

ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF LANGA
TOWNSHIP, CAPE TOWN, 1927-1948.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the social and political history of Africans in Langa Township from 1927 to 1948. Langa conveniently and justifiably serves as a good case study of the urban African experience because it is the area in Greater Cape Town, during this period, where there was the largest concentration of a relatively organised, stabilised and permanent African working class community. It is also the oldest township with the deepest roots and longest evolution in Cape Town.

Langa also makes an interesting area of study because the politics surrounding its evolution as an urban African segregated residential township presents it not only as an arena of social conflict between the ruler and the ruled, but also stands out as a veritable testimony of the African struggle to become an integral part of the city.

The thesis traces what, initially, began as an "externalised" struggle by Africans against the forced removals from the city and Ndabeni Location to Langa and attempts to establish the continuities of this struggle within the township - i.e. "internalised" struggle. African popular struggles in Langa predominantly centred around such issues as rents, railway fares, living conditions, restrictions on beer-brewing and trading activities, the demand for direct municipal representation and the freedom of movement.

The study explores the nature of the relationship that subsisted between the Langa residents and the Cape Town City Council and the internal social and political relations in the Langa community, paying particular attention to conflicting tendencies and the forms of resolution implemented. The thesis aims to highlight the fact that protest and resistance were the only weapons that empowered the Langa residents to fight against unilateral unpopular decisions by the local authority or central government.

Flowing from these findings is an attempt to discover how the lived experiences of the Langa people, their frustrations, disillusionment, crises of expectations, translated into political consciousness and how these help us to explain the people's role in nationalist politics. Alternatively, this will help us to explain how political parties, the African National Congress (ANC), the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and the National Liberation League (NLL) exploited the crises in civic matters to enhance or strengthen their support bases and with what results.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.A.C.	All African Convention
A.M.E.C.	American Methodist Episcopal Church
A.N.C.	African National Congress
C.P.S.A.	Communist Party of South Africa
M.O.H.	Medical Officer of Health
N.L.L.S.A.	National Liberation League of South Africa
N.A.C.	Native Affairs Committee
N.A.D.	Native Affairs Department
N.E.U.M.	Non-European Unity Movement
W.P.J.V.A.	Western Province Joint Vigilance Association

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to show how local social and political struggles by Africans in Langa from 1927 to 1948 became enmeshed with wider national political issues. There are some very useful pioneering works on Langa which precede this study. The first one was a book co-authored by Wilson and Mafeje and published in 1963.¹ The book has a social anthropological slant and besides giving a brief general historical background, concentrates on analysing the basis for the coherence of groups in Langa in the 1950s and early 60s. True to their discipline, the two anthropologists did not address those issues that fall within the historian's area of cognition. However, from an interdisciplinary perspective, this work remains a useful source.

Saunders' article "From Ndabeni to Langa", was the first serious attempt to lay the basis for the reconstruction of the 'hitherto neglected history of Africans in the Mother City'.² It traces the rise of the first African Township after the destruction of Ndabeni Location.

A number of History Honours students have, in recent years, attempted to move a step further and examined some interesting themes on historical developments in Langa. Kondlo, for instance, focused on the culture and religion of the people of Langa from 1938 to 1958. His overall objective was to examine to what extent religion impacted on the development of their culture.³ Mohammed examined the history of Langa High School before and after the passage of the Bantu Education Act in 1954 and the Langa residents' response to the legislation.⁴ Lastly, Molapo looked at the question of

1.M.Wilson and A.Mafeje, LANGA: A Study of Social Groups In An African Township, (Cape Town, 1963)

2.C.Saunders, 'From Ndabeni to Langa', Studies in the History of Cape Town, 1, (1984), 194-230. (hereinafter referred to as Studies).

3.K.M. Kondlo, 'The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa during the Period 1938 to 1958', (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989).

4.N.Mohammed, 'Langa High School: The Struggle For Existence: The First Twenty Years in the History of Langa

identity and popular culture in the same township in the 1960's. He wanted to demonstrate how the Langa community, through music, culture and politics attained a specific identity which serves as an oppositional element against the culture of the dominant classes.⁵

These works hardly deal, substantially, with any of the aspects this thesis seeks to address. This study will attempt to present a substantial account of how the residents' lived experiences, frustrations, disillusionment and crises of expectations, manifested through resistance and protest against the paternalistic Cape Town City Council, became a fertile ground for nationalist politics.

The choice of aspects for discussion in this thesis was largely influenced by two factors which, ideally, determined the areas of struggle in Langa and these are:

- (1) the needs and concerns of a community and
- (2) the structures and interests of the local and central governments and the relationship between the two.

It is at that point when one of the two fails or refuses to respect and/or fulfil the needs, concerns, interests or structures of the other that the terrain of struggle becomes clearly delineated. A statement by Muthien consolidates this point:

Material conditions and political structures create parameters which circumscribe political actions, but at the same time, political action and opposition to those structures continually force readjustment.⁶

The thesis treats the themes of protest and resistance as offensive strategies through which the very foundations and structures of the local state were challenged. It assumes that this sort of challenge forced the local state to respond either by backing down and introducing reforms or by becoming more repressive. In short, protest and

High School', (B.A.Hons. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1989).

5.R.Molapo, 'Identity, popular Culture and Politics in Langa in the 1960's, (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1991).

6.Y.Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance, Cape Town 1939-1965', (D.Phil. thesis, Christ Church College, Oxford University, 1989), 307

resistance are regarded not merely as defensive reactions to imposed limitations on peoples' freedom and individual liberties but also as offensive strategies which compel the state to readjust.⁷ Below is a discussion of the major concerns of the thesis in chapter form.

The first chapter provides a background to the creation of Langa Township in 1927 and situates it within the segregationist discourse which provided the rationale for its formation. It outlines the demographic, gender and occupational profiles of the township residents in relation to those who lived outside the township. This edifies our understanding of the peoples' residential patterns and what such patterns meant to their existence as well as to the local authorities.

The second chapter deals with the structural expansion of Langa, occupation and resistance. It focuses on the institutional structures in the township, i.e, the lay-out of buildings and infrastructure and how this had a direct bearing on the question of physical and social control, living conditions, interaction of residents, socialising and permanent stabilisation. The aim is to gauge the overarching influence this infrastructure had on the community's internal relations, in terms of conflict and consensus and even perceptions of one section towards the other, and above all, external relations, i.e., conflict between the local authority and the residents. The chapter proceeds to consider the course, complexity and the nature of the forced occupation of Langa and African reaction. The aim is to explore the trend, form and the sort of ideas that informed African resistance to domination, which drew on earlier traditions in Ndabeni. It establishes how this initial resistance from outside (i.e. in Ndabeni) Langa sets the tone of future organised resistance within Langa.

The systematic lay-out and structuring of infrastructure in the segregated African township/location was dictated by the central and local states' need to control and

7.Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance', 306-307.

manage urban space, labour and leisure time.⁸ The process of urban space construction (i.e. 'the configuration or arrangement of space in the urban environment')⁹ was very much part of the framework of control. Meticulous considerations were made in the planning of townships. In order to facilitate repressive control of Africans as and when it became necessary, the state provided 'limited access routes that are easily blocked off in times of crisis'.¹⁰ This made official surveillance over African movement fairly manageable.

CHAPTER 3 deals with the encroachment of the City Council of Cape Town into what Africans in Langa saw as their exclusive business/trading domain. This happened in two ways, firstly, the municipalisation of trading activities, the refusal by the Council to grant trading licences or business premises to would-be African traders and, secondly, the monopolisation of beer brewing and selling. This became a distinct area of conflict between the affected classes of people such as, traders, beer-brewers, hawkers and the other residents, as they were directly and indirectly affected, on the one hand and the City Council, on the other hand. The Council struck at the centre of African urban existence and laid bare the contradictions between official versus popular perceptions or conceptions about life in general.¹¹

Official apprehensions of the dangers of African consumption of alcohol were certainly not shared by the Africans themselves. Quite to the contrary, the women of Langa,

8.F.Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time, and Wage Labour in Africa', F.Cooper, (ed.), Struggle for the City: Migrant Labour, Capital and the State in Urban Africa, (London, 1983) 8.

9.M.Padayachee and R.Haines, 'Capital Accumulation, Control and the Construction of Urban Space - An Overview of Some Aspects of Urbanisation and Urban Space Construction in South Africa 1870 -1980', R.Haines and G.Buijs, The Struggle for Social and Economic Space: Urbanisation in Twentieth Century South Africa, (Durban, 1985), 1.

10.K.Philip, 'Mitchell's Plain : Urban Contradictions and Community Struggles', L.Cooper & D.Kaplan, Selected Research Papers on Aspects of Organisation in the Western Cape, 24 (Dept. of Economic History, Univ. of Cape Town, June 1982)

11.P. la Hausse, 'The Struggle for the City: Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Culture in Durban, 1902-1936' (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), 4.

living as they did on the margins of subsistence perceived domestic beer-brewing, first and foremost, as a survival strategy. Similarly, men were often proud of their methodical drinking habits -drinking in sets/groups based on kinship or home-boyism associations. Whereas the officials perceived African men as given to unregulated consumption of alcohol, in fact it was not 'just the imbibing of alcohol that counts, but the essentially social nature of the act, the affirmation or strengthening of ties with kith, friends or neighbours'.¹² It is this lack of a clear grasp of the workings and significance of this popular culture on the part of officialdom which inevitably resulted in a protracted militancy by the subordinate people.

The municipalisation of trading activities in Langa was largely based on a reworking of the institutions already established by the Africans, for example, the domestic brewing of traditional beer, which the City Council sought to transform into the beerhall system based on the Durban model. The chapter also investigates the ways in which the people tried to preserve their culture, of which beer brewing was a part, vis-à-vis the threat by the Council to undermine it. Symbolically the drinking of traditional beer and the act of brewing it provided a lasting continuity between the town and the countryside in spite of an increase in its commercialisation in response to harsh economic conditions in the location. Thus the significance of this cultural expression will be evaluated.

Attention will be paid particularly to the role played by the women of Langa, as they, poignantly and quite distinctly, came to the fore in resisting the Council's encroachment upon what they regarded as their exclusive spheres of influence, the manufacturing and selling of beer and trading in food stuffs. This will provide us with an opportunity to view women not simply as passive, silent and as mere functionaries in the making of history but also as equally active participants as men, in the arena of popular resistance.

12.P.Mayer, Townsman or Tribesman, Conservatism and the Process of Urbanisation in a South African City, (Cape Town, 1971), 118

Crucial to our understanding of these developments is the premise upon which Council policy proceeded. Council policy was meticulously designed to frustrate the mushrooming of a potentially strong and competitive African business class in Langa. It was also intended to ensure that the African trader and consumer alike did not entrench him/herself in Cape Town, as this would naturally subvert the migrant labour system upon which, and for which, Langa African Township had been established.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the way in which enforcement of the policy of total prohibition of beer brewing engendered intense resentment among the Langa residents and how they reacted to police raids, searches for liquor and arrests. It also considers how the failure of this policy of total prohibition gradually paved the way for the hated and "dreaded" beerhall system.

The second part concentrates on attempts by the City Council to establish a beerhall in Langa - something it failed to do on three occasions. That a municipality failed to establish a beerhall, when it had all the necessary legal and financial resources at its disposal is unusual in the history of the liquor question in South Africa. In other urban centres such as Bloemfontein, Durban and Johannesburg, beerhalls were established and riots against the institutions came later. Therefore, the unusual developments in Langa help us to analyse the changing nature and character of popular non-violent resistance as compared with other centres. The surfacing of African political organisations in the 1940s and their involvement in the beerhall question adds a new twist to the evolving history of popular resistance in Langa - hence their effect will be examined.

The third and last section deals with the actual establishment of a monopoly by the Council in trading activities in Langa and the way in which it unceremoniously pushed the African traders out of business. Of interest, in this section, is the protest by women against municipal trading which was informed by an analysis of their living conditions.

The fourth chapter considers yet another significant site of struggle, namely the role of the Advisory Board in the Township and how it structured and polarised relations between the Langa residents and the City Council. The failure of the Langa Advisory Board to effectively and genuinely represent the residents' civic interests led to the clamour for direct municipal representation instead of continuing to depend on an institution that did not help them.

Deprived of direct municipal representation, Africans in the urban locations of South Africa increasingly found themselves initially relying on Native Advisory Boards as the only mechanism to express their views and air their grievances to the Native Affairs Committees of various city councils. This advisory board system formed part of the whole matrix of social and political control over the permanent and stabilized urban African working class in the 1930s and 1940s. Literature focusing specifically on the efficacy of the advisory boards is unanimous in its characterisation of the institution as a purely consultative machinery of a perfunctory nature abhorred by many an urban African.¹³ Urban Africans, invariably and disdainfully described Advisory Boards as "mere debating societies", "talking shops", "grievance committees"¹⁴, "guns without bullets", and "collaborationist organisation(s)"¹⁵, while those who served on the boards were seen as "agents", "stooges" or "sell-outs"¹⁶. These epithets testify to the extent to which the advisory board system was not only unpopular but objectionable wherever it was implemented in South Africa.

What is patently clear from the foregoing is that urban Africans wanted to have a say in how best they should be governed if they were not to govern themselves. The chapter then considers the case of Langa Township and explore the development of the politics

13. BC 579 B11.58 South African Institute of Race Relations Conference Report - July 1941

14. P.R.B. Lewis 'A "City" within a city. The Creation of Soweto', Lecture Notes delivered at University of Witwatersrand, September 1966, 23

15. L. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, Race, Class and Politics in South Africa, (Yale University Press, 1965, 344.

16. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, 344.

of and the demand for direct municipal representation in Cape Town by Africans. It examines why and how the Langa residents were opposed to the establishment of a Location Advisory Board from the beginning - and whether its establishment was a compromise or change of heart on the part of the residents, as well as the nature of the relations between the Langa Advisory Board and the Native Affairs Committee (N.A.C.) on one hand and the Advisory Board and the Langa community per se, which it supposedly represented, on the other. It also investigates how the Langa people, sought and created alternative channels of representation without necessarily dissolving the advisory board - and the significance of this in African protest politics. All these developments culminated in the eventual demand or quest for direct municipal representation. Lastly, this chapter considers how local demands for municipal representation translated into a national demand for genuine political parliamentary representation.

CHAPTER 5 represents a deliberate attempt to shift, for a while, from a concentration on resistance and protest politics by the Langa residents against the municipality to an examination of the inner workings of the Langa African community. By adopting this approach, we hope to be able to understand what exactly made the Langa community almost always respond to the City Council's overtures in a unified way. This will be done, firstly, by examining how the process of community-formation generally takes place and what forces brought the conflicting sections of the community together in times of common popular struggles as well as what militated against such a united approach.

One of the central and complex social and political processes that are the inevitable products of urban segregation is community-formation.¹⁷ The term "community" denotes a variety of things. In general terms, it refers to a grouping of people who share all or some of the following: common origins, beliefs, geographical and social space, who share a common type of residence, and can be identified by similarities of

17. But it could also-ironically-divisive.

class position.¹⁸ According to Thornton and Ramphela, the term can be conceived as an "image of coherence", a cultural notion which people use in order to give a reality to their social actions and thoughts. They go on to say that, from a sociological point of view, communities, 'are founded on more or less intense social interaction among their members, which inevitably produces social boundaries defining them and giving them identity'.¹⁹ To Belinda Bozzoli, this "sense or image of coherence", derives from the spatial aspect of community-formation, as she argued that the term "community" refers to, 'a space within which the group is formed and reproduced'.²⁰

But the question is, what fosters the process of community-formation particularly the urban African community in the South African context? Thornton and Ramphela do not address this issue adequately. Neither do they attempt to explain what engenders this community esprit de corps.

Bozzoli provided some of the answers to these questions. The history of urbanization in South Africa shows that community-formation is a dynamic process which derives from the African people's traumatic experience of forced removals. It is always in a constant state of flux because community-destruction through state-decreed forced mass removals of Africans leads to a regrouping of the same people who, because of the devastating experience they have in common, try to adopt defensive strategies. Besides, one of the most obvious shared experiences of the majority of urban Africans in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s was dispossession, a product of rural impoverishment in the reserves and the rise of capitalist agriculture.²¹ In towns, it was the dispossession or deprivation of the right of choosing where one wishes to live. Bozzoli argues that

18.R.Thornton and M.Rampele, 'The Quest for Community', in E.Boonzaier and J.Sharp, (eds.), South African Keywords: The Uses and Abuses of Political Concepts, (Cape Town, 1988), 29.

19.Thornton and Rampele, 'The Quest for Community', 38.

20.B.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology in the Evolution of South African Society', in B.Bozzoli, (ed.), Class, Community, and Conflict, South African Perspectives, History Workshop, 3, (Johannesburg, 1978), 27

21.H.Sapire, 'The Stay-Away of the Brakpan, 1944', in B.Bozzoli, (ed.), Class, Community and Conflict, 366.

because dispossession is the common denominator, the dispossessed people who occupy a given geographic space usually congregate in groups which reflect why and how they left at a given time and that this often occurs along ethnic, racial or non-class lines. In this respect, therefore, community-formation becomes a concerted effort to respond to the twists and turns of a dispossessed existence.²² The act of forced removals by Government decree instilled, in urban Africans, a sense of community. The destruction of established communities through the relocation of townships was usually followed by a restructuring and consolidation of internal community relationships to stave off further "external" hostile acts, a veritable act of self-empowerment. Instead of destroying the sense of gregariousness in urban African communities, the very act of removal had the effect of transforming those communities into militant ones. It also spawned a specific ideology, a new culture and a new identity.²³

Community-formation is also made possible by "the existence of a hostile environment". The over-bearing and paternalistic South African state was responsible for creating such an environment. The result is that 'communities, urban and rural alike, find a hitherto undiscovered internal unity in the face of the threat of removal or destruction'.²⁴

But to explain the shaping of a community only as a process caused by external hostile pressures is to overlook other equally important factors that make community-formation necessary and possible. Even without the threat of dispossession or removal the process of community-formation never ceases to take place. The establishment of institutions, by a group of people, which make human interaction fluid, such as churches, sports, and self-help financial associations, with or without external help, is in itself a significant indication of the moulding of a lasting community.

22.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 21.

23.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 28.

24.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 29-30.

The internal solidarity in the urban African community in South Africa was hardly a welcome feature to the central state, the local state and other powerful groups. If anything, the central and local states encouraged class, ethnic and gender cleavages among urban African communities.²⁵ There was a fear that those internal networks that appeared to transcend class divisions could:

converge into a dense and dangerous network of bonds among workers, the self-employed, and job-seekers, united by poverty and oppression.²⁶

These attempts at tearing apart the very fabric that unites people when confronted by a common onslaught widened the boundaries of struggle between the central state, the local state and the township communities, and in our case Langa Township as we shall see in the succeeding chapters.

The penultimate chapter deals with the activities of nationalist political organisations in Langa and, where relevant, in Cape Town. It traces how the National Liberation League (NLL), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) transformed community-based protest into a popular protest with a national outlook. Party political participation added a new dimension to the nature of popular protest in Langa. The emergence and dynamics of the new ideology of popular protest can best be understood by, briefly, focusing on the cogent conceptual analysis of the French historian, George Rude.²⁷

Defining what constitutes the ideology of popular protest, Rude stated that it is:

often a mixture, a fusion of two elements, of which only one is the peculiar property of the "popular" classes and the other is superimposed by a process of transmission and adoption from outside.²⁸

Popular ideology is, therefore, characterised by two elements, which are:

25.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 20.

26.Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time', 38.

27.G.Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, (New York, 1980),

28.Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 28.

(a) "inherent" beliefs. These are ideas that are transmitted via oral traditions and folk memories, concerning issues like the right to the land and a fair, if not proper political order.

(b) "derived" or "borrowed" ideas which are or could be of a political, philosophical and/or religious nature. Derived ideas are then grafted on to the inherent notions. But the final amalgamation of the "inherent" and "derived" dialectical elements is largely determined by the specific circumstances and the sharp "jostle of experience" of a particular community. This also determines whether the product of the mixture of the two elements will assume a militant, progressive or conservative outlook.²⁹

Rude's treatise is a pertinent analytical tool for any analysis of the ideology of popular protest in urban African communities in South Africa, provided, and one should take heed of Hirson's cautious advice, that it should not be applied in a mechanical way.³⁰ By this he meant that one should not forget that there were notable periods in which people made gigantic strides forward in understanding and coming to grips with the difficulties which confronted them. But there were also times when they receded and sought an explanation in their past beliefs. Therefore, in that sense their minds were not like a tabula rasa on which ideas were simply grafted,³¹ even though, '(i)nevitably, leaders emerged and put their stamp on events--and they too brought ideas, old and new, to inform their followers'.³²

Urban Africans had their own "inherent" beliefs and expectations, such as the belief that they had a right to live in the city, to unfettered movement, to higher wages, to adequate sanitation, to cheap and convenient transport and to equal education. It is around these issues that popular and community-based struggles shaped the African urban geo-socio-political landscape. Protests in the form of strikes, stay-aways, bus

29. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 36.

30. B. Hirson, Yours for the Union: Class and Community Struggles in South Africa, (Johannesburg, 1989), 122.

31. B. Hirson, Yours for the Union, 122

32. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 32

boycotts and riots in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s were all veritable manifestations of, and an attestation to, the persistence of these and other grievances.

It is also worthwhile for our purposes to consider Rude's question:

But how far can this "inherent" ideology by itself carry the protesters into strikes, food riots, (with or without success); and even into a state of awareness of the need for radical change?³³

Rude argued that these popular struggles cannot advance without the fusion of both the "inherent" ideology and the "derived" element:

the political, philosophical or religious ideas that, at varying stages of sophistication, became absorbed in the more specifically popular culture.³⁴

This process of fusion, according to Rude, is one that takes place gradually and does so at different levels of sophistication. In its rudimentary stages, it can take the form of slogans but with the passage of time, it assumes a higher level of political sophistry as radical terminology is used and radical demands are made.³⁵

In our context, the derived element was represented by the three political organisations whose role and activities in Langa and Cape Town at large were significant and quite far-reaching, namely, the NLL, the ANC and the CPSA.

Party political programmes were received by almost all classes of people in Langa, owing to the fact that although people had disparate class interests, an unwritten alliance was readily forged between the core of Langa's middle class and its working class as well as its lumpen elements. The Langa residents were crowded together, irrespective of class position, in the same type of accommodation. As a result, they laboured under the same racial indignities and discrimination. In more ways than one, they had the same grievances. The activities of these organisations in the township saw

33. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 32.

34. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 33

35. Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, 34.

the intertwining of social and political issues, and thereby made Langa an outstanding locus of resistance against state repression in Cape Town. In spite of this, the very few works on the role and activities of political organisations in the Western Cape and Cape Town proper, quite incredulously, skirted Langa.³⁶ Yet it was the "core activist constituency" of the NLL, ANC, and the CPSA.

The theses of Kingwill, Hofmeyer and Grossman, are cases in point. Kingwill's Honours thesis on the ANC in the Western Cape is patchy and sketchy. It is a general history of the organisation and as a result fails to pay attention to its activities at grassroots level. Although Hofmeyer's M.A. thesis deals essentially with the ANC's activities in rural Worcester, he devoted a substantial part of the thesis to the organisation's political activities in Cape Town. But, again, he peripheralized Langa, in spite of his conclusion that 'it was only in the Western Cape that there was a revival of the ANC as a mass-based organisation'.³⁷ Jonathan Grossman's voluminous D.Phil. thesis, (divided into two volumes), on the CPSA, does not accord Langa its "rightful" place, in spite of the fact that the CPSA had Langa as one of its most important and support-bases. The failure to render such a treatment to Langa has, quite evidently, created a significant void in the history and evolution of African political organisations in the Western Cape as none of these researchers satisfactorily situates them within the context of social history. This problem can be partly explained by the fact that the political climate, during the time these works were written, was not conducive to a thorough investigation of political organisations without incurring the wrath of the

36.R.Kingwill, 'The African National Congress in the Western Cape: A Preliminary Study', (B.A. Hons.thesis, University of Cape Town, 1977).

W.Hofmeyer, 'Agricultural Crisis and Rural Organisation in the Cape: 1929-1933', (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985).

J.Grossman, 'Class Relations and the Policies of the Communist Party of South Africa, 1921-1950', (D.Phil. thesis, vols. 1 and 2, University of Warwick, 1985).

37.W.Hofmeyer, 'Rural Popular Organisation Problems: Struggles in the Western Cape, 1929-1930, Africa Perspective, 1983, No. 22, 27.

repressive government, or even that of the African people on grounds of suspicion/spying.

CHAPTER 7 is an extension of Chapter 6 in that it also deals with the activities of political organisations. But the main difference is that whereas the previous chapter concentrates on politics from above,(i.e. there was a time when there was very little involvement and participation by the people of Langa in the political programmes of the day, the political leadership prescribed what to do for the people), this chapter completes the picture by examining the participation of the Langa residents in campaigns against the Pass Laws between 1943 and 1946. It demonstrates that good organisation by the leadership which filtered through to the targeted constituency generated a positive response and success.

This leads us to important aspects of the Anti-Pass Campaign which we will explore, namely organization and response. Perhaps more than any other grievance examined in this thesis, the Anti-Pass Campaign aroused an extra-ordinary response from Africans country-wide. This was so in the Cape Peninsula. This response can, first and foremost, be attributed to good organization. The Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee demonstrated an ability to organize itself and the people. But from where did this ability come? The prominent Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire had this to say about organization:

Organizing the people is the process in which the revolutionary leaders, who are also prevented from saying their own word initiate the experience of learning how to name the world. So it is that leaders cannot say their word alone; they must say it *with* the people.³⁸

This, again, points to another significant element of the campaign, namely co-operation between the leadership and the people (who may have diverse levels of functions, interests of responsibility), which can only be achieved through communication or dialogue. Freire went on to say that it is this cooperation which,

38. Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, (Great Britain, 1972), 145.

leads dialogical Subjects to focus their attention on the reality which mediates them and which--posed as a problem--challenges them. The response to that challenge is the action of dialogical Subjects upon reality in order to transform it.³⁹

Freire's concepts may have been specially tailored for a specific discipline, but they are pertinent to this analysis of the Anti-Pass Campaign. Rarely did the leadership of the Cape Town Anti-Pass Campaign (also subjected to the rigours of Pass legislation) issue statements without the endorsement of the people they represented. There was a genuine realisation of the need to involve the people.

Finally the conclusion evaluates the importance of Langa Township in the development of nationalist politics. It also assesses the significance of community struggles and argues that although the Langa residents attained very few substantial concessions in their protest activities, they nevertheless in the words of Tom Lodge had an "accumulated heritage of resistance".⁴⁰ This resistance saw Langa become, after 1948, a flash-point of political demonstrations and in 1960 was the only parallel to Sharpeville in South Africa.

This study utilised both published and unpublished official sources, periodicals and newspapers and a few oral interviews. Most of the data was gleaned from over a dozen volumes of the minutes of the Native Affairs Committee, and the minutes of the Langa Advisory Board and the Vigilance Committee spanning the period 1925-1948, in the Cape Municipal Archives. Extensive use was also made of the Molteno Papers at the Manuscripts and Archives Department of the Centre for African Studies Library. But what these documents evidently lacked was information on political organisations, in particular the ANC and the CPSA. What filled this yawning gap was The Guardian (a mouthpiece for the CPSA and to a lesser extent the ANC and the NLL) and Inkululeko (a pro-ANC paper). I also could not get access to the Simons Papers which contain

39. Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 136.

40. T. Lodge, 'The Destruction of Sophiatown', B. Bozzoli, Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response, (Johannesburg, 1983), 337.

information on Langa due to an "embargo" over their use. These documents are in the Manuscripts and Archives.⁴¹

Unfortunately, oral interviews were not very useful particularly on the activities of political organisations in Langa. The period within which this study falls made it difficult to get hold of interviewees who were old enough to have witnessed the political developments that transpired then. There was also some reluctance by some interviewees to talk on the subject of politics and this can be attributed to the fact that the people have just emerged from a period of political repression in which freedom of speech and political involvement of any magnitude was a risky exercise. But interviews on some social aspects of the peoples' existence in Langa were quite enriching.

41. [MA] BCZA 92/14403-14412

CHAPTER ONE

THE CREATION OF LANGA: 1927

Langa African Township was established in 1927 as an alternative to Ndabeni Location which had outlived the purpose for which it had originally been founded. Ndabeni had been the by-product of white racism against Africans that was manifest in Cape Town at the turn of the twentieth-century.⁴² The emergence of the bubonic plague that afflicted the Mother City in 1900 served as an expedient for the realisation of the residential segregation of Africans.

The path-breaking works by Saunders⁴³, van Heyningen⁴⁴, and Barnett ⁴⁵ on the creation of Ndabeni are provide a useful introduction to an analysis of later

42. Even before the outbreak of the bubonic pandemic, strong tendencies towards the physical and social segregation of Africans had already set in by the end of the 19th century. Swanson's oft-quoted phrase "sanitation syndrome" which meant the equation of 'black urban settlement, labour and living conditions with threats to public health and security', sums up these tendencies. See M.W. Swanson, 'The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony, 1900-1909', *Journal of African History*, 18, 3, (1977), 387-410.

For a further development of this point, see also V. Bickford-Smith, 'A "Special Tradition of Multi-racialism"?: Segregation in Cape Town in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', in W.G. James and M. Simons, (eds.), The Angry Divide: Social and Economic History of the Western Cape, (Cape Town, 1989). See also by the same author, 'The Background to Apartheid in Cape Town: The Growth of Racism and Segregation from the Mineral Revolution to the 1930's', unpub. paper, (University of Witwatersrand, History Workshop, 1990). Briefly, Bickford-Smith saw the white elite class as having been concerned with the preservation of its status as the dominant class from the "contamination" of races "other than whites". By the end of the last decade of the 19th century there were demands for the establishment of a separate location for Africans. In what amounted to xenophobia, Cape Town's "respectable" classes alleged that the "natives" were causing a "nuisance", that their presence in the city disturbed the equanimity of the more respectable working classes and that their continued presence led to the devaluation of property and lack of security.

43. C.C. Saunders, 'The Creation of Ndabeni: Urban Segregation and African Resistance in Cape Town', Studies in the History of Cape Town, (hereafter referred to as Studies), 1, 1979, 165-193.

developments in Langa. A number of salient characteristics which directly impacted on and informed the nature of African resistance against forced removal from Ndabeni to Langa, can be gleaned from their works. The removal of Africans from the city to Ndabeni in 1901 had a profound and long-lasting effect on race relations between blacks and whites in Cape Town. Whites' actions on Africans, as van Heyningen observed, were not simply a result of racism but the result of 'a complex blend of prejudice, fear, expediency and paternalism'.⁴⁶ Africans on their part, generally viewed whites, and in particular, the central and local authorities, with mistrust and suspicion. Their protest against removal from the city to Ndabeni and the "sustained opposition" throughout the existence of Ndabeni and, above all, their "remarkable unity" was in itself an exercise in political education. Frequent use was made of not only informal, but also formal means of protest, especially the use of legal means in challenging authority.⁴⁷ They were able to use, quite effectively, the experience they had acquired over time to resist the relocation to Langa.

By the late 1920s, the overall living conditions at Ndabeni had deteriorated. The hasty establishment of the location, coupled with poor sanitary conditions and over-crowding, and above all Government negligence, had left Ndabeni in a decrepit condition. What served as a warning to the Government was an outbreak of the Spanish influenza in 1918 which claimed the lives of many residents in Ndabeni. Just as the bubonic plague of 1901 had publicised the dangers of overcrowding in the city, so too did the Spanish influenza reveal the precariousness of the living conditions for urban Africans.⁴⁸ What also necessitated the relocation of the labour-force at Ndabeni was the expansion of industry. In December 1919, a commission was set up to enquire into the suitability of

44.E.van Heyningen, 'Cape Town and the Plague of 1901', *Studies*, 4, 1981,

45.N.Barnett, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910; Towards A Social History: The First Ten Years of Cape Town's Official Location', (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985).

46.van Heyningen, 'Cape Town and the Plague', 95.

47.Saunders, 'From Ndabeni to Langa', *Studies*, 1, 1979, 222.

48.H.Phillips, 'Black October': The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic of 1918 on South Africa' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984), 81.

Ndabeni as a site for a permanent location.⁴⁹ In its findings the commission recommended that the location be demolished in order to make way for the proposed Garden City of Pinelands. Once the Garden City had been established there was little doubt that Ndabeni would never be allowed to continue to exist adjacent to it since it was believed that the township would erode the value of the latter. As Cuthbertson wrote, 'The Ndabeni location, on the northern border of Pinelands, was a constant source of discontent among residents of Pinelands and was the subject of many debates at Garden Cities board meetings'.⁵⁰

The Garden City fathers argued that something needed to be done about the location to 'safeguard the character of Pinelands'.⁵¹ This echoes Davenport's comment on locations in general: 'The location became far too easily a moving area of settlement on the further edge of expensive land'.⁵² The same commission further advised the Government that because of the phenomenal growth and increase in the number of industries in the Cape Peninsula, housing provisions had to meet the proportional increase of African workers at a new location.⁵³ It should be noted that it took the Government about eighteen years to discover that Ndabeni was not suitable as a permanent location. Had it not been for the need to create space for industrial expansion there may not have been talk of demolishing it.

The urgent need to provide housing for the Africans in Cape Town revealed the contradictions in the relationship between the Government and the municipality of Cape Town. Which body was responsible for housing urban Africans and under what laws and regulations was this to be done? Municipalities maintained that it was the

49.G.C. Cuthbertson, 'A New Town At Uitvlugt: The Founding and Development of Pinelands 1919-1948', Studies, 1, 1979, 118.

51.Cuthbertson, 'A New Town At Uitvlugt', 118.

52.Davenport, 'Rhodesian and South African Policies for Urban Africans', 72.

53.Kinkead-Weekes, 'Africans in Cape Town: The Origins and Development of State Policy and Popular Resistance to 1936', (M.Soc.Sci. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985),116.

Government's responsibility to establish and administer locations. On the other hand, the Native Affairs Department insisted that since the bubonic plague had receded it could not continue to run or establish the locations. Instead the municipalities should do so under the 1902 Locations Law.⁵⁴ Attempts at finding a centralised control system and the formulation of a standard national urban policy had been foiled by an ambiguity in the South Africa Act of 1909 concerning the responsibility of provincial and central governments over the administration of Africans in the urban area.⁵⁵ It was only after the First World War, following a rapid expansion of the urban African population, increasing urban impoverishment, housing shortage and general African resistance to low wages and pass controls, that the State decided to formulate a clearcut urban policy which culminated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923.⁵⁶

It is against this backdrop that the city of Cape Town and the Government tossed the question of responsibility hither and thither between them. When the Government announced in March 1919 that Ndabeni was to fall under the jurisdiction of the Cape Town Municipality in terms of the Natives (Urban Areas) Bill that was being tabled in Parliament, the Council did not readily accept the "offer".⁵⁷ The Council protested against taking responsibility over what it thought was the Government's mess and argued that it:

54.M.W. Swanson, 'The Sanitation Syndrome', 397.

55.E. Hellmann, 'The Application of the Concept of Separate Development to Urban Areas in the Union of South Africa', (unpub. pamphlet, 1961), 121.

56.The enactment of this legislation in 1923 was the first manifest intervention of the central state in the management-reproduction of African labour power since Union. The Act had five salient principles which laid the basis for the establishment and governance of locations. It empowered local authorities to: (a) control the "influx" of Africans into the cities and "efflux" from the rural areas and in conjunction with this a system of labour allocation through a labour bureau. (b) establish and administer segregated African townships. (c) administer a separate Native Revenue Account which would self-finance the collective means of consumption. (d) prevent Africans from making land purchases in urban centres. (e) refuse the granting of political rights to Africans in cities.

57.Kinkead-Weekes, 'Africans in Cape Town', 116.

had allowed a location to grow up at Ndabeni which was a disgrace to any country, and realisation of the fact had made them a little more anxious than ever to off-load the burden and transfer it to the Council.⁵⁸

The Council was concerned about the financial implications of accepting such a responsibility. It made it clear that, whilst it was willing to take up the burden of operating locations, it would not commit itself to the rehabilitation of Ndabeni. It would provide a "first class" location pending the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Bill into law.⁵⁹ Even though the Council agreed to administer locations, it was quick to point out its halfheartedness in executing the obligation it had accepted. At a meeting of the Native Affairs Committee on 6 November, it was unanimously resolved that the issue of providing housing for Africans should not take precedence over the question of assisting the "poorer" coloured people because the latter class 'have lived in our midst for generations whereas, the native is imported from up-country'.⁶⁰ This was in spite of the fact that the Council itself employed African workers. This clearly spelt out where the priorities of the Council lay and this indifferent attitude towards the welfare of the Africans perfectly coincided with and echoed the principles of segregation enshrined in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act- and the doctrine of Stallardism that 'towns were essentially the creation of the white man, and that the black man's presence there could be justified only in so far as he served the white man's needs'.⁶¹

The Urban Areas Act came into effect on 1 January 1924 and the boundaries of the City of Cape Town were extended forthwith, bringing into its jurisdiction Ndabeni Location and the proposed Langa African Township. For the purposes of the registration and removal of squatters within the urban area under the Act, the area outside Cape Town was extended from three to five miles under Proclamation 135 of

58.CA, 3/CT 1/4/1/1/1, Minutes of the Native affairs Committee (N.A.C.), 6 November 1922.

59.CA, 3/CT 1/4/1/1/1, Minutes of the N.A.C., 6 November 1922.

60.CA, 3/CT 1/4/1/1/1, Minutes of the N.A.C., 6 November 1922.

61.T.R.H. Davenport, 'The Triumph of Colonel Stallard: The Transformation of the Natives (Urrban Areas) Act between 1923 and 1937', South African Historical Journal, 2 (1970), 77.

1926.⁶² It was hoped that by so doing the Act could be effectively enforced as no Africans could live within the range of this newly designated area.

The Council's assumption of control over Ndabeni was followed by the appointment of a "Superintendent for Natives" and the first incumbent to this post was Mr. George P. Cook. He was to act as Superintendent of Ndabeni until it was demolished in 1936. At the same time, he was to preside over matters concerning the development of the new township to which he was appointed as the substantive superintendent in 1927. In executing his duties he was assisted by Mr S.A. Rogers who succeeded him in 1938. From 1 September 1940, the designation "Superintendent of Natives" was changed to "Manager of Native Administration".⁶³ It is not clear why but Davenport suggested that the latter title was used in "richer towns".⁶⁴ The superintendent was responsible to the Native Affairs Committee. The incumbent of this post was to be,

of good character and address, that he should possess some knowledge of Native languages, that he should be experienced in the handling of Natives and a good organiser, and that he should be competent in correspondence and in the keeping of accounts and stores. Above all, the Superintendent should be a man of strong personality, who is able to combine firmness with tact, patience and sympathy in his dealings with Natives.⁶⁵

Notwithstanding these requirements, it was fashionable during those days for local authorities to employ location Superintendents with either a military or police background. The rationale was probably that they would have had the requisite experience in exercising rigid control. It is, therefore, not a matter of coincidence that Cook qualified for this position given his career background. He joined the service of the Bechuanaland Exploration Company in what was then Rhodesia, at the age of sixteen. He was in charge of many of Africans in the Company. He also served in several wars including the Matebele Rebellion and the South African War. To crown

62. CA, 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, Correspondence between the Town Clerk and the Assistant General Manager, South African Railways and Harbours.

63. CA AWC 3/1/3 Superintendent's Monthly Report, 31 December 1940

64. R. Davenport, 'Historical Background', in M. Swilling et al, Apartheid City in Transition, (Cape Town, 1991), 8.

65. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1275, Secretary of the Native Affairs Dept. to the Town Clerk, 13 July 1923.

it all, in 1913, he joined the Bloemfontein Municipality and was instrumental in the establishment of the first African location there.⁶⁶

He was responsible to the Native Affairs Committee -an organ of white town councils set up on the recommendations of the Stallard Commission.⁶⁷ However, with minimum supervision, the Superintendent enjoyed almost an unfettered control over the Township and very often did not evince the required noble qualities mentioned above in the day-to-day execution of his duties. On numerous occasions Langa residents called for the resignation of Mr. Cook and later Mr. Rogers because of their lack of "tact, patience and sympathy", and their excessive "firmness" which amounted to lack of tolerance. For instance, in 1946 the Langa Advisory Board said of the Superintendent:

The chief weakness is the autocratic control exercised by the superintendent, whose powers are like those of a commandant of a concentration camp. The big change needed is to bring the administration under democratic control. This can only be done through direct representation of African residents.⁶⁸

The Superintendent's position was bolstered by a set of regulations used in the governance of Langa Township. This was the first major development under the Urban Areas Act and the Cape Municipal Ordinance of 1912. The regulations were received with an intense dislike by the Ndabeni residents who were the prospective residents of the new "model location", the so-called "torch-bearer of decent housing", for Africans. The regulations were rejected in their entirety.

One of the most hated regulations was that dealing with registration. Every African, upon arriving at the township for the purpose of residing there, had to be registered and obtain an identification card. He was also obliged to obtain a registered contract of service from his employer. The package of regulations included

- (1) the prohibition of any type of trading,
- (2) reporting of visitors and stating the object of a visit to the Superintendent,

66.CA, 3/CT 1/4 10/1/1/2, unpub. Municipal Report- re: History of Ndabeni.

67.Davernport, 'Historical Background', 8.

68.Cited in Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance', 287

(3) entrance into or exit out of the township was to be through gateways provided for that purpose,

(4) no occupier of any dwelling was allowed to harbour any non-resident African without the Superintendent's permission,

(5) that no gathering, public meeting or entertainment was to be permitted in any street or public place in the Township without the written permission of the Superintendent, and

(6) no dance, public meeting, tea meeting or special gathering was to be held or continued on Sundays or any other day after 10.00 p.m., except on Saturday, when there was an extension to 11.00 p.m.⁶⁹ Residents perceived these regulations as nothing more than draconian. Some Langa residents maintained that the "regulations are only meant to humiliate the Africans".⁷⁰ At the height of intense political activity in Langa, a delegation representing ten organisations protested against these regulations which, they alleged, "turned the place into a concentration camp".

In a striking aphorism Johnson Ngwevela of the ANC and an official of the Langa Advisory Board scorned at the regulation by saying that "a visitor has to get the permission of the gaoler before he can see the prisoner".⁷¹

In December 1948, the Cape Town Municipality backed down and relaxed regulation No. 24 which made it compulsory for all visitors to report to the Superintendent before seeing their friends or relatives.⁷²

In 1924, the Superintendent conducted a number of meetings with representative bodies of Ndabeni residents, such as the Advisory Board, the Vigilance Committee and members of the National Native Congress (Ndabeni Branch), with a view to explaining

Cook was, moreover, coming from a place that had been hailed as having a "model location" in Bloemfontein after the First World War and the Town Council's successful eradication of the 'flu bore testimony to this. See Phillip, "'Black October" : The Impact of the Spanish Influenza', 150.

69. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1243 Langa African Township Regulations.

70. The Guardian, 13 March 1947 Also cited in Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance', 290

71. The Guardian, 4 November, 1948

72. Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance', 291.

the import of the regulations. The representatives placed on record their total objection to the proposed regulations and refusal to have anything to do with them "in any shape and form".⁷³ They objected to the regulations because they were tantamount to the institution of a pass system. They argued that the employers would take advantage of them and reduce wages or even retrench them in preference to coloured labour, as the latter had no registration complications. They also interpreted the word "contract" to mean "slavery" as they were not party to the agreement. This reaction was a pointer to the sustained resistance against forced removals that ensued later.

