

## CHAPTER 8

### THE BREAKING OF POPULIST UNITY : THE NEW ENTREPRENEUR AND SHACK SOCIETY AFTER THE 'BATTLE OF CATO MANOR'

#### Shack Society After the Pogrom of January 1949

By the early 1950s, the Mkhumbane shack dwellers became increasingly aware that as a result of the widespread African political activity of the later 1940s and, particularly, the January 1949 Riots, their own power had become highlighted and thus subject to increased criticism from White and Indian city residents, employers, the municipality and the government. Furthermore, as a direct result of their own actions during this period, day-to-day life in the shantytowns had become seemingly caught in a vortex of change. At the very least, daily shantytown life during the early 1950s was subject to processes which threatened the close communal bonds which existed within shantytown society during the later 1940s.

After the January 1949 Riots Africans living in other parts of the city flocked into Mkhumbane which throughout 1949 continued to absorb more and more people.<sup>1</sup> Mr Gumede, who was born in the Piet Retief district, came with his parents to Durban "at the time of the Indian African war" and settled in Mkhumbane.<sup>2</sup> Mr Moeli, originally from the Johannesburg region had settled with his family in the Candella area of Durban in the 1940s. When the January 1949 Riots broke out, Moeli "ran to Mkhumbane."<sup>3</sup> Soon after the Riots of January 1949, municipal inspectors reported that a further 302 new shacks had been erected in the Mkhumbane area.<sup>4</sup> Municipal inspectors also reported that Africans living in the area were stockpiling supplies of "second hand corrugated iron" for use in building new shack accommodation.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the flight or death of Indian residents, African shacklords assumed greater control in the area, either leasing out vacant land to "immigrants", taking over Indian-owned shacks or themselves erecting shacks on vacant land. Mr J J Shabalala, himself a rackrenter, recalls that "after the wars it was easy because now you could take the land much more easily. The Indians had gone. So you build the houses and give them [sic] out to all the people."<sup>6</sup> Mr Shange, who operated a herbalist business in the city, had originally lived in

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1. This movement of people into Mkhumbane did not however lead to any boycott or municipal accommodation as occurred in the Johannesburg region in this same period. See Stadler "Birds in the Cornfields" in Bozzoli, *Townships*.
  2. KCAV; interview with Mr N Gumede, 3 July 1979.
  3. KCAV; interview with Mr J Moeli, 3 April 1979.
  4. MNAD:H 2/CM, vol 1; Chief Superintendent-Manager, MNAD, 2 March 1950.
  5. MNAD:H18/CM, vol 1; handwritten notes by municipal inspector and Chief Medical Officer of Health-Manager, MNAD, 2 March 1950.
  6. Interview with Mr J J Shabalala, 27 November 1986.

Mkhumbane but then, in the later 1940s, moved to Somtseu Road Location. In the early 1950s, Shange moved back into Mkhumbane, setting up his herbalist business and becoming a rackrenter owning a "twelve roomed house."<sup>7</sup> Residents of Mkhumbane recall that with the exit of Indians, the African "landlords" became more assertive of the shacklands: "the landlord was king."<sup>8</sup> The majority of these shacklords already owned substantial amounts of shack accommodation in the Mkhumbane area.

In December 1952 municipal inspectors estimated that 75% of African residents in the Mkhumbane area owned no housing in the area. Of those who did own shack property in the shantytowns, only 22% both owned a single shack and lived on these premises. Approximately half the accommodation in the area was owned by Africans who, whilst living in the area, owned more than one shack. Just over 20% of the shacks were owned by Africans living either in other areas of the city or outside Durban. Only 7% of the shacks appeared to be owned by Indians, although municipal officials acknowledged that many apparently African-owned shacks could in fact belong to Indians.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the African shacklords owned significant numbers of shacks and were totally reliant on the incomes derived from rackrenting. Residents estimated that shack owners like Esau le Fleur, the 'mayor' of Mkhumbane, and people like A W G Champion, then residing in Chesterville, collected as much as £30 a month from shackrenting.<sup>10</sup> John Hlope recalls that his father, a rackrenter, "did not work. He was working for himself."<sup>11</sup> In 1952 municipal officials estimated that it was conceivable that nearly 20% of the population of the Mkhumbane area "were dependent only on income from rents."<sup>12</sup>

