and Protest*, 188-189.
2. Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 46.
3. 'Michel Foucault, on the Role of Prisons.' 5 August 1975, in *The New York Times on the Web*, http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/12/17/specials/foucault-prisons.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=login.
4. Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 18.
5. *New Age*, 6 April 1961.
6. Naidoo and Sachs, *Robben Island*, 103-4.
7. "Your sister's cunt"; Babenia, *Memoirs*, 139.
8. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 241.
9. Naidoo and Sachs, *Robben Island*, 58-59.
10. Alexander, *Robben Island Dossier*, 13-14.
11. Lodge, *Mandela*, 116-117.
12. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
13. *ANC Weekly News Briefing No. 1* Interviews with Recently Released Political Prisoners. 1985.
14. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 129-30
15. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 130-31
16. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
17. Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 50.
18. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
19. *ANC Weekly News Briefing No. 1* Interviews with Recently Released Political Prisoners. 1985.
20. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 167
21. In Jeremy Gordin, 'A quirk of fate stymied struggle hero,' *Sunday Independent*, 24 June 2007.
22. Kathrada, *Simple Freedom*, 22.
23. Orkin, "'Democracy knows No Colour",' 651.
24. 'WALKING WITH PRIDE'. Court Statements by ANC Cadres on Trial. Accessed at <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/trials/pride.html#EBRAHIM>.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Orkin, "'Democracy knows No Colour",' 652.
27. In Jeremy Gordin, 'A quirk of fate stymied struggle hero,' *Sunday Independent*, 24 June 2007.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Ibid.*
31. *New York Times*, 17 January 1989. Accessed at <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE0D91031F934A25752C0A96F948260>.
32. In Jeremy Gordin, 'A quirk of fate stymied struggle hero,' *Sunday Independent*, 24 June 2007.
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34. http://www.anc.org.za/people/nair_b.html
35. ANC, SACP and COSATU pamphlet issued at time of George's death.
36. Babenia, *Memoirs*, 195-97.

CHAPTER 21 THE SCATTERING

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2. Paton, *The Long View*, 197.
3. *New Age*, 24 May 1962.
4. Fullard, 'State Repression,' 349.
5. Fullard, 'State Repression,' 350, 390.
6. NAB, RSC 103/1966.
7. Fullard, 'State Repression,' 365; Rokaya Saloojee's testimony to the TRC, 29 April 1996. Accessed at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/media/1996/9604/s960430d.htm>.
8. Accessed at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/methodis/jassat.htm>
9. Fullard, 'State Repression,' 365; Rokaya Saloojee's testimony to the TRC, 29 April 1996. Accessed at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/media/1996/9604/s960430d.htm>.
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12. Solani and Nieftagodien, 'Political Imprisonment,' 420.
13. Solani and Nieftagodien, 'Political Imprisonment,' 440-445.
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15. Shubin, *View from Moscow*, 131.
16. Naidoo, *Don't Mourn, Mobilise*, 94.
17. http://www.anc.org.za/people/naicker_mp.html
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21. UKZN Documentation Centre Accession No. 1318/8.
22. E-mail, Kader Hassim, 21 June 2007.
23. Hassim, 'Zuleikha,' 1992.
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25. Makwaia wa Kuhenga, 'Karrim Essack: Revolutionary in a hurry,' *The Express*, 8 May 1997.
26. Mkapa, 'Karim Essack,' *Tanzanian Daily News*, 26 May 1997.
27. NAB, RSC 103/1966.
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30. Noble, *Ruffled Feathers*, 132.
31. TRC Proceedings held at Durban, 25 October 1996. Accessed at <http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/hrvtrans/hrvdurb3/day2.htm>
32. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 36.
33. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 21.
34. Interview with authors.
35. Interview with authors.
36. Interview with authors.
37. Interview with authors.
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39. Naidoo, *Footprints*, 181-82.
40. See, for example, Gevisser (2007); Shubin (2008); Suttner (2008); Trewhela (2009), and SADET (2004 and 2006) for studies of the liberation movements in exile.
41. Sapire, 'Liberation Movements,' 274. Sapire was based on citing Gevisser (2007)
42. Goonam, *Coolie Doctor*, 167-173.
43. Cited in Jonker, *Black Butterflies*, 15.
44. Jonker, born on 19 September 1933, committed suicide on 19 July 1965 at the age of 31 in Three Anchor Bay.

CHAPTER 22 THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

1. *Daily News*, 20 February 1963.
2. Fullard, 'State repression,' 351.
3. Moroney and Ensor, *The Silenced*, 1.
4. *Drum*, June 1968, 12.
5. *Daily News*, 29 November 1966.
6. *Daily News*, 11 December 1966.
7. *Graphic*, 18 May 1973.
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9. SAB, S.2.2. vol.2; 2/50/444. This includes a seven-page letter from the Ministry of Justice to Monty's attorney J.N. Singh detailing extracts from Monty's speeches at over 20 meetings between 1946 and 1954.

10. Monty Naicker, NIC conference on the Group Areas Act, 5 and 6 May 1956.
11. Paton, *The Long View*, 110.
12. The Asiatic Land Tenure Amendment Committee of 1950 produced a report (UG 49 of 1950) on which the Group Areas Act was based. Paton, *The Long View*, 110.
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27. Chetty, *Memoirs as the Wife*, 16,19.
28. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre interview.
29. Meer, *Fortunate Man*, 235.
30. Moroney and Ensor, *The Silenced*, 11-12.
31. Interview by authors.
32. Gandhi-Luthuli Centre. 'Voices of Resistance' Project.
33. Alan Paton Centre Interview.
34. Interview, Julie Frederickse.

CHAPTER 23 BACK FROM 'A LIVING DEATH'

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5. *Natal Mercury*, 14 May 1973.
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7. *Graphic*, 18 May 1973; *Post*, 20 May 1973.
8. *Graphic*, 11 May 1973.
9. *Daily News*, 22 May 1973.
10. *Graphic*, 11 May 1973.
11. *Graphic*, 11 May 1973.
12. *Daily News*, 22 May 1973.
13. *Daily News*, 28 August 1973.
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17. *Leader*, 16 August 1974.
18. *Leader*, 12 March 1962.
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20. Christenson, *Political Trials in History*, 84-87.
21. 'Voices of Resistance,' Gandhi-Luthuli Centre.
22. *Leader*, 20 September 1974.
23. *Leader*, 27 September 1974.
24. *Leader*, 27 June 1975.
25. *Natal Mercury*, 18 November 1974.
26. *Leader*, 17 October 1975.
27. *Leader*, 20 May 1977.
28. *Leader*, 26 August 1977.
29. *Leader*, 11 November 1977.
30. *Leader*, 18 November 1977.
31. *Leader*, 25 November 1977.
32. *Leader*, 2 December 1977.
33. *Leader*, 16 December 1977.
34. *Natal Mercury*, 14 January 1978.

1. Quote attributed to Mohandas K. Gandhi. Accessed at <http://www.quotedb.com/category/life-and-death/author/mahatma-gandhi>
2. *The Leader*, 20 January 1978.
3. See Kane (2001). We are indebted to Lodge, *Mandela*, 224-225 for this perspective and reference.
4. Lodge, *Mandela*, 224-225.
5. Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, 148.
6. Southworth, 'Group Areas,' 28.
7. Suttner, *ANC Underground*, 46
8. Hikmet, *Moscow Symphony*.
9. Mishra, *Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, 39.
10. *The Leader*, 27 January 1978.
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