The regulations were also attacked by political as well as religious groups. James S. Thaele of the Cape African National Congress wrote to Superintendent Cook denouncing the "multitudinous regulations" such as being forced to be indoors by 9.00 p.m. and the system of contract labour. He deprecated the pass system as denigrating and an evil to the whole of the Cape and vowed to 'agitate against it until the millenium'.⁷⁴ A similar protest was communicated to the Native Township Committee by the Synod of the Wesleyan Methodist Church as 'deregatory to the self-respect of the individual' and that all pass laws were 'an unjust restraint on liberty and an incentive to police tyranny'.⁷⁵

These protests went unheeded as the municipal Council, sanctioned by Government, went ahead with the implementation of the regulations without even the slightest attempt at amending them. It demonstrated that the Superintendent's gesture of consultation was mere lipservice. Such intolerance, which ran counter to the specified qualities of a Superintendent, was, again, a significant pointer to the somewhat tense future relations between the Langa residents and the Council and its agent, the Langa Administration.

73. CA 4 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Memo. from the Superintendent to the Native Township Committee, 16 January 1924.

74. CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Supt. to Native Township Committee.

75. CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Supt. to Native Township Committee.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC, GENDER AND OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES OF THE LANGA RESIDENTS.

When it was established, Langa was the only spot in greater Cape Town where Africans were allowed to reside by the City Council. It was designed to accommodate an official figure of no more than 5000 people.⁷⁶ It is important to, briefly, consider the demographic and gender profiles of Langa in order to highlight the residential patterns of Africans in the Municipal area of Cape Town.

The population of Langa compared to Ndabeni as on 31 December 1927 was as follows:

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u> ⁷⁷
LANGA	231	2	233
NDABENI	3 980	1 005	4 985

By the end of 1928, there was a significant increase in the occupation of Langa. But instead of a proportional decrease in population at Ndabeni, there was a substantial increase. What was also unique about the population of Ndabeni was that there was a sprinkling of Coloureds. They were, all in all, nine (3 males, 3 females, and 3 children).⁷⁸ The settlement of Coloureds in Langa was never entertained by the municipality. The population as on 31 December 1928:

Africans

	<u>Adult</u>		<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u> ⁷⁹
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
LANGA	611	160	189	960
NDABENI	4 649	564	943	6 156

The fact that Ndabeni, ironically, experienced an increase in population during this year throws light on the Africans' reluctance to move to Langa. It also suggests that

76. Saunders, 'From Ndabeni to Langa', 201.

77. Medical Officer of Health (MOH) Annual Report, in Mayor's Minute, 1928, Appendix 8, Table J, 118.

78. MOH Annual Report, 1928, Table J, 118.

79. MOH Annual Report, in Mayor's Minute, 1929, Appendix 8, Table J, 120.

removing Africans to Langa was not an easy task for the Council. However, this trend changed when the City Council began to institute legal proceedings and considerable amount of force. (Appendix B shows this trend).

The population census of 1936 put the total resident African population in the municipal area of Cape Town at 15 679. The age and gender divisions of the population were:

	<u>Over 18 years</u>	<u>Under 18 years.</u>
Males	9 853	1 521
Females	2 785	1 520
Total	12 638	3 041

The number of Africans resident in Langa Township at the time of the census was 3 855. The total number of females stood at 799 and males numbered 3 056. In 1941 the number of males in Langa had risen to 3 349 but the female population (over 18 years) had declined to 713, altogether totalling 4 062.⁸⁰ As at 31 January 1941 the number of children in Langa stood at 1 812. Six hundred of the adult males and all the women and children lived in the married quarters, while 2 649 male adult Africans resided in the single quarters. Over 9 000 Africans lived outside the township. In 1942, the City Engineer estimated the African population in the municipal area of Cape Town to be 19 300 of which 7 300 resided in Langa, 6 000 at Windermere, and 6 000 in Cape Town. Between 600 and 700 of this number in Cape Town lived at the Docks Location.⁸¹

During and after the war years Langa continued to experience an increase in population so that the average population for (i) the 12 months July 1946 - June 1947 was as follows:

80. Union of South Africa Population Census Report of 1936, U.G. 21/1938.

81. Inter-departmental Report on the Inspection of the Conditions of Natives in the Cape Peninsula/Slarke Report (Native Affairs Department, Cape Town, April 1943).

<u>Adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u> ⁸²
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
6 613	1 377	2 527	10 517

For the the 12 months July 1947 to June 1948, there was a very marginal drop in male figures but an increase in both female and children's figures.

<u>Adults</u>		<u>Children</u>	<u>Total</u> ⁸³
<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>		
6 312	1397	2 750	10 459

The graph on the next page represents a gender breakdown of the increase in population in Langa Township. (See also Appendix B) These figures can only be treated as conservative estimates of the African population as a whole because in spite of the influx control regulations, there was frequent mobility which made counting difficult.

The Docks Compound/Location was a private establishment under the management of the South African Railways and Harbours Administration. It was liable to inspection by the Native Commissioner of Cape Town.⁸⁴ It served as a depot where Africans waited to be employed in the dock yard. Only male adult Africans were accommodated there. Most of the men were casual labourers. They were however allowed to seek employment with, for example, the stevedoring companies for very brief periods, when they were not required by the Administration. The population of the Docks Location tended to fluctuate but it could hold more than 600 people.⁸⁵ Although the location relieved the City Council of having to provide housing for the Railways and Harbours employees, this did not have an impact on the situation in the urban area.⁸⁶

There were, however, other institutions where Africans could stay with the approval of the Council. These were:

(a) St. Columbus Home, was founded by the Church of England in 1897. It was situated in District (6) and it housed about 108 people. The Home was controlled by

82. MOH Annual Report, in Mayor's Minute, 1948, Table S, 125

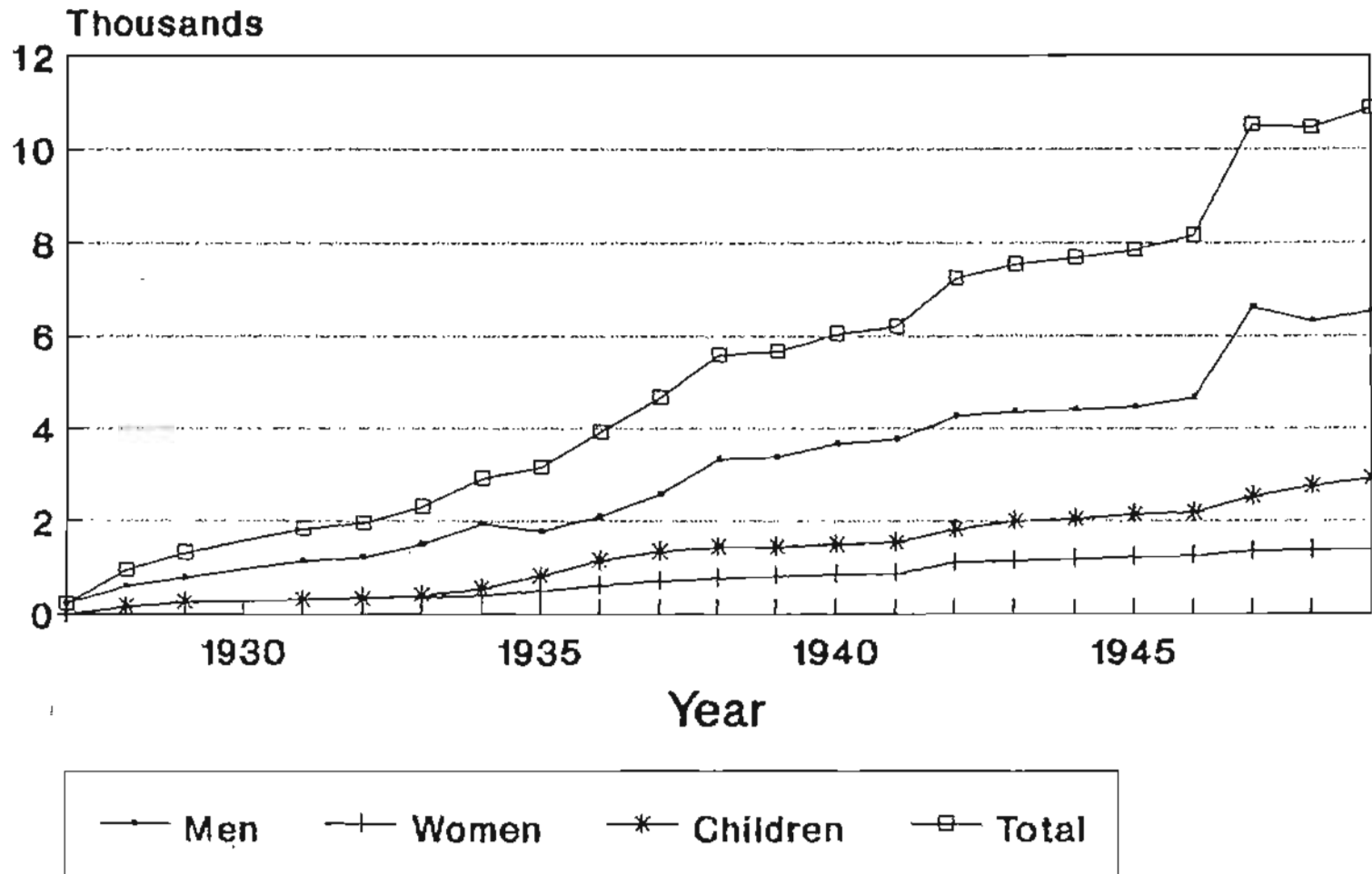
83. MOH Annual Report, in Mayor's Minute, Table U, 130

84. CA AWC 3/18/57.

85. MA MP BC579 B9.35, Inspector of Urban Locations, (P.G. Caudwell) Report on Africans in Cape Town, 30 April, 1941.

86. MA, MP BC579 B9.35, Report on Africans, 1941

Langa Population Figures 1927 - 1949



Source: Medical Officer of Health
Annual Reports

Father Bull and Father Savage both of whom made a significant contribution in the fields of education and religion in the Langa community. Accommodation was offered to only those Africans who were known to the Church. The occupants of this Home all worked in the municipal area.⁸⁷

(b) The Cape Marine Suburbs, Ltd. Compound: was situated at Camps and housed only 32 African male employees of the company.

(c) The Stakesby-Lewis Hostel: a temperance hostel, accommodated Africans and Coloureds in separate sections. There was accommodation for 30 Africans in the African section. In what seemed like an aberration from the norm, the hostel reserved one room for African women.⁸⁸

The City Council also allowed some employers in the city to provide accommodation for those African employees who, because of the nature of their jobs, could not practically stay in Langa. These were people who did domestic work and some worked in dairies, hotels, restaurants, theatres, garages, news agencies, etc. where the hours of work were such that they could not live in the township.⁸⁹ One is immediately reminded of Maylam's general observation of this contradiction when he said that employers of labour preferred to have their labour close at hand. The proximity of labour enabled the employers to minimise on costs which would otherwise go into the reproduction of labour, for instance, transport costs, if they were to be accommodated elsewhere. The requirements of employers, however, ran counter to those of the practitioners of segregation to whom African presence in the heart of the city was "anathema" or taboo save when they were ministering to their needs. Elaborating on the same contradiction between the local state and capital, Yoshikuni succinctly wrote:

To dream, as citizens of an official location removing "racial problems" from their door steps was one thing but to place, as employers, their

87.MA, MP BC579 B9.35, Report on Africans, 1941.

88.MA, MP BC579 B9.35, Report on Africans, 1941.

89.CA 3/CT 4/2/1/1/620, Town Clerk's memorandum to the Native Affairs Committee, 8 July 1942.

own African employees into the location and to pay high rents for them was another.⁹⁰

All this non-municipal accommodation was clearly inadequate to house the ever increasing African population. Even though the Council was reluctant to establish alternative residential areas, the pressure from the Government and widespread "squattling", compelled the Council in the 1940's to take that option it dreaded most because of the financial and administrative implications this entailed.

In 1946, only 16% (1 289) of the 7 938 African women in Cape Town lived in Langa. The low numbers of women in Cape Town and Langa can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, the migrant labour policy coupled with state influx control regulations did not encourage the migration of women to the cities. Secondly, the 500 mile distance between Cape Town and the nearest African reserves of Ciskei and the Transkei is long enough to promote any rapid migration. Further prohibitive factors were the shortage of formal accommodation particularly for single women and high rents. Above all, the racial and gender divisions of labour made the employment of females in the cities very difficult.

This explains why women in Langa, because of their low numbers, did not, exclusively, occupy the centre-stage of local politics. This was in total contrast to, for instance, the women of East Bank Location in East London, whose number almost equalled that of men.⁹¹ They were also able to set a formidable and brisk trade in beer which saw them in constant virulent clashes with the East London Municipality.⁹²

What was common about the occupational patterns of the Langa residents was that the majority of working men were confined to manual jobs as they lacked the necessary

90.T.Yoshikuni, 'Black Migrants in a White City: A Social History of Africans in Harare, 1890-1925', (D.Phil. thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1989), 74.

91.G.Minkley, 'Married to the Beer: Gender and Class in the East London Location, 1930-1963', Africa Seminar Paper, (Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 25 March 1992). In 1936, 12 951 African men and 12 437 African women in East London. p.5

92.Minkley, 'Married to the Beer'.

skills. These men worked with the brickyards and construction industry, quarries, food and clothing industries, with the municipality, in the domestic service sector and the transport and commercial sectors. It is, however, not easy to construct or obtain definitive statistics to determine the number of men from Langa in each service sector. Very few women were lucky to find jobs in the domestic service sector. Otherwise the majority turned to hawking, the selling of foodstuffs, and the brewing and selling of beer.

There was a relatively small petty bourgeoisie class in Langa which comprised teachers, court interpreters, clerks, ministers of religion, a few African female nurses, and businessman (or traders - in the parlance of the time). Because the Cape Town Municipality, like any other municipality was not in favour of the growth of a powerful African entrepreneurship, the Langa businessmen were often locked in a struggle with the former. The local political leadership was derived from this class. An important point that needs to be made right from the onset is that while class divisions existed in Langa, the same classes of people shared common grievances which related to living conditions and shared oppression as one race made possible the growth of an organic sense of unity in community struggle. In spite of the existence of such "distinct" classes in the township, the nature of the housing and the system of allocation tended to obfuscate these strata. The following chapter examines in detail the type of accommodation in Langa.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUCTURAL EXPANSION OF LANGA, OCCUPATION AND RESISTANCE: 1927-1948

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES IN THE TOWNSHIP.

It is important in a study of this nature to focus briefly on the institutional aspects of the Township because of the profound impact and influence it had on the development of the social, cultural and political life of the Langa community.

Langa Township is situated 11 kilometers from the City, on the Cape Flats railway and adjacent to the city's main sewerage works. This echoes the general observation of the South African Tuberculosis Commission of 1914 that:

The location is usually placed on the outskirts of the town ----the site is in many cases illchosen, generally ---not far from the town sanitary tip, the refuse dump, and the slaughter poles ----¹

Proctor's observation that sewage disposal and African locations seem to have historical connections as he cited the Western African Township, in Johannesburg, constructed in 1918 at the depositing site at Newlands, opposite Sophiatown, is also typical of this link.²

The provision of housing in Langa was influenced by the basic tenets of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, namely that the majority of Africans were "temporary sojourners", in the cities. This is the context within which the barrack system, which formed the main core of housing at Langa, was initiated. There was also a growing realisation about the need to, and inevitability of, providing accommodation to permanent urban Africans. There was thus an amalgamation of the two systems in Langa. These were adopted on the recommendations of a City Council delegation, which consisted of the Mayor, an ex-Mayor, and the City Engineer of Cape Town,

1.Cited in Davenport, 'Rhodesian and South African Policies', 72

2.Proctor, 'Class Struggle, Segregation and the City', 53.

who in 1923, inspected the African locations in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban and Bloemfontein, with a view to adopting the most suitable system of accommodation to Cape Town conditions. Their recommendations were based on the assumption that Cape Town had some Africans who wanted to settle with their families and others who only sought work of a more or less temporary nature and afterwards return to the rural areas. In order to meet this dichotomy, they recommended the adoption of the barrack system along the lines of the compound at the City Deep Mine in Johannesburg, for single men. For married persons they recommended the Bloemfontein system where Africans settled with their families.

Because Langa was built in phases, the residents tended to identify sections of the Township with those phases and gave them meaningful names which encapsulated a particular experience they lived through. For instance, the first phase of the Township which was built in 1926 was called the "Old Location". It comprised houses for married people, the Special Quarters, the Main Barracks and the North Barracks. It was old in the sense that under the new and succeeding development scheme, the houses were a relative improvement on the first one. The streets in the 'Old Location' were not macadamised, there was no electricity³, and the houses were not as attractive as those in the second development phase (completed between 1927 & 1928) or "New Location", called Bhongweni (which means "People's Pride"), for married people.

Explaining why it was called Bhongweni, an informant said this was 'In order to bring the people together so that they could stay with the hope of fulfilling what the name carries', i.e., what the name means.⁴ This, in away, symbolised the general unity that the people of Langa enjoyed although there were obviously some differences between the married and single sections. After Bhongweni, there was Thembani, the Third Phase (completed in 1935), which means "Trust". It was hoped that the houses in

3. Levin, 'Marriage in Langa Native Location', (M.A. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1946), 5.

4. Interview with Mr. Price Sigwana, 640 Special Quarters, Langa, 5 September 1991.

Them bani would "bestow comfort" because there was electricity. The Fourth Scheme (completed in 1941) was called Bubani.⁵ The Fifth Scheme was called Bulawayo (which means "to kill"). It was so called because the houses were not as "spacious" as those in the "Old Location". Mr Siqwana said ;

They were tightly built and very little area for kids to fiddle about and for gardening as well, it was very small. The people were not pleased with the houses in Bulawayo and they felt that it was one way of trying to do away with blacks ---- these houses were considered to be cheaply built ---they did not have the necessary qualities that would bring comfort.

On the relevance of the name Bulawayo, he said:

---what we were all concerned about is that they were sort of trying to kill the blacks in a polite manner giving them small houses where they had no comfort and these small houses seeing them from afar one would see that there was not sufficient space even to keep the kids happy inside.⁶

Judging from the names given to some of these phases, the development of Langa did not portray such a rosy picture of a model location as the one painted by newspapers and Municipal officials. Such names and the names of roads and streets like Mdolomba, Ndabeni, Mendi, Harlem, Jabavu, and Brinton, all form an impressive reflection of the residents' perceptiveness, creativeness and imaginativeness. They also show their interest in upholding a sense of their history (as expressed through a name like Ndabeni, from they had come). (see Street Map of Langa on the next page).

The Main Barracks and the North Barracks (next to the Hospital) were built during the first development scheme to accommodate 2 000 and 900 single men respectively and both had the trappings of a compound system which Rex defined as, 'a kind of bachelor barracks in which workers retire when off-duty to bunk beds in communal dormitories and receive their food in specially provided communal kitchens'.⁷

5. Meaning not clear but an informant guessed that it might have originated from the term "bubonic" in reference to the 1901 bubonic pandemic.

6. Interview with Mr Siqwana.

7. J. Rex, 'The Compound, the Reserve, and the Union Location', cited in R. Granelli and R. Levitan, Urban Black Housing: A Review of Existing Conditions in the Cape

Similarly, the Main Barracks which were situated at the remote end of the Township from the railway station, were built in the form of a square surrounding a bare quadrangle. The blocks comprised big identical rooms each of which accommodated between 24 and 32 men. The floors were made of brick and the roof was made from corrugated iron sheets with no ceilings at all. This made the large rooms, "impersonal, cold, damp and draughty" and because of these circumstances, 'the possibility of creating a warm, private area for relaxation or personal needs seems remote (eg.-In each room were double bunks on which the men slept) (see picture on the next page) They were built along the walls and were made from hard boards. They had no mattresses nor lockers. Because there was no space in the rooms, those who would have wanted to buy wardrobes could not do so. The men, therefore, kept their paraphernalia under the bunks.⁸

Out of the 84 rooms into which the Main Barracks were divided, 5 rooms served as a Reception Depot where newcomers to the Township were admitted for a period of strictly less than fourteen days.⁹ The appointment of African wardsmen to monitor people's movements in the Barracks and the Depot reinforced the Council's objective of overall social control. Their duties entailed the supervision of the inmates of the Barracks and visitors to the Reception Depot. The Wardsman on duty had to check the permits of the newcomers every night. He also collected those that had expired and warned the owners to report to the township administration.¹⁰

During their inspection errands they were occasionally accompanied by the European personnel from the Langa Administration.¹¹ Although documents do not state exactly what they inspected in the Barracks, it appeared that, among other reasons, they were looking for liquor and women, possibly smuggled in.

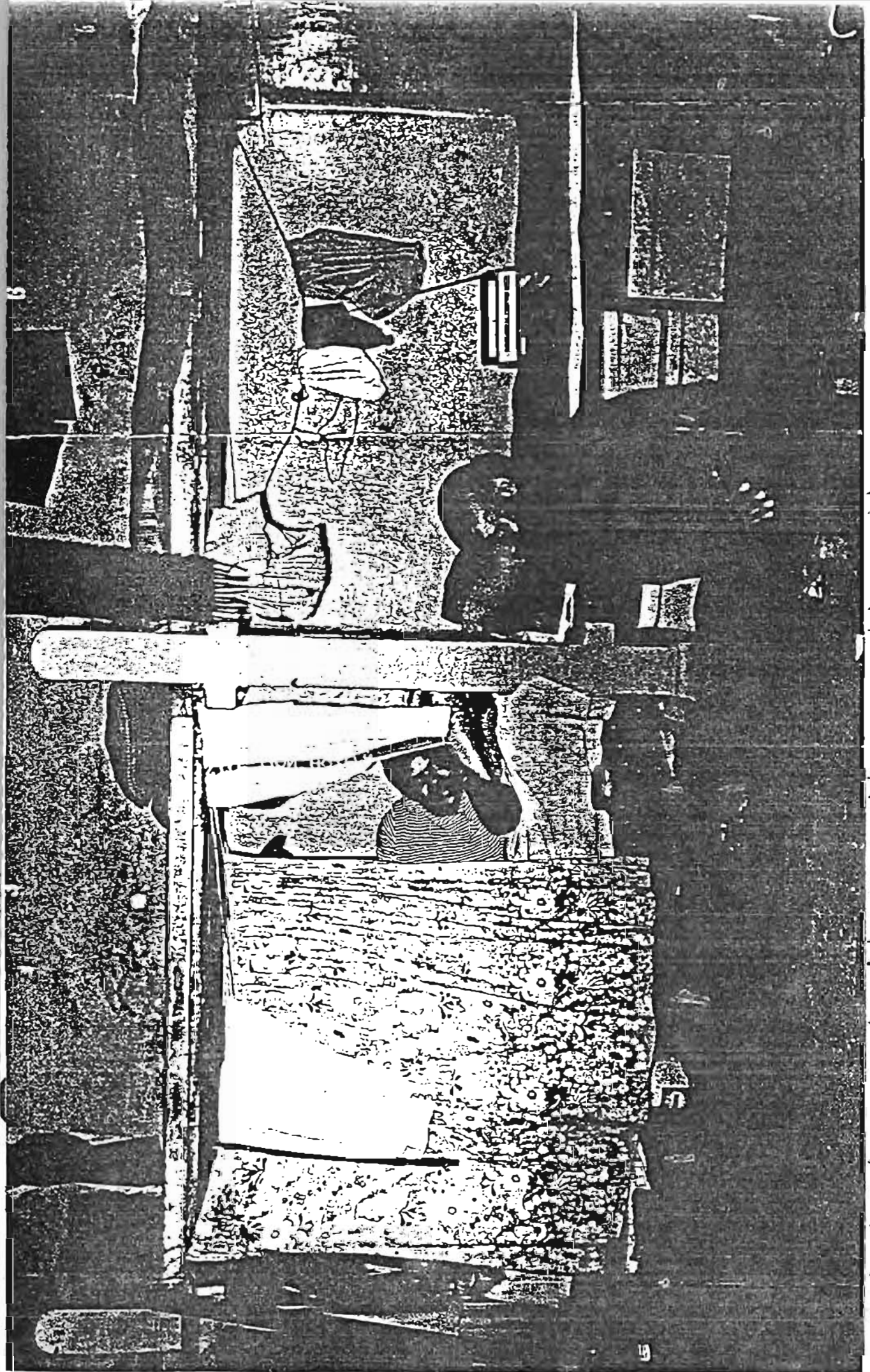
Peninsula with some Guidelines for Change, (Urban Problems Research Unit, University of Cape Town, 1977), 18

8. Granelli and Levitan, Urban Black Housing, 64.

9. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1243, Superintendent's Report, 18 December 1934.

10. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1243.

11. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1243.



Bunk No. 4 is a room shared by 25 people. The curtain provides the much needed privacy.

Source: Granelli R., Urban Black Housing

However, the task of the Wardsmen was not, usually, enviable because the occupants of the Barracks, 'generally either feign ignorance or give false information regarding absentees'. They had also developed skills to undermine social control. For fear of not wanting to antagonise the residents (because doing so, especially in the 1930s when they were being forced to move to Langa, would have increased their antipathy), the wardsmen had learnt to conduct their inspections "with circumspection without unduly harassing the residents".¹²

There were separate ablutions in the quadrangle where men did their washing. Each block served 500 men. The toilets, fixed with some timber rails for the support of the user were communal. Underneath them were uncovered channels in which water ran continuously. Such a plan was naturally fertile ground for unsanitary conditions.¹³

In the same quadrangle and not far from the ablutions block, was a small communal kitchen where the bachelors were supposed to have their meals, although the majority usually preferred to make their own. It was barely furnished, with very few tables, no doors and wide openings for window.¹⁴

Complementing the barrack-type of accommodation was the compound of single quarters for single men otherwise known as the "Special Quarters". They accommodated 544 single men. Each room contained a bunk and was intended for the "better" class of Africans who could pay a little more rent per week than their counterparts in the barracks.¹⁵ The rooms were constructed from a simple form of brick and either brick or concrete walls partitioned them. Such partitions always raised the

12.CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1243.

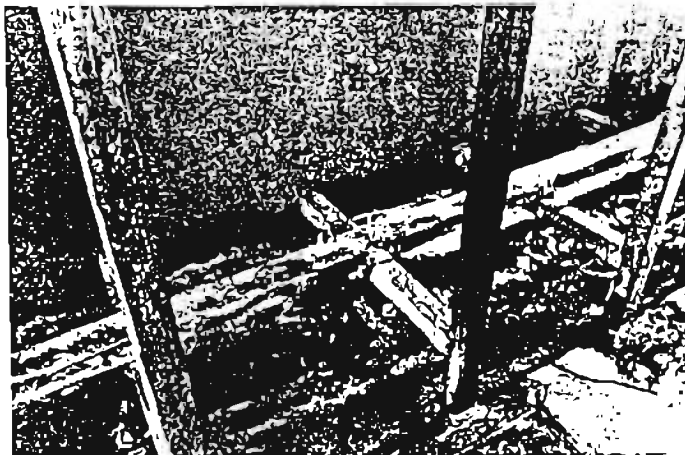
13.Granelli and Levitan, Urban Black Housing, 64.

14.Granelli and Levitan, Urban Black Housing, 67

15.CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1 Main Buildings for the New Township.



THE MAIN BARRACKS IN LANGA. The small building in the centre is the kitchen and the ablution block is on the right



The interior of a communal toilet.

problems of lack of privacy because the partitioning walls were not high enough, so that, "one could see the next man in the other room", said Mr Ntshuntshe of Langa.¹⁶

This lack of privacy often led to jealousy, envy and thefts among tenants. The same informant pointed out that when some young people, who often roamed the streets of the "Old Location", 'felt that these tenants were dressed a lot better than him, he would just jump on (their) beds taking what he wanted'.¹⁷ Apart from thefts, the lack of privacy and overcrowding, the prohibition of women had a deleterious effect on the minds of the inmates. In a survey of 'The Male-Female Dynamic Amongst Migrant Workers In the Western Cape', Ramphele, observed that the lack of privacy inhibits the development of a meaningful love relationship between a male migrant and his lover.¹⁸ There is always the problem of poor communication between the two, which is a direct result of :-

(1) Estrangement, which is caused by the physical separation of a family for a long time and this militates against the development of a mutual understanding and tolerance of basic differences as persons.

(2) Lack of Privacy: The overcrowded conditions in the barracks deny couples the chance to share their problems in confidence. Ramphele went as far as to say that:

It is actually difficult to conceive of how these people actually manage to make love under such conditions. Lovemaking is such a personal and private thing that it must be difficult for self-respecting people to engage in it given the constraints of the situation.¹⁹

Another informant who was privileged to have lived with his parents in the married Quarters, wondered how the bachelors earned their sexual satisfaction when he said, 'it

16. Interview with Mr. Zandi S. Ntshuntshe of Special Quarters, Langa on 31 August 1991

17. Interview with Mr. Ntshuntshe.

18. M. Ramphele, 'The Male-Female Dynamic Amongst Migrant Workers In The Western Cape', in Social Dynamics, 12 (1), 1986, 15-26.

19. Ramphele, 'Migrant Workers', 20

was hard for people to stay like animals---to think that these guys leave their homes for almost a year not having someone to stay with of the opposite sex', was difficult to imagine.²⁰ Besides this "assault on the ego" ²¹ of the migrants, these Spartan-like conditions under which they lived had a debilitating psychological effect on some of the migrants. This probably explains their readiness to respond to crises sometimes in a riotous manner to vent this frustration.

Along Harlem Avenue, next to the Hospital was the "Spinsters' Quarters", which could only accommodate 200 single women i.e. the up and coming, grown up women, divorcees and widows.²² Each dormitory was designed to contain twelve separate bunk beds. Separate lavatory and wash-house provisions were made in the centre of the courtyard.²³ Since women were by law, after 1937, not allowed to settle in the urban areas, the Council hoped that such accommodation would make it possible to exercise control and limit their numbers whenever necessary.

Accommodation for the married people consisted of two, three and four-roomed houses.(see picture of Basic House Types A, E, and D) in Langa The most outstanding characteristic, monotonous feature of these houses, (as well as the Special Quarters), was that they were all built in endless identical rows which made identification impossible.

The monotony of this arrangement was well captured in a very euphemistic article by Rev. Citashe of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa in Langa, which he wrote to The Argus newspaper called "Passenger-Train Architecture: Native Housing -- Through A

20. Interview with Mr. Fisher Gallo of Langa, on 24 August 1991

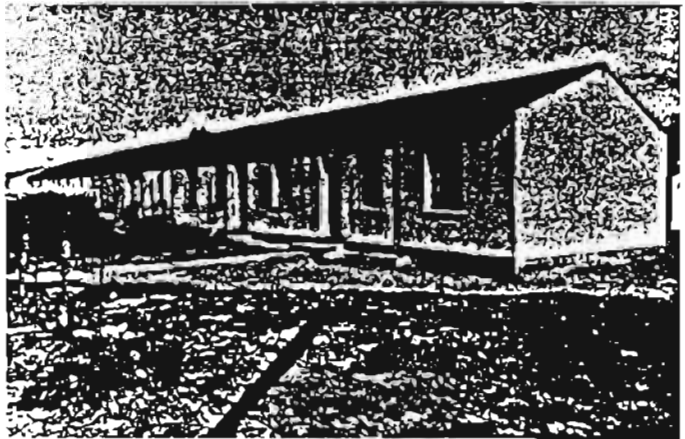
21. A phrase used by Ramphele to refer to the undermining of a migrant worker's pride by the conditions obtaining in the Barracks.

44. Interview with Mr. Bernard Nozeu of 19 Sandile Extension, Langa, on 25 July 1992.

23. CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Main Buildings in Langa.



A



E



D

These houses are shown with their 'official type designations'. They are typical examples of the Type A, E and D. houses, but in rows.

Source: Granelli R, et. al., Urban Black Housing,

Native's Eye; Ragged Nerves in Crowded Quarters", Describing the rows of the buildings of houses in Langa, the Rev. said:

The Langa architects or engineers and contractors must either have been engine drivers or ticket examiners. The whole place resembles trains. The houses are linked up into chains of several houses. The bedrooms consist of one window, each with a roof that looks like falling on the occupants.²⁴

But the married quarters were not only notorious for their "Passenger-Train Architecture" but also for their small size in which even a modest family could hardly fit. Rev. Citashe's description paints a very vivid picture of what it looked like and what it meant to be a tenant in such type of accommodation;

Looking at Langa----- and the passenger train- like married quarters in blocks of six or ten houses with low roofs, nine by nine (ft.) bed- rooms, with the fourteen by eleven living room combined into a kitchen, dining and sitting room with its small yard and back- to- back houses with just enough space for motor-cars to pass between the houses, where residents can look straight into the house of the neighbour opposite, one cannot be surprised at the question of a 15- year- old boy who asked for the difference between a house built for a Langa European (in reference to the Superintendent and his white staff) with only two children as against his own family of six with only two bedrooms and so small in size.²⁵

It was not uncommon to find that a couple of houses in every row in the married quarters section had their "verandahs" trellised, i.e. converted into another make-shift room to expand the living or sleeping space. (see picture on the next page). These alterations were not just a manifestation of need but also an expression of dissatisfaction about the inadequacy of housing units; dissatisfaction, because those who had the money to build their own spacious houses could not do so and there were no "superior neighbourhoods" to which they could move. This assault on their status increased dissatisfaction.²⁶ The size of these houses and other issues such as the condition and the distance of lavatories from the house was to become one of the many issues from

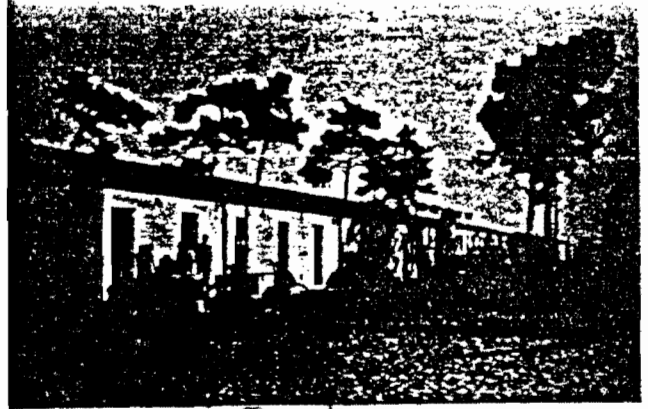
24. Cape Argus, 28 November, 1947.

25. Cape Argus, 28 November, 1947.

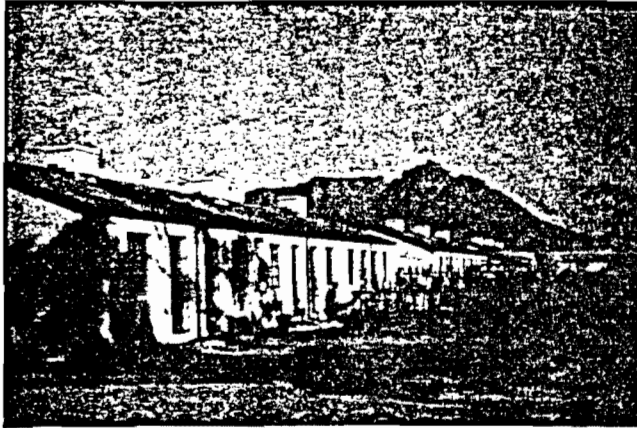
26. Granelli and Levitan, Urban Black Housing, 21-22.



A row of houses in the 'New Location'



The Special Quarters



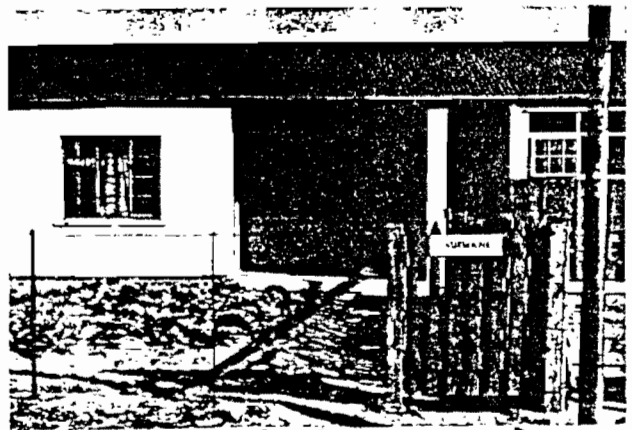
Two-roomed houses



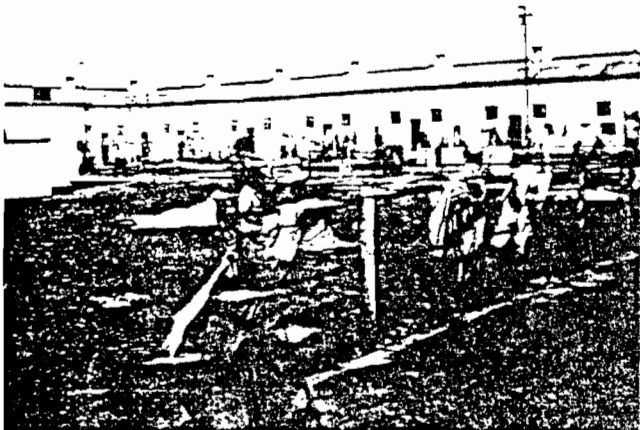
THREE-ROOMED HOUSES



A ROW OF HOUSES IN THE 'OLD LOCATION'. THE FIRST HOUSE HAS A 'TRELLISED' VERANDAH.



'A WELL-KEPT HOME'



THE MAIN BARRACKS.



AN UNKEPT HOME.

Source: R. Levin, 'Marriage in Langa Native Location', (M.A., UCT, 1946)

which and around which resistance against moving to Langa by the residents evolved and revolved.

The Police Station was strategically located in order to maintain an efficient control of the Township. The station was positioned in relation to the roads to ensure an efficient policing of the Township. A police officer patrolling on the roads running North and South (viz. Meridian, Station and Jungle Walk), could get an immediate view east and west down all the other roads and across the open spaces.²⁷

Adjacent to the Police Station was the Superintendent's seat of power, the central administration block which was centrally situated in the Township. The building consisted of the offices of the Superintendent, and the Registering Officer. It was from here that the Superintendent, 'ruled with absolute authority aided by a specially recruited police force concerned with implementing the dozens of laws which in his everyday life the migrant or his wife or his children might break'.²⁸ It is also here that rents were collected and recorded, social welfare issues were dealt with, and domestic disputes were settled.

There was also a Periodical Court presided over by the Native Commissioner and it was held daily. It tried cases of Africans accused of contravening the Natives (Urban Areas) Act and its amendments and regulations. These included the Location Regulations, the unlawful possession of Kaffir beer, and being in the Proclaimed Area (ie. Langa) without permission. Its powers of punishment were restricted to "minor" cases such as rent default, fights, etc. Serious cases such as riots, and assaults were tried at the Wynberg Magistrate's Court. The Periodical Court, therefore, bolstered the Superintendent's powers of control over the Township.²⁹

27. CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Development of Proposed New Township at Vyge.

28. J. Rex, 'The Compound, the Reserve and the Urban Location: The Essential Institutions of Southern African Labour Exploitation', South African Labour Bulletin, 1, 4, (1974), 13.

29. CA AWC 3/27/1b Langa Township.

Between 1927 and 1948, there were twenty-two churches in Langa. Sixteen of these were separatist churches. Very few had buildings of their own. The first to be established in Langa, the Presbyterian Church of South Africa, the Wesleyan Church, the Church of England and the Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), had buildings in the centre of the Township.³⁰ Church buildings usually comprised a spacious house for the Reverend-in-charge. This distinguished him from the rest of the rank and file of the Township. Those churches that did not have their own buildings, conducted their services either in the Township Civic Hall, or in the houses of the ministers. Most churches drew their membership from within and outside Langa, some as far as Woodstock, and Retreat. This suggests that Langa was not socially isolated from other areas.³¹

Apart from providing spiritual succour, the churches' vestries were used as classrooms, before, and even after, the erection of school buildings and this suggests the double role that churches played in the shaping of a close-knit community. It is also significant to note that the first five schools in Langa were built by Mission Churches, although they were taken over by the Bantu Education Department in the 1950's. These were St. Cyprian (later called Elukhanyisweni) by the Anglican Church, St. Louis by the Roman Catholic Church, Langa Methodist School (Tembani Lower Primary), and the Langa Mission School of the Dutch Reformed Church (later Moshesh Higher Primary). Lastly, there was the A.M.E. Church school, later called the Henry Bonner Lower Primary.³²

African traders' shops were located at various points on the streets of Langa. There were General dealers shops, Eating Houses, Butcheries, Milk Shops, Handicraft stalls and Hawkers' stores. In terms of the Urban Areas Act, trading was confined to

30. Botto, 'Some Aspects of the Leisure Occupations of the African Population of Cape Town',

31. Levin, 'Marriage in Langa', 7.

32. CA AWC 3/27/1b.

Africans residing in Langa but although this was the case in theory, the City Council itself engaged in business enterprises.³³ This, in it itself, became a significant site of struggle.³⁴

In terms of transport the Township was served by a branch line off the Cape Flats railway line. There was also a bus service operated by the Golden Arrow Bus Company between Mowbray station (about 3.8 miles from the Administration offices). This was only introduced in 1943.³⁵

There were recreational facilities in the form of large playgrounds on the periphery of the Township. They served as soccer and rugby fields. There were also facilities for athletics and, cricket and tennis. Although the provision of sports facilities in many workers' residential centres was necessitated by the need to keep men from "undesirable associations during leisure hours", in Langa there was a growing perception by the authorities, particularly the Superintendent, that emphasis should be shifted from that point of view. Instead, the Superintendent argued that increased sporting facilities should be an all-time necessity from the point of view of health. "Well-equipped playgrounds, both for children and seniors, are a necessity and will repay any expense by the better health of the people". Furthermore, an increase in such amenities would be 'an added attraction for parents to settle in the location', argued Mr Cook as he urged the Municipality to increase the recreation facilities.

For once, the Superintendent had become pragmatic and quite forward looking.³⁶ A healthy workforce was a concern of employers and location superintendents from the late 19th century. The provision of amenities to the residents would, according to the Superintendent, serve as 'an added attraction for parents to settle in the location'.³⁷

33.CA AWC 3/27/1b.

34. See Chapter 3.

35.CA AWC 3/27/1b.

36.CA AWC 3/1/3, Superintendent's Monthly Report, 31 December 1937.

37.CA AWC 3/1/3, Superintendent's Monthly Report, 31 December 1937.

There were obviously many other important institutions but the ones examined are particularly significant for their centrality in the issues discussed hereafter. What can be gathered from the structure, lay-out of the accommodation as well as the strategic location of the police station, administration block e t c , is that these were meticulously designed to overcome the underlying problems of social control. But, by the same token, this also bred and accentuated a somewhat perennial opposition from the inhabitants of Langa.

OCCUPATION: 1927-1936.

The transfer of Africans from Ndabeni and the City of Cape Town to Langa from 1927-1936, was a complex and troubled affair which Municipal authorities little expected. Notwithstanding the fact that Langa was a relative improvement on Ndabeni, Africans strenuously objected to being removed. The reasons for this apathy ran the whole gamut from high rentals, high rail-fares, lack of genuine consultation, inadequate accommodation to allegations that Langa was synonymous with gaol. But the most outstanding grievances centred around rents and the exorbitant cost of railway travel to and from Langa. These and other grievances caused so much resentment that it became paradoxical that whilst the Council fought against "squatting" in and around the urban area, its actions and the failure or reluctance to genuinely consider the rationale behind the Africans' unwillingness to move, led to intense squatting.