The growing power and wealth of established African shacklords resulted in increasing conflict between shack owners and tenants. The basis for this tension lay in the cost of accommodation and the manner in which the increasing amount of accommodation owned by existing shack owners made it very difficult for other residents to "invest" in shack property.<sup>13</sup>

For the majority of the fully or casually employed residents of the Mkhumbane area, shack ownership was a prized commodity having a dual function. The ownership of a few shacks allowed people to profit from renting accommodation and thus avoid the immiseration which came with full wage employment. These profits

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7. KCAV; interview with Mr J Shange, 24 June 1979.

8. Interviews with Mr M Mcanyana, 19 May 1985, Mr T Phewa, 23 June 1985 and Mr J J Shabalala, 29 November 1986. It is interesting that many informants refer to African rackrenters as "landlords", thereby alluding to the seeming authority of shacklords under conditions where the legal powers of both Indian landowners and the municipality appeared to have lapsed.

9. Shum Papers; C N Shum "Survey of Shack Families: Incomes and Other Considerations", 2 February 1953.

10. Interview with Mr M Mcanyana, 19 May 1985.

11. Interview with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985.

12. Shum Papers; C N Shum, "Survey of Shack Families: Incomes and Other Considerations", 2 February 1953.

13. Interview with Mr M Mcanyana, 19 May 1985.

could act as both a reserve source of money and, through the capitalisation of profits, allow such persons to avoid the rigours of full wage employment. However, for many residents having few material resources, the main desire was to own shack accommodation. Such ownership was a central issue amongst the urban proletariat constantly struggling for both permanent legal urban residence and the right to own both land and housing in the city. In the same way as the already permanently urbanized Indian working class was eager to own land in Durban, so, too for the African shack dwellers, ownership of a shack dwelling allowed residents to both sustain permanent urban residence and invest their savings. This investment could either be handed on to heirs, thereby allowing dependents a future city life, or owners could profit from the sale of such buildings.

During the later 1940s, many families had grouped together and paid for the construction of one shack. When finances permitted the shack would be taken over by one family while the other family moved into a shack financed by all involved in the initial venture. With the high costs of shack building when compared to the wages earned by African workers, many residents would use money gained through stockpiles to acquire property.<sup>14</sup>

The desire to own shack property was continually balanced against the availability of sites, the cost of building materials and the estimated future security of any particular shack area.<sup>15</sup> Despite the increasing prices of shack material, with the 'liberation' of Mkhumbane during the 1949 Riots, many residents attempted to acquire their own shacks. By and large, such attempts were to be blocked by the already wealthy African shacklords. Residents recall with bitterness the way in which 'Champion came in and told us that we must build our own places and forget about the Indians. That was when Champion, who already had lots of houses, ... he puts lots of houses up himself.'<sup>16</sup> Other recollections express a more generalized set of resentments. Charles Khumalo recalls the period immediately after the 1949 Riots: 'if you were wanting a place of your own, then you must go somewhere else. Not in Mkhumbane. There you had to rent from the mayor.'<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the later 1940s, the land and housing rents charged by Indian shacklords had been slightly lower than those shack rents charged by African shacklords.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, during the early 1950s, as the power of Indians waned against the authority of African shacklords and then, later, the municipality, Indian shackowners were often prepared to accept even less rent for accommodation.<sup>19</sup> Against this trend, during the early 1950s, African shacklords, taking advantage of the shortage of officially sanctioned African urban housing and the popularity of Mkhumbane, increased the rentals which they charged for accommodation in these

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14. Interviews with Messrs C Khumalo and T Phewa, 21 April 1985.

15. Interview with Mr C D S Mbutho, 19 April 1985.

16. Interview with Mr T Ndlovu, 14 January 1986.

17. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 19 July 1985.