The people's refusal to settle at Langa largely took the form of passive resistance. It was so effective that the Municipality abandoned its initial persuasive approach and decided to meet it with force, but with mixed results. Rather than settle at Langa some Africans chose to leave Ndabeni for the Athlone, Cape Flats, Elsie's River,

Kensington, Lakeside, Muizenberg, and Retreat.³⁸ This was another conscious way that urban Africans resisted being pushed around. Further to this, was the "freedom" to choose where to go without taking cognizance of the Regulations which most of them may have been unaware of.

For those who remained and chose to launch a community-based resistance, what was spectacular was their ability to organise themselves and seek legal aid and question the legality of the Municipality's powers to evict them. Although they finally succumbed to the force exerted, they at least succeeded in extracting some concessions such as rent reductions from the ever adamant Council. Their protracted resistance cost the Council about 13,000 pounds worth of revenue every year. Conceding that this opposition had dealt them a telling blow, it became almost habitual, henceforth, for the Council to slightly soften its radical position.³⁹

Initially, the Council made it voluntary for the Ndabeni residents to go to Langa and select the rooms they would have wanted to move into. But this seemingly preferential treatment yielded disappointing results for the Council as few people responded to the Council's offer. The Ndabeni residents were reluctant to be removed to Langa on account of the high rental scales which were two-and-half times as much as those at Ndabeni. The comparative rents for the two areas were as follows:

	<u>LANGA</u>	<u>NDABENI</u> ⁴⁰
Barracks	10s	4s
Special Quarters	15s	6s
Married Quarters (2-roomed houses)	24s	10s
Spinsters Quarters	24s	10s

In fixing the rents for Langa, the Council did not consider the low wage earning capacity of Africans. Having incurred a capital expenditure of about 382 000 pounds

38.CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, Correspondence Between the Town Clerk and the Secretary for Native Affairs, 28 November 1927.

39.

40.CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, Report from the Native Affairs Committee

on laying out the roads, drainage system and the construction of housing, it became the Council's policy to make the residents bear the costs for the administration and future expansion of the Langa. This was chiefly done to relieve the white rate-payers of the responsibility.⁴¹

The residents contended that they could not afford these rents. At a meeting held on 16 October, 1930 they argued that there was a huge difference between their net earnings and gross wages (on which their ability to pay was based). Moreover, there was the added expense of commuting to and from Langa and the costs of buying food, not to mention clothing. These factors made it virtually impossible for them to pay more than they did at Ndabeni and they refused to move on account of that.⁴²

The City Council was accordingly criticised by a liberal organisation, the Joint European-Bantu Council of Cape Town, for failing to take into account the people's earning capacity. In its statement to the Council it said:

The responsible committee of the City Council considers nothing but the financial aspect of Langa, so much capital sunk, so much interest and redemption fund must be forthcoming. On that, and not on the natives capacity to pay, they fix the rents. That they are hopelessly beyond their capacity does not enter into the question.⁴³

It was this sort of myopia which cost the City Council thousands of pounds when residents refused to budge. It is no wonder that since Langa was opened up to about 1930, the loss to the Municipality on the administration of the Township, including interest on the capital expenditure was about 40 000 pounds.

The Africans were not blind to the fact that most of the construction at Langa had been done exclusively by unionised European labour at very high wages. Interest on this was included in the rent demanded from them. They argued that if unskilled African labour had been used, the preliminary cost of building Langa could have been far less.

41. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, N.A.C Report.

42. The Cape Argus, 17 October, 1930.

43. The Cape Argus, 15 September, 1930.

They refused to be made responsible for the huge capital expenditure incurred in the construction.⁴⁴

They were also sensitive to the fact that they were being compelled to reside and pay for "model cottages" built by highly skilled European labour while at the same time, the City Council was aiding unskilled Coloured people and Europeans to put up their own housing complexes on various sites. They also wanted to build their own houses with Council assistance. Many Ndabeni residents were heard asking 'Why may we not be allowed to build our own houses too?'.⁴⁵ Thus their opposition was also influenced by their realisation of this discrimination.

The consequence of their resilience was that Langa remained a white elephant as all attempts to force them into the location were proving a failure. By the end of April 1930 there were only 663 single men residing in the Main Barracks, and 248 families in the two-roomed houses for married people. The total population of 911, was a far cry from the envisaged maximum capacity of 5 000. Apart from the loss of revenue, and the embarrassment to the Council caused by the slow rate at which Langa was being occupied, the Council felt the heavy financial burden of administering two areas simultaneously. It was calculated that if the transfer of Ndabeni residents was expedited and Ndabeni closed down eventually, the Municipality would save about 3000 pounds per annum.⁴⁶

To speed up the process the Council began to issue notices of eviction to residents, particularly single men. The Council's action was, however, checked by the courts, after the Ndabeni residents challenged the legality of the Council's action. The Magistrate at Caledon-Square ruled that the Superintendent had no right under the Township regulations, to shift the residents from one area to another. This judgement

44. The Cape Argus, 20 May 1930.

45. The Cape Argus, 20 May 1930.

46. CA 3/CT 4/1/1/1262.

had the effect of upsetting and temporarily halting the transfer.⁴⁷ The mere fact that the residents challenged the Council and won the case, was to them an achievement of no mean feat as this emboldened them in their future dealings with it. It also proved that the Council was not entirely invincible.

In times of a crisis, the residents of Ndabeni came together to form a formidable challenge to whatever force threatened their community. So it was that they set up a common law fund which they used to seek legal advice and assistance as they did in the case referred to above. This spirit of togetherness was a clear testimony that their reaction against removal was a well planned and well co-ordinated.

For those who went to settle at Langa earlier, resistance did not end. They continued to wage an "internalised resistance". For example, the City Council's financial losses were worsened by the fact that, of those who had taken up residence at Langa, very few paid rent. From 21 May 1929, to 31 August, new Langa residents refused to pay and the Council lost 3 155 pounds and 180 pounds was owed by those who sneaked out of Langa and settled surrounding areas. These residents managed to do this by capitalising on certain legal formalities which made it impossible for the Council to compel them to pay.⁴⁸ Again this has echoes of the early history of Ndabeni.

Under the Langa Township Regulations, the Council had the power to collect rents without taking recourse to civil action. But owing to an oversight there was a technical irregularity in the promulgation of the regulations in 1927, which had not received the formal blessings of the Provincial Executive Committee.⁴⁹ It became difficult for the Council legally to enforce the payment of rent from defaulters and the residents took advantage of this loophole.

47. The Cape Times, 21 May 1930.

48. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/265, Memo from Town Clerk to the Secretary for Native Affairs.

49. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/265, Memo, Town Clerk to Secretary.

The frantic efforts made by the Council to force urban Africans into one township only resulted in more people leaving for the outlying areas of the city. In May 1930, it was estimated that there were about 2 000 Africans in Kensington Reserve which fell outside the boundary of the Proclaimed urban area. Some stayed on the Cape Flats in pondokkies. Most of these people, about 1 500 lived for a short time in Langa and decided to leave surreptitiously. The figure shook the Council out of its complacency as it realised that it had been labouring under the false illusion that Langa had been gradually filling. As if this was not enough, Ndabeni which had been closed to further admissions to people in 1928, was filled up by about 400 people who impersonated those who had left.⁵⁰ This, in effect reversed the process which the Council wished to accomplish as a matter of urgency.

There was nothing as conspicuously segregationist as the distance of Langa from the City centre, 11 km being almost double that of Ndabeni. In establishing the Township greater emphasis was put on segregation rather than the effects a long distance would have on the workers and how this would in turn affect productivity at work. The transfer to Langa disadvantaged the workers seriously. To start with, the wages and hours of work bore no relationship to the time spent on the journeys. The travelling time was charged to them. Worse still, under the Industrial Conciliation Act, they did not fall under the definition of employees and did not have recognised trade unions to protect their interests as workers. The planners of Langa may have learnt something about the effects of long distance on workers if they had read The Barlow Royal Commission Report on " The Distribution of the Industrial Population". The Commission stated that:

Travelling -----can hardly fail to have adverse effects on health and to result in fatigue and loss of energy. There can be no doubt too, that these adverse effects on the workers are reflected in no small measure on their efficiency and output, and in turn on the employers' cost of production.⁵¹

50. The Cape Times, 10 July 1930.

51. Cited in the Evidence to the Native Laws Commission of Enquiry, 25 February 1947.

The assumption was obviously that the workers would use a train service to travel to their respective work-places, but quite a number of were forced to go to work on foot.

These observations make sense if we consider the other complaint against removal to Langa, namely the infrequent train service and the high train fares. Transport problems to and from Langa were, in the early days, worsened by the fact that the Township was served by only one means of transport. There were no buses as yet. The irregular train service to Langa as compared to the one to Ndabeni, was a substantial cause for resentment. They demanded that additional workmen's trains should be provided, particularly an earlier train in the morning leaving at or before 5.00 a.m. and another leaving in the evening. Worse still there was no train service on either Saturdays or Sundays to ferry them to town and there was no obvious alternative. Furthermore, the type of carriages that were reserved for them were of an inferior type to the third class carriages on other lines.⁵²

All this militated against settlement in Langa. Superintendent Cook confirmed the gravity of the matter when he reported that the cry for an additional train service to and from Langa was such a vexed question that he urged the Council to find an urgent solution:

The Natives feel this train question more than anything. After all it must be remembered that probably the native is the largest user of the Cape Flats line and considers himself entitled to greater consideration from the Railway Department.⁵³

Closely linked to the complaint about the poor train service was the question of high railway fares. As in the case of accommodation rentals, Ndabeni residents had become accustomed to paying 6s, per month or 1s 6d a week from the City to Ndabeni. From Langa, they were expected to pay nearly double those amounts, i.e. 11s per month, or

52.CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1. Minutes of the interview between the Native Affairs Committee and the General Manager of Railways, 22 October, 1927.

53.CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Superintendent's Monthly Report, 11 July.

2s 9d a week.⁵⁴ The difference between the two fares was a material one to the residents and even worse for the unemployed/job-seekers.

The contradictions over the question of responsibility for the "management-reproduction"⁵⁵ of labour surfaced again on this issue in 1930. Appeals by the Native Affairs Committee to the General Manager of the Railways, to reduce the fares to the Ndabeni level fell through because, since it operated on business principles it was uneconomic to consider any reductions. Meanwhile, as the Council called upon the Railways Administration to review its fares, it shifted its responsibility by pointing out that the high fares and the establishment of Langa were the consequence of Government policy. The Council also refused to subsidise the Railways and clearly stated that, as a matter of policy, it did not subsidise cheap labour.⁵⁶ At the same time the employers of labour denied that they underpaid their workers. The inevitable outcome of this game of "passing the buck", was that Africans became the victims since they had to use the service will-nilly.

By February 1932, all the single men had been evicted from their dwellings. The Council turned to the eviction of the remaining 400 families and it embarked on the erection of forty-eight 2-roomed houses in Langa which were completed by the end of 1932. The approval of a 50 000 pound loan on 22 April 1933 made possible the building of two hundred more houses which were completed in 1934.⁵⁷

The removal of the married people was also not an easy task for the Council as they had specific grievances which were unique to their class and position. They objected to

54. CA 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/1, Minutes of the Interview between the Native Affairs Committee, and the Manager of the Railways.

55. 'the process of active intervention by the state to secure an essential condition of capital accumulation, that is, the continued existence of a labour force sufficient to meet the demands of the capitalist economy for labour power', Bloch and Wilson, 'Urban Control and Popular Struggle', 5

56. The Cape Times, 21 May 1930.

57. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1262.

the inadequate accommodation as well as the condition of buildings at Langa. A whole family was expected to live in two rooms, each measuring 12ft by 10ft. As some of them had acquired some furniture, they found it extremely difficult to fit it in.⁵⁸ In fact, those who finally went to Langa, had to store their furniture in the Municipal store.⁵⁹ The complaint by Mr Fassie of the Ndabeni Advisory Board probably encapsulates the general feeling prevalent in Ndabeni against the unsuitability of this type of accommodation:

I have got three children. One of them is in school in standard six, but how disgraceful it is when I go to bed with no privacy with the children, and the mother and everybody in the same room. If I want to have to have a little chat with mother the children already understand what I say to mother.⁶⁰

Nurtured and groomed in such circumstances, children could not fail to lose respect for each other as brothers and sisters as well as for their parents. Overcrowded conditions certainly made life difficult.

There was a level at which the Africans viewed Langa as synonymous with jail and they unambiguously made it clear that they could not move into jail with eyes wide open. What baffled them most was the fact that if they lived elsewhere they were arrested and sent to jail and if they lived at Langa they were sent to jail for failing to pay rent. They argued that their reasons for failing to pay rent were not considered at all. As a result some people chose to drift away from Ndabeni to Langa and those already in Langa just slipped out owing unspecified large amounts of rents. The people's dilemma was well summed up by one member of the Cape Joint European-Bantu Council when he derided the City Council's policing attitude:

No wonder the native has learnt to regard Langa with dread -- to him it is only the road to gaol if he does not go there. If he does go there and any misfortune makes it impossible to keep up to date with the rent which is making such heavy demands upon him, he is again threatened with gaol. Thereupon, he loses his job and with it all the hope of making up his rent. What then, can he do, but take refuge to the bush.⁶¹

58. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1267, Ndabeni Advisory Board Minutes: Transfer of residents to Langa, 12 September 1934.

59. The Guardian, 1 September 1939.

60. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1267 Details of meeting between the NAC and the Residents of Ndabeni/Langa.

61. The Cape Argus, 15 September 1930.

It was this fear of courting a double tragedy, i.e. going to jail and subsequently losing one's job that some people decided rather not to go to Langa.

The resemblance of Langa to a jail was often caricatured by those who, at some point, had had the misfortune of being convicted. Such people even said that they were much better treated in jail than at Langa.⁶² Some residents remembered, with horror, the insensibility of the Council when it arrested Mr. James Gardley of Langa and sent him to Wynberg for failing to pay his full rent. He was imprisoned and died in prison.⁶³ Whether he died of "natural" causes was, to them, besides the point. The mere fact that this tragedy had happened in jail taught them to be "careful" not to go to Langa lest they failed to pay rents and be incarcerated with probable consequences too ghastly for them to contemplate.

A Supreme Court Judge also ruled that it was a monstrous thing that people were sent to prison in an ordinary matter such as the failure to pay rent. The same Judge when quashing the conviction of a rent defaulter, argued that if whites failed to pay rent they were not convicted as was done to Africans.⁶⁴ The Judge's ruling was a vindication of the fact that the laws were morally reprehensible.

The removals to Langa were not simply an issue that affected the people of Ndabeni alone. Shopowners and Churches, particularly Independent Churches, were equally affected but the rationale for their opposition stemmed from vested interests. The most prominent shopowner in Ndabeni, Mr. J.B. Cook (it's not clear whether he was related to Supt. Cook), the proprietor of J.B. Cook and Son Ndabeni Trading Stores, bemoaned the transfer of all the single men, in particular, in 1932. He complained to the Native Affairs Committee about the diminishing profits which resulted. His business was always brisk because the single men bought their groceries from his store

62. The Cape Argus, 7 January 1932.

63. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, Minutes of meeting between the NAC and Langa residents, 25 October 1930.

64. The Cape Argus, 19 August 1929.

upon their return from work at night. Cook was not enthused at all by the prospect of seeing married people left behind temporarily, not to mention the complete evacuation and destruction of Ndabeni. His contention was that married women did not buy from his store as they had time to wander about during the day and found time to buy from outside the location.⁶⁵ With the destruction of the barracks at Ndabeni, which he saw as his catchment area for his customers, Cook complained to the NAC:

We now find it extremely difficult with the decreased takings, to meet our obligations in general i.e. site rent, merchant accounts, business expenses e.t.c.⁶⁶

He appealed to the Committee to grant him a site at Langa on which to put up temporary structures of wood and iron for trading purposes until such time a suitable building had been erected, obviously oblivious to the fact that Langa, unlike Ndabeni was not going to be open to outside traders under the Urban Areas Act. Cook's protest, as is evident, did not stem from any moral considerations but the profit-making motive. He felt betrayed by what he regarded as the Council's inconsiderate actions which robbed him of a reliable source of income.

Churches in general, but specifically African Independent Churches, also bore the brunt of the Council's forced evictions. They argued that since they had asked to move, or to be moved, they should be compensated. But the City Council adamantly refused to do so. On 21 March 1927, a deputation representing an organisation called the Cape Peninsula Church Council from the Wesleyan Parsonage in Woodstock, met the Native Affairs Committee to discuss the subject of compensation upon moving to Langa. But their request was turned down.⁶⁷

The Church Council seems to have acquiesced in the Council's reply without protest but the same is not true of the Independent Churches, especially the A.M.E. and the Presbyterian Church. Rev. J. Geo Matshiqi, pastor-in-charge of the A.M.E., had his

65. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1256, J.B. Cook's letter to the NAC, 11 February 1932.

66. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1256, Cook's letter to NAC.

67. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1247, Churches, Ndabeni.

request for compensation turned down by the Council and the Rev. did not acquiesce at all. He decried the Council for making such an arbitrary decision as it adversely affected independent denominations such as his. These churches were not as financially sound as the Wesleyan and Anglican Churches, which had depended on, European help. A good example was that of the Church of England which had appealed, with great success, to Europeans for funds for their new Langa Church. The Rev. Matshiqi lamented the Council's position which did not take into consideration the unfortunate circumstances of such churches. 'By its decision, the Council will crush the life out of these churches', complained Rev. Matshiqi.

The Council's decision was motivated by what had, previously, happened in Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein (where Superintendent Cook had once worked) with regards to the question of compensation in 1902. Upon his request, the Superintendent of Langa had been told by the Town Clerk of Port Elizabeth that when Africans were removed from the city to New Brighton, the separatist churches were simply "bought out of existence".

In Bloemfontein, no compensation was paid. Applications by Church authorities for assistance to erect church buildings were considered on their merits.⁶⁸ What these merits were is a matter for conjecture. It is, perhaps, not an exaggeration to surmise that the Council's attitude against separatist churches was influenced by the general perceptions by Government authorities that these churches had both religious and political ramifications. Independent Churches had long provided fora for political tirades against the discriminatory practices of the State.⁶⁹ Be that as it may, these churches struggled and eventually succeeded in establishing themselves without the Council's compensation.

68. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1247, Superintendent's Monthly Report, 1927.

69. B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, (London, 1961), 38-64

The last families in the Ndabeni Location were transferred to Langa on 4 January 1936, upon the completion of sixty additional houses in December 1935. This necessitated the closure and subsequent completion of the agreement between the Government and the Council with regards to the disposal of the ground for industrial purposes. In their final act of opposition, whilst they were still in Ndabeni, the residents demonstrated to the Council that they were acutely aware of the fact that it was the need to create industrial space for the manufacturers that Ndabeni was being disposed of. They questioned the Council's ingenuity in ordering them to vacate Ndabeni on the basis of unhealthy conditions and wondered how the same conditions would be suitable for industries. Many were heard to ask, 'if the Council was contemplating making the spot a healthy one, why could they not make those arrangements for the present inhabitants?'.⁷⁰

True to its name, NDABENI--which means "the place of talk", formally became "the place of dead silence", by a Government notice of May 1936. However, the formal closure of Ndabeni Location did not lead to the full occupation of Langa. Accommodation for 3 000 single men had been provided at Langa but about 50% of this remained empty up to January 1937. Not even half of the 1 900 men removed from Ndabeni in 1932 registered at Langa. The total population of Langa after the closure of Ndabeni stood at 3,730 as of 31 December 1935. This figure, obviously, fell far short of the original target of 5 000.

In spite of the small population that had settled at Langa by 1936, and the high-handed methods that had been employed to remove it from Ndabeni, what is significant is that the nucleus of a dynamic, stable and politically conscious urban African community had been established. Once settled it was no longer possible for both the Government and the local authority to ignore or regard the Langa community as a docile urban entity. What is also evident about the people's resistance is that there was virtually no conspicuous party political agitation which normally accompanied such developments.

⁷⁰. The Cape Argus, 1 June 1931.

This changed quite drastically such that in the late 1930's and the 1940's when African political organisations, such as the ANC, the SACP, and the NLL in particular, seize the peoples' grievances against the Cape Town City Council to establish themselves and the people, too, respond favourably to these organisations. This, however, is the subject of Chapter 6

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: THE MUNICIPALISATION OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISE IN LANGA TOWNSHIP AND THE AFRICAN RESPONSE 1927-1948.

When Langa was opened to African occupation in 1927, the Cape Town City Council was against the idea of encouraging African trade there. Langa residents were compelled to purchase their personal requirements from the city and the profits were pocketed by European proprietors instead of circulating among the African community. There was, thus, an unwritten covenant between the city local authority and white business capital that the denial of trading rights to emergent African entrepreneurs would create a large pool of customers for the businesses in the city. Although the policy of territorial segregation ostensibly meant the paramountcy of European interests in European areas, and African interests in African areas, the municipality spread its tentacles into what was "exclusively" the African's domain. The outcome was a municipal monopoly over what had been the petty African trader's sole means of eking out a living. This initiated incessant struggles between the rulers and the ruled over the latter's only indispensable means of subsistence.

The municipalisation of trading activities in Langa was embarked upon by the City Council from the late 1930s to 1948 under a thinly veiled paternalistic justification - the welfare of the Langa populace. For instance, in 1938 the Council argued for the virtues of a municipal beer hall to cater for the drinking requirements of the "bachelor" class which could not brew its own beer in terms of Location Regulations. Again, under the guise of combating malnutrition amongst the bachelors in the Main Barracks, it expropriated the eating house from the African traders who operated their businesses there. What is characteristic of the Council's trading activities in Langa is that it closed all the existing avenues through which such enterprises could find an outlet.

PART ONE:

LANGA - A TOWNSHIP OF TEETOTALLERS?

The question of liquor in general and "Kaffir beer" in particular runs threadlike through the history of the African working class in South Africa.¹

Purporting to have the welfare of its subjects at heart, the City Council of Cape Town decided to inaugurate the new African township of Langa in 1927 with the total prohibition of liquor including utshwala, commonly but disparagingly referred to as "Kaffir beer". Relying on its experience in Ndabeni - the location which preceded Langa, where a permit system was in operation, the Council argued that a permit was open to abuse and 'detrimental to the morale of the native in that it creates a sort of monopoly, only a certain number being able to get a permit to brew'. Permits were issued to married householders for domestic brewing only, and they were not issued to the more than 3,500 single men who formed the largest part of Ndabeni's and Langa's population.² The municipality maintained that this permit system created a temptation both to these single men and to the permit holders who were tempted to sell to them illegally.³

Evangelical organisations in Cape Town such as the Wesleyan Methodist Church of South Africa, the Cape Town Diocesan Synod of the Province of Southern Africa, and the South African Temperance Alliance including the Ndabeni African ministers of Independent Churches, were alone in congratulating the Council on this unrealistic policy. Their moral and Christian view-point was blended with their apparently racist fears that, 'the native, once he has acquired the alcohol habit, is physically much less capable of moderation than a European'.⁴ (my emphasis)

1.P. La Hausse, 'Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Struggle in Durban: The Origins of the Beer Hall in South Africa 1902-1908', Africa Seminar, Centre for African Studies, U.C.T. 1983,

2.Cape Archives (hereafter CA) 3/CT 4/1/5/1262.

3.CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1262.

4.CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1262, Memorandum to the Mayor of Cape Town from Archbishop of Cape Town, Charles Savage et.al. July 1924.

From the beginning, the regulation on total prohibition was a dead-letter since people had not been consulted. It was bound to be transgressed as long as Langa remained a dry island, and as long as alternative forms of entertainment and recreation continued to be virtually absent. Beer drinkers in Langa soon asked why they were the only ones not allowed to brew their own beer. Why Langa was governed by regulations totally different to Ndabeni remained a mystery to them.⁵ This denial of what they considered to be a privilege, if not a right, was to bring together the beer brewers, the consumers, and in some cases teetotalers, against the municipality in a struggle over the liquor traffic. There is nothing new about this. Ndabeni residents had built a reputation for defending what they considered to be their inalienable rights.⁶ What tended to bring together the beer brewers and their consumers was the symbiotic relationship between them:

In fact that was one of the most prosperous businesses you could run then, because people had nothing to do from work - coming back just to prepare their food, the next thing....drinks [beer].⁷

As with women elsewhere in Africa, the migrant labour system, with its 'rigid sexual and racial division of labour ... [which] excluded African women from jobs in the formal, industrial sector' meant that the women of Langa depended on beer brewing, the smuggling and selling of whiteman's liquor, and petty trading, for survival.⁸

The women of Langa reworked the tradition of beer brewing and adapted it to a survival strategy by commercialising utshwala which traditionally had been used for ceremonial functions only. In the words of P.A. McAllister:

People do not generally preserve old habits or customs for their own sake, but adapt these or introduce new ones, as the need arises. New institutions emerge from the old; established customs may be reinterpreted or give new meaning.⁹

5. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1262, Memo to the Mayor

6. Saunders, 'The Creation of Ndabeni', 165-195.

7. Interview, Mr F. Galo, Langa, 24 Aug. 1991.

8. C. Walker, Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, 190.

9. P.A. Mc Allister, 'Beer and the Unity of Study: notes on the history of Xhosa beer drinking and on combining cultural analysis and "political economy" approaches in anthropology', Rhodes University Conference, 1987, p.1.

In the light of the above considerations, in 1930, three years after the opening of Langa, the Superintendent of Langa, Mr. G.P. Cook, was to report that it had become, 'practically impossible to stop illicit brewing of kaffir beer, and to control the introduction of bottled liquor',¹⁰ in spite of frequent police patrols. In the previous month, December 1929, sixty-nine bottles of liquor were confiscated at Langa and £97.10s in fines imposed, one thousand gallons of utshwala confiscated and £297.15s in fines imposed.¹¹

That total prohibition was an unwelcome regulation among the concerned Langa residents was made overtly clear by a resolution they made at a meeting with the Superintendent on 22 January 1930 in connection with beer permits. They called upon the Native Affairs Committee of the City Council to

consider the urgent necessity of granting permits for the domestic brewing of Kaffir beer on the same conditions appertaining to Ndabeni Location, as many of our people are getting into trouble through the drink question.¹²

The Superintendent's readiness to endorse the demand vindicated the point that the situation had become untenable. The Council rescinded its resolution and removed the anomaly by regulating the brewing of utshwala in Langa on the same terms as Ndabeni by permits.¹³

The municipality hoped that, armed with this regulation, it could still effectively control the liquor trade. After all, the Liquor Act No. 30 of 1928 was in place and could be invoked any time to check the smuggling of liquor. It provided for the denial to Africans of brandy and bread-yeast. There were also restrictions on methylated

10. CA 3/CT 4/1/5/1262, Superintendent's Report on 29 Jan. 1930.

11. ibid.

12. ibid.

13. ibid.

spirits, used mostly by the "well-to-do" Africans,¹⁴ for the lighting of primus stoves - for fear of their being used as intoxicating gases.¹⁵

Even so, Africans often managed to obtain liquor by hook or by crook. White or "Coloured" shebeen operators purchased liquor at retail outlets and clandestinely sold it to them. Alternatively, Africans could send "Coloureds" to buy it for them,¹⁶ although this alternative could be unreliable as they could easily disappear with the money or liquor.¹⁷

Under the Natives Urban Areas Act No. 21 "intoxicating liquor" could also be obtained "for bonafide sacramental purposes".¹⁸ This was not as easy as it might sound. The ordeal one had to go through was described by Rev C.N. Citashe of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa:

The Native Clergyman must apply to the Magistrate who refers the matter to the liquor branch of the C.I.D. whither the applicant is called and interrogated and the final approval obtained and the Clergyman is permitted to buy his Sacramental wine by the production of his PASS which must be endorsed by the storekeeper everytime he buys. He must frequent the Bottle Store as the permit does not allow another to deputise for him.¹⁹

If the process of obtaining wines for sacramental purposes was cumbersome, that for obtaining permission to brew beer for traditional ceremonies such as the Fingo and Moshoeshoe celebrations was equally tedious and people considered themselves very fortunate to have beer until the end of the ceremony. Mr. F. Galo testified:

14. Liquor Act No. 30 of 1928.

15. Manuscripts and Archives, U.C.T. (hereafter MA), BC579 D1.9.

16. W. Schärf, 'The Impact of Liquor on the Working Class (with particular focus on the Western Cape). The implications of the structure of the Liquor Industry and the role of the State in this regard', (M.Soc.Sci. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1984) 1984, p.78.

17. Interview, Mr. Galo, Langa, 24 Aug. 1991.

18. Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923 Section 19 (1).

19. MA, BC 579. D.1.9.

when there was what we call "Umcimbi" maybe circumcision then we would see there's some beer there, or maybe it was through the 'mercy' of the officials if they come there and they decide that they can allow this, if they decide to spill everything they just kick that bucket [of beer].²⁰

Clearly, the liquor laws were a threat to the religious and cultural beliefs of the Africans in Langa as the successful completion of any ceremony, Christian or traditional, was at the mercy of those in the corridors of power.

Although the Langa residents had clamoured for the introduction of the permit system, they soon discovered it was open to abuse. The Superintendent of Langa used the system to extort rent from defaulters. The forced removal to Langa from 1927 had been characterised by resistance to the higher rents compared with Ndabeni. Very few of those who took up residence at Langa paid rent regularly. Now the Superintendent issued permits allowing four gallons per day for every married resident who was not in rent arrears.²¹ That the Superintendent was using his discretion, independent of the municipality, is clear from his admission: 'Whether I am, by law, allowed to refuse a permit if the applicant is in arrears with rent, is a moot point'.²² To a local authority which by 1930 had an accumulated deficit of £42 500 on Langa,²³ its "loyal and obedient servant" ²⁴ was being administratively efficient and deserved a pat on the back.

Ironically, however, those householders who were refused permits depended on the sale of utshwala to raise the money for their rents. Failure to do so usually led to summary ejection from the township. Caught in this dilemma, the tendency by the affected women was to continue brewing and risk being raided, arrested and imprisoned.²⁵ The sentences ranged from fines to imprisonment with hard labour. Cases in point are

20. Interview, Mr Galo, Langa, 24 Aug. 1991.

21. CA, 3/CT 4/1/5/1266, Report from the Native Affairs Committee.

22. CA, 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/8 Superintendent's Report, 6 Nov. 1935.

23. Cape Times, 1 Oct. 1930.

24. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/2.

25. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/2.

those of Kopolo Siyaya of No. 274 Married Quarters who was sentenced to one month, suspended for one year, for being in possession of ten gallons of utshwala, together with a fine of £10 or three months in jail.²⁶ Maria Mashoba, of No. 442 Married Quarters, was sentenced to three months with hard labour for being in possession of two flasks of brandy and six bottles of wine. Again, Emily Labule was sentenced to three months with hard labour for possessing brandy.²⁷ The list is endless, but these severe sentences were not a deterrent at all for the liquor traffic continued unabated.

For the shebeen operators the most unsavoury part of the raids was the high-handed approach of the Superintendent who conducted the raids himself. There were numerous cases where he met with a severe reprimand from his victims and one incident on 9 April 1939 will illustrate this. On this fateful day, the Superintendent went into the Langa Location in the early morning around 6.30 am to raid for liquor. At about 7.00 am he got to No. 457 Married Quarters where he asked for admission to the house, which was refused. After being delayed for twenty minutes, the Superintendent forced his way into the house and, according to him, found fourteen gallons of beer - ten gallons in excess of the permitted quantity. While the beer was being measured about sixty women took part in a "hostile demonstration" outside the house and the two African Wardsmen accompanying the Superintendent were assaulted. The woman of the house also assaulted the Superintendent.²⁸ Realising the threatening mood of the women, the Superintendent sent for the police, who apprehended the two ring leaders but again, two European policemen were assaulted. When the prisoners were taken to the police station, the rest of the women followed and 'created a disturbance in the streets and became very rowdy outside the police station, shouting for the release of the two accused and demanding admittance to the Charge Office'.²⁹

26.CA, 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/10 Superintendent's Report, 10 Feb. 1942.

27. ibid.

28.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/6/4/1/2, Superintendent's Report, 8 May 1939.

29. ibid.

The two ring leaders were charged with assault on 26 April before the Magistrate at Wynberg. The first accused was fined £10 or two months' imprisonment with hard labour, and the second, £5 or one month with hard labour. Moreover, the registered occupier of the house, No. 457 Married Quarters was fined £3 or three weeks with hard labour for obstructing the Superintendent 'by failing or refusing to open the door of his house in the execution of my duty' and fined £5 or five weeks for being in possession of ten gallons excess quantity of utshwala.

A few observations can be made about the women's conduct. Initially, they were protesting against the Superintendent's raiding for beer as they considered that he was doing a police duty. They accused the Superintendent of taking an active part in order to bring the system of domestic brewing into disrepute to justify the Council's proposals for the establishment of a municipal brewery.³⁰ At the heart of these allegations was a rejection of the Superintendent's interference with their way of life. While they did not necessarily approve of shebeens, the Superintendent's actions were a naked challenge to an institution which was not only traditionally and culturally significant but which was economically indispensable. For others, it was an opportunity to vent their anger against the harsh treatment meted out to them by the registration office when they entered the location.

In this incident one can also observe some incipient tendencies towards female assertiveness over male authority. It was unusual, if not unheard of, in predominantly patriarchal societies, the Xhosa-speaking one included, for a woman to beat up a man. But in this case, the women of Langa, without much ado, assaulted everyone from the Superintendent and the Wardsmen, to the European Policemen - collectively a symbol of oppression. Most remarkable, though, was the extent to which the women of Langa rallied behind a fellow woman to the point of physically defending her. Whatever reason made them act in the manner they did, it was their ability to fight single-

30. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/6/4/1/2, Superintendent's Report, 8 May 1939.

handedly (without men) against a system that threatened their very existence that is so striking.

In September 1939 there was a general attack on the beer regulations by the Langa Advisory Board. The arrests for the possession of unfermented beer, the heavy fines imposed for the possession of even a small excess of beer over the prescribed quantity, and the fact that tired workers, as householders, had to queue for hours every week for permits, were all intensely disliked. As there was also much talk about establishing municipal beerhalls nation-wide in 1938, the Advisory Board attributed these difficulties to the municipality's 'campaign against home-brewing to make way for the "beerhall mania" of the politically-motivated Native Administration'.³¹

The Langa Advisory Board was not alone in voicing its discontent. The Langa branch of the National Liberation League (NLL), a political organisation which claimed to fight for "Equality and Freedom", petitioned D.B. Molteno, the parliamentary representative of Africans in the Western Cape, on 2 November 1939. Firstly, the Langa branch sought clarity on who exactly was responsible for conducting searches in houses for beer.³² Of late the Superintendent had increasingly assumed the role of the police in conducting raids, which the Langa residents felt were "manifestly undesirable" since 'the Superintendent of Natives (Mr. S.A. Rogers) who is head of the Native Administrative Branch of the Council and source of appeal by residents in matters affecting the location, should be placed in the position of having to discharge duties of a police nature'.³³ As the women's assault indicated, the Superintendent was no longer trusted by the residents.

31.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/6/4/1/2, Minutes of the Langa Advisory Board meeting, 12 Sept. 1939.

32.MA, BC579 A24.55 NLL - Memorandum to Molteno, 2 Nov. 1939.

33.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/6/4/1/1 - Memorandum from the Langa Advisory Board to the Town Clerk, 1 July 1939.

The second grievance was against a police pick-up van stopping anywhere in the location and searching people for liquor.³⁴ Amongst the numerous cases reported was that of D. Mahloane, Vice-chairman of the Langa Vigilance Association. Mahloane was stopped by an African constable on 25 October 1941 who demanded to search his attache case on the street. Mahloane refused to be searched publicly and asked to go to the police station. The African constable complied. Little did Mahloane know how his request would be interpreted. Although no liquor was found Mahloane was charged with obstructing the policeman in the course of his duty. He was refused bail and a fine of £1 was demanded from him which he refused to pay. Afterwards a senior policeman allowed bail of £2.³⁵

The secretariat of the Langa Vigilance Committee was later to condemn the treatment given to Mahloane in the strongest terms:

We wish to protest against the rough and bullying treatment meted out, and the bad and obscene language used by responsible officials at Langa Police Station, to people arrested and detained there. (Mahloane's case furnishes an excellent example of these). Instead of achieving its purpose, such undignified behaviour casts a very bad reflection on both the victims and officials responsible for them.³⁶

Their voice of protest was also echoed by the Episcopal Synod of the Province of South Africa.³⁷

Finally, the Langa Branch of the NLL queried the conduct and right of the African police to search passengers alighting from the train at Langa for liquor. People resented being pitched into the pick-up van, which was always parked nearby, when they objected. An informant vividly recalled how an African policeman nicknamed NDIYAKUKROKRELA ("I suspect you"), would stand at a strategic position at the railway station and 'as people were coming home from the sub-way, he would look at

34.MA, BC579 A24.55.

35.MA, BC59 A24,431,

36.ibid.

37.ibid.

them and say "Ndiyakukrokrela!" then you must just go to him'.³⁸ The interviewee also confirmed that if one refused to be searched or was found with liquor or wine, one was thrown into a pick-up van.³⁹ Nothing indicates more strongly the people's deep-seated hatred of the system than the fact that a certain Ndiyakukrokrela was stabbed to death as a protest against these searches.⁴⁰

The struggles between the Langa residents, the police and the City Council, through its administrative branch in the location, were characterised by fear, mistrust, and animosity. The Langa residents were not cowed into subservience when they witnessed their rights being trampled. The brewers' resolute stand against the Superintendent's frequent raids for beer, the failure of the high fines and severe sentences with hard labour to act as deterrents and the refusal of the general Langa residents to kowtow to police searchings all demonstrate the nature of their implacable resistance.

PART TWO:

THE CITY COUNCIL AND THE "BEERHALL MANIA" OF THE LATE 1930s AND 1940s

Nowhere else in southern Africa has the beerhall institution been so violently opposed and assumed such political overtones as in South Africa. Its origins in the form of the Durban system forms the major part of Paul la Hausse's seminal works.⁴¹ Briefly, the beerhall system originated in Durban. A commission appointed in 1906 to enquire into matters connected, inter-alia, with the illicit sale of liquor to Africans and the restriction of beer drinking, recommended that the manufacture and sale of beer in the

38. Interview, Mr Zandi S. Ntshuntshe of 61 Special Quarters, Langa, 31 Aug. 1991.

39. Mr. Ntshuntshe

40. Mr. Ntshuntshe

41. For example P. la Hausse, 'Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Struggle in Durban: The Origins of the Beer Hall in South Africa 1902-1908', (Africa Seminar, Center for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1983), and la Hausse, 'Drinking In A Cage: The Durban System and the 1929 Beer Hall Riots', Africa Perspective, No. 20, (1982).

urban areas should be regulated and placed entirely under municipal control. This recommendation became the foundation upon which the Natal Native Beer Act of 1908 was passed. It provided for the licensing, by municipalities, of individual Africans to sell beer. Alternatively, the municipalities could establish a monopoly in their areas.⁴² For obvious reasons, the latter was preferred. In terms of the Act profits from the municipal beerhalls were channelled into the Native Affairs Administration Fund (which became the Native Revenue Account in 1924). The fund was supposed to meet the expenses incurred in the administration of the Act for the "welfare" of the African population residing in the locations, but in practice it never did so.⁴³ Thus the Durban system became the model of African administration which was not only applied in South Africa but was also exported to Zimbabwe, Zambia and East Africa.⁴⁴

But la Hausse is by no means the only historian who worked on the beer hall system and the subsequent riots in Durban in 1929. Helen Bradford plugged a glaring lacuna in her illuminating article which showed that women were at the helm of the struggle against the Durban system.⁴⁵ Her main concern was to bring to the fore the hitherto subsumed role of women in the 1929 riots in Natal. They were fighting against two oppressive systems, namely the tendency of patriarchal society to subordinate them to second class status, and the racist oppressive state that instituted the discriminatory policies against them. For example, the 1908 Act made the drinking of beer in the municipal beerhalls a privilege entirely exclusive to men, and also made it illegal to brew beer in their homes for commercial purposes. This robbed women of their sole lucrative source of income as their potential male customers gravitated to the

42. Report of the Native Affairs Commission, 1941. Also, la Hausse, 'Alcohol, Ematsheni and Popular Struggles', 15.

43. la Hausse, 'Alcohol, the Ematsheni and Popular Struggles', 15

44. H.F. Wolcott, The African Beer Gardens of Bulawayo, (New Jersey, 1974); E. Colson and T. Scudder, For Prayer and Profit: The Ritual, Economic and Social Importance of Beer in Gwembe District, Zambia 1950-1982, (California, 1988), 55.

45. H. Bradford, '"We are now the men": Women's Beer Protests in the Natal Countryside, 1929, in B. Bozzoli (ed.), Class, Community and Conflict, (Johannesburg, 1987).

municipal "drinking cage".⁴⁶ Bradford transmitted "history" into "herstory", thus ascribing a significant role to women which, previously, had been ignored by radical feminists.⁴⁷

Although riots against the beerhall system were a frequent occurrence in South Africa's rural and urban centres, they were not the only manifestation of African discontent. The riots of the 1920s were not merely against municipal beer-halls. There were no beerhalls in Bloemfontein. But there was an equally bloody riot in April 1925 staged by women against the series of political raids and arrests for domestic beer as Baruch Hirson has graphically shown.⁴⁸ The women of Langa were not an exception to this kind of resistance.

The total prohibition of domestic beer-brewing and the permit system were ineffective in checking an illicit liquor traffic which was a product of economic pressures. As a result, the Native Laws Amendment Act No. 46 of 1937 reversed this policy and provided for the operation of three methods of manufacture and sale of traditional beer viz:

1. Municipal monopoly - this system, if adopted, would automatically exclude both the following methods;
2. The Licensed African Brewer - under this system, one or more African brewers could be allowed to operate under licenses issued by the local authority or regulations made by the responsible Minister;

46. Africans regarded the beerhall as being synonymous with a cage in which they would not drink freely as they would do at their homes because of the watchful eye of the beerhall policeman and the restrictive times during which it would be open - hence the term "drinking cage".

47. Bradford, "We are the men", 316-317. Bradford made the point that radical feminists promote a 'tendency in patriarchal society for "her story" to be transcribed into "history"', by which she meant that the role of women in history is almost always made to be overshadowed by that of men.

48. B. Hirson, 'The Bloemfontein Riots, 1925: A Study in Community Culture and Class Consciousness', Collected Seminar Papers, Vol. 13, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1984.

3. Domestic Brewing and Possession of traditional beer.⁴⁹

The effect of this Act was tremendous as local authorities in the main cities of the Union implemented it forthwith. From January 1950⁵⁰ when the Act became officially operative, ten local authorities in the Transvaal and one in the Cape Province implemented the first system. These numbers subsequently increased to seven in the Cape, fifteen in Natal, eighteen in the Transvaal and six in the Orange Free State.⁵¹ The Cape Town Council was not to be outdone in the race to establish beerhalls, but, although it had the will to do so, it lacked the requisite power because of the concerted opposition to municipal trading by a wide spectrum of the Cape Town community.

Following visits to urban centres with beerhall establishments in the Union and Zimbabwe, Colonel W.H. Quirk, Chairman of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee of the City Council, and Mr. S.A. Rogers, the Assistant Superintendent of Langa Location, recommended that the Municipality assume the exclusive right to manufacture, sell and supply beer within the urban area of the City of Cape Town.⁵² The merits of a beerhall, from their point of view, were three-fold: firstly, it would cater for the requirements of the bachelor population of Langa who 'have no legal method of obtaining their customary beverage except through friends or relatives living in the Married Quarters'.⁵³ Secondly, it would reduce the consumption of liquor and thirdly, it would torpedo the illicit liquor traffic.

The sub-committee believed that domestic brewing was so profitable that men from the Transkei sent for their wives and started breweries. There were also, allegedly, instances of "loose" men and women who claimed married quarters in Langa on the grounds that they were married according to African custom, proliferating the

49. The Native Laws Amendment Act No. 46 of 1937.

50. Report of the Native Affairs Commission, 1941.

51. Report of the Native Affairs Commission 1941.

52. MA, BC579 B.25 Report of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee, May 1938.

53. *ibid.* See also CA, 3/Ct 1/4/10/1/1/12 Reference by Council 10 March 1947.

breweries.⁵⁴ The third justification for the municipal monopoly was that it would bring an end to the, again allegedly, "disgustingly filthy conditions" under which the beer was often brewed - a specious concern about the health of the bachelors, whose overcrowded conditions were ignored.

The financial position of the Council may perhaps throw some light on the local authority's real motives. The Native Revenue Account suffered from a perennial annual deficit almost every year from 1927. For the years 1937, 1938 and 1939 they were £6,041; £7,031 and £9,624 respectively. For a local authority which did not want to burden the white taxpayer by subsidising the Native Revenue Account, which was supposed to be self-balancing, these amounts were quite large. Moreover, the base for the Native Revenue Account was very limited. Funds from the Langa residents came from fines, pass and contract registration fees and rents.⁵⁵ Given the historically erratic payment of rents, the deficit continually increased. As most of the Langa residents were migrant labourers and received very low wages, and there was no large scale business sector in the township, there was no reliable tax base.⁵⁶ If the policy of African self-reproduction was to work, Africans had to fund their own administration out of beer consumption profits.

Developments in other urban centres show beyond reasonable doubt that the Cape Town's proposal was economically motivated. Two examples demonstrate this. Since the beginning of 1938, the Johannesburg Municipality had made handsome financial returns from its beerhall centres. In 1938, the profit was £7,092; in 1939, £32,768 and in 1940, it spiralled to £63,752.⁵⁷ The profits for Durban were £38,775 in 1940. For the Cape Town Municipality to say that the financial aspect was purely fortuitous⁵⁸ in its desire to establish a beerhall, was to hide behind a transparent veil.

54.MA, BC579 B.25.9.

55.W. Scharf, 'The impact of liquor on the Working Class', 49.

56.Scharf, 'The impact of liquor', 49.

57.Race Relations News, vol. 3, No. 8.

58.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/4/12 Report of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee, July 1939.

It is partly this exploitative profit-raising aspect of the Council's proposal which was objectionable in Langa. In June 1938 the Council's offices were inundated with protests from individuals, church, civic and political organisations. The African traders viewed the competition of municipal enterprise with intense dislike. A municipal monopoly was also to the detriment of the consumer. The Bantu Commercial Union, an organisation of African traders, as well as the Langa Vigilance Committee argued that the brewing was better done by private enterprise.⁵⁹ The municipal scheme would throw the majority of African traders out of business as most of their trade was made of items required in the manufacture of beer.⁶⁰ Moreover, it was not in accord with the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 which provided for the restricted promotion of African business or trading.⁶¹

Municipal intentions were made abundantly clear by the deliberations at a conference of municipalities on 28 and 29 September 1938 to discuss the provisions of the Native Laws Amendment Act of 1937. The system of licensing African brewers was rejected as undesirable.⁶² Essentially the Councils wanted to limit African economic competition and control the traders tightly. The municipalities pointed out that it was not necessary at all to 'concentrate so lucrative a business in the hands of one native, however high his repute might be'⁶³ (my emphasis). The implication of their rationalisations were indicative of the extent to which the municipalities viewed the African as a "temporary sojourner" in the city who should never join the ranks of big businesses.⁶⁴

59.CA, 3/Ct 1/4/6/6/4/1/2 Statement of views of the Bantu Commercial Union June 1938.

60.Report of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee July 1939.

61.Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923.

62.CA 2/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/1, Memorandum to Town Clerk on Conference of Municipalities, 22-29 Sept. 1938.

63.CA 2/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/1, Memo to Town Clerk

64.CA 3/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/2.

The beerhall proposal was also disturbing to the Christian fraternity. The Methodist Church of South Africa, Women's Auxilliary, the Western Association of Congregational Churches and the Western District Congregational Women's Association of South Africa all protested at the detrimental effects of a municipal beerhall on the welfare of the Langa residents. They vehemently argued that the municipal beerhall militated against the spiritual, social and moral upliftment of the Africans at Langa.⁶⁵

The Christian churches considered it ungodly to sell beer on Sunday under the proposed system. They contended that it was biblically unethical and blasphemous to do so. They feared that if beer was sold on Sundays, very few people would attend church services.⁶⁶ The churches called for the diversion of funds earmarked for the beerhall scheme to the provision of educational facilities which were badly needed in Langa, given that municipal participation in the provision of education in Langa was virtually nil.⁶⁷ There were no proper classrooms and church vestries had to be used.

The Langa residents also resented the European "overstaffing" and the monopoly of jobs in the Langa Administrative Offices, whilst blacks were relegated to menial ones.⁶⁸ They regarded this to be an 'unfair and unreasonable practice of grabbing the African people's rights'. In 1938, they were witnessing yet another attempt by the Council to create employment opportunities for Europeans in the form of a beerhall. The Langa residents complained through the Cape Peninsula Joint Council of Europeans and Africans that: 'The reason for the ever mounting "bureaucratic incubus" appears, in large measure, to be the creation of more and more posts for European administrators'.⁶⁹

65.CA, 3CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/2.

66.*ibid.*

67.M. Wilson and A. Mafeje, Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township, (Cape Town 1963), 103.

68.3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, Native Affairs Committee Ordinary Minute 1947.

69.MA, BC579 B25.64 Memorandum on Beer Supply at Langa March 1947. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/4/1/2 The Cape Peninsula Church Council - memo to the Town Clerk, 18 July 1938.

The beerhall proposal also threatened to regiment the Langa residents' social, traditional and cultural practices.⁷⁰ Beer-drinking was part of an indigenous system of hospitality which meant that one consumed one's beer with one's friends and relations and important social and political issues would be discussed.⁷¹ Some of these customs were still being observed in Langa although there is a strong possibility that they were changing in form under the influences of urbanisation. The beerhall system threatened to alter this much prized custom of limited social consumption. The conservative traditionalists argued that the white conception of the "public house" was completely alien to them.⁷² The beerhall system was akin to "drinking in a cage",⁷³ where all and sundry would congregate, making it difficult for them to drink only with their chosen friends and guests.

Traditional norms dictated that only senior men and their immediate juniors, who were established heads of households, could drink beer. It was taboo for boys, let alone girls, even as teenagers or in their early twenties.⁷⁴ Although this was changing, parents and elders in Langa could still exert their control over the young people. But with the coming of the beerhall the older generations feared that the lever of control would slip out of their hands:

The younger boys, who would not be allowed to partake in home drinking by reason of their age, acquire the habit of drinking in the open public bars. No one is responsible for another and each one drinks his fill in a rowdy atmosphere. Under such conditions the social custom of drinking together is degraded into drunkenness resulting in violence and crime.⁷⁵

Langa elders also lamented the fact that juvenile delinquency would increase. Home-brewing was an institution whose decorum checked drunkenness and rowdiness, particularly among the young generation.⁷⁶ They were vindicated in this belief as the

70.MA, BC579 B25.64.

71.MA, BC579 B25.11.

72.*ibid.*

73.MA, BC579 B25.9.

74.The South African Outlook, Vol. 71, Nov. 1941, 219.

75.MA, BC579 B25.24.

76.*ibid.*

levels of drunkenness, gauged by the number of convictions, was quite low according to the the Office of the District Commandant of the Police, compared with that of Bellville and Cape Town.⁷⁷ Prosecutions for traditional beer offences were, in fact, much lower than those for the possession of hard liquor.⁷⁸ This record, according to the Langa Advisory Board and Vigilance Committee, was one that a township of 4 000 inhabitants need not be ashamed of.⁷⁹

There was support for this view that home-brewing was socially useful from the Native Economic Commission of 1932, set up to enquire into beer brewing. It recommended that home-brewing and other institutions and customs of the Africans should not be broken down. The Commissioners stated that: 'this can only be granted if a case is made out for it, but that it should only be refused if a strong enough case can be made against it.'⁸⁰ Invoking this recommendation, the Advisory Board and Vigilance Committee challenged the municipality to allow home-brewing to continue undisturbed.

The strength of the collective arguments persuaded the City Council to shelve its proposal in 1940 ⁸¹ and later it postponed consideration of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee report on 28 July 1938 and only revived the matter twelve months later.⁸² But in spite of the stinging criticism it had received, the Council decided to put the proposal to a second test. Again, it met with resistance.

The suspension of the beerhall proposal in 1939 was by no means the end of opposition to the system. The Native Affairs Commission of 1941 presented a much wider

77.33, 27 and 22 convictions for 1938, 1939 and 1940, compared with 3501, 3577 and 3711 in Cape Town. MA, BC579 B25.32 Figures from the Office of the District Commandant Aug. 1941. Report of the Cape Coloured Liquor Commission of Inquiry 1945, p.23.

78.CA, 3/CT/1/4/6/6/4/1/2. Superintendent's Report, 9 June 1939.

79.Report of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee, July 1939.

80.Report of the Native Economic Commission 1932 para. 762.

81.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/6/1/2.

82.ibid. Report of the Native Affairs Sub-Committee July 1939.

platform for the articulation of protest. The evidence given to the Commission by the All African Convention Committee (Western Province), the South African Communist Party (S.A.C.P.) and the African National Congress (A.N.C.) was significant for its radical departure from the mundane issues that had previously been highlighted. Their contributions were based on an in-depth analysis of the economic conditions which obtained in the Langa township.

The approach of these organisations, particularly the S.A.C.P. and the A.N.C., can only be understood within the context of the political developments of the 1940s. Unlike the decade prior to 1940, during which political activity was dormant, the 1940s were quite fervent politically. It was an era in which political movements started coming to grips with the new challenges and opportunities wrought by the wartime industrial expansion which in turn produced an increase in numbers of the African proletariat.⁸³

At the outbreak of the Second World War there rose a sharp demand for labour and Africans moved to the major cities and towns from the countryside. Movement was encouraged by the relaxation of influx and labour controls by the State up until 1948. This, in no way, symbolised a fundamental change of heart on the part of the State, but was a strategy of appeasing the Africans so as to avoid political confrontation at a time when its efforts were directed towards the war and also when black labour was badly needed. Wages, too, were relatively higher than before the war. However, because of widespread poverty, both in cities and the countryside, and shortage of labour in the post-war period, the wages were undermined tremendously. At the same time there was a sharp rise in commodity prices of staple food and fuel, not to mention shelter and clothing.⁸⁴ This bleak situation saw an increase in the adoption of survival strategies that the urban cities could offer to the unemployed, such as hawking, beer-brewing and prostitution. To the working class there were so many grievances to be addressed that,

83. T. Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa since 1945, (Johannesburg, 1990), 11.

84. ibid., p.12.

with the non-recognition of African trade unions by the State, strikes ensued. It is against this background that the S.A.C.P. and the A.N.C. began to champion the cause of the African urban proletariat.

One of the many issues that political organisations tried to address was domestic brewing. The All African Convention (A.A.C.) Committee (Western Cape) took issue with the "undue prominence" that the City Council of Cape Town gave to the plight of the more than 3500 bachelors who were not provided with their own beer. Giving evidence to the Native Affairs Commission, the A.A.C. attacked the paternalistic attitude of the Council.⁸⁵ Most of the bachelors were migrant labourers whose object was to earn and save money to support their families in the rural areas. The beerhall system, unlike domestic beer drinking, encouraged wasteful expenditure which was undesirable socially and economically.⁸⁶ The Cape District Committee of the South African Communist Party and the President-General of the A.N.C., Dr A.B. Xuma urged that what needed to be radically addressed was the economic position of the Africans in Langa and elsewhere.⁸⁷ The root cause of the commercialisation of domestic brewing was the low economic status of the Africans which no magic wand or a beerhall could exorcise.

The S.A.C.P. and the A.N.C. argued that it was not enough just to improve wages to salvage the people from their economic plight. The solution lay much deeper. They attributed the African's miserable economic position to the denial of basic human rights and personal liberties. The freedom of the African had to be restored first by the total removal of the Pass Laws, Native Service Contract, Masters and Servants Act and the Native Laws Amendments.⁸⁸ This discriminatory legislation placed severe restrictions

85. MA, BC 579 B25.24 A.A.C. evidence to the Native Affairs Commission on the Beer Question, 1941.

86. M. Wilson and A. Mafeje, *Langa*, p.147.

87. Inkokeli ya Bantu October 1941 (no specific date) Dr A.B. Xuma's Evidence given before the Native Affairs commission. (1941). See also: MA, BC 579 B25.41 Cape District Commission of the S.A.C.P. Evidence given before the Commission, Oct. 1941.

88. *ibid.*

on the free movement of the Africans as they could not sell their labour where they deemed fit. Their bargaining power was limited or stripped altogether. Thus they became potential victims of any unscrupulous employer. The City Council's proposal to municipalise beer brewing tended to create an erroneous impression that African rights in urban areas were dependent on their right to brew and sell beer and not on their political freedom, economic prosperity and social advancement. With the churches, the two organisations proposed that instead of spending money on a beerhall, more schools and playgrounds should be built.⁸⁹

Lobbying against the Council's proposal by church, civic, commercial and political organisations and above all the Langa residents demonstrated the effectiveness of passive resistance. There was nothing really revolutionary about it. Although the solutions proposed by the S.A.C.P. and A.N.C. were radical, they were not calling for revolutionary overthrow of the state but for reforms. Understandably, the political organisations' approach was also a way of seeking a political base in the cities by addressing the African urban dwellers' problems at a time when there were few effective means of articulating grievances.

The tradition of resistance explains why the municipality failed to establish a beerhall on three occasions before 1948. Even though the Council succeeded in opening a beerhall in Langa sometime between late 1965 and early 1966, this was a transient victory.⁹⁰ The Student Uprisings of 1976 saw the destruction of 250 bottle stores and beerhalls across the country including the Langa Beerhall.⁹¹ This was a veritable manifestation of the extent to which the beerhall had become not only a political target but also a symbol of exploitation and oppression.

89. *ibid.*

90. *Cape Times* 23 Nov. 1965.

91. W. Schärf, "Liquor, the State and Urban blacks" in D. Davis and M. Slabbert (eds), *Crime and Power in South Africa : Studies in Criminology*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1985, p.56.

PART THREE:

MUNICIPAL TRADING IN LANGA

If the municipality of Cape Town failed to establish a beerhall as part of a new system of controlling trade and business on the Durban model, it did succeed in eliminating private African enterprise. In achieving this, the time-honoured pretext of improving the health conditions of the Africans in Langa was invoked by the Council.⁹² In 1938 it was the condemnation of the "disgusting filthy conditions", under which domestic beer-brewing was practised in Langa that led to the Council proposal for the beerhall system.⁹³ In 1943, it was ostensibly the malnutrition of the bachelor class and the unhygienic conditions of the eating houses at the Main Barracks operated by African traders, which caused the municipality to take over the business. In the same year, the Council resorted to health regulations to terminate the trading activities of the women in Langa when, in reality, it wanted to do away with the threat they posed to the eating house business.

Ironically, when taking over the eating house from the four African traders on 1 June 1943, the municipality described its monopoly scheme as a measure against the 'prevalence and pernicious advance of malnutrition amongst Natives, particularly those residing under bachelor conditions';⁹⁴ conditions for which they themselves were responsible. Their actions occurred against the background of an inquiry by the Union Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic conditions of Urban Natives (1941-2) which found an appalling amount of malnutrition amongst urban Africans.⁹⁵ The Committee recommended municipal distribution of protective food-

92. For details see M.W. Swanson, 'The Sanitation Syndrome: Bubonic Plague and Urban Native Policy in the Cape Colony 1900-1909', *Journal of African History*, XVIII, 1977.

93. MA, BC 579 B25.24.

94. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10, History of Main Barracks Eating House, Langa Township, June 1943.

95. Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, health, and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives (1941-2) (Chairman Mr D.L. Smit), 5.

stuffs. The nature of this involvement was left to the discretion of the municipalities and the Cape Town Council decided to administer a dining hall that would provide: 'good, wholesome meals, giving a properly balanced diet, at cheap rates in the interests of the health and well-being of Natives in the Barracks and quarters at Langa'.⁹⁶

But malnutrition was not the only problem affecting the bachelors in Langa. The same Committee also noted the inadequacy of general health care.⁹⁷ Residential conditions in the locations were appalling, contributing to chronic disease. Instead of attacking these problems the City Council chose to concentrate on a cost-effective project- the eating house.

The municipal trading scheme gave rise to considerable opposition from vested African interests. They perceived it as an incursion into their natural domain:

If White and Black are divided into separate camps, it is manifestly fair and in accordance with the basic conception of segregation that the black man should be permitted to serve his own people in his own camp.⁹⁸

What also exasperated them was the Council's back-tracking from a principle it had "wholly" committed itself to, namely that only Africans would carry on the trade in Langa location.⁹⁹ It was this betrayal that was disturbing to the traders, particularly those directly affected by the take-over of the eating house.

Since 1927, municipal policy had been a "progressive" one. It had hired out the eating house premises at the Main Barracks, which was comprised of four sections, to four African tenants, to sell food to the bachelors. The policy worked quite well as the bachelors were not allowed to cook their own food in the barracks.¹⁰⁰ However, the premises suffered from lack of maintenance. When the Committee visited the eating

96.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10, History of Main Barracks.

97.Smit Report (1941-2).

98.MA, BC 579 B11.40 African Traders' memo to the Mayor, 30 Oct. 1941.

99.*ibid.*

100.CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10.

house in Langa in November 1941, they described the condition as a nightmare.¹⁰¹ This became the excuse for removing the four lessees as the Council blamed the bad conditions on 'the incompetence and indifference of the lessees who, lacking energy and enterprise, rested on their somewhat monopolistic position to maintain their livelihood.'¹⁰²

But the up-keep of the premises was the responsibility of the local authority. In protest to the eviction orders the four tenants, Messrs Plaatje Petu, Henry Cuba, Julius Malangabi and Harry Siyaya, put it to the Mayor that for a number of years they had operated their businesses under practically impossible conditions because of the Council's total neglect in repairing the premises. Almost every year the Council had been reminded about the near derelict conditions.¹⁰³ Each section of the eating house consisted of one bare room in which both cooking and serving were done. Now the wooden window frames had rotted and the window panes had fallen out. The tenants had to cover these apertures with sacks. The worn out stoves installed by the Council were broken, so that the smoke, instead of escaping through the chimney, passed into the eating house, depositing soot and grime everywhere.¹⁰⁴

Repeated complaints were also made by the customers through the Langa Advisory Board. The Board wrote to the Council in 1940:

The Eating Houses from which the men obtain their food are in a very bad condition, through no fault of the Proprietors. The Ovens smoke, there is not adequate room for storing flour and meat and everything gets covered in soot and dirt. The Eating Houses should be reconstructed.¹⁰⁵

The limited variety of foodstuffs provided, along with bread and "vetkoekies", did not justify the Council's take over of the eating house. The Council restricted the tenants to cooking certain foods and to supplying specific commodities only. In spite of the fact that the lessees paid the same licence fees they were not allowed to trade in an

101. The South African Outlook, Dec. 1941.

102. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10.

103. MA, BC 579 B11.40.

104. ibid.

105. MA, BC 579 B11.40.

assortment of goods like other General Dealers in the city.¹⁰⁶ These restrictive conditions militated against the growth of a strong African business class in Langa. Thus Council policy can be described as one of ensuring the submergence and not emergence of an entrepreneurial African class.

The municipalisation of the eating house shook the pillar of the African tenants' survival. It generated a feeling of disgust against the Council which was determined to 'rob us of our means of livelihood built up after years of effort, without even consulting us first and giving us an opportunity of discussing the matter with the Native Affairs Committee and making representations. We feel this is harsh and unjust.'¹⁰⁷ The trauma suffered by these men is evident as the three of them, Petu, Cuba and Malangabi wondered how they would fend for their families of eight, three and four children respectively, some of whom were at Colleges and required school fees.¹⁰⁸

As an alternative the Council offered to erect two bakeries at the Main Barracks and two at the North Barracks. If the tenants objected to the offer, and it was obvious that they would, bread would have to be bought outside the location. The rent for the bakeries was prohibitive. Firstly, the tenants faced an increase of rent from £2.10s to £10 a month. Secondly, they would find it impossible to subsist out of these bakeries, as they were restricted to selling bread and "roosterkoek" only, unlike the bakeries in town which made most of their profits out of the sale of cakes.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the eating house business, they stood to lose the profitable trade in boiled meat, beans, mealies, "vetkoek", amarewu and amasi.¹¹⁰

These restrictions were further compounded by yet another set of regulations for the bakeries. As licensed bakers they had to operate under the general regulations that fixed

106.MA, BC 579 B11.40.

107.ibid.

108.ibid.

109.CA, 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/9 Minutes of the Langa Advisory Board, 10 Sept. 1940.

110.ibid.

bread prices and wages at certain standards which they could not afford, given the nature of their market. For example, they used to sell bread in the eating house at 2¼d. per lb. loaf, compared with the 3d. charged outside the location.¹¹¹ While pretending to be considerate, the municipality made the offer and set regulations in the full knowledge that the tenants would find it difficult to comply with them. As the municipality expected, the four tenants could not accept the bakery business. The Council put itself effectively in control of the business without competition.

The municipality demonstrated its creeping monopolistic tendencies by arbitrarily terminating the licences of the tenants. At two meetings, held on 24 October and 2 November 1941, resolutions were passed, largely by the bachelors, rejecting the municipal scheme.¹¹² This was symptomatic of the strong communal spirit among the residents of the barracks and the tenants, as well as women traders, as will be seen later. The eating house was important to the bachelors in that they could get food on credit, and could get loans and aid when they were not working.¹¹³ They could not, therefore, support the take-over by Council of their reliable form of "social security".

The Langa Advisory Board and the Vigilance Committee urged the Council, instead of establishing a municipal eating-house in the location, to emulate what had been done in other cities. For example, in Durban, the municipality opened eating cafes near places of work in the town itself. Such a cafe was desperately needed in Cape Town as well as in the Docks area, where most workers bought from Greek shops at exorbitant prices.¹¹⁴ They argued that in Langa the eating house should be renovated and the tenants supported.¹¹⁵

111. ibid.

112. MA, BC 579 B11.45 Statement by the Cape Peninsula Joint Council of European and Africans, 7 Nov. 1941.

113. CA, 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/9, Minutes of the Langa Advisory Board, 10 Sept. 1940.

114. ibid.

115. ibid.

Without giving the Langa residents and other organisations a platform to state their case as they had done before, the Council unilaterally decided to take over the eating house. Its disregard of the voice of the official African body - the Advisory Board - suggests that both the Council and the residents viewed it as a "sham democracy".

Contrary to its pronouncements that it was not interested in profiteering, the Council recorded some handsome financial returns on the eating house. Takings at the kitchen rose from £397 in June 1943 to an average of approximately £1,200 per month, with the revenue fluctuating broadly between £1,100 and £1,400.¹¹⁶ It suggests that, by eliminating competition, the people had no alternative but to buy at the municipal eating house.

The proceeds earned from the eating house made the Council more ambitious as it set about introducing new profit-generating projects in Langa. The Council also approved the municipal distribution, at cost, of milk, vegetables, fruit and fuel.¹¹⁷ Further to this, the City Council took over the selling of these items in April 1944 "for the benefits of the residents of the Location".¹¹⁸ In order for the fruit, vegetable and coal depot to be self-supporting, the Manager of Native Administration, Mr S.A. Rogers, developed a garden next to the Main Barracks. He did so, although no land had been made available to the residents for such a purpose, despite the 1942 Union Inter-Departmental Committee's recommendation that:

The production of vegetables and fruit in the locations themselves by the private efforts of their occupants (my emphasis) is potentially a very useful method of supplementing dietaries otherwise deficient in these protective food-stuffs.¹¹⁹

The Committee went on to suggest that the inhabitants be offered free seeds or seedlings (from a municipal nursery) and prizes for well-kept domestic vegetable gardens. The Johannesburg Municipality tried the scheme and it proved a success,¹²⁰

116. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10.

117. The Smit Report (1941-2).

118. CA, 3/CT 1/4/6/1/1/10.

119. The Smit Report (1942) para. 71.

120. ibid.

but the Cape Town Council chose instead to own and monopolise the vegetable gardens. By July 1945, Mr Rogers was able to report that he had made a profit of £18 on the fruit, vegetable and coal depot and a profit of £256.6s on the vegetable garden for the five months ending 31 May 1945.¹²¹

What was perhaps resented most about the Council's unpopular trading practices was the way in which they nibbled at the means of survival of the women of Langa. It has been pointed out elsewhere in this chapter that the 1940s was generally a politically turbulent decade. Poverty, the rising cost of living and food shortages became the order of the day in the Union. Prices of staple foods rose sharply by 91% between 1939 and 1944 with the result that both the cost of living allowances and wages were far outstripped.¹²² This had been further compounded by dislocations in the supply system during the Second World War, which led to a shortage of basic food-stuffs in shops.¹²³ This scenario had a direct impact on African mothers in that:

Price rises and food shortages directly threatened the health and stability of their families and infringed on their daily lives in such a way as to force them to look outside the home to the wider political and economic context in which they were located.¹²⁴

It is precisely within this context that women in Langa reacted with bitterness to the Council's interference with their mainstay.

For the women of Langa, petty trading was nothing new. In Ndabeni they had successfully supplied foodstuffs such as cakes, bread, fruit, vegetables, ginger and hop beer to the bachelors. Before 1943, they used to operate "freely" despite the existence of the Health Regulations. But the women's small-scale trade was a direct challenge to the municipal eating house business and the Council was determined to see it eliminated because it was '... losing hundreds of pounds as food at the Eating House was left

121.CA, 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/10 Manager of Native Administrator's Report, 10 July 1945.

122.P. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism: the African National Congress, 1912-1952, (London, 1970), 302.

123.C. Walker, '"We fight for food": Women and the "Food Crisis" of the 1940s', Work in Progress, No. 3, 1978, p.18.

124.ibid., p. 20.

over.'¹²⁵ It was in this situation that the Council invoked sanitary considerations. Dr T.S. Higgins, the Medical Officer of Health reported:

When the central eating-house in the township was taken over by the municipality the practice [of selling cakes and bread] grew considerably and children and others are seen hawking the cakes in the bachelor's quarters under undesirable conditions and also selling ginger beer and hop beer..¹²⁶

The Council's crackdown policies against the women becomes clear when it is observed that this type of trade had been going on for years and no action had been taken against them before. Not surprisingly the women questioned the Council's sincerity in enforcing the Health Regulations. They protested:

Dr. Shaddick Higgins condemned the Barracks at Langa only a couple of years ago and yet these are still not improved, in fact they are worse. Further, when the eating houses were run by private African individuals the Council neither cleaned nor renovated them - the condition of these deteriorated and became unsafe for HEALTH.¹²⁷

What is striking about the women is their perception of their petty trade as a survival strategy and not a hobby. The selling of refreshments, home-made cakes, minerals, sheep heads and sheep "feet" and other foods showed the resourcefulness and innovativeness of the hard-working and economically active women who could not penetrate regular wage employment. For those doing "piece-jobs",¹²⁸ petty trading was a way of supplementing their meagre incomes or their husband's. Their husbands received low wages ranging from £5 to £10 per month. But it was not every husband in Langa who worked and it was also not every woman who had a husband to fend for the family - some were widows.¹²⁹ It was such a background that forced the women to devise strategies of surviving. Accordingly, the Women's Council Section of the

125.MA, BC 579 A24.403, Statement on the Case of African Women's Protest.

126.MA, BC 579 A24.438, Medical Officer of Health Report on Making and Sale of foodstuffs by housewives at Langa Location.

127.MA, BC 579 A24.403.

128."Piece jobs" are different types of jobs a person can do in a week or more to supplement his/her little income.

129.MA, BC 579 A24.403.

Western Province Joint Vigilance Association (W.P.J.V.A.) entitled its statement of protest to the Mayor in 1943, "NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION."¹³⁰ Theirs was not a business of such gigantic dimensions as to warrant any trading licences, or one that could subvert the Council's monopolies. It was:

a sort of reciprocal supplementing of earning power; an agreement is made whereby a house-wife agrees to help a certain number of friends with these commodities that appeal to them. The friends, in turn agree to repay the housewife, in cash, for her humane services.¹³¹

The women felt that their system was one that was not only geared towards the generation of profit but was also characterised by magnanimity - it was a kind of social service based on mutuality, as payment was made by friendly agreement on the convenience of the "debtors".¹³² They unreservedly condemned Council actions:

We are totally against any form of trading at Langa by the Municipality. Africans are not allowed to trade anywhere else except in the locations, so therefore, instead of taking away this only right of ours, we feel that the Council should rather extend suitable facilities for our trading eg. building premises and letting these to Africans..¹³³

It is no wonder that the African women of Langa joined the Women's Food Committee, an organisation that was formed in response to the unbearable pressures brought to bear upon them by the rising costs and uncertain supplies of food. The so-called "food crisis" forced the Government to bow to pressures from the Food Committee to ensure a systematic rationing of basic foodstuffs. In response the Government introduced mobile food vans. The vans sold groceries that were scarce in townships and suburbs at regular prices. It was out of the queues of women that formed to wait for the vans that the Women's Food Committees grew.¹³⁴ It was to become the recruiting ground of both the ANC, the Communist Party and the NLL in Cape Town.¹³⁵

130. *ibid.*

131. *ibid.*

132. *ibid.*

133. *ibid.*

134. C. Walker, "We fight for food", 19.

135. Walker, "We fight for food", 19

What emerges from the discussion is the centrality of the economic conditions among Africans to struggle, not only to keep the municipal monopoly system at bay, but also to survive. The success of this enterprise could only be realised if the social, political and economic conditions of the people were radically improved. Municipal beerhalls serve as part of a whole range of recreation and entertainment provisions where people could go freely to steam off the mind after a hard day's work. Its success depended on competition, as this ensured maximum efficiency and provision of the best quality of goods. None of these indispensable ingredients existed in the Cape Town municipal proposals for a beerhall and therefore it could not appeal to would-be patrons.

Denied the right, Africans could not utilise their business acumen to improve their status. The problem of malnutrition was one that could not be solved at branch level by the establishment of an eating house. The root of malnutrition was the ridiculously low purchasing power of the urban Africans. Malnutrition could only be overcome by a general rise in wage levels, and a non-paternalistic effort by both Government and local authorities to promote the socio-economic community projects that raised people's living standards. This could be realised by the extension of legislation, such as that which operated for the benefit of European women and children, like the Children's Act, to include all the races, particularly Africans. This could only materialise in circumstances in which Africans were not denied their political rights.

The municipalisation of trading activities in Langa and the Council's attempts at social control, form a distinct area of urban conflict. Not only do they strike at the centre of African urban existence but they also lay bare the contradiction between official versus popular perceptions about life in the city.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE QUEST FOR DIRECT MUNICIPAL REPRESENTATION IN CAPE TOWN: THE LANGA CASE, 1927 - 1948

"Certainly it would be difficult to name a city in any part of the world in which the governing class has either known or done what justice demanded for the poorer or more needy sections of the community, so long as those sections have had no effective say in the government of the city."

(J P R Maud, City Government, the Johannesburg Experiment (Oxford, 1938))

The quest for direct municipal representation is an aspect of the African urban experience that does not feature in great detail in the already documented urban history of Cape Town. Kinkead-Weekes's most recent article, 'Donald Molteno and the Politics of "Native Representation" in Cape Town, 1936-1948',¹ does not help in this respect. This is because it is primarily concerned with electioneering strategies employed by Molteno versus his opponents in the 1936 and 1942 House of Assembly elections. How and why Africans in Cape Town became involved in the campaign for or against Molteno as their parliamentary representative is unclear in his paper. What has, perhaps, made this aspect a "forgotten" one is the very nature of Cape liberalism which tended to cloud the localised African struggles from the eye of the observer. The celebrated Cape 'native' franchise as well as the municipal franchise - the hallmarks of the Cape liberal tradition are misleading in this regard.

The Cape Native Franchise was until 1936, a measure which allowed African males of 21 years and above, to vote with and for whites at Parliamentary and Cape Provincial elections. Further conditions were that they were supposed to be gainfully employed and had to be bona fide residents of the Cape Province. They also had to be owners of fixed property to the value of £75 or earnings of not less than £50 per year.² At local government level was the Municipal Franchise. In terms of Cape Ordinance 22 of 1925, the qualification for the exercise of the municipal franchise was

1 B Kinkead-Weekes, "Donald Molteno and the Politics of 'Native Representation' in Cape Town 1936-1948", South African Historical Journal, 25, (1991)

2 BC 579 B28.23

either ownership of property worth £100 or occupation of such property of £200 value regardless of race or colour.³

Whilst it is true that both franchises gave a semblance of direct representation to those Africans who qualified, it is also true that the qualifications for the Cape Native Franchise and the Municipal Franchise were prohibitive. Given the already prejudiced economic and social position of Africans in the Cape, just as elsewhere in the Republic of South Africa, where Africans were regarded as no more than "temporary sojourners" in the city, it was difficult for them to qualify for inclusion on the common voters' roll let alone for the Municipal Franchise. Because of the restrictive laws on and lack of house ownership, the majority of Africans residing specifically in Langa Township were naturally cut out of the municipal franchise. Although in 1946, the Cape Town City Council, in giving evidence to the Native Laws Enquiry reported that the occupants of 204 dwellings in Langa could qualify for enrolment as municipal voters,⁴ there is no evidence to suggest that their votes were canvassed for in practice.

THE ADVISORY BOARD SYSTEM: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

Although advisory committees had existed in Pretoria and other towns before, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923 formally provided for the setting up of Native Advisory Boards in every African residential area that was constituted as a location or village.⁵

The 1920 Transvaal Local Government Commission had recommended that a form of consultation between the Location Superintendent and the location residents

3 E Hellmann, Handbook on Race Relations in South Africa, (Cape Town 1949), 265

4 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/12 Native Laws Enquiry: Answers to Questionnaire 1946

5 L Reyburn, The Urban African in Local Government: A Study of the Advisory Board System and its Operation, A Fact Paper, South African Institute of Race Relations No. 9, 1960, 24

was necessary. Thus the formation of a body such as the advisory board would make it possible for the Superintendent to

keep in close touch with the Natives under his charge - their needs and aspirations - thus ensuring prudent administration and general contentment.⁶

The Urban Areas Act left the duties and functions of Location Advisory Boards open-ended and this probably explains why the system was often abused. Initially, there were only two issues on which the board had to be consulted by the local authority. In terms of Section 10 (2) of the Act, the local authority had to consult the advisory board before it passed or withdrew any regulation. According to Section 21(1) of the same Act, a municipality could not pass a resolution asking the Minister to give it the exclusive right to manufacture and sell "kaffir-beer" unless it had first referred the matter to the advisory board.⁷

However, the Native Laws Amendment Act No. 36 of 1944, widened the scope of the advisory board functions. Added to the initial two functions were that the board had to consider and report upon any regulations which the urban local authority proposed to make or adopt, any matter affecting the interests of Africans in urban areas and submit the report to the local authority or the Minister through the local authority as circumstances demanded, and any matter referred to it by the Minister or by the local authority. Over and above this, the board could take the initiative in recommending regulations.⁸

Before 1945, local authorities were not obliged to submit their estimates on the Native Revenue Account to the advisory boards for consideration. For example, a survey conducted by the South African Institute of Race Relations in 1939 revealed that out of the thirty municipalities investigated, only five submitted estimates to the advisory boards.⁹ But under Act 36 of 1944 (amended into Consolidation Act 25 of

6 ibid. 24

7 The Natives (Urban Areas) Act No. 21 of 1923

8 The Native Laws Amendment Act No. 36 of 1944

9 BC 579 B10.38

1945) local authorities were obliged to submit the estimates to the boards before their adoption.

These functions only served as broad guidelines for the framing of location regulations governing the constitution, and other matters, of advisory boards by respective local authorities. Put differently, it became incumbent upon the local authorities to decide and define the modalities of constituting an advisory board within the broad parameters set out by the 1923 Act and its subsequent amendments.

THE LANGA ADVISORY BOARD

The first Advisory Board in Langa Township was constituted against the backdrop of a long and protracted resistance by Africans to the forced removals from Ndabeni to Langa from 1927 to 1936.¹⁰ They were opposed, among other things, to the high rental charges as well as the transport costs they were supposed to pay upon moving to the new Langa Township. From the onset therefore, relations between the nascent urban African community at Langa and its landlord, the Cape Town City Council in the early years, can at best be described as antagonistic. This probably explains the apathy by the residents towards the Superintendent's attempts to constitute the first location advisory board in 1928.

Advisory Board Regulations applicable to Langa Township were promulgated in the Cape Provincial Gazette on Friday 13 January 1928.¹¹ The Langa Advisory Board, which was to be reconstituted annually, was to consist of six members elected by the registered occupiers of the Married Quarters, Special Quarters and the Main Barracks, and three members appointed by the Council according to Advisory Board Regulation 53.¹² The Superintendent of Langa was to be elected by the Council and serve as ex-

10 For a detailed treatment of the subject see C C Saunders, "From Ndabeni to Langa" Studies in the History of Cape Town Vol. 1, 1984

11 3/CT 4/1/5/1243

12 BC 579 B12.5.1

officio chairman of the Board¹³ - this, and the appointment of Council nominees, was to arouse considerable resentment among the residents. Of the six members that were to be elected, two were supposed to be registered occupiers of, and would represent, the Married Quarters, two were to be registered occupiers of the Special Quarters and two were to be registered occupiers of the Main Barracks.¹⁴ This system of representation was rather arbitrary. There was no attempt to make it proportional. For example, the Main Barracks housed about two-thirds of the single male population but it had just two representatives out of nine.¹⁵ They thus could not influence a decision of the Board on those issues in which the Barracks residents held views contrary to other sections of the location.

For the Cape Town City Council, the grievances of the Africans, and the heavy financial loss it was running into due to their reluctance to go to Langa, underlined the urgency of setting up an advisory board. Without an advisory board there was no representative or intermediary body that served as a point of contact between the Council and the residents. But it was the Council that badly required such a body. The Council had made attempts to make use of the Ndabeni Advisory Board to deal with the Langa problems, but Langa was not within its jurisdiction. So it was that the Superintendent, Mr G P Cook, held a meeting with the Langa residents in February 1928 to discuss the election of an advisory board. The residents plainly pointed out that they did not want to elect a board but rather preferred to have their complaints attended to through the Ndabeni Advisory Board.¹⁶ This seems to have been a very modest and subtle protest and it appears that the Langa residents knew consciously or unconsciously that the Ndabeni board did not have any legal powers to deal with matters arising from Langa. It is however not clear whether the Superintendent succeeded in having the board elected for the year 1928. What is clear, is the election

13 3/CT 4/1/5/1243

14 BC 579 B12.5.1

15 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/9

16 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/3

of an advisory board in February 1929. This had also been achieved with some relative difficulty.¹⁷

The apparent apathy that had been displayed by the Langa residents regarding advisory board elections was one that necessitated an enquiry by the City Council.¹⁸ What emerged from the enquiry was that the Advisory Board did not serve any useful purpose as it existed in name only. More serious than this was the Langa residents' objection to the provision that was contained in the Langa Advisory Board regulations for the appointment of the Superintendent of Langa as the Chairman of the Board.

While not calling for the total dissolution of the advisory board system, they put on record the opinion that the myriad grievances the residents had could best be addressed if the functions of the board could be strengthened.¹⁹ In this regard they suggested the appointment of a European Chairman who was 'entirely independent of and unconnected with the Council's administration, but one who knew and understood the native people'.²⁰ Although very little changed in future, the Langa people managed to extract their first concession from the City Council. It agreed to the proposal and immediately took steps to amend the regulations accordingly.²¹

The amended Advisory Board regulations for Langa were promulgated in the Provincial Gazette on 2 May 1930. The Council, however, much to the chagrin of the Africans, reserved the right to appoint the Chairman of the board who under whatever circumstances was supposed to be a European. The first incumbent for the post was a Mr Bennie, a former General Inspector of Native Education in the Cape Province, in 1930.²² This was, thus, a piecemeal reform which did not substantially change anything. To this end, Hellmann rightly concluded that:

17 *ibid.*
 18 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/4
 19 *ibid.*
 20 *ibid.*
 21 *ibid.*
 22 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/3

...these fundamentally procedural modifications do not touch upon the core of the problem, which is to devise a means of allocating definite functions to the boards and rescuing them from the slough of sheer futility in which they now founder.²³

There was nothing that could stop the Council from manipulating or influencing its appointees whenever it deemed it necessary.

The Langa residents were so sensitive to the idea of relying on the Council's communication channels that, with the many clashes they had with the municipality, they decided to set up a central fund to enlist the services of a legal adviser. As a result, a representative group of men from Langa approached an attorney, Mr F W Burton, in December 1930 and voiced their concern about the election of the advisory board that had been proposed. This time they had become a somewhat more radical in their demands. The representatives pointed out that the Langa residents were in a position to elect a board which consisted of six members and a Chairman, but that all should be nominated by the residents of Langa Township so that 'pure and unfettered consultation can take place between themselves and the Council.'²⁴

They also expressed their resentment of the presence of Council nominees upon the board. Referring to their experience with the Ndabeni Advisory Board, but without being specific, they stated that they viewed such nominees with great suspicion. They further contended that the regulations that imposed a European Chairman were ultra vires. In their representations to the attorney, they also dwelt on the point of semantics as they argued that the word "may" in the 1923 Natives (Urban Areas) Act gave room for the election of an African.²⁵ Although there can be no doubt that the authors of the 1923 Act were referring to the appointment of none other than a European incumbent

23 E Hellmann, Handbook on Race RElations, 267

24 3/CT 4/1/5/265 Memorandum from Town Clerk to the Secretary for Native Affairs, The Natives (Urban Areas) Act No.21 of 1923, stated that a European "may" be appointed as chairman of an advisory board. This, therefore, was construed by the Langa Board to mean that such an appointment was discretionary and could mean an African could also be appointed.

25 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/4

for the post, it is the use of such ambiguous terms as "may" which incensed the Langa people because they were not specific on what they were actually referring to. In his correspondence with the Native Affairs Committee, Mr Burton put it neatly to the former that:

In view of the fact that the Council have to consult a Native Advisory Board, the Natives cannot understand why such words should be construed that the Council has to consult itself (that is its own nominees on the Board). They desire that the Board shall represent native views pure and simple.²⁶

The Native Affairs Committee's response to these representations was curt and simple, 'the Advisory Board regulations do not permit the appointment of a Native Chairman'.²⁷ The refusal by the municipality to move even an inch towards rationalising its code of regulations in order to accommodate the residents' demands was in itself a recipe for future mutual mistrust and suspicion between the advisory boards and the Council on the one hand and the Langa community and the Council on the other. Worse still, it reflected adversely on the indifferent and paternalistic attitude of the City Council towards the grievances of the residents. But above all, it increased the lack of confidence, trust and hope in the Langa residents about the whole significance of the advisory board system.

The question of the Langa residents' dislike of the Council's nominees on the board was to feature extensively as from 1943. The case of Mr James Msutu, a Council appointee on the Advisory Board, illustrates the Langa residents' disapproval of the system. At a public meeting of Langa residents on 25 July 1943, Mr L Nonyaza, an Advisory Board member elected by the residents, heavily criticised the action of his colleague in submitting a motion in support of the Council's extension of trading activities in Langa. Nonyaza's brief speech was punctuated by shouts from the audience abusing Msutu for having proposed such a motion. When Msutu was summoned to explain why he had tabled a motion to that effect, there were even more threatening shouts: "Mbeta! Mbeta!" (Hit him! Hit him!).²⁸

26 ibid.

27 ibid.

28 CA AWC 3/75/44

The residents saw in Msutu a representative of the Council's exploitative interests in the location. The heckling and castigation of Msutu is also understandable in terms of the Langa traders' and hawkers' interests which were seriously undermined by the Council's trading schemes in the location.²⁹

A Cape Town City Councillor, Sam Kahn, reminded the Council that the three members of the Langa Board it had appointed were extremely alienated by the Langa residents. Their views and ideas were perceived as representing the official viewpoint of the municipality and hence their position on the board was regarded with suspicion.³⁰ To this end, the Langa Advisory Board on 11 June 1945 adopted a resolution calling upon the Council to clearly explain in full the aims and objectives of its nominees on the Langa Advisory Board. The response of the Native Affairs Committee to this request was rather ludicrous. As if to shift responsibility from itself, it replied that the board's request should be directed "not to the Council but to the nominees themselves", and went further to state that, 'The Council merely appointed three members of the Board in terms of Advisory Board Regulation No. 53. Such members did not in any way represent the Council or owe allegiance to it: they were perfectly free and independent members of the Board whose aims and objects were such as they themselves determined.'³¹

The Council's flagrant response speaks volumes about the manner in which it regarded the advisory board and its status. For the Council to pretend that its members on the Board had nothing to do with it was to fly in the face of evidence, the story of Msutu being a case in point. Moreover, the same Council prided itself on nominating the "most intelligent members on the Board".³² It can, in my opinion, only be surmised that the Council nominees served as the Council's spies during board

29 For details on municipal trading activities at Langa, see Chapter 3

30 CA AWC 3/75/44(?) (?)

31 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617

32 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/11

meetings, as well as in the everyday life of the location - detecting those issues that were seditious or constituted political action against the local authority and the State. Moreover, it is interesting to note the Council's preference for Ministers of Religion as nominees on the Langa Advisory Board. In the 1933 advisory board elections the Rev. J Mvambo of the Wesleyan Mission Church in Langa was nominated by the Council as its representative.³³ The Rev. C N Nontshinga-Citashe of the Ethiopian Church in Langa was nominated for the 1941 Board. It is highly probable that the Council was exploiting the social and religious status of these ministers to further its ends. Presumably, in times of crises they could be relied upon by the Council. As church leaders they could appeal for calm and understanding.

Leo Kuper has observed that generally, as far as Africans were concerned, participation in European governing bodies did not mean subordination as those positions equipped them with skills to organise the people.³⁴ For Africans participation did not necessarily imply subordination. Kuper argued that positions on the statutory bodies could be used as a basis for undermining the structure of domination. Such structures provided opportunities for organising the people and there were small advantages to be gained in the improvement of conditions.³⁵ This, coincidentally, is a fine hypothesis for what Shula Marks aptly called the "Ambiguities of Dependence" - a motif that runs through in this chapter. Explaining how colonial domination breeds this ambiguity, Marks said:

a concept of ambiguity is crucial to any understanding of domination, even while demanding obedience, and provoking resistance, domination operates not simply through coercion but also through concessions that themselves are shaped by the nature of resistance. These in turn become the basis of consent as well as of further struggle by the dominated.³⁶

33 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/9

34 L Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, Race, Class and Politics in South Africa, (Yale University Press) 1965, 328

35. Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, 328

36 S. Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence in South Africa: Nationalism and the State in Twentieth-Century Natal, (Johannesburg, 1986), 2.

Certainly some of the Council nominees were to serve in very important and powerful positions in the Langa Vigilance Committee - a civic organisation formed in Langa as an alternative, though unofficial organisation, to the Langa Advisory Board. For instance, the Rev. C N Nontshinga-Citashe was to serve as Chairman of the Vigilance Committee in 1944. His deputy was to be Mr H Gcilishe with whom he had, coincidentally, served on the Board as Council nominees in 1941. So too were Mr E Mlambo who became the Treasurer, Mr T Faku, the Interpreter, and Messrs G Nongauza, J Mafu and J Papu as committee members of the Vigilance Committee.³⁷ Therefore, while the Advisory Board system may have had numerous negative attributes, it served positively as a training field for the organised leadership that Langa could boast of as from the mid-1940s.

THE LANGA ADVISORY BOARD'S GRIEVANCES AND THE RESPONSE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

The Langa Advisory Board's significance and prestige were largely dependent upon two things. On the one hand, the Board depended on the degree and level of co-operation, mutual understanding and respect that could be created in the process of representations and references as well as consultations that took place between the board and the N.A.C. of the Council. On the other hand, it depended on its ability to win the confidence of the Langa residents. This it could only get by genuinely representing them and being able to extract tangible concessions from the Council. More than anything else, this could only be proved by a significant improvement in the people's mundane living conditions.

Because of the contradictory nature of the expectations of the City Council and the Langa community, the Langa Advisory Board almost always found itself in an intercalary position, a position that was described by M Wilson and A Mafeje as "one

linking opposing groups in an authoritarian system".³⁸ It was, indeed, an invidious position in which the Council expected the Board to keep it informed about developments in the location, on one hand, and the location residents expected the same Board not only to air their grievances, but also to deliver the goods, on the other. But, be that as it may, securing the goodwill of either side again depended on the strength of the position of the Advisory Board. Clearly, as has already been established, the board lacked the authority or executive power to get things done without having to seek approval from the local authority. Hence, the incapacity to implement its resolutions, let alone its failure to get the approval of the N.A.C., not only adversely affected the Board's image and performance, but it also reduced the Board to a mere "complaints department" in the location.

Because of the intercalary position of the Advisory Board, Leo Kuper observed that:

The elected members in particular are faced with a basic dilemma: they are accountable to the people they represent, and yet they can do very little to remedy their urgent grievances. They can do nothing at all about the major Government policies which bear so heavily on their people such as influx and efflux control and the payment of economic rentals; these policies are sacrosanct.³⁹

Caught up in this dilemma, the elected Langa Advisory Board members who were equally subjected to the policies that affected the people they were representing, chose not to succumb to the interminable pressures that were brought to bear upon them by the City Council. They judiciously used their positions to hit back at the whole municipal machine - thus in a way undermining, from within, the structure of domination. The problematic issues that the Board members dealt with were: the unilateral imposition of economic rentals, railway fares, the outlawing of beer brewing and trading, police raids. They also dealt with the arbitrary powers exercised by the authorities, particularly the Superintendent or the so-called Manager of Native

38 M Wilson and A Mafeje, Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township (Cape Town) 1963, 147

39 L Kuper, An African Bourgeoisie, 334

Administration, the policy of influx control and the general indignities suffered by Africans as a result of any of these matters.

One of the many frustrating concerns of the Advisory Board during any year was the reluctance or refusal by the Native Affairs Committee to submit the estimates of the Native Revenue Account before it. In June 1935, the Advisory Board moved a motion requesting that this be done and that the N.A.C. be requested to authorise the submission, to the Board, of the details of the salaries paid to the employees of Langa Administration.⁴⁰

These requests were necessitated by the Board's and desire to be kept informed about the financial administration of the location. It was the Board's contention that it could not effectively deal with the problems that inhibited the improvement of living conditions in Langa, as it was

ignorant of the various formalities and restrictions governing capital and ordinary expenditure and that a knowledge thereof would no doubt assist the Board to a proper understanding of proposals it might be desired to submit for the consideration of the Native Affairs Committee.⁴¹

The N.A.C. refused to accede to the Board's request concerning in particular the submission of details of salaries paid to employees of the Council at Langa for the benefit of the Board. It however, agreed to authorise the submission to the Board of the monthly statement prepared for the information of the N.A.C. by the City Treasurer relative to the Native Revenue Account. But the statement did not show any item except the arrear rents that were owed by residents, the total rents due in the location each month, and the amount of cash collected. It also indicated a comparison of rents with the corresponding months of the previous year.⁴² As far as the Board was concerned, the financial statement served no useful purpose, as it did not give the slightest clue as to the expenditure on the Native Revenue Account.⁴³

40 3/CT 4/1/5/1277

41 ibid.

42 ibid.

43 ibid.

The Council's attitude put the Board in an embarrassing position. All that the members of the Board could do was to express regret and their utter dismay at the N.A.C.'s refusal to honour their requests. The Board was also not blind to the incapacitation the N.A.C.'s actions caused it, as the Board clearly stated that:

without a more particular knowledge of items of expenditure than that to be gained from an examination of the printed estimates, the Board was restricted in its usefulness as an instrument for advising the Council.⁴⁴

Before 1945 the local authorities were under no obligation to submit the estimates on the Native Revenue Account to the Advisory Board. Submission depended on the nature of the relationship that subsisted between the local authority and the Board. In the case of the Langa Advisory Board, relations with the Cape Town City Council were not altogether smooth, with the result that the board was not provided with the opportunity of seeing the financial statement in its entirety.⁴⁵

But even with the passing of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945, very little changed. Section 19(5) of this Act provided that:

The appropriation of moneys from the Native Revenue Account shall not take place otherwise than in accordance with the estimates of expenditure which have been passed by the urban local authority and approved in writing by the Minister: Provided that before such estimates are passed by the urban local authority, they shall be referred by it to its Native Advisory Board or boards for consideration and report, and any relevant report submitted by such board or boards shall be duly considered by the urban local authority.⁴⁶

Although from 1945, henceforth, Board members were furnished with copies of the estimates, they were not entirely pleased with the submission procedure. The 1945, 1946 and 1947 draft estimates, for example, not only lacked sufficient detail but were submitted too late for the Board to discuss and comment upon. The Langa Advisory Board protested against the N.A.C.'s common practice of requiring it at short notice to deal with the draft estimates. This gave the Board virtually no time to consult the residents of the township on any proposals. In a majority of cases it had to call for an

44 *ibid.*

45 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617 Response by the N.A.C. to complaints made by the Langa Advisory Board, 10 Feb. 1947

46 Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945

adjournment in order to enable it to get sufficient time to debate, but this was often rejected by the N.A.C.⁴⁷

The manner in which the whole question of the Native Revenue Account was dealt with by the N.A.C. not only showed the low esteem in which it held the Board, but its refusal to lay before the Board all the details seems to suggest that it had something to hide.

The somewhat unfair treatment meted out to the Board members by the N.A.C. over the estimates of the Native Revenue Account issue was enough to prod the Advisory Board members into protesting against the Council's indifferent response to other matters. Instead of submitting their memorandum of protest to the N.A.C., which was the normal procedure, the Board bypassed it and submitted it to the Mayor. In this memorandum it accused the N.A.C. of not dealing with the Advisory Board according to the letter and spirit of the Urban Areas Act. To quote it, the Board pointed out that the N.A.C. did not meet their

reasonable requests in a sympathetic and cooperative spirit, that it refuses such requests without sufficient reason, that it fails to explain adequately to the Board the reasons for its decisions on the Board's requests and it does not ensure that matters raised by Board members with the Township Administration are considered in a manner befitting the representative character of such Members.⁴⁸

The Board went further to enumerate a list of grievances that were illustrative of the manner in which it was treated by the N.A.C. Among them was obviously that of the estimates of the Native Revenue Account. The Board's request to appoint its own Chairman and Secretary was refused and no reason was given for the refusal. So too was the Board's request that its elected members be increased to nine instead of six to correspond with the increase in population.⁴⁹ The Board's request that the "notoriously bad and unhealthy condition of the Barracks and Special Quarters be remedied" was casually met with a promise of "investigation". This was in spite of the numerous

47 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617

48 BC579 A24.279

49 ibid.

investigations that had been carried out in the past, including the significant one by the Native Affairs Commission in 1941, which had proved beyond doubt that the conditions were incredibly unsatisfactory.⁵⁰

Nothing seems to have materialised from these representations, and in a way this vindicated the Board's view that the N.A.C. did not 'treat matters in a manner befitting the representative status of such Members'. The year 1947 began without any improvement in the conditions in Langa or in the relations between the Board and the N.A.C. Rather than continue performing its ill-defined duties the Langa Advisory Board convened a meeting on 10 February in 1947 at which it decisively resolved to adjourn its activities sine die:

till all the decided matters are effectively implemented and considerate reference be effected to every matter pending consideration by the City Council. The failure of the Council in carrying out its agreements on these matters dates as far back as 1943.⁵¹

To this resolution was attached a list of thirty-one demands and/or grievances which the Council was supposed to immediately attend to. Among these were:

- (a) That trading by the City Council at Langa should be terminated forthwith.⁵²
- (b) That the Board objected to the "raw manners and unforgivable attitude" of some of the Langa Administration and Registration Office staff members towards the residents.
- (c) The practice of the City Council of carrying out measures at Langa to the disadvantage of the residents without the approval of the Board and residents had to be stopped. This was an apparent reference to the Council's unilateral decision to take over the running of the Eating House from African traders in Langa in June 1943.⁵³
- (d) That the Board had to be asked to make recommendations when the Chairman of the Advisory Board was to be elected.

But perhaps the most challenging of all the demands was one in which the Board had the audacity to demand the abolition of the Native Affairs Committee. In expressing its vote of no confidence in the N.A.C. the Board resolved:

50 ibid.

51 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/12

52 see Chapter 3

53 ibid.

That since the Native Affairs Committee has repeatedly failed to effect progress, the authorities be requested to abolish this Committee for a better method of advancing the desires of residents of the Township.⁵⁴

Although this marked a turning-point in the relations between the Board and the Council, the Board's resolution was the result of a combination of a number of forces that joined the campaign for the democratisation of urban local government in Cape Town. We now turn to the alternatives sought by Langa residents in creating their own independent, that is, relatively uncontrolled representative structures and their attempts to exploit any available communication channels to air their grievances to local government *vis-à-vis* the failure by the Langa Advisory Board to serve as an effective communication instrument.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE ADVISORY SYSTEM

I The Langa Vigilance Association "Iliso Lomzi Wakwa Langa"

The formation of the Langa Vigilance Association in the early 1930s was a direct reaction to the increasing ineptitude of the Advisory Board system. Its establishment represented the Langa community's independent initiative and a rejection of official municipal control. As an independent non-statutory body, the Vigilance Association refused to kowtow to the frequent overtures of the City Council. Despite its relatively aggressive and forthright stance the Association attracted a large membership surprisingly from the "older and more conservative rent-payers in the married quarters of Langa" and not the "younger and more radical people",⁵⁵ especially the bachelors.⁵⁶ The latter viewed the Vigilance Association as being no different from the Advisory Board. They scornfully referred to it as the "Superintendent's Association" and frequently dubbed it a "collaborationist organisation".⁵⁷ However, this cleavage between the young and the "old guard" did not seriously undermine the

54 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617

55 M Wilson, Langa, 8

56 Mr Jack interviewed by Monica Wilson, 5 April 1956, Langa - Manuscripts and Archives, UCT

57 M Wilson, Langa, 8-9

importance of the Association in the community affairs of Langa. There was no evidence to indicate the membership of the Association but it seems that it enjoyed widespread support when it took up issues affecting the Langa community at large.

The Langa Vigilance Association's tasks were no different from those of the Advisory Board. They included making appeals to the Langa Administration against increased rents, police searchings and raids on individuals, poor sanitary conditions and general living conditions. While it had no direct access to the Council as it lacked statutory recognition, it nevertheless served as an important pressure group.

The Association's strength lay in its unique composition. Its representative structures were probably a reflection of what the Langa residents would have wanted the Advisory Board to approximate. All the office-bearers of the Association were elected by the rent-payers at an Annual General Meeting in the Langa Civic Hall.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note that most of the members who were elected to the Association's committees had at one time or another served on the Advisory Board. This may account for the future co-operation between the Association and the Board not only in criticising the advisory board system but also in demanding direct municipal representation. A look at the 1944 Langa Vigilance Association provides us with a useful insight into the representative nature of the Association, because that was the year its committee was enlarged. Before 1944 it had only four members in its executive and seven committee members.

The Association's executive consisted of the posts of Chairman (occupied in 1944 by the Rev. C.N. Nontshinga-Citashe, once a Council nominee on the Advisory Board), Vice-Chairman (occupied by Mr H Gcilishe; he too was once a Council nominee in the same year with the Rev. Citashe), Secretary, Assistant Secretary, two posts of Treasurer and that of Interpreter. Besides these, there were twenty-eight

Committee members.⁵⁹ Added to this were eleven committees which, to a large extent, were a comprehensive representation of the vital aspects of the socio-economic and political life of the Langa people. The Association comprised committees dealing with the following issues:

1. ADVISORY BOARD, JOINT COUNCILS AND MEETINGS
2. AFRICAN CHIEFS - this dealt with issues involving the visit of chiefs to Langa
3. BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE
4. CHURCH, HOSPITAL AND SCHOOLS
5. DISTINGUISHED AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN VISITORS
6. JUVENILE, DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES
7. LIQUOR
8. RENTS, HOUSES AND STREETS
9. SPORT
10. TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICS
11. TRANSPORT ⁶⁰

A cross-section of these portfolios stands in stark contrast to the ridiculously narrow and limited scope of the Advisory Board. The structure of the Association shows, among other things, the Langa people's clear vision of what genuine and democratic governance should entail. Unfortunately, there are no records which indicate the various day-to-day activities of these organs.

One of the many positive and progressive elements about the Langa Vigilance Association is that it was not an exclusively male organisation. Women too were represented. There is, however, not much evidence about women's representation save some vague references. An informant did confirm that there was a women's section of which the structure corresponded in almost every detail with that of the Vigilance

59 BC 579 A24 546

60 BC 579 A24 546

Association. The women also attended the Annual General Meeting in Langa. They however did not even amount to a hundred.⁶¹

It is highly probable that it is this same Women's Council section of the Western Province Joint Vigilance Association (W.P.J.V.A.)⁶² which presented a statement of protest to the Mayor of Cape Town in 1943. Langa women were protesting against the City Council's policy of outlawing hawking business in the Township at a time when there was a high cost of living, high transport fares and rentals.⁶³ Again women's representation was a marked departure from that of the Advisory Board system which never made reference to the position of women in local government.

In principle, the Langa Vigilance Association was forward-looking, as is borne out by its motto: "Progress"⁶⁴ which seemed to undercut the Advisory Board's relative lack of success and progress in handling the Langa residents' grievances.

Although the Langa Vigilance Association had been founded as an alternative to the Advisory Board, the two civic bodies did not sever links, but instead their co-operation increased in opposing the policies of the Native Affairs Committee. There was an unwritten agreement between the two about their mutual dependence. The Langa Advisory Board at least was the only statutory body which could seek and get audience with the N.A.C. and this the Vigilance Association could not do unless it went through the Board. The Vigilance Association could only get access to the

61 Mr Jack

62 The W.P.J.V.A. was a joint organisation of Cape Peninsula Africans formed to negotiate with relevant authorities about the acute shortage of housing for Africans in the Cape Peninsula and their grievances in relation to certain aspects of local administration. It was composed of members from Langa Vigilance Association, Kensington, Cape Town, Retreat and Bellville.

63 BC 579 A24.403

64 BC 579 A24.546

Superintendent or Manager of Langa. Similarly, the Advisory Board with its progressively waning popularity had no choice but to rely on the popular Association.

But the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Association were not operating in a political vacuum and neither were they the only bodies taking a lead in the local politics of Langa. The period after 1936 saw a renewed intense political activity which was encouraged by the promulgation of the Representation of Natives Act and the Native Land and Trust Act in the same year. This aroused African nationalism which had temporarily been in a slumber and there was at the time a very strong crusade for political unity between Africans, Indians and Coloureds in order to protest against the disenfranchisement of some Africans in the Cape Province who had hitherto enjoyed voting rights.⁶⁵ During the mid-1930's there were a host of branches of political parties in Langa, namely the ANC, the CPSA, and the NLL.⁶⁶ Their political activity perfectly coincided with the calls by the Langa Vigilance Association and Advisory Board for direct municipal representation, given the farcical representation that the Advisory board system offered.

The Langa Vigilance Association and the Langa Branch of the National Liberation League, organised a meeting of Langa residents in October 1941 at which demands were made that it was high time the African people residing in locations had their own representatives on the City Council. It was also resolved that the Council should amend the Municipal Council Ordinance to enable Africans to return their own representatives to the City Council who had to enjoy the same rights and privileges accorded ordinary Municipal Councillors.⁶⁷

65 L Kuper, "African Nationalism in South Africa 1910-1964", M Wilson & L Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa II, Oxford, 1971, 437

66 K M Kondlo, "The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa during the Period 1938 to 1958", BA.Hons. Thesis, History Dept., UCT, 1989, 50

67 BC 579 B10.22

The campaign for municipal representation seemed to be gathering momentum by the end of 1941, as two months after the Langa meeting the Location Advisory Boards Congress⁶⁸ passed a similar resolution urging all Municipal Councils to consider the possibility of having African people residing in urban locations represented on municipal councils in much the same way as Africans represented in the Senate and the House of Assembly.⁶⁹

Beginning from the 1940s, the people of Langa, and elsewhere in the country, had quite evidently shifted from the practice of simply criticising the weakness of the Advisory Board system to a radical demand for genuine municipal representation. The Vigilance Association, which was fairly representative and more active than the Advisory Board, embarked on and led a massive campaign for direct municipal representation. On 17 June 1942 a deputation comprising members of the Langa Vigilance Association, the Langa Advisory Board and the Langa Branch of the National Liberation League, submitted a memorandum to the City Council on the subject of African Municipal Representation.⁷⁰

In support of the principle of African Municipal Representation, the deputation put forward a number of motivations coupled with demands to that end. They argued that Africans at the national and local levels unanimously and badly desired that municipal representation be accorded to them. They questioned the logic of providing direct African representation in Parliament and the Cape Provincial Council whereas the same principle could not be used in local government. As far as they were concerned, local governments were charged with important powers, functions and duties with respect to the governance of the urban population in aspects such as housing, social services, trading licences, beer control and the regulation of residential

68 Location Advisory Board Congress - founded in 1928 - was a body of affiliate location Advisory Boards that met every year to discuss issues concerning the running of African urban locations.

69 BC 579 B15.2

70 BC 579 B10.22 Memorandum for Presentation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the City Council.

rights. They therefore argued that since that was the case, it followed that Africans had to have a voice in relation to these important matters that affected their everyday lives, if the principle that "Africans should have a direct voice through their elected representatives, in national and provincial policies affecting their interests", was to be upheld.⁷¹

The delegation dismissed the provision for the election of an Advisory Board in every township and the existence of a Native Affairs Committee as an adequate reason that could be invoked to explain why direct representation could not be granted. They further argued that, no matter how much interest and concern the members of the Native Affairs Committee showed in the welfare of the African community, it was common knowledge that they were elected by the white ratepayers which apparently excluded the residents of Langa.⁷² In relation to this E Hellman had this to say about the fallacy of white councillors "representing" African location residents:

No councillor, no matter how genuine his goodwill, can promote African interests without antagonizing at least a portion of his white electorate.⁷³

To a large extent, the conduct of the Native Affairs Committee in its treatment or handling of matters brought before it by the Langa Advisory Board, reveals a careful attempt not to engage in issues that could end up in ratepayers subsidising the Langa residents.

There is also a kernel of truth in J P R Maud's observation which neatly relates to the deputation's contention. He stated that:

There are few occasions in history where a privileged section of any community has succeeded even in knowing what are the needs and just demands of the unprivileged, still less in satisfying them ... so long as those sections have had no effective say in the government of the city.⁷⁴

This fitting summation encapsulates the contradictory causes of the ever frictional and sometimes volatile relationship between the Langa residents and the N.A.C. This state

71 ibid.

72 ibid.

73 E Hellman, Handbook on Race Relations, 268

74 J P R Maud, City Government: The Johannesburg Experiment, Oxford, 1938, 210

of affairs was largely the result of the N.A.C.'s failure, or, to respond to, and show an appreciation of, the needs of the Langa community. This leads us to the second contention of the deputation.

It unreservedly criticised the Advisory Board system. 'The Advisory Board, as its name implies, has advisory functions only - it has no statutory powers.'⁷⁵ The deputation went further to point out that Africans no longer wanted nominal representation but desired a 'direct voice in the body that makes regulations affecting their interests and frames the estimates of the Native Revenue Account to which they are the chief contributors.'⁷⁶

They put forward three precise demands/proposals to the Council. Firstly, they demanded the inclusion of three African representatives on the Cape Town City Council and that these had to be elected by the Langa rent-payers. They also demanded an extension of the rights of Africans to purchase and lease land in the municipal area generally. If this was done, it would not only naturally increase the extent of African municipal representation, but also enable some of the Langa residents who were precluded from voting for Councillors because they occupied municipal houses, to do so.

Lastly, the deputation emphasised the need for electing only those Africans who resided in Langa Township and only by the Langa rent-payers. They contended that such a condition served to guard against the election of any African from outside Langa, because, as the law stood, there was nothing that precluded an African from being a Councillor even if elected by European or Coloured ratepayers.⁷⁷

75 BC 579 B10.22

76 ibid.

77 ibid.

Similar calls for municipal representation nationwide were made by the Natives' Representative Council in the same year.⁷⁸ Other political organisations such as the Cape African Congress and the Cape District Committee of the Communist Party of South Africa backed the campaign as well.⁷⁹

These requests were snubbed by many local authorities. In 1942, the Union Native Affairs Department asked Provincial Secretaries to solicit the views of municipalities on the question of granting Africans direct participation in local government. A few of them accepted the idea, but the majority, including Cape Town, rejected it outright.⁸⁰ In fact, in the same year, out of forty municipalities represented at a meeting of the Municipal Association of the Transvaal, thirty-seven opposed the idea. Again, almost all municipalities that submitted evidence to the Fagan Commission, 1946-8, remained obdurate in this regard.⁸¹

The Langa civic bodies were not daunted by the fruitless outcome of their demands. Instead the Vigilance Association and the Advisory Board continued to press for direct representation on numerous occasions. After 1942 these two bodies entered into a marriage of convenience and increasingly acted jointly in either protesting against unpopular Council measures, or mediating in local community disputes. This, in a way, served to undermine the Council's grip on the Advisory Board, particularly when it was allegedly "infiltrated" by communists, as we shall see.

In October 1943, the Langa Vigilance Association, the Advisory Board, as well as the Retreat Vigilance Committee, jointly reacted to the Report of Mr Slarke, Inspector of Urban Locations on Conditions of Africans in the Cape Peninsula, of 21 April 1943. They criticised some of the views in the Report as misrepresentations of the truth. They attributed this to the fact that the most affected people, the African

78 BC 579 B10.38

79 BC 579 A7.1761

80 BC 579 B10.38

81 D Welsh, "The Growth of Towns", M Wilson & L Thompson (eds), The Oxford History of South Africa II, 229

people, were not consulted on the subject.⁸² They further pointed out that they had not been invited to a Conference considering the proposals of the Report:

Our Parliamentary Representatives were invited to the Conference with the local authorities in the capacity of auditors only and no Africans were invited to attend.⁸³ (my emphasis)

The joint bodies also emphasised their right to be consulted:

We wish to press most strongly our claim to be consulted in relation to the whole position, more particularly as we note with concern the irresponsible attitude of so many of the representatives of the local authorities who attended the Conference.⁸⁴

Their claim justifies their call for genuine and direct representation without which their condition would always be misrepresented. Lack of genuine representation and the resulting ignorance bred suspicion which in turn led to hostility.⁸⁵ Hence the joint bodies questioned the legitimacy of the authorities' actions of discussing the condition of an unrepresented, let alone unconsulted, people.

The Advisory Board in Langa seems to have lost a lot of ground to the Vigilance Association by the mid-1940s. What the Board was losing in terms of influence, the Association was gaining. In some instances the Association, dispensing with established protocol, by-passed the Advisory Board as the legally constituted mechanism for channelling grievances to the N.A.C. But what is all the more striking is the Association's protest activities on behalf of the Advisory Board to the Council. A sound example is one resulting from the Langa Advisory Board meeting of 11 October 1943, at which Board members queried the failure by the Council to consult the Board, as laid down by the Urban Areas Act, about the scheme of supplying soup to school children in Langa.

82 BC 579 B10.241, Memorandum by the Langa Advisory Board and Vigilance Committee and the Retreat Vigilance Committee on the Report of Mr Starke, Inspector of Urban Locations on "Conditions of Natives in the Cape Peninsula"

83 ibid.

84 ibid.

85 BC 579 B11.73, Report of Natal Regional Conference on Africans in Urban Areas: S.A. Institute of Race Relations, 2 Aug. 1943

The Chairman of the Board, Mr. S.J.Fort, instead of responding to the query, openly retorted that the members had "stupid senses". When Board members called upon him to withdraw his "unjustified utterance and apologise for his unwarranted behaviour", Mr Fort declined to do so.⁸⁶

After a public meeting of Residents at which a report was given of what had transpired at the Board Meeting, the Langa Vigilance Association, acting upon the authority of the residents, dispatched a strongly worded protest to the Town Clerk (and not to the N.A.C.) against the behaviour of Mr Fort. It read in part:

His attitude was both unjustified and unreasonable and his utterance has been calculated to cast a reflection on the abilities and capabilities and integrity of the Board Members and the Langa Electorate as a whole.⁸⁷

Whilst the Langa residents as well as the Vigilance Association no longer seriously approved of the functions of the Advisory Board, it would seem that they still upheld the dignity and integrity of the Board Members as individuals. Hence, they were prepared to lodge a common protest against the affront and, worse still, one coming from an unelected European incumbent whose replacement with their own elected African Chairman, they had always campaigned for, time and again. The Vigilance Association's concern too about the besmirched 'abilities, capabilities and integrity of the Board Members' says a lot about its relationship with the Board. The Board seems to have been used as an instrument for political or other ends.

The Association managed with a measure of success to influence the Advisory Board, as it was responsible for organising the election of the Board members who were then co-opted into one of the Association's committees as ex-officio members.⁸⁸ Political parties also fielded their candidates to stand for election. Both the Langa Vigilance Association and the Langa Branch of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) registered a victory when they won five positions out of the nominated six for

86 BC 579 A24.401

87 ibid.

88 M Wilson's interview with Mr Jack

the Langa Advisory Board in 1944.⁸⁹ Details on the participation of political organisations are considered in Chapter 6.

II Dependence on D B Molteno: "The Native Representative" 1937-1948

It is quite paradoxical that while Africans in the Cape hated all that the Representation of Natives Act of 1936 stood for, especially the establishment of a separate voters' roll, the very same people increasingly came to rely on the separate political institutions that it provided. The Act provided for the election of five white representatives by qualified Africans in the Cape on a separate roll, three in the House of Assembly and two in the Cape Provincial Council. Provision was also made for the election of four whites to represent Africans in the Senate as well as for the establishment of a Native Representative Council to serve only in an advisory capacity. It would include African members indirectly elected.⁹⁰

In spite of the numerous protests against this arrangement, Africans eventually chose to rely on these structures of representation for want of anything better. Political organisations, as noted, particularly the ANC, the CPSA and the All African Convention (AAC) at least before 1948, came to accept this as a "useful" structure which they could, with expediency, use to their benefit.

But for the Langa residents who did not qualify for the vote at all, because of reasons already stated, it was not so much the need for parliamentary representation that they came to rely on Donald Molteno, the first "Native Representative" for the Western Cape. Evidence suggests that they did not see him, in the first instance, as a Parliamentary Representative, but as someone who could, because of his influential

⁸⁹ N Mohamed, "Langa High School: The Struggle for Existence. The First Twenty Years in the History of Langa High School", BA.Hons. Thesis, History Dept., UCT, 1989, 46

⁹⁰ B Kinkead-Weekes, "Donald Molteno and the Politics of 'Native Representation' in Cape Town, 1936-1948", 105

position and probably to a large extent his liberal disposition, help them in redressing their grievances with the City Council. This dependence was particularly reinforced by the failure of the Advisory Board to effectively and meaningfully represent them. Put loosely, Molteno served as an "ombudsman" - investigating complaints against the municipality, the Langa Administration, and the police and advising people on legal issues.⁹¹ As if to acknowledge its ineffectiveness, the Advisory Board and the Langa Vigilance Association too, enlisted his services.

One of the many grievances that the concerned Langa residents took to Molteno was about the seemingly changing role of the Superintendent. On 2 November 1939 they put it to Mr Molteno that it was unbecoming for the Superintendent in his capacity as the substantive head of the Administrative Branch of the Council to assume the duties of a policeman, viz., conducting beer raids and searching for liquor in their houses. They contended such conduct made it extremely difficult for them to appeal to him for help, because their trust in him was fast eroding.⁹²

They also complained about the embarrassing and indiscriminate searches for liquor by the "Native Police" to those who had just returned from work at Langa Railway Station. In November 1943 Molteno wrote to the District Commandant of the South African Police, investigating the numerous complaints about "Native Police" conduct and the whole practice of searching. He cited the arrest of a prominent Langa resident, Mr Daniel Mahloane, the Vice-Chairman of the Langa Vigilance Association, as highly representative of the many similar cases brought to his attention. Molteno highlighted the view that no consideration had been taken of the fact that Mr Mahloane did not drink at all - something well known by the Langa police - but that he was simply a dealer in patent medicine and yet the police searched and fined him.⁹³

91 D Scher, Donald Molteno "Dilizintaba - He-Who-Removes-Mountains", (Johannesburg, 1979), 48

92 3/CT 1/4/6/6/6/4/1/1, Memorandum from the Langa Advisory Board to the Town Clerk 1 July 1939

93 BC 579 A24.431

On another occasion, Molteno wrote to Mr S A Rogers following an appeal to him (Molteno) by representatives of the Main Barracks residents. Molteno stated:

I was much disturbed at the unsatisfactory relations which apparently exist at present between the Administration and these residents, to a large extent based on misunderstandings.⁹⁴ (my emphasis)

Molteno's express disappointment underscores the significance and the residents' desire to have genuine and direct representation which would have ensured that "misunderstandings" did not occur.

In reference to one of the "bachelor's" grievances - that they were expected to take tickets from the Administration as permission to collect wood, when previously they had never used tickets - Molteno warned the Manager about the unpleasant consequences of making abrupt unilateral changes in administrative practice, 'simply because some individuals have cut wood is, I submit, going a bit too far without warning'.⁹⁵

From 1938 onwards Mr Molteno became a popular and outspoken spokesman for the Langa residents, against the proposal by the City Council to establish a beer hall in Langa Township. The crux of his anti-beer hall stance was that the fact that the "bachelors" did not have a place from which to consume beer, unlike the married people who could, if granted permission, brew beer in their houses. So the provision of a beer hall did not solve the underlying problem. According to Molteno, the problem was the Council's policy of building many structures for bachelors and very few for married people. This imbalance made it impossible for the Council to allow for domestic beer brewing.⁹⁶

Molteno, however, did not always succeed in getting the Council to positively respond to the residents' complaints and neither did he always manage to placate the Langa residents. In March 1947 he tried without success to persuade the Langa

94 BC 579 A24.488

95 BC 579 B25.64

96 ibid.

residents not to engage in a riot against the long-drawn-out beer hall question in Langa. But after the small-scale riot, Molteno successfully defended twenty-two residents who had been charged with either inciting this show of resistance or damaging the Eating House which was earmarked for the beer hall.⁹⁷

The local leadership in Langa, especially from the Advisory Board and the Langa Vigilance Association, maintained a close working relationship with Molteno up until 1948 when he declined to seek re-election. This relationship was either in appreciation of the services and contributions to the Langa community, or the benefits likely to accrue to some of the leaders from such a relationship. What immediately comes to mind is example of the Rev. C.N. Nontshinga-Citashe who, it seems, never missed an opportunity to appeal to Molteno for contributions towards the construction of a building for his Ethiopian Church of South Africa, the official opening of the Church, the celebration of the Church's Silver Jubilee, and his completion of twenty-five years' service for the Ethiopian Church.⁹⁸

But perhaps, on a more profound note, the mounting disillusionment resulting from the ineffectiveness of the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Association and the outright refusal by the Council to grant direct municipal representation, motivated the leadership to rally behind Molteno, particularly in times of his election campaigns.

During the election campaign of 1942, Molteno drew most of his support, as well as members of the election committee, from the All African Convention. His election committee consisted of the AAC's regional committee chairman, Mr A V Coto and its secretary, Mr A J Jayiya. The two became chairman and secretary of Molteno's election committee. Included in the committee were Messrs. Bill Ntshinga from the Langa Vigilance Association, J Malangabi and C N Nontshinga-Citashe of the Langa Voters' Association and P Petu and W Ndunyana, both Advisory Board members in

97 B Kinkead-Weekes, "Molteno and 'Native Representation'", 123

98 BC 579 A24.599

Langa. Added to this list were also A Ndlwana of the Langa branch of the National Liberation League and finally Welcome and Veldtman, both representatives of the Dock Workers' Union.⁹⁹

The leaders' political relationship with the "Native Representative" was, however, brought to an end by Molteno's decision not to seek re-election in 1948. This was to coincide with the climacteric rise to power by the Nationalists in the same year which dashed the Africans' hopes of attaining direct representation in governmental structures.

The politics of non-representation in Langa formed part of the jigsaw puzzle of social and political control over Africans residing in urban locations. It was also a struggle between the Council to control the Langa residents and the latter to control themselves. In this respect, the City Council was not prepared at all to surrender its control over Langa to any organisation. The Council's position was clearly stated in no uncertain terms by the Acting Town Clerk in December 1941,

"The Council can obviously not invest the Board with any form of control in the administration of the location which would have the effect of abrogating its own judgement and discretionary powers."¹⁰⁰

Disillusionment resulting from the Municipality's grip on location affairs and its reluctance to respond meaningfully to the residents' demands, saw the Langa residents taking recourse to initiatives of their own.

99 Kinkead-Weekes, 118
100 3/CT 1/4/10/1/1/9

CHAPTER FIVE

COMMUNITY AND CLEAVAGE IN LANGA: 1927-1948.

The ties of kinship, ethnicity and clientage can either be a source of mobility or the basis of a dangerous autonomy - cultural as well as social - among the poor that ruling classes might contain but cannot penetrate.¹

THE COMMUNITY AT NDABENI: 1901-1927

Any serious analysis of the growth of the community in Langa from 1927 cannot be attempted without turning the clock back to the days of Ndabeni's existence. The life-span of this once "sprawling" African Location, among other things, tells the story of communal solidarity which even the threat of forced mass removals could not destroy. Such a reference helps us to establish the continuity of the tradition of resistance which was to characterise the existence of Langa, albeit, in a regenerated form.

Communal solidarity in Ndabeni manifested itself in the existence of kinship and family ties, church groups and other forms of social mechanisms which promote and demonstrate the existence of such communality.² Naomi Barnett has celebrated the growth of such a community in Ndabeni.³ Although the Ndabeni residents were a people who had been forcibly brought together they immediately went about structuring and organising themselves into a formidable closely-knit community. There emerged a strong leadership from the location's clergy, luminaries such as Rev. Elijah Mdolomba of the Wesleyan Church, and Rev. Ebenezer Makabulo, an Evangelist. Outside the church were people like Alfred Mangena, one of the founding members of the A.N.C.⁴

1.Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labour in Africa', 38.

2.B.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 29.

3.N.Barnett, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910, Towards A Social History: The First Ten Years of Cape Town's First Official Location', (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985).

4.Barnett, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910', 92.

These community leaders became the people's spokesmen against central and local states policies.

The people's participation in the Legislative Council meetings in 1908, and in meetings in 1909, to discuss their destiny in relation to the constitution of the proposed Union of South Africa is something Barnett hailed as a clear sign of the emergence of 'an articulate and informed community'.⁵ Religious and educational institutions were established. By the end of 1901 there were six established churches, the African Methodist Episcopal, the Salvation Army, the Church of England, the Presbyterian, Congregational and the Wesleyan Methodist. A government- financed school and denominational schools were established to cater for all children of school-going age. Churches provided night schools where adults within and without Ndabeni could go and study after work, a significant development that was, however, not approved of by some employers of domestic labour who felt inconvenienced by the absence of their domestic servants in the evenings.⁶

The continuation of traditional-cultural practices, adapted to suit and meet urban conditions also demonstrated the nature of the community that was evolving in Ndabeni. Because of the interactions necessitated by these institutions, there emerged a strong community whose presence the white community and the local authority could not take for granted.

But it was also a community upon which the first experiment on the effectiveness of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 was attempted. The Act, however, also provided an opportunity for the Ndabeni community to test its own resilience. From 1927 this community was uprooted and broken up and it only managed to come together, again, in 1936 but with new and daunting challenges to face, namely struggles around high

5. Barnett, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910', 100.

6. Barnett, 'Ndabeni 1901-1910', 117.

rents, bus fares, rigid influx controls, the brewing and selling of beer, trading activities, lack of freedom for political activity, denial of municipal representation etc.

In Ndabeni and Langa, there were different classes of people- a small African petty-bourgeoisie which comprised ministers of religion, small traders, businessmen, school-teachers; the working-class, probably the largest class; and a 'rapidly expanding "underclass", where the unemployed merged, for shorter or longer periods, with the Location's lumpenproletariat',⁷ were "squashed together", as it were. Their only distinguishing feature was "race".⁸ Subjected to the same debilitating, living conditions, high rentals, overcrowding, rigorous controls and very restricted avenues of self-advancement imposed by the domineering central and local states in Ndabeni, a spirit of defensiveness, which transmuted into collective popular protest, was forged.⁹

It is interesting to note the instances of individualised forms of resistance which perfectly merged with generalised resistance. Certain individuals were fighting for entirely different aims from those of the majority of people who happened to be struggling against identical pressures. A good illustration of this, is that of William Sipika of Ndabeni whose life-long dream was that of establishing a business enterprise in a location and resigning his job as a dock labourer. When Sipika realised that his long-term ambitions remained a pipe-dream, he joined a campaign of mass protest against rent-payments in the location in 1901-1902.¹⁰ It is possible that there were many like Sipika who went unnoticed even in Langa.

7.I.R.Phimister and C.van Onselen, 'The Political Economy of Tribal Animosity: A Case Study of the 1929 Bulawayo Location 'Faction Fight" ', Henderson Seminar No.44, (Dept. of History, University of Rhodesia, 1978), 25.

8.Bozzoli, 'Class, Community and Ideology', 28.

9.Saunders, 'The Creation of Ndabeni', 176.

10.Saunders, 'The Creation of Ndabeni', 176.

THE LANGA COMMUNITY: 1927-1948

The forced relocation of Ndabeni residents to Langa in 1927 and the protracted collective resistance they resolutely put up was a demonstration of an internal solidarity that had been weaved since 1901. This "externalised" protest continued in the form of an "internalised" resistance once all the people had been moved to Langa by mid-1936. But this begs the question, what made that collective communal response in Langa possible, especially among people who were physically and structurally divided into migrants and permanent residents, single/bachelor and married men? However, we need to go, not only beyond this, but also deeper and bring to the surface the subterranean social and political cleavages which existed among the Langa community but were almost obliterated by communal action.

In answering the question posed above one is immediately reminded of Yoshikuni's sound criticism that community-formation is not mathematical.¹¹ He argued against making an 'automatic equation between the process of industrialisation and the making of African working-class communities'. Why? Because,

This equation, if made in a rigid and collective and static way, would take us nowhere towards the explanation of collective action among urban Africans at the *earliest* stages of industrialisation and would make unintelligible the "stratigraphical" nature of African urban culture, each stratum of which was the product of a particular African experience.¹²

He went on to say:

In the face of the history and nature of African participation in wage employment, it is rather natural that the "base" strata of African urban culture received strong injection of peasant traditions; so, workers were bound together, among others, by human relations very familiar to them, that is ethnic and regional ties.¹³

Several forms of human relationships went into the formation of the Langa community as manifested by the creation of social institutions. The residents' cardinal objective

11.T.Yoshikuni, 'Strike Action and Self-Help Associations: The Emergence of An African Working Class in Zimbabwe, 1918-21', (unpub.Seminar Paper No.68, Dept. of History, University of Zimbabwe, no date), 26.

12.Yoshikuni, 'Strike Action and Self-Help Associations', 26

13.Yoshikuni, 'Strike Action and Self-Help Associations', 26

was to make their existence livable, meaningful and fulfilling. A sense of common geographical origin (expressed through what was known as "home-boyism") prevailed. Black African labour was extracted largely from the Eastern Cape and Transkei as far back as the late 1830's. From these areas came the Mfengu and the Xhosa-speaking people who formed the overwhelming majority of Africans in Cape Town.¹⁴ Wilson and Mafeje attested to the view that the concept of common origin was a very important facet in the formation of a close-knit community especially among the migrant labourers. They stated that:

Common origin may provide a basis for friendship and co-operation, and a townsman who originally came from Middledrift will call a friend from that district his home-boy, and those who have grown up in Langa are home-boys vis-a-vis country migrants, or workmen from Johannesburg, but no group holds together without some common interest other than the home tie. (my emphasis).¹⁵

"Home-boyism" was such a strong force that sports clubs in Langa were actually established on that basis. Rugby and soccer clubs were formed and given names which reflected where the membership of those clubs hailed from. For instance, there were teams such as the Basutoland Happy Lads, Bechuanaland Swallows and the Transkeian Lions. There were, interestingly, splits in these clubs based on the urban-rural dichotomy, so that, ironically, the same force that tended to bring people together could also serve as the basis for a cleavage.¹⁶ A rugby team called the Busy Bee, for example, comprised members from King Williams Town. An increase in membership also led to increased differences and this eventually led to a split between those from the "town" and the "country". The result of this was the establishment of the Harley Queens, made up of members from the countryside and who resided in the barracks.¹⁷ The proliferation of many clubs was a healthy development for an emerging urban African community denied the benefit of recreational facilities. Significantly, sport, in spite of the fissiparous tendencies mentioned, remained a favourite form of escapism

14. Saunders, 'The Creation of Ndabeni', 165.

15. Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 54-55.

16. Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 114.

17. M. Wilson's Research Notes for the book LANGA, 267.

from the otherwise dull and monotonous tenor of township life. Moreover, in terms of consolidating community relations, R.Botto's informant neatly put it this way:

....sport is a great leveller; all classes of people come into contact with one another more intimately. Through sport we get into friendly terms with anybody, thereby our circle of friends is widened.¹⁸

Further to this, networks of kinship relations in Langa bolstered this sense of common origin. It was not uncommon to find that some of the migrants in Langa were kinsmen who hailed from the same lineage, or mother's kin or from the same clan. Kinship ties, therefore, played a significant unifying role in Langa.¹⁹ With the passage of time, kinship relations became less and less significant as new forms of urban-created associations came into being.

A common language, too, was an important ingredient in the formation of a cohesive community. Xhosa was the predominant lingua franca in Langa. Sotho-speakers were a relatively small group and did not constitute a separate community.²⁰

The establishment of churches in Langa was central feature of community-formation. By 1947 there were twenty-two denominations.²¹ There were two dominant types of churches, those that owed their origin directly to missionaries, such as the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.), Catholic (Roman), Seventh Day Adventist and Dutch Reformed, on the one hand, and those known as "Independent African Churches", such as the Presbyterian Church of Africa, the Ethiopian Church of South Africa, and the Church of Christ.²²

18.R.Botto, 'Some Aspects of the Leisure Occupations of the African Population in Cape Town', (M.Soc.thesis, University of Cape Town, 1954), 109.

19.Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 75.

20.Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 34.

21.W.D.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches: A Preliminary Survey of Religion in an Urban Location', (M.A.thesis, Anthropology, University of Cape Town, 1948), 1.

22.Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 92-93.

The politics of the origins and establishment of these churches has been sufficiently dealt with to require no further elaboration.²³ We will, therefore, deal with those aspects of that contributed to the evolution of the community, which even Wilson and Mafeje glossed over. Churches in Langa were the most significant vehicle of association. They attracted the largest numbers of people, more than any other type of association.²⁴ For example, the Women's Christian Association (Umanyano wabafazi) of the Bantu Presbyterian Church (established in Langa in 1934) had a striking membership of 90 women.²⁵ Because of this numerical superiority, Christianity commanded an overarching influence on the community.²⁶

Women's and Young Men's Christian Associations made an outstanding contribution towards giving Langa a Christian outlook. To demonstrate this contribution, we will consider the activities of a few associations of Independent African churches. The activities of each denominational association were similar. The Women's Christian Association of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa (established in 1903) in Langa served the interests of its womenfolk and children of the congregation. Demonstrating a sense of organisation, the association had an elaborate structure. It had an elected chairwoman and the incumbent minister's wife was the President for the whole congregation. The chairwoman was assisted by elected secretary and treasurer. The association's task was to assist in the activities of the church such as fund-raising by holding concerts, bazaars and many other social activities at which money was collected. In their 1947 account they had fifty pounds.²⁷ For this and other activities, Hammond-Tooke's informant, Reverend S.P.Lediga, the church minister, showered praises on the women's role:

23. B.G.M. Sundkler, Bantu Prophets in South Africa, (London, 1962), See also by the same author, The Concept of Christianity in the African Independent Churches, (Institute of Social Research, University of Natal, 1958).

24. Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 91.

25. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 17.

26. Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 91.

27. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 30.

They are very active socially. The Women's association is a spark of life in the church.²⁸

Apart from the Women's Association, there was the Young Men's Christian Association of the same church. The minister was the president of the congregational association. The Young Men's Association numbering about sixty played a significant role in the,

revival services and do much to spread the Gospel to the heathen. They are specially interested in the youth of Langa and go to the roughest and rawest places, in fact rather like the Salvation Army.²⁹

The Home Mission Society (Uvanjelo lwasekhaya) of the Seventh Day Adventist Church's (started in 1930 at Ndabeni) itinerary included conducting Bible studies, holding prayer meetings, helping the sick, giving clothing and food to those in dire need. This was a male organisation. If a member of this Society or of the church saw or heard about a destitute family, he/she had to report to the Society which in turn would assess the case. The church did not discriminate against those who were not members of the church. It tried to assist anybody deemed fit to get help.³⁰

The Mission Volunteer Society, was for adolescents and children, numbering about 20 boys and girls who were taught to carry out the same tasks as those of the elders' Home Mission Society. To instil a sense of responsibility in these youth they were divided into groups like "friends", "helpers" and "comrades". The Dorcas Society for women of the same church devoted their time and energies to the making and gathering of clothing and food for the destitute. They also made contributions for purchasing materials and foodstuffs.³¹

A similar role was played by the Women's Home and Foreign Society of the A.M.E. in Langa which consisted of about twenty-two members. A structure of this Society called the Sick and Poor Committee was charged with the specific task of collecting

28. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 30.

29. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 31.

30. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 59.

31. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 60.

basic necessities such as candles, sugar, matches and many other items, to give to those who could hardly fend for themselves due to abject poverty, or sickness.³²

Lastly, the Women's Association of the Ethiopian Church of South Africa, with a membership of about forty-four women ministered to the destitute as well and prayed 'to help those who walk disorderly'. Their programme, for every Thursday, the day they met, included praying for the whole of Africa and so that it could be converted to Christianity, to discuss issues concerning husbands, sons and daughters, and speaking against "uncleanness and witchcraft". The church's Young Men's Association, which consisted of fifty members, showed it had a controlling effect on the discipline of its youth in Langa. Before anyone in the church could join the Association they had to undergo a thorough examination. Would-be members of the Association were compelled to refrain from beer-drinking and leading a "loose" existence. They attended meetings on Saturday evenings because it was "'the time when the African male is at his worst'", and presumably this was supposed to persuade him to listen to the word of God.³³

Despite the duplicated roles that these various associations played in Langa, what is significant about this was that, taken in their totality, they infused a very strong sense of discipline among the youth by introducing and implementing a strict moral and ethical religious code. Given the poor economic status of most of the residents in Langa, it is remarkable that they could contribute something to help the poor and the sick. Even though not every resident in Langa was a christian, the magnanimous gestures of the associations could not fail to have an indelible impact on a considerable number of people.

The church's impact on the shaping of the Langa community was expressly demonstrated by its vehement rejection of the Council's beerhall scheme as this would

32. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 76.

33. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 93.

have subverted the evangelical programme of the church or so they thought.(see Chapter 3). It is also not surprising that the church went into conflict with the City Council because it had allowed the opening of sports fields on a Sunday. Since football and cricket were very popular, there were fears that the church would lose a lot of membership to sport.³⁴ It is also probable that there was an element of sabbatarianism.

The proliferation of many churches in Langa should not suggest the total absence of levels of inter-denominational co-operation. An African Ministers' Association served as a unifying factor to all the congregations whose ministers were affiliated to it. The ministers met every fortnight to discuss common themes, problems, and saw to it that church activities such as fund-raising were not held at the same time.³⁵ This practice of co-ordinating denominational activities promoted a spirit of christian brotherhood.

The formation of these associations including self-help clubs such as the Umgalelo and Zenzele Clubs,³⁶ civic organisations like the Langa Vigilance Association, political organisations³⁷, are all a significant indication of the qualitative changes that the social life of the people in Langa were going through. They were qualitative because 'changes took place not only in the "exogenous" levels of life', (such as demands for better and adequate housing and good working conditions), 'but also in the deeper, "endogenous" levels of life, concerning the life-style and outlook of people'.³⁸ The men and women of Langa developed a conscious habit of solidarity and cohesion in defence of their community. This partly explains why the community served as the basis of protest action in Langa.

The development of a sense of neighbourliness between and among the Langa residents reinforced the development of a spirit of togetherness. To begin with, the structure and

34.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 100.

35.Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 100.

36.Kondlo, 'The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa', 48-49.

37.To be dealt with in chapters 6&7.

38.Yoshikuni, 'Strike Action and Self-Help Associations', 27.

lay-out of houses in Langa, especially those for the married people, was such that members of each and every household lived in very close contact with the other immediately next to it, and there was constant interaction. On either side of each house, there is another. Moreover, the yards of two rows of houses face each other. Although the basis for relating to one's neighbours could depend on commonality and mutual compatibility of interests, there was, however, a relationship of friendship that developed. In an anthropological survey conducted by Ruth Levin in Langa between April 1945 and April 1946, she found out that:

Neighbours shop together, eat in each other's homes and accompany one another to meetings of different kinds; they afford each other help by lending various articles and performing favours for each other. Neighbours assist each other on all occasions of note, such as births, marriages and deaths, and at various parties, like those held at baptism and initiation, are among the main leaders of the proceedings.³⁹

The proximity of the residents' households made it easy for neighbours to know what took place in each other's house. This, in a way acted, as a social control mechanism on some people's behaviour. For example, neighbours could report the infidelity of someone's wife to her husband when he was away at work,⁴⁰ or the husband's extra-marital relationships. While this could lead to a split of families it also served as a form of social control.

Inter-ethnic marriage practices in Langa were a stabilizing factor and this brought people closer together. Although this practice was shunned by conservative elders who encouraged their sons and daughters to marry from within their ethnic group, certain limitations made it impossible for some people to adhere to this advice. Some people in Langa married outside their ethnic group because there were very few men and women who shared their ethnicity.

39.R.Levin, 'Marriage in Langa Native Location', (M.A. thesis, Anthropology, University of Cape Town, 1946), 134.
40.Levin, 'Marriage in Langa', 134.

Moreover, the increasingly urbanized young men and women did not want a "country" bred partner for marriage purposes. Boys born and raised in town saw country girls as "backward, uncivilised and coarse", and preferred to marry town bred girls because they were "brighter and more polished". Likewise, urbanized girls derided country-bred men as "too coarse and raw", preferring, instead, the "smartly dressed" town-bred men.⁴¹

With the increasing independence of the youth in Langa particularly in choosing a marriage partner, ethnic boundaries were often ignored, thus resulting in inter-ethnic marriages e.g. between a Xhosa and a Mfengu, or a Sotho or a Pedi.⁴² One positive point about inter-ethnic marriages is that they minimise conflicts which would otherwise be prevalent.

The developing relationships in the Langa community culminated in the formation of the Langa Parents' Association in 1948. This was a "new and independent" organization whose cardinal aim was to find ways of combating juvenile delinquency, following an increase in 'acts of violence, assaults without provocation, the use of the knife, house-breaking and theft, highway robbery, gambling and hooliganism', in Langa.⁴³ It was a problem that beset the whole community.

At its inaugural meeting in 1948 the Langa Parents' Association (L.P.A.) invited influential organisations which represented a wide spectrum of people to find a common solution. These organisations included the Langa Vigilance Association, the Rentpayers Association, the African National Congress, the National Council of African Women, the Teachers Association, the Ministers' Association and the Students' Association.⁴⁴ They unanimously agreed that the cause for the problem on their agenda had five inter-connected aspects. Firstly, it was the economic position in the

41. Levin, 'Marriage in Langa', 37.

42. Levin, 'Marriage in Langa', 20-24.

43. Cape Archives (hereafter CA), 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, Langa Parents' Association (L.P.A) Memorandum.

44. CA, 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, L.P.A. memo.

countryside which forced the African^{to} migrate to the towns. Secondly, whilst in the town, he received a pittance of a wage which fell far short of meeting the ever rising cost of living. This compelled him to 'resort to any means in order to make ends meet for necessity knows no law'. Thirdly, the same African had to adjust to 'strange and unfamiliar conditions and surroundings'. Fourthly, his family had disintegrated and his children received no proper training. Fifthly, his social institutions had disappeared such that nothing remained to positively influence his future conduct.⁴⁵

They condemned punitive police raids which although directed against bona fide criminals, ended up affecting the whole Langa population. This, they felt, was a 'negative solution' to a complex problem. Instead, they recommended ten solutions and demanded that they be implemented by the Cape Town Municipality.

Among these "positive solutions" were:

(a) the opening up of employment avenues to Africans. They condemned the employment of fifteen Europeans in Langa as one of the worst aspects of Cape Town's administration of Africans which knew 'no parallel elsewhere even amongst the largest locations in South Africa.'

(b) the provision of a big community centre complex where their youth could spend their time constructively. They condemned the Langa Civic Hall and described it as an "eyesore". They demanded that such a complex should have a lounge, a library, a gymnasium big enough to be used as an entertainments hall whenever it was necessary, a billiard saloon, a milk bar and other social amenities. Aware of the importance of social interaction they added that this proposed complex could become, 'the rendezvous and headquarters of our cultural life where residents and visitors could meet in congenial atmosphere and company for social intercourse and exchange of opinion for mutual improvement'.⁴⁶

45. CA, 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, L.P.A. memo.

46. CA, 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, L.P.A. memo.

(c) they also demanded the services of a Social Worker employed by the City Council to be based in the community. They wondered why and how a 'small dorp like Umtata right in the heart of the Transkei', could afford to employ an African Social Worker and maintain a social centre for Africans when such a big centre like Cape Town lagged far behind.

Lastly, they called for the provision of bursaries by the City Council to train African men and women to enable them to run their own civic matters, financial aid to Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, the Boy's Club and African sport as was done by other local councils. What embittered them most was that in Langa Location, 'we witness the unusual spectacle of a tennis court for Europeans and yet African sport at Langa is neglected by the City Council', as they put it.⁴⁷

The coming together of all these organisations which had disparate interests, is indicative of the growth of a formidable community. As parents, the nature and substance of their solutions and demands suggest a strong sense of permanence and stability, hence their concern about the future and conduct of their children. As far as they were concerned Langa was a permanent home and they rejected the life of a migrant, thinking of officialdom that the permanent home of the African was in the rural area. Implicit, also, in their demand for a typically European-style community complex is an assertion that they wanted to be provided with the same amenities as those given to whites in the city.

What we have established up to this point, is that the urban African community-- the Langa Community in particular-- is not, in the words of Epstein, "a formidable mass of confusion, a social chaos". It has, quite to the contrary, 'its own form of social organisation, and this organisation provides a general framework for the understanding

47. CA, 3/CT 4/2/1/1/617, L.P.A. memo.

of a good deal of the behaviour of its inhabitants'.⁴⁸ Kinship links, common ethnicity and socio-cultural networks could, therefore, be used as the basis of mobilising into collective action.⁴⁹ But the Langa community had its own internal tensions which have not received detailed attention from the few historians as well as social anthropologists who have worked on this area.

SOCIAL CLEAVAGES IN LANGA

THE MFENGU AND NTSIKANA MEMORIAL CELEBRATIONS: SOURCES OF CONFLICT.

Botto,⁵⁰ Wilson and Mafeje,⁵¹ and to a certain extent Kondlo,⁵² tended to emphasise the theme of group or community cohesion at the expense of forces of conflict, choosing only to make peripheral allusions to them. Occasions such as the Ntsikana, Mfengu, and Moshoeshoe Day celebrations, while indicating group cohesion, often led to "tribal" animosity especially between the Xhosa-speaking people and the Mfengu. "Tribal" animosity was usually engendered by the raking up of a "tribe's" past history glorifying one's victory over, or "emancipation" from, the other.

The launching of the Mfengu Memorial Association in February 1943 and the subsequent celebration of the Mfengu Emancipation Day on 14 May that same year, caused a stir in Langa which nearly led to a polarisation of relations between the "Mfengu" and the Xhosas, the Xhosas and the Langa Administration, and the conflict also permeated into some of the Independent Churches. In February 1943, all the Mfengu in the Western Cape Province, the majority of whom were in Langa, constituted themselves into an Association. The foundation members elected the

48.A.L.Epstein, Politics in an Urban African Community, (London, 1973), 226.

49.Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labour', 38

50.Botto, 'Some Aspects of the Leisure Occupations of the African Population in Cape Town'.

51.Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA.

52.Kondlo, 'The Culture and Religion of the People of Langa'.

following as the leaders, Messrs G.Nongauza, Chairman, G.Boqwana, Secretary, P.Zuma, Treasurer. The Executive Committee members were Messrs P.Zuma, Convenor, G.Boqwana, J.Mafu and C.J.Nabe. A "Yellow Circular" was dispatched exhorting all the Mfengu to join the Association, rather provocatively, 'If you are a Mfengu what prevents you from joining the Association of Mfengus. This is an Association!'. Without specifying, it vaguely promised to deal with 'all matters affecting us both socially and politically'.⁵³

However, their principal aim was to commemorate the day when their forefathers took an oath under the "milkwood tree", 14 May 1835, after they were supposedly "emancipated" by the British from Xhosa oppression.⁵⁴ On this day they pledged :

- (i) to be faithful to God and adhere to the teachings of Religion.
- (ii) to be loyal to the British King, and
- (iii) to educate their children.⁵⁵

There was an immediate reaction from the Langa Vigilance Association which, from the tone of their correspondence with the Manager of Langa, Mr S.A.Rogers, appeared incensed by the whole event. The Vigilance Association strongly condemned the formation of an Association along "tribal" lines to 'commemorate the so-called liberation (my emphasis) of the Mfengu people from the Ama-Xhosa'.⁵⁶ The civic organisation registered its fears that once the establishment of this organisation was allowed it would set an unfortunate precedent that would see Langa regimented into "tribal" sections. It stated that:

Once such an organisation comes into existence then the Ama-Xhosa will see to it that they too, are organised along those lines. Then follows the Basuto, Zulu, Swazi, etc., and Baca and other tribes resident in the Location.⁵⁷

53. Manuscripts and Archives, (hereafter MA), Molteno Papers (hereafter MP), BC579 A24.256.

54. MA, MP BC579 A24.236.

55. J. Ayliff and J. Whiteside, History of the Abambo Generally Known as Fingos, (Cape Town, 1962), 34.

56. MA, MP BC579 A24.255.

57. MA, MP BC579 A24.255.

It further appealed to the Manager to discourage such moves as the "position forebodes ill for the future",and "It promises tribal fights, etc.".⁵⁸

An unspecified number of concerned residents representing the Ama-Xhosa, approached Mr.Rogers on 19 February 1943 and echoed the fears expressed by the Vigilance Association.⁵⁹ In spite of these protests the newly formed Mfengu Memorial Association went ahead with its plans to hold celebrations on 14 May. The Manager's response to the appeals was not clear and this seemed to suggest to the Vigilance Association and the Xhosa-speaking residents, that he was giving the Mfengus a go-ahead with their function, hence giving effect to the divide and rule policy.

In early March, a deputation of the Vigilance Association met the Manager, to object to any form of Mfengu Memorial Celebrations. A deputation from the Mfengu Association also attended the meeting. What was striking about the Vigilance Association's delegation was that it consisted of 'several members who were Mfengus' and who spoke against the celebrations.⁶⁰ The Manager who presided over the meeting gave his decision in favour of the celebrations. The minutes of the Vigilance Association show the latter's displeasure. Firstly, according to the minutes,the Manager failed to show impartiality when the Mfengu deputation used, 'deep and wounding language and insults to the Ama-Xhosa people'. Secondly, he completely disregarded the advice of the Mfengus in the Association's deputation against allowing the event to take place. Thirdly, Mr.Rogers acted unprocedurally by unilaterally deciding to give the greenlight to the Mfengu Association without consulting the Advisory Board as clearly enunciated in the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923.⁶¹

58.MA, MP BC579 A24.255.

59.Cape Archives (hereafter CA), Administration of Western Cape (hereafter AWC), Memo. from Rogers to Mr.G.Nongauza, 8 April 1943.

60.MA, MP BC579 A24.241, Memo. from Langa Vig. Assoc. to the Langa Adv. Board, 3 March 1943.

61.MA, MP BC579 A24.241, Memo. from Vig.Ass. to Adv.Board.

That Mr. Rogers was employing "divide and rule" tactics by displaying favouritism towards the Mfengus was not a baseless allegation. The founder members of the Mfengu Association were employed by the Langa Administration of which Rogers was the Manager. It is probable that he did not want to disappoint his employees, given the fact that he never, at any time, raised the slightest objection to the holding of the celebrations. The Manager and the Chairman of the Native Affairs Committee, Councillor S.J.Fort were, reportedly, going about posing the question, 'How many Mfengus have you in the Advisory Board or Vigilance?'. According to Rev. Citashe of the Ethiopian Church, such a question was potentially suggestive of which side they were. 'Apart from its other meanings it has embedded, indeed it is capable of, a spirit that officials of the standing of the Manager and the Chairman are not disinterested'.⁶² Moreover, Rogers did not honour an agreement that he would hold another round of a dispassionate discussion of the issue with Messrs B.Ntshinga, W.Ndunyana, and P.Petu, all members of the Vigilance Association.

The Manager's reluctance to consider the advice of the residents' statutory representative structures, especially the Advisory Board, reinforced the importance of the Board. Suffice it to say that the Manager's arbitrary handling of this matter tended to fan the potentially volatile situation.

It is likely that the Manager did not appreciate the gravity of the matter for lack of a clear insight into the historical background to the conflict that the Mfengu celebrations would inevitably rake up. In an examination of the 1835 so-called "Mfengu Emancipation", A.Webster argued that claims made by historians like Ayliff and Whiteside that the British liberated people who came to be known as the "'Mfengu", were "largely mythical", as this was a 'cover-story intended to disguise the illegal

62. CA, AWC 3/26/228, Rev.Citashe's letter to Rogers, 15 April 1943.

labour practices being carried out by the colonists, with the knowledge and aid of the colonial authorities'⁶³.

According to Ayliff and Whiteside , about 17 000 refugees who fled from Chaka's wars, the Mfecane, and lived in poverty and led a servile life under the Gcaleka (a clan of the Ama-Xhosa), were liberated by the British Army in May 1835.⁶⁴ But the war between the Gcaleka and the British, leading to the "Mfengu Emancipation" also left Xhosa independence weakened, their infrastructures, wealth and power destroyed and allowed the British to seize involuntary labour.⁶⁵ For this the Xhosa blamed the Mfengu because they sold out. Explaining why he would dare not participate in the Mfengu celebrations one umu-Xhosa said, 'this is a painful and unforgettable day when the Mfengu betrayed the Xhosa and sold them to the whites'.⁶⁶ When the war commenced, the Mfengus resolved that;

- (a) they would not take part in the British invasion of the colony,
- (b) 'as far as possible the Fingo shall defend and protect the English missionaries and traders,
- (c) 'the Mfengus shall be the nightly bearers of letters from Mr. Ayliff to the commander of the British forces, giving information of the state of Kaffirland'.⁶⁷

Therefore, as far as the Mfengus in Langa were concerned, it was worthwhile for them to commemorate the day they were liberated from the "tyranny" of the Xhosa-speaking people. For the Xhosa-speaking people, it was a sensitive matter to dig into such a "dark past", hence the alleged "tribal" animosity it would engender.

What made the formation of the Langa Mfengu Memorial Association peculiar, was that it did not receive the blessings and approval of a Kentane Attorney, Mr. H.S.E.

63.A.Webster, 'An Examination of the "Fingo Emancipation" of 1835', Africa Seminar, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 2 May 1990), 1

64.Ayliff and Whiteside,

65.Webster, 'An Examination of the "Fingo Emancipation"',1

66.Cited in Wilson and Mafeje, LANGA, 36.

67.Ayliff and Whiteside, History of the Abambo, 24.

Bikitsha, the General-Secretary of the Mfengu Day Memorial Celebrations.⁶⁸ The General-Secretary dissociated himself and his organisation from the one in Langa. Mr. Bikitsha also took a swipe at the Langa Mfengu Association's "Yellow Circular"⁶⁹, which is said to have contained language offensive to the Xhosa. Bikitsha's attack read in part:

One cannot but deplore the offending intemperate and probably unwarrantable language in which the Cape Town Fingos sought to support their application for permission to observe the Fingo Day at Langa.....⁷⁰

While Bikitsha's response should not be construed to mean that he was totally opposed to the formation of such an association, his castigation vindicates the concern of the Vigilance Association, the Advisory Board and other residents about possible animosity in Langa. Despite these objections, the Native Affairs Committee of the City Council, on the advice of the Manager of Langa, authorised the first inaugural celebrations on 14 May with the proviso that, the celebrations would be restricted to the set objectives when the association was formed.⁷¹ Although the first and subsequent celebrations took place without incidents, ~~the seeds of mistrust~~ between the Ama-Xhosa and the Mfengus were sown.

While the formation of the Mfengu Association caused a sensation, it is striking to note that when the Ama-Xhosa chose 14 March 1944 as the day of observing the St. Ntsikana Memorial Celebrations there does not seem to have been any noticeable objections from the Mfengus. But there is no doubt that the Ntsikana Celebrations were begun in response and opposition to the Mfengu Memorial Celebrations. St. Ntsikana was revered by the Ama-Xhosa as their first Christian and who urged his

68. The Bantu Forum, 'Inkundla Ya Bantu', 30 June 1943.

69. It is not clear what exactly was said in the "Circular". the document does not exist and my informants do not remember what it said.

70. The Bantu Forum, 30 June 1943.

71. CA, AWC 3/26/228

people to accept Christianity and to educate their children.⁷² The Ntsikana Memorial Organisation was noted for its special fulfilment of the latter aspect. It created a Fund for a scholarship to be awarded to enable deserving students irrespective of "tribal" or ethnic origin to proceed with higher education.⁷³ On the day of the celebration the national outlook of the Ntsikana Organisation was emphasised. What also made the Ntsikana Ceremony less ethnic-oriented was that, generally all the ministers of all the congregations were on the Commemoration Committee as they regarded this as a religious event. The Rev. Lediga, for example, of the Presbyterian Church was a Pedi and spoke Sotho. Church ministers were known to say about the Ceremony; 'We feel that it represents all Bantudom'.⁷⁴ This outlook gave it a more national than a sectarian outlook.

Rogers seems to have accepted the formation of the Xhosa organisation with considerable equanimity, save for his uncertainty as to whether it would not be receptive to the political influence of the A.N.C. This was so because the Rev. J.A. Calata (of the Cradock Anglican Church), who was the president of the National Committee of the Ntsikana Day Celebrations, happened to be the President of the Cape African Congress.⁷⁵ At the 13 April 1947 celebrations held in the Methodist Church, Rev. Calata is said, by Rogers, to have devoted the major part of his speech to proposals to send delegates to the United Nations Organisation as was being done by the Indian community. Rogers did not take this lightly, because he feared that these organisations might be used as political platforms.⁷⁶

Although the Ntsikana Organisation seemed to be all-inclusive, there were strong under-currents of Mfengu-Xhosa conflict in the Langa community. This conflict permeated through the churches. For instance, the Presbyterian Church of South

72. J.B. Peires, The House of Phalo: A History of the Xhosa People in the days of their Independence, (Johannesburg, 1981), 74.

73. CA, AWC 3/49/229.

74. Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 113.

75. CA, AWC 3/49/229

76. CA, AWC 3/49/229

Africa was affected. Membership of the church dropped. Rev. S.P.Lediga, attributed this to the arrogance of the Xhosa who regarded themselves as 'the true rulers of the country and despise and hate the Fingos as traitors to the land'.⁷⁷ In the church these two groups did not cooperate. For example, Xhosa elders did not bother about the welfare of the Mfengus under them, and the reverse was the case. Only the arrival of Rev. Lediga, who was a Pedi and acted impartially, was a bridge between the widening chasm between the Xhosa and the Mfengu.⁷⁸

In the Seventh Day Adventist Church, although there was not much friction between the Mfengus and the Xhosa, there was still "a little of it". During church elections, Xhosa members in the church tended to vote for Xhosas, on the one hand, and the Mfengus preferred to vote for Mfengus, on the other.⁷⁹ In other congregations there were under-currents of this conflict but they did not in any way have a deleterious effect on church activities.⁸⁰

Although we saw above that inter-ethnic marriages played an important role in the Langa community, there were exceptions to this rule. Some parents did not allow inter-ethnic marriages as they felt strongly about the Mfengu-Xhosa cleavage. Some Xhosa parents felt that it was an act of self-denigration for their children to marry among the Mfengus as they believed that the latter were a "low tribe".⁸¹ As a general observation, one does get from the fore-going, the impression that it was always the Ama-Xhosa who taunted and villified the Mfengus rather than vice-versa.

77.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 24.

78.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 24.

79.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 47.

80.Hammond-Tooke, 'Six Native Churches', 101.

81.Levin, 'Marriage in Langa', 30.

THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER'S "DIVIDE AND RULE" POLICY.

Some of the cleavages in Langa were brought about by Mr. Rogers in his capacity as the Manager of Administration. Acting like a typical Location Superintendent described in Chapter 1, Rogers was prone to using "divide and rule" tactics to get his way through the community. He was in the habit of exploiting the already existing structural division between the migrants/bachelors and the married people, playing off one against the other. He had a very patronising attitude towards the migrants in the Main Barracks. He seemed uncomfortable with the idea that the Advisory Board or the Vigilance Association genuinely and correctly represented the view-point of the migrants, preferring to by-pass these bodies and directly communicating with the migrants. This conduct was predicated upon his perception of migrants as "uneducated"⁸², "ignorant people",⁸³ and therefore gullible. Such a division and other forms of conflict might have evidently existed but a striking feature about the Langa residents was their intense sensitivity, if not suspicion, and ready reaction to forces that threatened to divide them.

An illuminating example of this behaviour is the cause of the outbreak of a riot in Langa in March 1947. The major cause of the riot was the proposal that a municipal beerhall should be erected for the use of all the men in the bachelor quarters in Langa. By the beginning of 1947, there still was no beerhall in place. It was the Municipality's strong conviction that the bachelors desperately needed a beerhall. Assuming that the bachelors were being inhibited from making a decision by those residents who enjoyed the privilege of domestic brewing, Mr. Rogers convened a meeting at the Main Barracks on Sunday, March 9, 1947, to discuss the beerhall question.⁸⁴

He pointed out that the choice was theirs to make, whether they wanted the beerhall or not. But he emphasised that:

82.CA, AWC 3/26/228, Rogers' letter to Citashe, 21 April 1943.

83.MA, MP BC579 A24.593, Rogers' letter to D.B.Molteno, 10 May 1944.

84.The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

Protests from the married quarters should not force the bachelors to oppose something beneficial to themselves, as since 1940 he had received numerous requests from bachelors that a beerhall should be opened.⁸⁵

Rogers' audience of about 200 bachelors was quick to detect his covert intention to divide the bachelors and the married people. One of the bachelors stood up and majestically demanded an explanation from the Manager as to

why the Advisory Board had not been consulted about this matter, who were the bachelors who had asked him to open a beerhall, and why a decision was being forced upon them before they had had an opportunity of discussing the problem fully.⁸⁶

Responding to the speaker Rogers stubbornly said that there was no need to speechify. What he wanted was a straight reply to his question. The crowd was all the more incensed by Mack Mngongo who stood up and charged that the bachelors were wasting their time by arguing, because 'if the City Council wanted a beerhall they would get a beerhall, and there was nothing the Langa residents could do about it'.⁸⁷ Rightly or wrongly, the bachelors construed what he had said to mean that he endorsed what the Manager had said, and pandemonium broke out. This led to a "disturbance" in which people used sticks to hit Mngongo until he was rescued by the police. The Manager, again, insultingly remarked that he would not talk to "hooligans".⁸⁸

This incident angered the Langa residents in general, who attended a meeting in "their thousands" later that day under the banner of the Anti-Pass Committee, the Vigilance Association and the Communist Party. At this meeting the beerhall scheme was condemned "root and branch", and the Manager was reprimanded for his overall conduct. In the evening a riot broke out and people shouted; "No beer hall", "smash the kitchens", "down with the superintendent".⁸⁹

85. The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

86. The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

87. The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

88. The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

89. The Guardian, 13 March 1947.

At a trial held in October 1947 at the Wynberg Court, at which 13 out of 19 Langa residents were acquitted, the Magistrate Mr.C.H.Cloete ruled that

there was not the slightest doubt that the cause of the trouble was the meeting called by the superintendent, Mr. Rogers. The people resented the way in which Rogers had handled the question of a beer hall.⁹⁰

The Manager's conduct and the consequences of what it led to, point to a number of factors which enhance our understanding of the community-cleavage balance in Langa. The Langa bachelors were part of a community to which they were tied by many inter-relationships and to use the beerhall as a divisive instrument, regardless of the rationale behind it, was bound to be a non-starter. The bachelors' response to Rogers' disproved his stereotypic perception that they were a gullible lot. The bachelors, like any other bona fide resident of Langa, were acutely aware of the unbridled contempt with which the Native Affairs Committee and the Langa Administration held the Advisory Board.⁹¹ They, therefore, conceived Rogers' by-passing of the Advisory Board not only as unprocedural but as seeking to divide the community into two hostile camps. In the same vein, to them Rogers represented a system which had seen them move from pillar to post through the system of forced removals and rigid controls since 1901 and it seems there was no reason for them to trust him then. Lastly, the Magistrate's verdict and the apportionment of all the blame for the riot on the Manager was a victory for the Langa community. It also underscored that collective communal action could be a major force to reckon with.

No sooner had the crisis he had caused ended than did Mr.Rogers resume his unpopular tactics. He decided to introduce mobile food vans from which "inmates" of the North and Main Barracks could buy foodstuffs.⁹² He approached two members of the Advisory Board for the Barracks (North and Main) on 18 August 1947 and tried to

90.The Guardian, 23 October 1947.

91.see Chapter 4

92.CA, AWC 3/72/44, Memorandum from Mr. B.Mctiyala, secretary of Vig. Assoc. to the Town Clerk, 21 Aug.1947.

discuss the issue with them. But the two Board members refused to discuss the matter until the other four Board members had also been consulted. Concerned about the divisive approach of the Township Manager, the Advisory Board convened a meeting to consider Roger's new idea. Instead of discussing the matter with him the Board registered its displeasure about the way the Manager had sought to obtain the people's views, by taking the matter straight to the Native Affairs Committee. But Mr. Rogers told the Board that he would have his way and enforce his intentions as he chose.⁹³

The inmates of the North and Main Barracks did not take the Manager's conduct lightly particularly his "divide and rule" system which he has been using all along'. At a meeting convened by the the Board to report the Manager's intended use of deliberate force to the bachelors of the Barracks. The bachelors passed emotionally charged resolutions which demonstrated their disapproval of the Manager's management competence. In one such resolution they condemned the "Hitlerism habits of Mr. Rogers", as was evidenced by his, 'deliberate and persistent clashes with the residents of Langa, his unwarranted ideas to enforce his intentions and his frequent undesirable attitude and also his deadly action towards the residents of Langa'.⁹⁴

The inmates of the bachelor quarters resolved that the Mayor Mr. A. Bloomberg, Mr. D.B. Molteno and the Native Affairs Committee as well as Mr Rogers should all be invited to attend a meeting in Langa at the Main Barracks on 24 August where Langa residents would ventilate their grievances and also "give their final decision to Mr. Rogers" employers in person and in their presence'. The actual words that were used do capture the anxiety and mood of that moment. The bachelors demanded, 'Ntshinga, bring us the men who have hired Mr. Rogers, we wish to talk to them personally but you Ntshinga must also be there'.⁹⁵ They also claimed that, by so doing, they wanted to avert a recrudescence of the violent disturbances that had occurred in March.

93. CA AWC 3/72/44

94. CA, AWC 3/72/44, Memo, Mctiyala to Town Clerk.

95. CA, AWC 3/72/44, Memo, Mctiyala to Town Clerk.

Again the Manager's "divide and rule" system of management had moved the community to yet another potentially explosive situation. The bachelors' negative response to the Manager's proposal for the introduction of mobile food vans was not just an impulsive one. This, to them, was reminiscent of incidents in 1943 and 1944 when the municipality outlawed the selling of foodstuffs by women traders in an attempt to force bachelors to utilise the Eating House which it had taken over from African traders.⁹⁶ They were also not allowed to do their own cooking. Whenever conditions to cater for themselves were relaxed, certain prohibitive regulations which effectively nullified that limited freedom, were introduced.

For example, the Manager decided in 1944 that Barracks residents would have to buy tickets for 3d. at his Office as was done in the Married Quarters.⁹⁷ This was impossible, as the bachelors retorted, because most of them worked all day and did not have wives to send to buy tickets as did those in the Married Quarters.⁹⁸ Mobile food vans were, therefore, an attempt to force people to refrain from self-catering but to buy from the Council-owned food vans, just as in the case of the Eating House.

What also made the mobile food van issue reminiscent of the Eating House scheme is how it was going to affect relations amongst the bachelors themselves as had happened in the past. There were, obviously, those few bachelors who were in favour of buying food from the Eating House who fell victim to those who chose to boycott the municipal service. In May 1944, at a meeting convened by the Advisory Board, people were advised not to buy food from the Council's kitchen and that "anyone attempting to do so should be prevented".⁹⁹ Those who did were attacked by 'gangs of men who went to purchase food at the kitchen were set upon by gangs of men armed with bars of

96. see Chapter 3

97. MA, MP BC579 A24. 591, Rogers' memo to Molteno, 4 May 1944.

98. MA, MP BC579 A24. 592, Molteno's reply to Rogers, 6 May 1944.

99. MA, MP BC579 A24. 591, Rogers to Molteno.

iron, sticks and other dangerous weapons', if Mr.Rogers' account was anything to go by.¹⁰⁰

This discussion has demonstrated that although there were internal divisions among the Langa residents, they were not that too deep to undermine collective action. Their sensitivity to official divisive tendencies, predicated upon their internal structural divisions, demonstrates a high level of community growth and consciousness.

100.MA, MP BC579 A24. 591, Rogers to Molteno.

CHAPTER SIX

POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND ACTIVITY IN LANGA: 1935-1948

From 1935, there was a significant shift in the levels of political organisation in Langa. Whereas, political organisation had hitherto been a localised affair, with the local leadership, in the form of the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Association, forming the vanguard of community-based protest, future protests found organised expression through the increasing participation of political parties in the affairs of Langa. Without necessarily supplanting the leadership of Langa, political organisations, especially the NLL, the ANC and the CPSA chose to work with and through the local leadership in order to make their political programmes more acceptable to the target constituency. This, obviously, added a new dimension to the nature of popular protest in Langa. This new brand of protest was met with an intensified form of State repression. The emergence and dynamics of this new ideology of popular protest was the result of the amalgamation of the "inherent" and "derived" ideas as enunciated by Rude.¹

This chapter demonstrates how these ideas were synthesised and produced a distinct ideology of protest which found Langa carving for itself a niche in national politics. This objective sounds as though there were rigid time-boundaries when these localised struggles took place without any "external" influence in the form of political organisations. In the case of Langa this is definitely the case. The evidence available suggests that for most of the protest activities that took place in Langa up to 1935, there was very little, if any, occasional "interference" by political parties in these protests. The preceding chapters bear testimony to this assertion. But after 1935, community-based protest action fluidly transmuted into national politics. In other words, what one sees after 1935, is that process of fusion between the "inherent" and "derived" elements, which Rude wrote about. The absence of party political activity, could be

1.G.Rude, Ideology and Popular Protest, (New York, 1980),

explained by the fact that the two prominent organisations, the ANC and the CPSA, were both in abeyance.

The Western Cape ANC, had in the late 1920's and early 1930's been caught up in ideological power struggles between the conservative and reactionary "Professor" James Thaele, president of the ANC (Western Cape), and the militants Bransby Ndobe, the Provincial Secretary, and Elliot Tonjeni who concentrated their activities in the rural districts of the Western Cape.²

The power struggle usurped the energies of the political leadership so much that campaigns and organisations at the grassroots were neglected. At no other time could a political party, sympathetic to the urban African people in Langa, have gained more political clout than at the time of the widespread opposition against forced removals from Ndabeni to Langa. But none of them took advantage of that. By the end of 1930, the arrest of the leaders of the radical movement, under the Riotous Assemblies Act, paralysed the ANC in the Western Cape.³ The central ANC's loose grip on its Provincial branches, which Dr. A .B. Xuma (ANC President) reversed from 1940, also partly explains this apparent dormancy.

Because Langa was inextricably linked with Cape Town, and political organisations straddled between the two centres, we will consider their activities in Langa in relation to, or in conjunction with, Cape Town where necessary.

2.P.Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa: The African National Congress 1912-1952, (London, 1970).

3.E.Roux, Time Longer Than Rope: A History of the Blackman's Struggle For Freedom in South Africa, (Madison, 1964). 240.

PART ONE

THE NATIONAL LIBERATION LEAGUE OF SOUTH AFRICA

At the time when the ANC and the CPSA were in a slumber, a predominantly Coloured organisation, the NLL was formed in December 1935, and led by Mrs. Cissie Z. Gool, the youngest daughter of Dr. Abdurahman (leader of African Political Organisation (APO)), James La Guma, Johnny Gomas and Goolam Gool (Cissie's brother-in-law).⁴ This new organisation was to become increasingly involved in the local affairs of Langa. The NLL was not necessarily launched to fill the hiatus created by the lacklustre organisations, but it was a break-away from the African Political Organisation (APO), by a "new and self-conscious Coloured intelligentsia". In fact, it became the new home for Communist Party leaders, e.g. Gomas and La Guma who had been expelled firstly from Clement Kadalie's Industrial Commercial Union (ICU) and secondly, from the Western Cape ANC by Thaele in 1930.⁵

The formation of the NLL is noted for its inherent ideological tensions in its leadership structure. There were two factions which nevertheless managed to coalesce an uneasy relationship. One faction was led by Cissie Gool and the other one by her husband's brother, Dr. Goolam H.Gool. The latter was a "purist faction" which did not want any form of participation in the "dummy" political institutions established under Hertzog's 1936 Native Acts. The former was influenced by the communists, especially Gomas. Cissie Gool's faction advocated a working class alliance between blacks and whites and the use of strikes, boycotts and mass action to achieve their objectives.⁶ Even with such divergent ideological pursuits, the NLL managed to survive. But Cissie Gool who, for a better part of the NLL's existence remained its president, strove to recruit Africans to her organisation.

4.I Goldin, Making Race: The Politics and economics of Coloured Identity in South Africa, (Cape Town, 1987)

5.G.Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall: A History of South African Coloured Politics, (Cape Town, 1987), 179.

6.Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall, 181.

The NLL rejected the strategies and tactics of the already established Coloured organisations and their parochial emphasis or definition of a Coloured exclusive identity. Instead, they opted for a wider black and working-class alliance, the use of mass action in the form of strikes, demonstrations, and boycotts to realise their goals of complete equality.⁷ In practice however, the NLL, like APO, employed the well worn-out constitutional methods of struggle. These were deputations, resolutions, court action, petitions and the election of its own candidates to central and local governmental public institutions. Nowhere else amongst all of its branches in the Western Cape did the NLL demonstrate its tenacious commitment to the use of such methods of struggle than in Langa. Where the NLL differed fundamentally from APO was its hatred of the latter's emphasis on the social separation of black and white. The NLL emphasised the need for the freedom of all black people in South Africa. It had as its main objective the attainment of total democracy because of its belief that black South Africans had to go through the "democratic stage of their history".⁸ The NLL publicised its activities in its branches (which numbered 29 at the beginning of Nov. 1939)⁹ through its official organ, which was always inserted in the the CPSA-aligned newspaper, The Guardian. It also used the Liberator for campaign purposes and included articles which implored unity among the black working-class .¹⁰

It was with such objectives in mind, that the NLL established a branch in Langa with Mr.A.Ndlwana as its Chairman and Mr. William Ndunyana, as Secretary. Mr. Ndunyana a few years later became a prominent member of the CPSA and also served on the portfolios of the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Committee.¹¹ The NLL was especially prominent in 1939 and 1941 when it harnessed the people's discontent over the failure of the authorities to redress their grievances. It fizzled out in 1943 because

7.Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall, 180.

8.Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall, 185.

9.The Guardian, 'Liberation League Page', 3 November 1939.

10.Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall, 185.

11.Kingwill, 'The African National Congress in the Western Cape', 28.

of its own internal divisions. There was a clear-cut realisation that mass political interest in the NLL could only be aroused by dealing with those specific issues that constituted an immediate concern to the Langa residents. Thus, the Langa branch was formed at a time when there were mounting grievances concerning living conditions in Langa.

The NLL's ebullient interest in Langa was necessitated by a waning popularity among its Coloured supporters, especially the elite. Gavin Lewis made the observation that although the NLL had successfully mobilised the Coloured elites against the residential segregation measures which tinkered with their privileged material rights, there was nothing left afterwards to sustain their interest in the NLL. He went further to say, quite justifiably, that after 1939, Cissie Gool extensively immersed herself and her organisation in social welfare and upliftment matters to keep the NLL's popularity buoyant.¹²

It is against this scenario that one of the crucial issues the NLL tried to articulate for the Langa residents, to the Native Affairs Committee of the City Council, was the shortage of African housing and the appalling conditions under which a good number of people resided. Following a visit by the executive leaders of the League to Langa, in mid-September 1939, 'to inspect conditions under which our African comrades live', a letter was dispatched to the Town Clerk's office emphasising the advisability of not only improving the appalling housing conditions in Langa but also of taking drastic steps to solve the critical housing shortage for Africans in Cape Town as a whole.¹³ But such appeals were nothing new. The Advisory Board and the Vigilance Association had, over the years tried all but in vain, to bring to the Council's awareness the critical housing shortage and its attendant hardships. Even the Council needed no reminder about this because the crisis was undeniably manifest. All that the NLL got from the Town Clerk was a reply that the Native Affairs Committee was

12. Lewis, Between the Wire and the Wall, 194.

13. The Guardian, 'Liberation League Page', 29 September 1939.

acutely and 'fully aware of the position of Native Housing in Cape Town, and an endeavour is being made to provide additional accommodation' at Langa.¹⁴ Further to this, the NLL was requested to send a deputation at its request to have an interview with the Native Affairs Committee Sub-committee.

Although it was radical in principle, the NLL chose the path of dialogue with the Council authorities. It accordingly, selected a deputation comprising Mrs. Gool, Mrs. Kobese, Messrs. Booker Lakay (General-Secretary), Morley-Turner (Assistant Secretary), Ho Ho, Nhlyana and Ndunyana (NLL, Langa Branch Secretary). Top in their package of grievances for discussion were housing issues, and these demands were, (i) the provision of additional blocks of lavatories at Langa; (ii) repairs to leakages, cracks in walls, and new floors; and (iii) rent reduction and an addition of more but improved houses. They also intended to discuss other general, but equally important, issues such as (a) that there was no resident doctor (the doctor was only available during day time at 10.a.m. or after 3.p.m.)¹⁵ ; (b) that there was no trained African nurse and (c) that there was only one mid-wife for the whole of Langa; (d) a demand that the Langa Advisory Board Secretary had to be an African as from 1940; and (e) why African municipal employees, the cleaners, got different pay from Cape Town coloured employees doing the same work.¹⁶

At the end of October 1939, the NLL deputation was granted audience by the Native Affairs Sub-committee, and the above grievances were aired. The 'committee were surprised to learn how bad are the conditions at Langa'.¹⁷ In spite of the promise by the Sub-committee to visit Langa itself, which did not mean much in real terms, the NLL took pride in the communication it had made with the local government authorities and what it had done for the people of Langa. A general comment to that effect in its official mouthpiece, the "Liberation League Page", said:

14. The Guardian, 29 September, 1939.

15. The Guardian, 29 September, 1939.

16. The Guardian, 'Liberation League Page', 13 October 1939.

17. The Guardian, 'Liberation League Page', 27 October 1939.

Together with the members of the Langa branch we have been patiently working day and night to obtain better living conditions for the people of Langa. Inspections, investigation and personal contact with the people have revealed a situation which is a disgrace to a civilised community. We have utilised every means at our disposal to show the public how detrimental it is in their own interests to allow conditions such as exist in Langa.¹⁸

It is clear from the above propaganda statement that the NLL's objectives, at least in this respect, were to get involved in the community affairs of Langa and increasing the people's awareness of how to respond to their condition. In the process, they hoped to gain popularity, which the organisation desperately needed to prove that it was a bona fide non-racial political movement. Whilst it may have been quite genuine about its willingness to help its African constituency by attending to its grievances, this raises questions about the tactics the NLL applied which had previously yielded very little results. For an organisation whose leadership was renowned for its radical outspokenness, it seems astonishing that they could have employed the same worn-out tactics for which it had severely, at the time of its formation, criticised other Coloured organisations. In effect what it simply did was to supplement the already existing civic structures in Langa without substantially and fundamentally changing the method of struggle.

Before the end of 1938, a 50 000 pound loan had been granted for the general development of Langa Native Location Fund and for the provision of accommodation for Africans in the Municipality. The Superintendent of Langa Mr. Rogers, had subsequently submitted a package of reforms which the loan had to cover. These changes were:

- (1) the installation of ceilings at the men's Special Quarters;
- (2) making alterations and improvements to the barracks;
- (3) the construction of a bakery at the Main and North Barracks;

18. The Guardian, 27 October 1939.

- (4) the alteration of eating houses which existed then at the Main and North Barracks;
and
(5) 3-roomed houses for men.

There is no evidence to suggest that these improvements were made necessary at the instigation of the NLL deputation and yet it claimed to have won some concessions from the City Council.¹⁹ The fact of the matter is that, Langa was built in phases and was supposed to accommodate an official figure of 5 000 persons only. White rate-payers who ratified the loans for the further expansion of Langa used to pressurise the City Council into ensuring that more accommodation was provided for the Africans who "illegally" resided in the city centre. I would argue that it was only a coincidence as plans were already afoot to work on this that when the NLL deputation met the Native Affairs sub-committee, there was an unbinding promise that their demands would receive attention. As a result, the NLL stated confidently in the Liberation League Page that, 'The League will not cease to press for the fulfilment of all its demands regarding living conditions at Langa'.²⁰ Such statements which indicated a serious commitment to the affairs of Langa were, undoubtedly, designed to win the hearts of the residents.

The NLL's practice of assuming the role of the Langa residents' mouthpiece was in conflict with the provisions of the Natives (Urban Areas) Act which stipulated that there should be, in every location or township, an advisory board which would serve as a communication link between local government authorities and the residents. The mere fact that a political organisation, the NLL, had assumed the role of the Advisory Board seemed to suggest that the nominal of the latter had been usurped. Following the NLL's meeting in October 1939, with the Native Affairs Sub-committee, the Acting Town Clerk of the City Council informed the General Secretary of the NLL that, 'representations on behalf of the residents of Langa will only be recognised by the Native Affairs Committee of the Council if they are submitted by the Advisory Board'.²¹

19. The Guardian, 27 October 1939.

20. The Guardian, 27 October 1939.

21. The Guardian, 29 December 1939.

Although there is no evidence to suggest this, one can justly surmise that the Municipality was not at all enthused by the prospect of a political party volunteering to represent the Africans. The Council must have become suspicious of the real intentions of the NLL.

In order to legitimise its role without losing its influence in Langa the NLL chose to use the same structure, the Advisory Board for that purpose. It resorted to fielding candidates, who were members of the organisation, for the Board elections in December 1939. The NLL members won the elections by a slight majority. The results were as follows:

<u>Married Quarters:</u>	<u>No. of Votes</u>
P. Peter (NLL)	48
W. Ndunyana (NLL)	46
C. Nabe	39

Main Barracks:

J. Msutu	82
M. Qongo	72

Special Quarters:

A. Zilwana (NLL)	(unopposed)
S. Bhingela (NLL)	(unopposed) ²²

This "infiltration" of the Advisory Board by the NLL does not seem to have gone down well with the City Council because it was tantamount to challenging constitutionally established structures. The League also seemed bent on "converting" all the members of the Board to its side. A month after these elections, in January 1940, the NLL lodged a strong protest with the City Council against its decision not to recognise the League as an "official mouthpiece" of the Langa residents for as long as the Advisory Board continued to exist. The League explained to the Council that its response to this

22. The Guardian, 29 December 1939.

decision was to put up candidates for the elections. The League went further to boast that:

Of the nine candidates returned, four were League candidates and two others have since joined the Langa branch. Six of the nine members are now connected with the League.²³

From the League's point of view, the fact that it commanded a majority on the Board justified its claim to being the residents' mouthpiece.

Although the Council disapproved the idea of having the NLL assuming the role of spokesmen for the Langa residents, it seems to have softened on its original stance. The Native Affairs Sub-committee met with the NLL deputation again.²⁴ But, this visit took place only after a full year had elapsed since the last meeting, from the end of October 1939 to the 17 November 1940. If this was an ample indication that the NLL had pressurised the Council into coming to Langa to have a first-hand observation of the ugly conditions obtaining there then, given the time taken by the Council to respond, it is also an ample indication that the Council took its time and acted only when it deemed it fit and opportune.

The NLL deputation was led by Mrs C.Z.Gool who happened to have been a City Councillor since 1938. The fact that she was a Councillor might have induced the Native Affairs Sub-committee, to give her and her delegation a sympathetic ear. At another level, the same fact that she was part of the municipal structure may also have influenced her organisation's use of the so-called constitutional methods of appeal.

An account of the visit per se and the conducted tour of the Township made by the delegation and the members of the Native Affairs Committee, is revealing in terms of the seriousness of the people's grievances. It also provides us with a peep-hole through

23. The Guardian, 'Liberation League Page', 19 January 1940.

24. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

which we can see why the NLL saw such grievances as a fertile ground on which to broaden their support-base among Africans.

On 17 November 1940, the party was taken around the Township by the Manager of Langa, Mr. Rogers. The party went to the North Barracks where it was discovered that the conditions in the dormitories were unhealthy, and unclean. The rooms were "terribly overcrowded" and each dormitory had 'coated, roof, walls, and bunks, with a sticky layer of sooty deposit, which came from the smoke, hung in thick clouds from the central fire-places'. They further discovered that the dormitories had no windows and the air bricks for ventilation were closed up. The floors were made of cement and were therefore very cold in winter.²⁵ Given these decrepit conditions, the lavatories outside the dormitories could not have been better than the dwelling place. The Manager's entourage also discovered that the lavatories were "an even greater blot". Cleaning water which was supposed to run through cement troughs, merely trickled, 'with the result that they are never clean and the flies collect by the million'.²⁶ The situation in the lavatories had been left to deteriorate in spite of the expert technical advice of Mr Walton Jamieson, the adviser to the Central Housing Board, who had unreservedly condemned the conditions. The Cape Town Medical Officer of Health had, in the same vein, corroborated this observation.

But the picture would not have been complete if the party had not had at least a glance at the centrally situated eating houses which the visitors described as an 'eyesore and a definite black mark in Langa'. It was discovered that the big fire-place at the centre belched clouds of smoke. 'Flies are attracted by the food and bits of carcasses from the abattoirs. The eating house itself, instead of being clean, fresh and an appetising place, is smelly, smoky and absolutely unhealthy'.²⁷

25. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

26. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

27. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

The Married Quarters did not escape the investigative eye of the municipal and NLL officials. They were stunned by the 'uncomfortably cramped space in which families of five, six and seven are expected to live in comfort and cleanliness'. Moved by such conditions, the municipal officials could only say that the original scheme of the Township was not the ideal one for the conditions existing then. They recommended that a new plan that met the laws and regulations of health and comfort had to be introduced.²⁸

The hospital, which was supposed to serve as a symbol of hygiene and cleanliness, was, apart from being under-staffed, in an equally messy state. In the wards, "there seemed to be more flies than ever". The conditions were such that babies were to be kept under cover of nets because of the swarms of flies.²⁹ This visit and the horrendous conditions which the Native Affairs Sub-committee observed served as a serious indictment on a local authority which incessantly patted itself on the back for having built a model township in the Western Cape, if not in the whole of South Africa.

After wrapping up their inspection, the Native Affairs sub-committee was more than convinced that the condition of Langa left a lot to be desired. As the comment in Liberation League Page said, there was a realisation that, 'a lot had to be done to Langa, before the Cape Town Council can boast, as they have done in the past, that Langa Location is a model location in South Africa'. The Committee recommended the disbursement of the 50 000 pound loan allocation for improvements and alterations was to be treated as an urgent matter.³⁰

There is no doubt that the NLL treated the outcome of this visit as well as the assurances made by the Committee as a victory and a vindication of the necessity for its self-assumed role of representing, working with and for the Langa residents. Encouraged by this development, the Langa Committee of the National Liberation

28. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

29. The Guardian, 1 December 1940.

30. The Guardian, 1 December, 1940.

League embarked on an aggressive recruiting drive in Langa in February 1941. It was scheduled to begin with a mass meeting in the Market Hall in Langa which was to be addressed by officials from the NLL Headquarters and officials in Langa.³¹ But before dealing with the fundamentals of the recruiting campaign itself, a brief background is necessary.

There had been campaigns before in Cape Town and additional branches had been established under the slogan "Organise Now, To-morrow will be too late".³² However, these had taken place in predominantly Coloured residential areas in, Athlone, Bellville, Belgravia, Eureka, Grassy Park, Kuils River, Rylands Estate, Surrey Estate, Oudtshoorn etc.³³ The February 1941 recruiting campaign in Langa was, however, started by invoking the people's grievances and complaints. The NLL, at the request of its branch in Langa, approached the Western Cape parliamentary representative Mr Molteno about the conduct of the police, seeking clarity on the legality of their actions in searching passengers for liquor.³⁴ The NLL decided to play on the people's indignation that had been aroused by these grievances. The League interpreted this simmering discontent to mean that there was a need for 'an active political body working together with sympathetic forces in Cape Town for protection against such abuses'.³⁵ The NLL felt that it was 'the only organisation capable of giving the leadership required'. Furthermore, it felt that a strong branch in Langa would be an indispensable complement to the endeavours of the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Committee in seeking lasting solutions to the residents' almost perennial grievances. Given the fact that the ANC and the CPSA had just started resurrecting from total moribundancy, and the incapacity of both the Advisory Board and the Vigilance Committee to act independently, the NLL was well placed to assume that organisational role which was lacking in Langa.

31. The Guardian, 20 February 1941.

32. The Guardian, 15 September, 1939.

33. The Guardian, 3 November, 1939.

34. MA, BC579 A24.55 NLL -Memorandum to Molteno, 2 Nov. 1939. See Chapter 4

35. The Guardian, 20 February 1941.

Besides playing on people's grievances, the League also sought to capitalise on the annual commemoration of the Mendi Tragedy in which hundreds of African troops aboard the Mendi ship drowned when it capsized on its way to France to help in the war effort in 1917. The NLL regarded the Memorial gathering that was to be organised by the Committee of Langa Church Ministers in February 1941 as an opportune occasion, 'for working African sentiments in order to arouse war fever, which is conspicuously absent in Langa', notwithstanding the fact that the gathering was a solemn occasion when people demonstrated their 'respect for their heroic brothers and of faith in their own courage and loyalty to their people'.³⁶

There is no evidence which indicates how this campaign proceeded. Nor is it clear how the political activities of the NLL in Langa faded. But this can be attributed to the fact that, faced by an immediate concern, it diverted most of its attention to the increasing threat of Fascism to South Africa in 1943 as well as the increasing discrimination against Coloureds by the Government. At a time when the popularity of the NLL in the township was at a low ebb, Langa became the hub of the political revival of the ANC and the CPSA.

PART TWO

The Significance of Langa Township in the Resurrection of the ANC and the CPSA in the Late 1930's and 1940's.

Langa Township served as a political catchment area also for the ANC and the CPSA. It was a crucial linchpin for the resurrection and the eventual ascendance to prominence

³⁶. The Guardian, 20 February 1941.

of the ANC and CPSA in the 1940s. But surprisingly, little is known about the centrality of such "little" places like Langa in the resurgence of these organisations. The dovetailing of social and political issues with shrewd party political leadership produced a formidable ideology of popular protest.

Although the ANC and the CPSA remained as separate entities, the revival of the ANC in Langa and Cape Town demonstrates the existence of a symbiotic relationship between itself and the CPSA, particularly at the leadership level. It was particularly the CPSA which, because of a lack of a large following, needed the ANC. In 1937 there was a realisation by the CPSA that the ANC had been in existence for a long time and was therefore the only organisation that commanded a broad support-base. The communists chose, therefore, to work for the rebuilding of the ANC.³⁷ This new thinking which, in essence, was a compromise between its relationship as a class party with other national liberation movements, was necessitated by the expulsions of Communists, in the 1930's, from Thaele's Western Cape ANC. From then on, there was no CPSA activity until about 1939, when its headquarters was transferred to Cape Town and fell under the leadership of Mr.Moses Kotane who had returned to Cape Town from Johannesburg in 1937. As its national secretary, Kotane was instrumental in the CPSA's revival.³⁸ Kotane, thus became an embodiment of the co-operation between the ANC and the CPSA.

The Revival of the ANC

The main task that Mr.Kotane undertook initially was the revival of the ANC in Cape Town and the surrounding areas. In this exercise, he was assisted by a coterie of ANC stalwarts, namely Joseph Nkatlo, Wilson Tsikiwe, Johnson Ngwevela and Julius Malangabi (both of Langa), Ngwenya, Sebela, Ndimande, Setloho, Msila and James Dambaza Chikerema (a Zimbabwean, who became a prominent nationalist leader

37.B.Bunting, Moses Kotane: South African Revolutionary. A Political Biography, (London, 1975), 83.

38.T.Karis and G.M.Carter, From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964, vol.2 (California, 1973), 108.

during Zimbabwe's independence struggle). These men successfully established ANC branches in Cape Town, Langa, the Cape Flats, Blaauwlei, Paarl, Simonstown, Worcester and Stellenbosch.³⁹ In reconstituting the organisation, Kotane and his colleagues were wary not to repeat the same blunder of leaving out the grassroots membership as had been done by the previous ANC leadership. By building the party from below they hoped to have an intensive as well as an extensive membership activity and participation in the decision-making process.⁴⁰

In February 1939 the central branch of the ANC in Cape Town (with its offices at 73 Francis Street), led by its chairman Moses Kotane, T.C.Kumalo, the treasurer, and Joseph Nkatlo, the secretary, dispatched a campaign programme that was published in The Guardian. The programme was notable for its apologetic tone for the ANC's past mistakes and an appeal to move forward. The programme also noted the incapacity of the old ANC to lead the people in organised protest. It read, in part:

Big political, social and economic questions are "settled" without any organised protest from us... This Committee feels that the time has when the Africans must be up and going.⁴¹

The programme contained an elaborate list of eleven points which had a social appeal to the African petty bourgeoisie, the African worker, and even the lumpen class in Cape Town. The central branch promised to do some of the following;

(i) to present the people's grievances to the responsible authorities and to get them redressed; (ii) to fight for the abolition of the Pass system; (iii) for the inclusion of the African workers under the Industrial Conciliation Act as other workers (this was in reference to white workers); (iv) for the right of Africans to buy and hold land on individual system of tenure in rural and urban areas; for the right of Africans to do trade and business where they desired and (v) for better housing and improved sanitary conditions in Langa and to fight for the abolition of the barrack system. The ANC vowed to work for the annulment of (a) the Native's Representation Act; (b) the Native

39. Bunting, Moses Kotane, 87.

40. Bunting, Moses Kotane,

41. The Guardian, 24 February, 1939.

Laws Amendment Act and (c) the Colour Bar Act. Lastly, it promised to strive for co-operation between itself and other non-European organisations. For the first time, here was a serious attempt by the ANC in Cape Town to take charge of the people's mundane problems.

But unlike the NLL, the ANC central branch committee did not restrict itself to issues of a local character, such as the people's grievances only. It aroused in people a sense national consciousness by reminding them that

the time has come when Africans must be prepared to do real work and make real sacrifices for their national emancipation. The road to emancipation is hard, full of trials, failures and misunderstandings. But these obstacles could be overcome and be turned into stepping stones.⁴²

In March of 1939, Joseph Nkatlo reminded the Africans in Cape Town that it was only through joining Congress and rendering it their moral and financial support that would make the organisation ' a force to be respected in Africa and beyond the seas'.⁴³ During the campaign great stress was laid on reinvigorating the organisation by forgetting the mistakes and weaknesses of the past by the provisional leadership of the ANC, Provisional President, A.V. Coto; Moses Kotane; Stephen Olifant; Mr. Msila and Joseph Nkatlo. Kotane was on record as stirringly appealing to the African people to become members of Congress. At a campaign rally in the Congregational Hall, 102 Harrington Street in Cape Town in June 1939 he emphasised the importance of unity as the bottomline to the resurrection of a formidable organisation. This could only be achieved if people "quit their petty bickerings" and if they stopped 'brooding over the mistakes of the past and to start afresh as a united people against the forces of reaction'.⁴⁴

The Cape Town Branch of the African National Congress wasted no time in taking the lead in championing the cause of its African constituency. In a strongly worded letter

42. The Guardian, 10 March, 1939.

43. The Guardian, 10 March, 1939.

44. The Guardian, 23 June, 1939.

to the Cape Town City Council, in August 1939, the ANC protested against the Council's expulsion of Africans residing within the precincts of the City boundaries. The ANC pointed out that such treatment precipitated alarm and agitation within the African community in the Cape Peninsula. The ANC also spoke for the bourgeoisie landlords, who were prosecuted for renting out accommodation to African tenants. The organisation condemned such action as an act of "callousness and dastardliness and highly un-Christian".⁴⁵ The ANC found it rather disturbing that while landlords were prosecuted for the above reason, those Africans who had struggled to get temporary shelter in the city were also prosecuted.

The Council, argued the ANC, did not take cognizance of the fact that there was little accommodation at Langa for married people. It went further to lambast the Council for providing unmarried Africans at Langa with barrack accommodation which was "not fit for human habitation", never mind the demoralising effect this had on the tenants. The letter implicitly hinted at the organisation's concern with class by pointing out that, some of the people living in the barracks had progressed and were too decent to live there.⁴⁶

The nature and style of accommodation at Langa and above all the entire concept of racially motivated residential segregation tended to obliterate "class divisions" among Africans at Langa. Even those Africans who had successfully ascended the economic ladder, and could, therefore, afford to buy a better house elsewhere or build or extend a house in Langa could not do so as it was against the law. It is this voiceless type of African that the ANC spoke for to the Council. This was a curiously class-based approach which the ANC displayed indicating that it hardly represented the workers only.

45. The Guardian, 11 August, 1939.

46. The Guardian, 11 August, 1939.

This, it can be said, was the first serious attempt by the ANC to deal with the bread and butter issues that affected the urban Africans. What one finds striking about this is the apparent lack of cooperation between the ANC and the NLL in dealing with such issues. Both were dealing with more or less the same issues, at the same time, using the same tactics of protest, and campaigning and recruiting among the same people but in different ways. In terms of strategy, the forging of a united front between the two organisations might have made a significant difference and impact on the Council. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the socio-economic conditions and changes that obtained in Langa and Cape Town were very important for the ANC in that they provided a concentrated mass organisational basis for political activity and political revival.

There is an assumption which has falsely become a historical fact. The resurrection in the fortunes of the ANC is a process which some historians say, began in the 1940s with the accession of Dr.A.B.Xuma to the presidency of the organisation.⁴⁷ The point is rarely made that this process had already begun in the Western Cape in 1939 led by Moses Kotane and his colleagues. They put ANC back on track so much that when Xuma was elected the organisation had already been transmogrified. So it was that, in recognition of the popularity of the ANC as mass based organisation in Langa and Cape Town, the CPSA which was seeking a political home in order to have a grassroots following or appeal, transferred its headquarters from Johannesburg to Cape Town in 1939.⁴⁸ The ANC in Johannesburg was still too dormant to provide the CPSA with a reliable mass base.⁴⁹ Further to this, Kotane, who had not relinquished his membership of the CP, during its nadir, was elected as the General-Secretary of the CPSA in 1939. As the two organisations had resolved to work together, he did not subordinate his loyalty to the other party.

47.Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, 24; see also Karis and Carter, From Protest to Challenge, vol.2, 72.

48.Karis and Carter, From Protest to Challenge, vol.2, 108.

49.Bunting, Moses Kotane, 87.

Like the ANC, the CPSA went through a period of regeneration and ran its own separate campaign programme from the ANC. Instead of engaging in a revolutionary struggle to attain its historical objective i.e. a socialist dispensation in South Africa, the CPSA chose to concentrate on those issues that would deliver quick, tangible political benefits to the African workers and other classes of people. It also campaigned among the same people as the ANC so that in most cases both organisations had an overlapping membership.⁵⁰ Alf Stadler rejected as a myth the notion by some critics that there was a communist conspiracy to control African nationalist politics. Instead he argued that the CPSA did not have a preponderant influence over other nationalist organisations, especially the ANC.⁵¹ This observation might be true in a very general sense but if one considers the dynamics of local or regional party political activity, one soon finds that the CPSA had a preponderant influence over the ANC, in Langa and Cape Town. Once it had been revived and had become vibrant the ANC seems to have taken a backseat whilst the CPSA leap-frogged the latter.

Once the headquarters of the CPSA had been transferred to Cape Town, Kotane again was at the centre-stage of the mass political mobilisation for the CPSA in Langa and Cape Town. He employed the same approach he had used when he campaigned for the rebirth of the ANC, that 'the people must be encouraged to be actively involved in rebuilding the party. The leadership must never alienate itself from them'. Speaking of the communists, Kotane said, 'Communists must be where the people are. Theories and policies must be judged by their success in mobilising the people for action'.⁵² In trying to get closer to the people, the Cape Town District Committee of the CPSA, which comprised activists like Ray Alexander and her husband Jack Simons, Eli Weinberg, Johnny Gomas, James la Guma and Leepile and Kotane himself, busied itself with taking up the African people's grievances, exposing their living and working conditions, calling for the abolition of the pass laws and similar discriminatory

50. Stadler, The Political Economy of Modern South Africa, 17.

51. Stadler, The Political Economy of Modern South Africa,

52. Bunting, Moses Kotane, 63.

legislation. It is quite clear that the provision of political organisation and leadership around issues of a subsistence character was a necessary bait towards communal mobilisation.

The most common grievance among Africans in Cape Town, at the end of the 1930's was either the shortage or the poor condition of accommodation in the Cape Peninsula resulting in "squatting". The position was further exacerbated by the outbreak of the Second World War which saw a sharp increase of the African population in the urban areas, following a relaxation of the influx control regulations by the government. Because the government took no necessary precautions to meet the housing needs of this population rise, this, among other things, led to a number of problems such as squatting. The seriousness of this problem was highlighted by Mr. Slarke's report on the "Conditions of Natives in the Peninsula". The report estimated that a rough figure of about 32 000 men, women and children were resident in the Cape Town Municipal Area. But the legal accommodation that existed, including Langa, could only house 12 000. What this meant was that the rest were living under wretched conditions.

The unorganised and unco-ordinated popular agitation against these conditions was not strong enough to prod the Cape Town City Council into redressing the anomalies. The CPSA, like the NLL and the ANC, took up this issue and articulated the position of the Africans to the Municipality. The Cape District Committee (CPSA) accused the Council of failing to provide enough accommodation even when the Government had made available sub-economic loans for the people.⁵³ The CPSA presented to the Council the objective but shattered social and material conditions in the rural areas which forced people to come to Cape Town to search for employment. The inadequacy of land and the imposition of heavy taxation were singled out as the reasons why people flocked to the City. But even if they found employment they still encountered more serious problems such as low wages, the denial of social, political or civic rights. Above all, lack of adequate housing forced many to live in shanties around Cape Town.

53. The Guardian, 6 May 1943.

Therefore, argued the CPSA, no amount of tinkering with the people's rights or hounding them out of Cape Town would solve the problem.⁵⁴

In a demonstration of a struggle towards common objectives with the ANC, the CPSA, ended its statement of appeal to the Municipality by reiterating the demands the ANC had made in February 1939. The CPSA called upon all 'workers and progressives' to renew the demands, for the adequate provision of housing for Africans by using sub-economic loans; the provision of a "human rate" of pay of 10s per day for unskilled workers; recognition of African workers' trade unions under the Industrial Conciliation Act; an increase of land allocation to the African people; and lastly the abolition of all pass or "control" and poll tax systems.⁵⁵

The tone of these demands is also notable for its lack of a revolutionary fervour. The CPSA hoped that a 'conference prepared to accept these basic requirements of the African people can hope to provide any sort of a solution to the so-called African problem'.⁵⁶ A possible explanation of this approach can be found in Tom Lodge's observation that the Communists' emphasis on reformist demands and their avoidance of confrontation with the authorities was a tactical expedient designed to promote the growth of an alliance with the conservative African National Congress.⁵⁷ But at the same time, the communists' "imaginative responses" to the "deprivation and helplessness" of the urban African ensured their commitment to the welfare of the downtrodden.⁵⁸ This was also a difficult period for communism world-wide in the 1940s.

54. The Guardian, 6 May 1943.

55. The Guardian, 6 May 1943.

56. The Guardian, 6 May 1943.

57. T. Lodge, 'Class Conflict, Communal Struggle and Patriotic Unity: the Communist Party of South Africa during the Second World War', (unpub. seminar paper, African Studies Institute, University of Witwatersrand, 1985), 12.

58. Lodge, 'Class Conflict', 12.

In order to gain a foothold in Langa and Cape Town, and to be able to agitate over such injustices and material hardships, the CPSA participated in a number of local governing structures with a view to ensuring that wherever and whenever possible, its interests would be represented. For the first time in its history it contested and won two seats in the Cape Town municipal elections in September 1943. A victory for these two councillors obviously became a victory for the CPSA. They were Mrs Betty Sacks (nee, Betty Radford, editor of The Guardian), and Mr Sam Kahn, an advocate, were the first Communists to sit on any official body in South Africa, according to the Cape District Committee leadership of the CPSA.⁵⁹ Much to the expectation of the CPSA the two Communists were assigned portfolios which were relevant to the party's objectives. Betty Sacks was elected as chairman of a Special Committee, the Scholarships Committee. She was also elected to the committees of Markets, Public Health, Native Affairs, and to represent the Council on the committees of Woodstock Public Library. Mr. Sam Kahn, was elected to the Traffic and Fire Services, Native Affairs, Trade Licences committees and to a special committee for Dental Clinics, chaired by Mrs Cissie Z. Gool.⁶⁰ These committees do not seem to have been central ones. It seems this was a deliberate move to marginalise them.

The CPSA viewed this as a victory. The appointment of both communist councillors to a committee that dealt with African Affairs could not have come at a better time. The councillors usually spoke against restrictions on Africans, the Council's unilateral rent increases and against pass legislation. It bolstered the Party's position vis-à-vis the problems facing urban Africans. Here was a golden opportunity for the CPSA to intensify its struggle for the social upliftment of the Africans in Langa and Cape Town and hence gain a firm foothold within its constituency.

It is important to remember that Africans were not directly represented on the Council. But, even though the election of CPSA councillors on the Council seemed to provide

59. The Guardian, 9 September 1943.

60. The Guardian, 9 September 1943.

some form of representation for the Langa residents, this did not stop them from demanding direct representation. That Africans were suspicious of the usefulness of indirect representation to them, is made abundantly clear by the statement issued by the Langa Advisory Board in response to a questionnaire from the Native Laws Commission of Enquiry in 1946. It said that, 'Only through direct representation can our interests be protected. As long as Africans are not taking part in the election of Councillors, so long will Councillors have no reason to safeguard African interests'.⁶¹

In trying to increase its identity and define its social location among the Africans, the CPSA, pursued its policy of participating in Advisory Board politics by canvassing support for its candidates, as it had done in Orlando since 1934 until the rise of James Sofasonke Mpanza's squatter movement in 1944.⁶² In Langa Township, the CPSA working in close conjunction with the Vigilance Association fielded its candidates for election on the Langa Advisory Board from 1944 and in subsequent years until it was banned in 1950. The Langa Branch of the CPSA and the Langa Vigilance Association fielded six candidates for the elections, of which four were communist members and two were members of the original Vigilance Association.⁶³

These candidates were, however, opposed by candidates of a new splinter Vigilance Association (from the original one led by Mr.B.Ntshinga) led by the Rev. Nontshinga-Citashe. Rev. Citashe and his clique, as it was commonly known, had an anti-communist agenda with the support of the Superintendent of Langa.⁶⁴ This was one indication that the CPSA was not always as popular as The Guardian would have its readers believe. The outcome of the elections held on 28 December 1944 was as follows:

61.CA 3\CT 1\4\10\1\1\12, Langa Advisory Board, Reply to Native Affairs Commission of Enquiry Questionnaire, September 1946.

62.Lodge, 'Class Conflict',10.

63.The Guardian, 28 December 1944.

64.The Guardian, 28 December 1944.

MARRIED QUARTERS: NO. of VOTES

Mr Johnson N. Ngwevela (Comm. Party)	232
Mr William Ndunyana (Comm. Party)	231
Mr J. Fuku (Citashe Clique)	140
Mr J. Pama (Citashe Clique)	139
Mr J. Malangabi (Independent)	21

SPECIAL QUARTERS:

Mr S. Bingela (Comm. Party)	80
Mr T. Lwana (Comm. Party)	76
Mr Kakaza (Citashe Clique)	71
Mr Mthula (Citashe Clique)	69

NORTH AND MAIN BARRACKS:

Mr F. Mvunyisa (Langa Vig. Assoc)	140
Mr N. Ntantiso (Langa Vig. Assoc)	140
Mr Ntantale (Citashe Clique)	86
Mr G. Mhlontlo (Citashe Clique)	83

It is worth to note, for reasons not immediately clear, the presence of the CPSA in both the Married and Special Quarters but not in the North and Main Barracks.

All in all, the Communist Party and the Vigilance Association obtained 900 of the 1,509 total votes, and the Citashe clique 588, and the Independent, twenty-one.⁶⁵ It is one thing to see the victory of the CPSA as a confirmation of its popularity and quite another to see it in terms of the confidence people had in certain influential individual leaders, e.g. Messrs Ngwevela and Ndunyana. Some voters voted for the Party and some for the individual because of his association with and contribution to many aspects of community life without necessarily linking him to the party he belongs. The profile of Johnson Ngwevela might be informative in this regard.

The election of Mr. Ngwevela (with the highest number of votes), was seen by the CPSA as an indication of the eminence not of the man himself but of the party. Ngwevela's colourful profile presents him as a leader of many parts. He was a prominent ANC leader and some informants in Langa said he became the Chairman of

⁶⁵. The Guardian, 4 January 1945.

the Cape Town Branch of the ANC in the 1950s.⁶⁶ He successfully combined his leadership of the communist organisation and that of the Wesleyan Church in Langa, in spite of the atheist doctrines associated with communism. In this church he was once a preacher and Treasurer and Secretary of the Wesleyan Men's Association.

At the time of his election to the Advisory Board, he had just resigned as the Secretary of a Committee responsible for the Welcoming of Chiefs to Langa but immediately became the founding-father of the Red Cross First Aid in Langa.⁶⁷ With such wide-ranging and varied experience, and influence in the Langa community the CPSA banked on him for providing a sustained level of support for the party in Langa.

Even though Advisory Boards along with similar segregated institutions, were widely seen by the residents in Langa and elsewhere, as well as political organisations, as mere "talking shops", after 1937, there was a changing perception within the ranks of the CPSA concerning the role of such institutions. Moses Kotane clarified the position of the Party towards participation in Advisory Boards in spite of their "impotence and helplessness".

Perhaps the correct line to follow would be to boycott the advisory boards. But an effective boycott demands a high degree of political consciousness, organisation, unity of purpose and action. I do not think we have attained these qualifications yet. Meanwhile we can and should make use of the advisory boards. From a propaganda point of view it is a good thing that the Party should take part in the advisory board elections. However our aim should be to get the Africans out of the rut.⁶⁸

It is this collaboration with such institutions, that partly led to the formation of the non-collaborationist Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) in 1943 in Cape Town by a group of radical middle-class intelligentsia. The strength of NEUM lay in boycotting segregated institutions and 'pillorying the perceived careerism and mendacity of all

66. Mr. Kobo, Ms. Sporty Ngwevela, (Mr. J. Ngwevela's granddaughter), Ms. Gertrude Ngxolo all of Harlem Ave. Married Quarters, Langa.

67. The Guardian, 10 March 1945

68. Bunting, Moses Kotane, 139-140.

those who willingly colluded with the dominant white capitalist classes in the hope of securing incremental reform for those classified by statute as "African", "Coloured" or "Indian".⁶⁹

If Colin Bundy's observation that NEUM's claim that it was the only genuine national liberatory movement, was based more on its "theoretical claims" rather than in any "actual organic strength",⁷⁰ is anything to go by, then, the CPSA, chose to pursue the development of the latter first and temporarily suspend the former. Experience had taught the CPSA that there was no way it could hope to successfully launch a workers' revolution in South Africa, without the Party first organically evolving out of the workers themselves. Hence, the Party immersed itself in the subsistence issues of the people in the hope of achieving immediate benefits, after which it could talk of a workers' revolution. In other words, the Party shifted its ideological emphasis on the attainment of an Independent Native Republic first to an analysis of non-racialism.⁷¹

A significant area in which the CPSA, working in conjunction with the ANC, made its political mark, was in arousing the people's consciousness by agitating against passes and pass laws. While this was generally an issue around which the whole African population was mobilised nationally, local mobilisation trends suggest why success was not achieved at the national level but at the local level, specifically in Langa and Cape Town.

69. B. Nasson, 'The Unity Movement: Its Legacy in Historical Consciousness', Radical History Review, 46, 7, (189-211), 192. See also, Neville Alexander, 'Aspects of Non-Collaboration in the Western Cape 1943-1963', Social Dynamics, 12, 1, (1986).

70. C. Bundy, 'Land and Liberation: Popular Rural Protest and the National Liberation Movements in South Africa 1920-1960', S. Marks and S. Trapido, (eds.), The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa, (London, 1987), 255.

71. P. Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa, 186.

In these two parts, there was evidently an emphasis on politics at the leadership level. Very little can be detected about popular political initiative. It would be an act of commission and omission to simply concentrate on popular political responses without also paying attention to elitist nationalist political activity. The limited political activity from below might help to explain the abrupt demise of the NLL. It also explains why both the ANC and the CPSA saw it fit to appeal to the grassroots levels to shake themselves out of the political limbo they were in. What these two sections have demonstrated is that dealing with popular mundane issues and articulating their grievances is not enough. The people whom political leadership purport to represent need to be empowered, taken along and be put into the confidence of that leadership. Chapter 7 attempts to demonstrate how the ANC and the CPSA tried to do this.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"DOWN WITH PASS LAWS-We want Freedom": The Anti-Pass Campaign in Langa and Cape Town, 1943-1946

The decade of the 1940's has historically been described as a period of mixed fortunes especially for urban Africans. It is a decade in which there was a rural-urban drift, but for a very brief period (1942-1943) influx control was suspended at the beginning of the war to contain African political agitation and because their labour was needed. But the point is not often made that Cape Town and its environs did not enjoy this brief spell of pass control suspension.¹ Even though political organisation and mobilisation against the pass laws was started in Johannesburg, it is no coincidence that Cape Town and Langa became the focal point of intensified party political activity, culminating in the historic bonfire of passes at Langa on 4 August 1946.

By late 1943, stricter control of the pass laws was firmly in place on the Witwatersrand and naturally anti-pass campaigns mushroomed there. The CPSA was quick to capitalise on the Africans' mounting discontent. It took the initiative to convene an Anti-Pass Conference in Johannesburg in November 1943. At this conference, 153 delegates from 112 bodies (the ANC, trade unions, civic leagues, sporting bodies, religious organisations etc.), representing 80 796 people, unanimously agreed to establish local anti-pass committees and to send resolutions to the Prime Minister and Minister of Native Affairs and the Native Representative Council.² Formed also at this meeting was a National Anti-Pass Committee made up of fifteen mainly African communists and a sprinkling of non-communist members of the Transvaal African Congress.³

1.D.Hindson, Pass Controls and the Urban African Proletariat, (Johannesburg, 1987), 56.

2.Lodge, 'Class Conflict', 8.

3.Lodge, 'Class Conflict', 8.

Anti-pass local committees were hastily set up throughout the length and breadth of the country. Although the Anti-pass drive had originated with the CPSA in Cape Town, it was the ANC (Western Province) which started the movement and oversaw the formation of an Anti-Pass Committee whose office-bearers were predominantly ANC members. For instance, Joseph Nkatlo, secretary of the ANC (Western Province) was a member of the Anti-Pass secretariat.⁴ By March 1944, the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee formed at the end of January was already engaged in an elaborate series of campaigns at the grassroots level in Langa, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Philippi Bellville, Kensington, Retreat, Blaauwvlei etc.⁵ The Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee, like other similar committees in the country, was notable for its campaign strategy largely aimed at making the affected people anti-pass conscious. Through open-air mass meetings which usually attracted many people, speaker after speaker from the Committee vividly chronicled how obnoxious the pass laws were.⁶ Africans in the Cape Peninsula, generally, demonstrated a 'keen determination to secure a complete repeal of the pass laws in 1944'.⁷

Freire's concepts, which we have examined in the introduction, may have been specially tailored for a specific discipline, but they sound pertinent to our analysis of the Anti-Pass Campaign. Rarely did the leadership of the Cape Town Anti-Pass Campaign (also subjected to the rigours of Pass legislation), issue statements without the endorsement of the people they represented. There was a genuine realisation of the need to involve the people. The first mammoth mass meeting convened in the City Hall in Cape Town on Saturday, 1 April 1944, at 2.30 p.m., is one such example. The meeting, attended by about 3 500 Africans, was addressed by, among others, Dr.A.B.Xuma and Moses Kotane. The address by Kotane underscored the importance of unity and cooperation as a vital force that could bring to an end the Pass Laws. Resolutions passed at the end of the meeting reflected the people's consciousness that

4. The Guardian, 20 January 1944.

5. Inkululeko, 25 March 1944.

6. The Guardian, 25 March 1944.

7. Inkululeko, 25 March 1944.

the Pass Laws were nothing more than a mechanism introduced by the State to secure the conditions for capital accumulation and the reproduction of cheap labour power.

We are of the opinion that the Pass Laws were introduced for the sole purpose of restricting our right to move freely and obtain employment in accordance with our wishes, thus condemning us to a state of backwardness and to being a source of cheap labour. We therefore call upon the Government to repeal these laws immediately.⁸

The April meeting was followed by the Cape Anti-Pass Conference called by the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee on 18 June 1944. The Committee sought to reach a wider spectrum of people by inviting non-European political and trade union organisations, civic and welfare associations and religious and sporting bodies. Clearly, the pass laws were directed against Africans as a race, but the leadership of the Anti-Pass Campaign found it worthwhile to solicit the support of all the non-European sections of the population in the Cape Peninsula because 'we believe none of them can be free while another is oppressed and because their interests are the same and interdependent', stated Mr.J.N.Ntshona, secretary of the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee.⁹

The conference, convened to deliberate on the modalities of "stimulating and intensifying the agitation" against pass legislation, attracted a record 41 delegates representing 17 800 people in 22 organisations. The Anti-Pass Committee was streamlined and strengthened to popularise the anti-pass movement. The Committee of 21 was given powers to 'suspend members for inactivity and to co-opt' more members. Those elected to the Committee were: Messrs. W.Tsikwe, M.Kotane (Gen. Secretary of the Communist Party), T.C.Kumalo, N.Hassen, J.Ntshona (CPSA), F.C.Welcome, J.Nkatlo, R.Moses, A.Mtsi, L.Phillips, Mrs.M.Bhola, (*my emphasis*), Messrs. S.Nkolombe, N.Kota, J. Mokatedi, R.Ndimande, J.Ntloko, L.Manyela, T.Ntsinde, J.Clarke, T.Ngwenya, and H.Kalipa.¹⁰ The composition of this Committee reflected the "alliance" between the ANC, the CPSA and the workers' trade unions represented

8. Inkululeko, 15 April 1944.

9. The Guardian, 8 June 1944.

10. The Guardian, 22 June 1944.

by ANC member Lucas Phillips, Secretary to the C.C.N.E. Engineering Trade Unions.¹¹

The re-organisation of the Committee was accompanied by the adoption of a four-point Plan of Action. It emphasised the need for the new Committee to work closely with the rest of South Africa through the Press and the National Working Committee, i.e. the National Anti-Pass Committee; to hold more public meetings which were widely representative; to establish smaller Anti-Pass committees in work places and residential areas; and personal contacts with the people through the selling of badges and the collection of signatures to the anti-pass petition.¹²

Although the pass law grievance seemed to overshadow other problems by the sort of urgent attention it was given, the Conference did not over-look the gravity of the local problems in the Peninsula. Resolutions were passed condemning the Cape Town City Council's proposal to erect a depot in Langa, where Africans seeking employment from outside the Cape Peninsula would be received and quarantined until such time they found employment.¹³ Another issue which received widespread condemnation and objection was the Native Affairs Department's proposal of a new system of recruiting Africans into "controlled mobile labour gangs", to benefit agricultural capital.¹⁴ These forms of control were nothing less of a complement to the cardinal objective of the pass laws, namely the regulation of cheap labour power.

Before gearing itself to its campaign schedule, the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee further set up three sub-committees with the intention of speeding up and facilitating its work. These were the Finance Sub-Committee, whose members comprised Messrs. R.Ndimande, T.C.Khumalo, and N Hassen; the Campaign Planning Sub-Committee, with members Messrs. M.Kotane, R.Moses, and S.Manyela; and the Publicity

11. MA BC 579 A7.1441, Anti-Pass Comm. memo., 10 March 1945.

12. The Guardian, 22 June 1944.

13. The Guardian, 22 June 1944.

14. The Guardian, 22 June 1944.

Committee, whose members were, J.Nkatlo, S.Nkolombe and N.Kota. These sub-committees constituted the most significant element of the whole Anti-Pass campaign, which was to win public support by selling Anti-Pass badges, soliciting signatures to the Anti-Pass petition and the donation of funds to make all these efforts possible.¹⁵

The large crowds that attended the marathon meetings in August 1944 at Langa, Paarl and Stellenbosch, bore ample testimony to the effectiveness of the streamlined Anti-Pass Committee. Incensed by the crippling effect of the pass laws, the people voiced their strong objection to the discriminatory legislation.¹⁶ Public outcry provided ample ammunition for the Anti-Pass Committee to intensify the Campaign. The Committee set aside Sundays to collect signatures for the Anti-Pass Petition but alternated this activity with public meetings. The highlight of this renewed strategy was the "invasion" of Langa Township by Committee officials as they moved from "door to door" canvassing for signatures.

The response in Langa was overwhelming. While successful progress in the collection of signatures was reported, the same could not be said about fund-raising with the result that Committee members' had to meet the expenses incurred during the campaign with their own money, if the report in the The Guardian is to be believed. The fund-raising functions organised by the Campaign Committee, did not yield a favourable response. But, although the Committee was financially ham-strung this did not scuttle its campaign programme.¹⁷

Although winning the support of the African people through the Anti-Pass campaign is not a remote possibility, what is strikingly clear about the conduct of the Campaign leadership, is that during the campaign there was virtually no talk of recruiting members for either the ANC or the CPSA. For as long as these organisations worked together for the campaign to succeed there was no talk of party affiliation or loyalty.

15. The Guardian, 6 July 1944.

16. Inkululeko, 26 August 1944.

17. The Guardian, 23 November 1944.

This probably explains why the CPSA launched a separate three-month campaign programme which it dubbed "BUILD THE PARTY DRIVE", from 1 June to 31 August 1944 with the immediate aim of gaining 1 000 new recruits nation-wide. The main thrust of this campaign was recruitment of members and financial contribution towards the war effort. In Cape Town the first recruitment meeting was held on 1 June 1944 and the District Committee of the CPSA aimed to recruit the biggest number of the 1000 national member target as well as raising 1000 pounds fighting fund.¹⁸ Instead of concentrating on pass law issues, the campaign focussed on the Second World War and the fascist threat to the progress of communism since the entry of the Soviet Union into the war. Very little was also discussed at the meetings about domestic grievances. The result was that by 15 July, Cape Town came third, after Durban (194 new members), followed by Pretoria with (186). Cape Town recruited only 141, the East Rand, 87 and Johannesburg, 48. The recruitment drive was miserably low in Port Elizabeth, East London and Pietermaritzburg with 10, 10 and 7 members respectively.¹⁹

Be that as it may, the degree of the campaign's success was manifested by the massive turn-out of Africans in Cape Town in a grand demonstration against the Acting Prime Minister Hofmeyr's refusal to meet the Anti-Pass Deputation. In June 1945, the 5000-strong crowd, led by the Anti-Pass deputation, marched from the Grand Parade to the Parliament chanting the African National Anthem, "Nkosi Sikelela iAfrica" punctuated with the slogan "Down with Pass Laws--we want Freedom".²⁰ Besides marching and chanting, resolutions were also passed condemning the stubbornness of the Acting Prime Minister to meet the deputation. The demonstration, apart from registering the Africans' profound resentment of the pass laws, yielded nothing tangible.

African resistance in Cape Town was further accentuated by the proposed introduction of pass laws (framed under the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, 1945) in the municipal area by the Native Affairs Department. Until then Cape Town with its

18. The Guardian, 1 June 1944.

19. The Guardian, 17 August 1944.

20. Inkululeko, 25 June 1945.

liberal tradition had escaped the formal introduction of the pass laws unlike other urban centres in South Africa. The Government's plan was to decentralise the control of African pass registration to local authorities as from 1 April 1946.²¹ According to the proposals, an African work-seeker could not get employment in the Cape Peninsula without a pass. Only a few select classes of people were exempted from the new draft regulations and these were chiefs and headman, ministers of religion who were marriage officers, teachers 'whose salaries are paid or defrayed directly or indirectly, in whole or in part by the Government', and interpreters of courts in the Union.²²

But the tenor and tempo of African resistance against the draft regulations changed with the proposal to subject women and children to the pass laws. Under the proposed regulations, women and children who came to Cape Town seeking work were to be, first and foremost, bearers of passes.²³ The rationale behind the exclusion of women from urban areas was obviously to prevent the permanent settlement of migrant labourers. These regulations were passed by the Government at the behest of both agricultural and mining capital which was in dire need of cheap labour, as they were losing labour to the relatively financially rewarding manufacturing industries in urban centres. The pass laws would, therefore, facilitate the ejection of Africans from industrial areas and drive them into the "clutches of the exploiting mine magnate and land owner".²⁴ What is spectacular about the draft pass law regulations is their arousal of gender sensitivities. No longer was the pass law merely perceived as an assault on the African race. It was also viewed as an assault on gender. Probably because they were directly affected, women in Langa and Cape Town became increasingly vocal against the pass laws.

21. The Guardian, 11 October 1945.

22. MA MP BC579 B9.53 Registration Regulations framed under section Thirty Eight (1) of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, 1945 (No.25 of 1945).

23. MA MP BC579 B9.53 Registration Regulations of the Natives (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, 1945 (No.25 of 1945) .

24. Quoted from Mr.D.B.Molteno's article specially written for The Guardian, 18 October 1945. re: Draft Native Regulations.

Africans in Langa held protest meetings and expressed their indignation against the draft regulations. A meeting held during the first week of October 1945, attended by about 5000 people, was unique not only in the sense that it was jointly addressed by the local leadership of Langa (members of the Vigilance Association) and CPSA and ANC leaders, but also in the sense that among the predominantly male speakers was a woman, Mrs.Siqwana.²⁵ An informant remembers her as a very militant woman who often led other women in community protest activities in Langa.²⁶ She was the author of the resolution adopted at the meeting condemning the anticipated "arbitrary official molestation" of women and children.²⁷ Consequently, Mrs.Siqwana became the representative conscience of the women at Langa and beyond at various fora. But Mrs.Siqwana did not see the women's struggle as unique to their sex. Rather, she implored African women to support men in the struggle against pass laws because 'You are the ones who will suffer most'.²⁸

The threat of pass law legislation to women demonstrated a massive display of women's consciousness about their rights (to live, work, to visit in and out) in the city. They organised themselves into a strong political force that complemented the inroads already begun by men. On 18 October, African women met at the Banqueting Hall in Cape Town to protest against the inimical Draft, but with special reference to the clauses that directly affected women, juveniles and the one on medical examination and vaccination.²⁹ Mrs.Siqwana presided over the meeting and was assisted by a like-minded lady, Mrs. M.Bhola. These two women were, subsequently, to lead the Women's League of the ANC as part of a twenty-three organisation strong delegation to the Minister of Native Affairs, Major P.G. van der Byl to express their reservations about the Draft regulations. These organisations included the African National

25. The Guardian, 11 October 1945.

26. Interview with Mr Kobo.

27. The Guardian, 11 October 1945.

28. The Guardian, 18 October 1945.

29. Section 18 (1) of the Registration Regulations stipulated that "Any male native entering, or employed or residing in the proclaimed area may be ordered by the registering officer to present himself for medical examination and vaccination....."

Congress, Anti-Pass Committee, Langa Advisory Board, Langa Traders, Race Relations, Race Contacts Committee, Joint Council of Bantu and European, the South African Communist Party. There were also business representatives and members of neighbouring local authorities.³⁰ Members of this motley group of organisations, even though they were brought together by the pass law issue, represented different interests.

Nevertheless, the representations made to the Minister were notable for their militancy. A few examples of these will suffice. Mrs. Bholi made a stinging attack against the carrying of passes as well as against the Native Affairs Department itself. She told the Minister that if the pass regulations were turned into law, then:

This means we have to carry a pass in the land where we were born --we resent it as women. It is the Native Affairs Department which is killing our people today. They should be the protection of our people. We cannot tolerate these laws any more piling on top of each other. We women will never carry passes--we will go to gaol or be short first.³¹

Mr. J. Malangabi, representing the Langa Vigilance Association, reminded the Minister that:

There are as many Natives leaving as coming and there is no need for this "panic legislation". The problem should be discussed coolly and rationally. You will not only drive The Africans from Langa to Windermere, but into the bushes where they will only come out at night'.³²

Lastly, Mr. Jellicoe Ntshona, secretary of the Anti-Pass Committee expressed a vote of no confidence in the Native Affairs Department: 'We are losing faith in the Department of Native Affairs. You are engendering hatred which you will not be able to control in future. The confidence of the African people is going very fast'.³³

30. The Guardian, 25 October 1945.

31. The Guardian, 1 November 1945.

32. The Guardian, 1 November 1945.

33. The Guardian, 1 November 1945.

The immediate effect that these protests had was that the Minister promised not to take any action until the Cape Town City Council had considered the Draft Regulations.³⁴ The City Council, however, decided against the acceptance of the Draft Regulations for the introduction of Passes. But then this was a partial victory for the lobbyists against the Passes as the Council recommended that, instead, those regulations which applied to Cape Town be extended to the adjacent towns and revised.³⁵

During the struggle against the Draft Regulations, the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee seemed to have taken a very low profile, leaving much of the campaign around this issue to the local leadership. In fact it worked with other organisations. However, after the Cape Town City Council had made its position clear the Anti-Pass Campaign Committee continued its campaign. The first phase of the campaign had unsuccessfully ended with the refusal by the Acting Prime Minister to meet the Anti-Pass deputation. This snub made the National Anti-Pass Committee to re-think its strategy towards the struggle. The National Anti-Pass led by Xuma was rather conservative and was not given to using violent means of struggling. But the failure of the deputation to meet the Prime Minister jolted it and in what remarkably became the second phase of the Anti-Pass Campaign, the Second National Anti-Pass Conference held on 23 June 1946 decided to take practical mass action. The Conference agreed that within three months a day of national work stoppage would be organised and passes burned because as Xuma said, 'We have been talking a great deal; now the time for action has come!'³⁶

But at the same time Africans in the Cape Peninsula had their own problem. The enforcement of registration or the extension of pass laws to areas adjacent to Cape Town was to begin in earnest on 1 July. The Second Anti-Pass Conference "instructed" Africans in the Cape Province to refuse to be registered or to abide by the extension of pass laws.³⁷ Rather than wait for the burning of passes nationwide within

34. The Guardian, 1 November 1945.

35. Bantu Forum, vol.8, no. 3, December 1945.

36. The Guardian, 27 June 1946.

37. The Guardian, 27 June 1946.

three months, the Cape Anti-Pass Committee decided that Africans in the Cape District should burn their registration passes at Langa on Sunday 4 August at 4.p.m. This decision was arrived at when Mr.Kotane, Secretary-General of the CPSA and member of the Anti-Pass Committee made this proposal at a rally at the Grand Parade attended by 2000 people. A report in The Guardian, said that every man and woman who attended raised his or her hand as an indication of willingness to participate in the pass-burning campaign.³⁸ Mr.J.Nkatlo, a member of the Anti-Pass Committee described the planned action as signalling the opening up of a second front, in the mass struggle of Africans for liberation, that 'will sound the death-knell of the pass laws in south Africa'.³⁹ (The first front had been opened when the first group of Indian passive resisters took action in Durban).⁴⁰

On 4 August, Africans, Indians and Coloureds came together at Langa to witness the burning of "'passes" of slavery' which they regarded as being synonymous with lighting the flame of freedom. It was a solemn occasion the tone of which can only be graphically captured by a brief chronicle of the event. Mr.Moses Kotane opened the ceremony by a brief which sounded non-committal on his part.

The settlement of peace in South Africa will be on the altar of the African people. You must say this afternoon--now--what you want. I shall read the resolution, but before doing so I solemnly declare, that the final decision rests with the people.⁴¹

This declaration was followed by a resolution to which the people agreed that they were

determined to rid ourselves of the pass because we recognise it as the most important administrative instrument by which the Government is able to carry out its policy of impoverishing us, and preventing us from improving ourselves economically, by denying us the right to move freely in search of employment in the land of our birth. We are resolved not to carry passes any longer and if arrested, not to pay fines.⁴²

38. The Guardian, 1 August 1946.

39. The Guardian, 1 August 1946.

40. The Guardian, 1 August 1946.

41. The Guardian, 8 August 1946.

42. The Guardian, 8 August 1946.

The ceremony proceeded with the handing in of passes, voters' registration forms and certificates to the platform. It should be noted that not everyone handed in his or her pass or certificates for fear of losing one's job, although they supported the event in principle.⁴³ The highlight of the occasion came when the chairman of the Anti-Pass Committee invited an African woman to start the bonfire of passes. The crowd hailed this gesture as "a revolutionary step" because, 'not only was an African woman setting the "passes" on fire, but she was at the same time destroying her own badge of inferiority in the the eyes of her people'. The burning of the "scraps of paper" was accompanied with a flourish. The people sang "Mayibuye" (The Freedom of the People). Incidentally, as this pass-burning ceremony was taking place, a Peace Conference was being held in Paris so that there was a ubiquitous belief that the smoke coming from the burning passes not only billowed into the sky but it was taken by the "winds of the earth" to the Peace Conference. It carried a 'solemn message from the African people that peace was indivisible and that unless there was Freedom for All then there could be Freedom for None'.⁴⁴

A few weeks later other areas around Cape Town followed suit. Residents of Kayamnandi Location in Stellenbosch burnt hundreds of passes. As had happened in Langa, a woman again lit the bonfire.⁴⁵

This mass action was the culmination of a scrupulous, well-co-ordinated and sustainable campaign exercise. If anything, it demonstrated the merit of good organization on the part of the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee leadership which was clearly confirmed, if not also informed, by the positive grassroots response. The success of the ^tpass-burning event in Langa is in itself a veritable rite of passage for the Township of the Mother City. This is so in the sense that Langa, in its search for identity and legitimacy as an indispensable element in the complete outlook of the City of Cape

43. The Guardian, 8 August 1946.

44. The Guardian, 8 August 1946.

45. The Guardian, 29 August 1946.

Town went through distinct community struggles. But as these struggles were transpiring the people's perceptions, in general, about their world-view did not remain confined within the strictures of community struggles but widened upon the realisation that their struggle was not unique to themselves.

If it is part of the historian's task to retrieve the local or regional history of a small place then it is imperative that the significance of that "small place" be located within the context of national history to discover its worthiness. Firstly, we have established that Langa and Cape Town anticipated the national revival of the ANC in 1939. Secondly, the successful revival of the CPSA in the same places, necessitated the transfer of the Party's Headquarters from Johannesburg where its political fortunes were in an absolute lull. Thirdly, the fact that the pass-burning campaign began and ended in Langa and the surrounding areas is a matter of historical significance. This is because, as Eddie Roux and Baruch Hirson have noted, after the June 23 1946 Second Anti-Pass Conference, nothing was heard about the initiative towards a national work stoppage and the burning of passes.⁴⁶ But the Cape Town Anti-Pass Committee did not wait for the stipulated three months to act. It almost single-handedly led the Africans into militant action--an achievement of no mean feat considering the fact that this was the first time such a bold action was being taken.

The ANC, from mid-1946 up to 1949, progressively declined in its popularity and political activities. The national leadership became alienated from the rank and file membership of the organisation. Unanimous decisions were not implemented. The pass-burning issue is one case in point. Secondly, decisions carried out at the Bloemfontein National Conference in December 1946 were hardly implemented. The boycott of the Royal visit was not observed. In fact Dr.Xuma, the National President of the ANC travelled to a place called Eshowe to attend the Royal reception. Thirdly, the decision to boycott elections under the Representation of Natives Act following the

46. Roux, Time Longer Than Rope, 330, Hirson, Yours For The Union, 91.

brutal repression of the 1946 African Mine Workers' strike was neglected.⁴⁷ This lack of competence and conservatism by the national leadership widened the chasm between the pro-militant Africanists (mostly members of the City Youth League), leading to the ousting of Xuma from office in 1949.

On the other hand the CPSA, was incapacitated by the police raid on its headquarters in Cape Town, the subsequent seizure of its documents and the arrest of its leadership.⁴⁸ Its influence in Langa, however, remained evident in Advisory Board elections in which the CPSA stalwarts in Langa, Messrs. Ngwevela and Ndunyana were always returned unopposed.⁴⁹

47. Inkululeko, December 1947.

48. The Guardian, 22 August 1946.

49. The Guardian, 23 December 1948.

CONCLUSION

What this study has attempted to establish is that Langa township was and still is, to-date, a prime site of community struggle - a 'crucial area in which people can start to challenge the controls of their everyday lives'.¹ This community struggle provided the inhabitants of Langa with some important lessons in political education. Hence, it is said community struggle' is a crucial area in which the living process of democratic participation in decision-making can be learnt' and '(i)t is only in the "living political school, by the fight and in the fight", that those lessons can be learnt'.² One area from which such a lesson in political education was drawn was in the Langa residents' quest for direct municipal representation. They were clearly aware of the futility of the functions of the advisory board. Hence the incessant struggle between them and the dominant local authority. This local struggle for municipal representation was microcosmic in that the Langa people were not blind to the reality that they did not have parliamentary representation. They could not also be hoodwinked into accepting the sort of parliamentary representation that was provided for under the Representation of Natives Act of 1936.³ It has been argued in Chapter 4 that the Langa residents' dependence on Molteno was not because they approved of the existence of such institutions. Instead this was a strategy which they used to their benefit.

African political responses manifested through community battles over forced removals, rents, bus fares, living and housing conditions, democratic participation in governing structures, and pass laws did not always meet with quantitative success mainly because of the repressive nature of the state. Nor did the protests lead to a qualitative upliftment of their social and material conditions.

1. Philip, 'Mitchell's Plain', 46.

2. Philip, 'Mitchell's Plain', 46.

3. The Act provided for the election of five white representatives only by qualified Africans in the Cape on a separate roll, three in the House of Assembly and two in the Cape Provincial Council. Provision was also made for the election of four whites to represent Africans in the Senate as well as for the establishment of a Native Representative Council to serve only in an advisory capacity. The later would include African members indirectly elected.

Moreover, these responses were not 'reflex responses to urban problems, but concerted actions that grew out of community and class ties, political consciousness and organisation'.⁴ In spite of the impressive mobilisation around these issues it was disheartening to note that 'at the end of the day when the euphoria of protest has died down things remain as they were, or more often than not, worsen'.⁵

Be that as it may, we can single out the struggles over the beer hall question in Langa as a poignant example of the successes that the ideology of protest and resistance scored. The absence of a municipally-sponsored beer hall and, more so, the non-participation of the Council in trading activities even to this day, suggests how resistance and protest were employed as offensive strategies to challenge the local authority against going ahead with the introduction of such schemes. There is, today, no beer hall in Langa except the now popular taverns owned by African entrepreneurs. Mention of the municipal beer hall still conjures up in the minds of some residents the image of a "drinking cage" and a place where the youth could quite easily be found wallowing in the pools of social decadence.⁶ It is little wonder that the beer hall which the Cape Town City Council had eventually erected between 1965 and 1966 became a target of physical attack during the student uprisings of 1976.

It is common knowledge that the peoples' non-violent protests failed to stifle the implementation of the apartheid scheme in 1948 by the Nationalist Party Government. The Apartheid State became increasingly repressive in order to legitimise its reign and this in turn intensified the resistance capacity of the Africans. The people of Langa developed an "accumulated heritage of resistance" since the days of Ndabeni which no amount of repression could break. This bountiful wealth of resistance did not remain dormant. Confronted by increasing state controls and ferocious repression, the people of Langa armed with their "collective memory of resistance" engaged in more daring

4.Cooper, 'Urban Space, Industrial Time and Wage Labour in Africa', 34

5.M.Francis, '"The Past is Theirs, The Future is Ours" - A Study of the United Democratic Front in the Western Cape', (B.A. Hons. thesis, University of the Western Cape, 1984), 2

6.Interview with Mr.Galo, 24 Aug. 1991.

scenes of struggle especially against the pass laws. The period 1943-1946, had witnessed an ever mounting resentment against the pass laws country-wide and we saw how Langa Township distinguished itself during the Anti-Pass campaigns. Langa remained the vanguard in the continual struggle against passes and pass legislation. This period, again, witnessed an increase in militancy by women in Langa and Cape Town with Mrs. Siqwana and Mrs Bhola taking the lead in the anti-pass campaigns. The same women and many more carried over the same tradition of resistance into the second phase of the anti-pass campaigns between 1955 and 1959.

At the beginning of the 1950s, the Nationalist Government passed a series of repressive influx control legislation which was mainly targeted on women. The first one was the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 which was 'principally concerned with establishing political/administrative control over squatting in peri-urban areas by Africans seeking or already in employment in adjacent towns'. Then in 1952 two Acts were passed viz. the Native Laws Amendment Act No.54 and the Abolition of Passes (and Co-ordination of Documents) Act.⁷ This aimed at bringing in women into the influx control system. From 1953 the State intensified raids on "illegal" squatters and particularly African women.⁸

In 1956 the Government started forcing African women to carry reference books. Both actions on the part of the State gave rise to intense resistance by local African women.⁹ A series of anti-pass campaigns took place in the Western Cape between 1955 and 1959. The campaigns culminated in the massive anti-pass demonstration of 21 March 1960. The demonstration received widespread support in Langa, Nyanga Township and Windermere. Langa served as the central locus of this protest. What symbolised

7.J.C.Cole "When Your Life is Bitter You Do Something" Women and Squatting in the Western Cape, - tracing the origins of Crossroads and the role of women in the struggle', in D.Kaplan (ed.), South African Research Papers, (Dept. of Economic History, Univ. of Cape Town, June 1986) 31.

8.Cole, "When Your Life is Bitter You Do Something", 32.

9.B.Kinkead-Weekes, 'A Brief History of Local Resistance to Apartheid: 1948-1960', (unpub. paper, Workshop on the Western Cape, Univ. of Cape Town, 6 Dec. 1984), 26

the significance of Langa as a flash-point in the anti-pass/resistance campaign, was the killing and wounding of 4 people and about 49 people respectively when police broke up a gathering of 6000 people outside the bachelor quarters on 21 March.¹⁰ Moreover, it was from Langa that the biggest crowd of 30 000 in the protest history of the Western Cape marched to the city centre on Wednesday 30 March 1960.¹¹ Thus it has been said 'the events of March 1960 came closest to representing a crisis for the South African state in its political capital, Cape Town'.¹²

Langa never lived up to its status as "the torch-bearer of decent housing" as the Council officials designated it. By African standards at that time, the economically well-to-do residents could not, legally, buy or own houses anywhere outside Langa as we saw in Chapter 6. Hence, the desire and incentive for "upward social mobility" remained a remote possibility. Protest against such hindrance was taken up by the ANC in the 1940s. However, while there is not much that has changed in Langa in terms of the infrastructure today, a visitor to the township today would be struck by the uneven housing development that has taken place over the years. Those few residents who can be referred to as the middle-class have gone ahead to extend and modernise their houses in spite of the fact that the yards are quite small. However, this has not been the same for those who until now live at the barracks and the one-roomed special quarters because there just isn't space to extend the buildings. The fact that such buildings have mushroomed is in itself a gesture of protest and defiance to, and a manifest subversion of, the local authority's housing policy.

This study has also endeavoured to show that the Langa community was not inherently prone to protest and resistance. Rather, it was because of the forces that were brought to bear on them (the residents) by the dominant classes which dictated the nature of such a response. Even today, because there has been very little qualitative

10.Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, 216

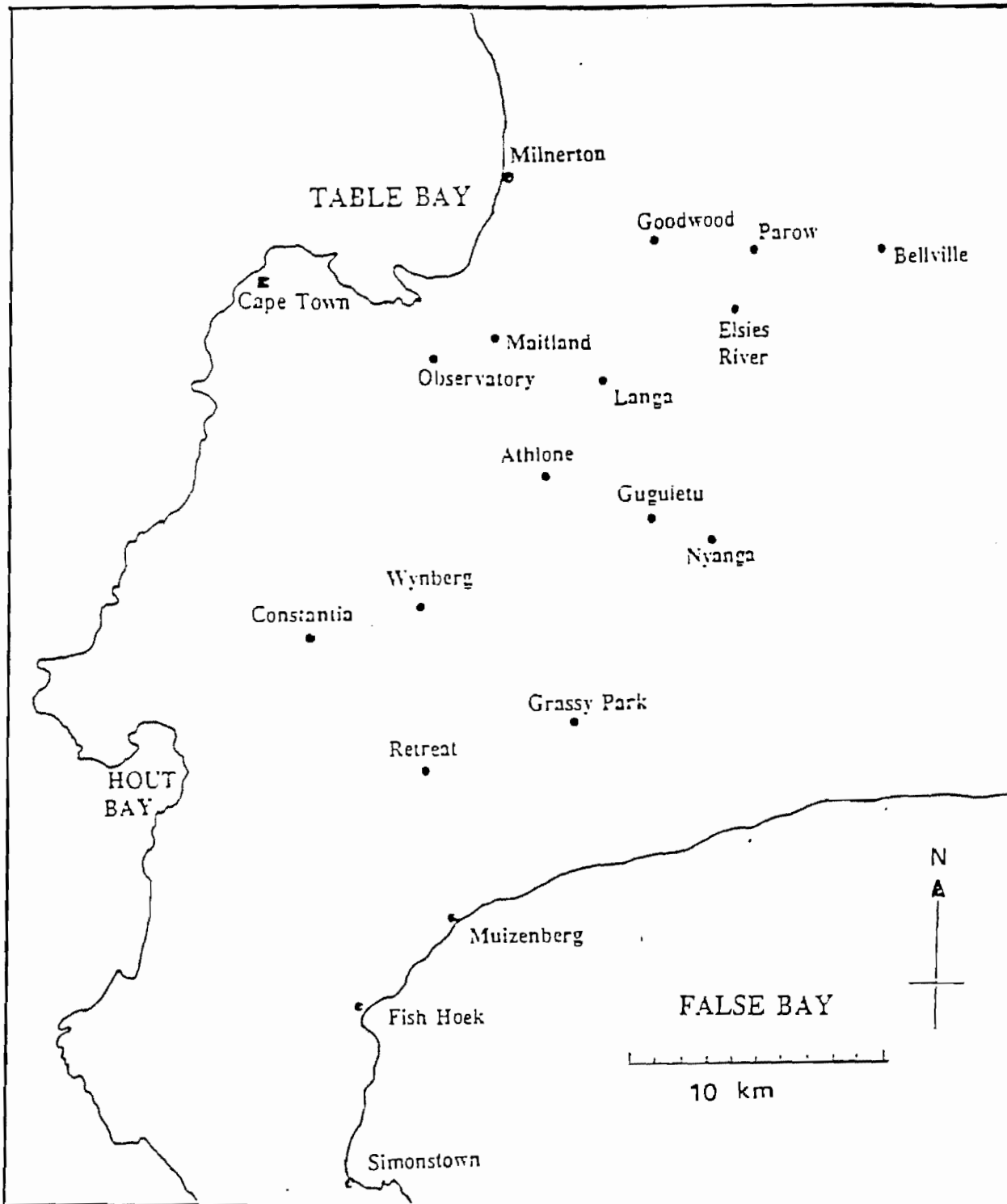
11.T.Lodge, 'The Cape Town Troubles', Journal of Southern African Studies, (vol.4, no.2, April 1978), 216.

12.Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa, 210.

transformation in the peoples' material and political conditions one can still witness their resolve to have this transformation take place. With South Africa on the threshold of a new political dispensation, one can only hope that the life of protest and resistance will come to an end and Langa and similar townships will have the chance to regenerate and develop into a decent suburb like any other which will provide shelter for all.

APPENDIX A: MAPS

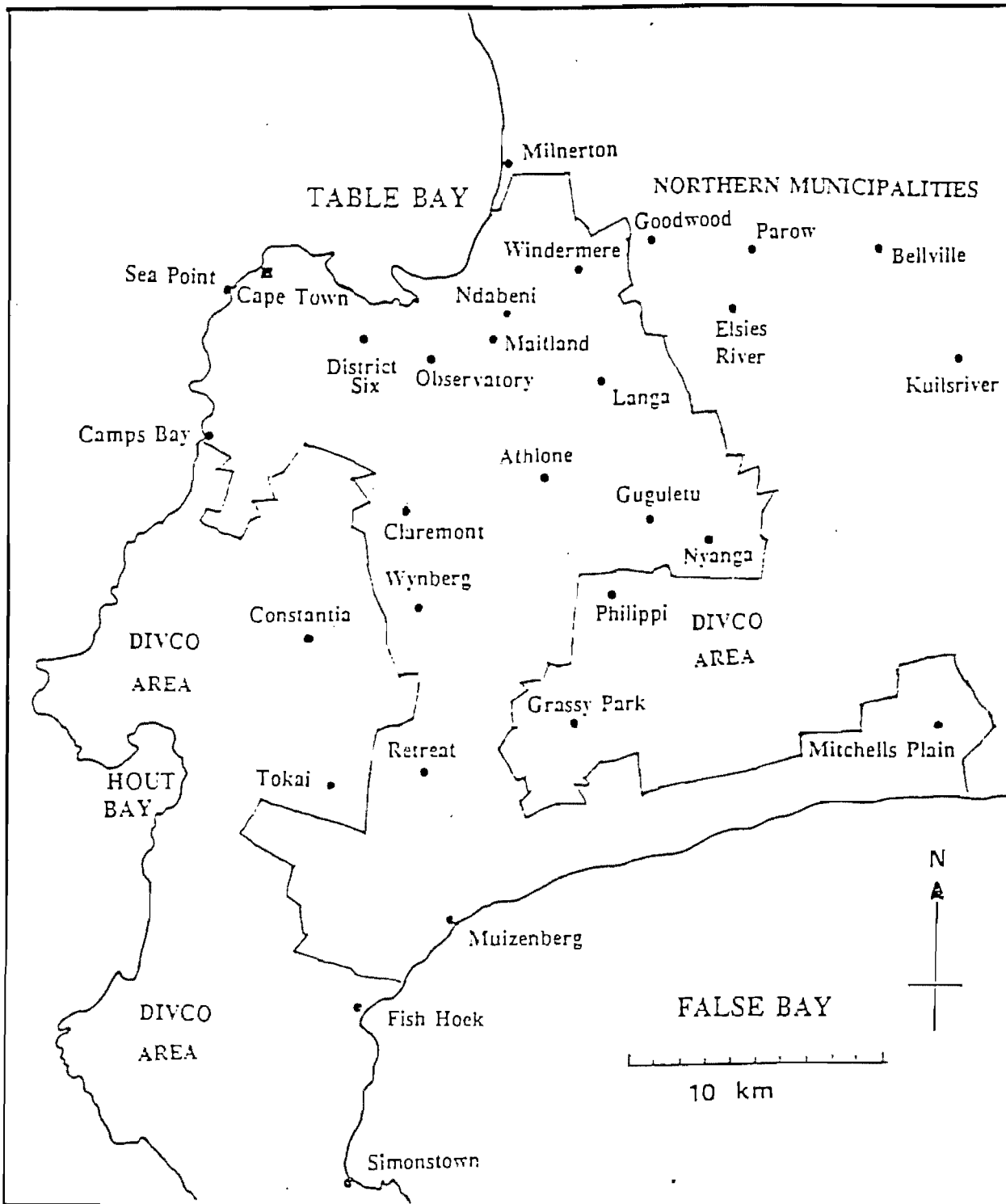
MAP 1: SKETCH MAP OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA OF CAPE TOWN



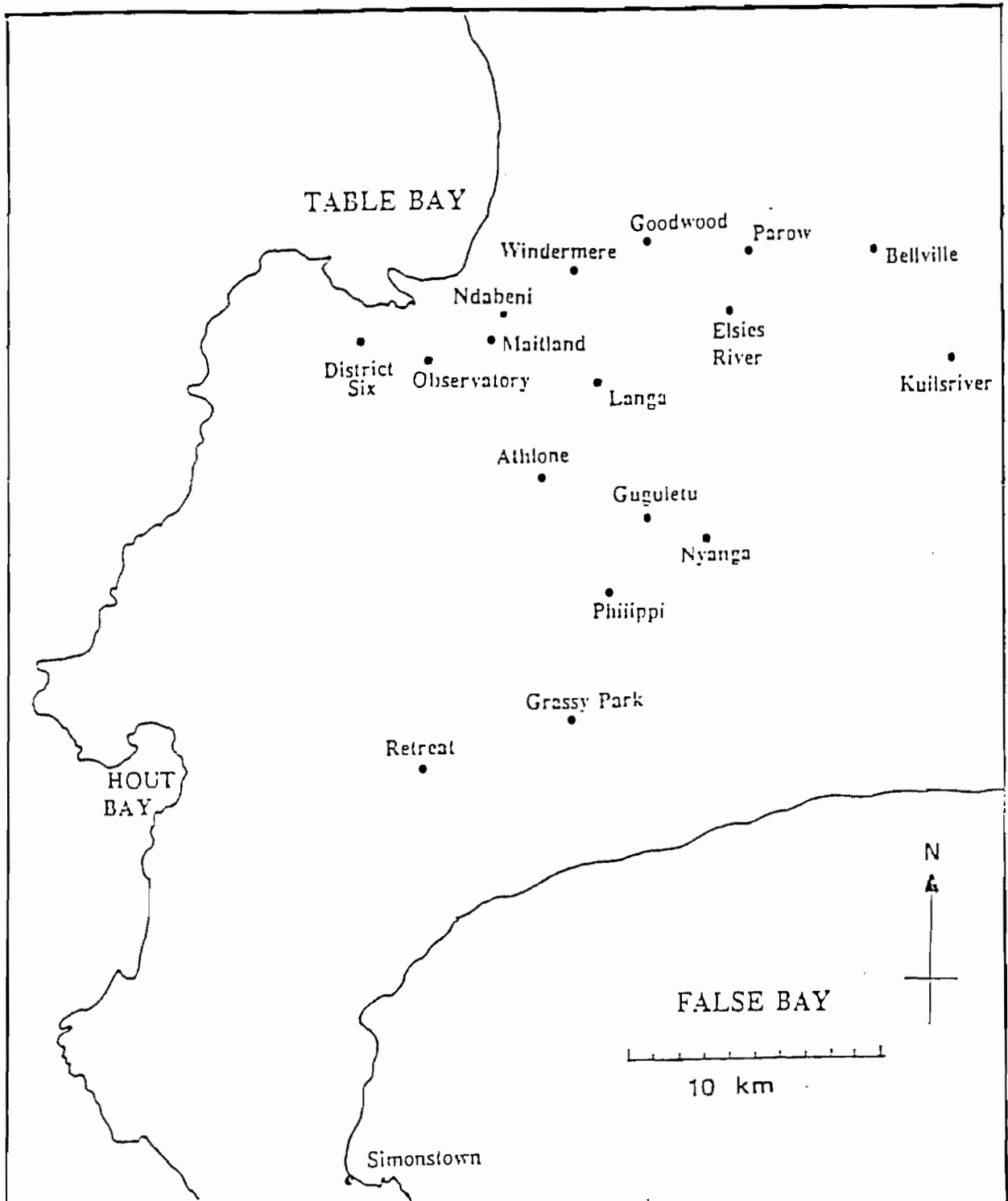
Source of Maps, re: Appendix A, B, and C

J. Muthien, 'Pass Control and Resistance, Cape Town, 1939-1965.'
(D. Phil, Christ College, Oxford University, 1989).

MAP 2: APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES OF THE CAPE TOWN CITY COUNCIL AREA



MAP 3: SKETCH MAP OF AFRICAN RESIDENTIAL AREAS, CAPE PENINSULA, 1939-1960



LANGA AND NDABENI POPULATION FIGURES
1927 - 1949

Source: Medical Officer of Health Annual Reports

Notes:

1927: figures only provided for male, female

Other years: Adult Male, Adult Female, Children

	Langa Men	Langa Women	Langa Chn	Langa Total	Ndab. Men	Ndab. Women	Ndab. Chn	Ndab Tot.
1927	231	2		233	3980	1005		4985
1928	611	160	189	960	4649	564	943	6156
1929	808	257	275	1340	2714	505	1244	4463
1930	808	257	275	1340	2714	505	1244	4463
1931	1161	326	334	1821	1835	493	1164	3492
1932	1236	371	345	1952	990	477	1115	2582
1933	1512	364	428	2304	346	443	1060	1849
1934	1937	416	562	2915	265	368	944	1577
1935	1787	515	844	3146	123	180	507	810
1936	2106	634	1171	3911	26	29	100	155
1937	2575	729	1367	4671				
1938	3321	791	1458	5570				
1939	3372	832	1459	5663				
1940	3655	874	1509	6038				
1941	3757	889	1559	6205				
1942	4276	1134	1824	7234				
1943	4372	1169	1996	7537				
1944	4417	1209	2058	7684				
1945	4453	1254	2142	7849				
1946	4671	1289	2200	8160				
1947	6613	1377	2527	10517				
1948	6312	1397	2750	10459				
1949	6518	1414	2913	10879				
1950	6558	1433	3026	11017				

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| 3/CT 4/2/1/3/1152 | Plans of proposed alterations and additions to 25 shops, additions to existing and new lavatory blocks, creche and clinic, Langa Native Township Bokmakirie, Athlone, 1943. |
| 3/CT 4/2/1/3/1154 | Proposed drainage, Langa. |
| 3/CT 4/2/1/3/1303 | Damp floors, Shop MQ18, Langa; Cape Town Corporation. |
| 3/CT 4/2/1/4/2 | Langa Township. Seventh Development Scheme, 1940 - 1941. |
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| 3/CT 4/3/1/309 | Langa Native Township, supply to, 1923 - 1940. |
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AWC 3/58, No. 27	Sports field - sporting amenities, 1937 - 1949.
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Interviews and Note Book(s)

Interviews conducted by M. Musemwa

25 July 1991

Mr Bernard Nozeu

24 August 1991

Mr Fisher Gallo

31 August 1991

Mr Ntshuntshe, Mr Zandi

5 September 1991

Mr E. Price Suqwana, Mr Kobo, Ms Sporty
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