18. MNAD; H 2/CM vol 4; Supervisor Shack Areas- Manager, MNAD, 2 February 1953 and Acting Manager, MNAD-Town Clerk and City Treasurer, 4 March 1953.

19. See interviews with Mr B Mngadi, 29 October 1986, Mr J Mnguni, 20 July 1985 and personal communication, Mr C N Shum.

shacklands. While small rooms could be rented for as little as 5 shillings a month, other larger rooms in more favoured locales could cost as much as £1.5s, £2 or more a month.<sup>20</sup> In 1952 the municipality estimated that the average monthly rental for shack accommodation in the Mkhumbane area was £1.3s. In 1952 the sub-economic rentals charged for a three-roomed house in Lamontville varied between 12 shillings and 6 pence and 17 shillings and 6 pence. Rentals in Chesterville were slightly higher.<sup>21</sup> John Hlope, whose father was a rackrenter in the Cabazini area, explains the position:

My father had ten rooms at Cabazini. This area is near to the road, good buses, good water. ... Now if you want a house there you must pay. My father built those houses. If you want to live in the location then it is okay, otherwise you must pay.<sup>22</sup>

Whilst there is evidence of some African shacklords charging increased rentals, the tension between shack owners and tenants was probably due largely to the increasing arrogance of shacklords rather than to any widespread rental increases.

Alongside the growing power of the established African shacklords came the increasing influence of African traders. In the months immediately after the Riots, many of the existing small-scale shackshop owners, members of running co-operative concerns, and other investors began to extend their trading operations in the Mkhumbane area. As M B Yengwa recalls, after the January 1949 Riots there was a "vacuum" created through the withdrawal of Indian, municipal and police presence.<sup>23</sup> It was thus "very easy for us Africans to start making money."<sup>24</sup> With such persons being accurately viewed as "hardheaded" and "ambitious", it was thus a relatively simple matter for African traders to expand their existing shackshops or move into those Indian shops not burnt during the Riots.<sup>25</sup>

There was however conflict among those persons trying to establish "proper businesses."<sup>26</sup> Two groupings emerged as relative calm developed after the Riots. The first of these groupings, a seemingly informal alliance between certain African traders from other parts of the city and aspirant traders living in Mkhumbane, was called Zondizitha Buying Club. As the name implied, the group was fiercely anti-Indian and pro-apartheid in so far as it claimed the right of Africans to trade in those areas of the city set aside for African residence. By the end of 1952, the Zondizitha Buying Club had been "forced" to disband and members joined the Zulu Hlanganani Association.<sup>27</sup>

20. Shum Papers; C N Shum "Survey of Shack Families: Incomes and Other Considerations", 2 February 1953.

21. *Ibid.* and *Durban Housing Survey*, pp 328-332.

22. Interview with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985.

23. *University of York*; interview with Mr M B Yengwa, 23 November 1976.

24. Interview with Mr B Mnqadi, 29 October 1986.

25. Interview with Mr S Selby, 12 August 1980.

26. Interview with Mr B Mnqadi, 29 October 1986.

27. *Ibid.* and Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie*, p 300.

Upholding the very same policies as had the Zondizitha Buying Club, the Zulu Hlanganani, which had been formed immediately after the January 1949 Riots, was eventually to become popular and powerful in Mkhumbane. The main purpose of this grouping was to ensure that only Africans resident in the Mkhumbane area and belonging to the Zulu Hlanganani would be allowed to trade in the shantytowns. By 1952 it seems that most of the other co-operative ventures and unaligned shackshops had either closed down or had become part of the Zulu Hlanganani. The collapse of many of the co-operatives was almost certainly due to these co-operatives own organizational weaknesses, but the power of the Zulu Hlanganani certainly contributed both to the decline of co-operatives and the, albeit brief, monopolization of trading in the area by the Zulu Hlanganani. The leaders of this group were all established traders or wealthy residents living in the Mkhumbane area.<sup>28</sup> Of these people, the majority had been involved in the various co-operative societies which had developed in the Mkhumbane area during the later 1940s.

Whilst also calling itself the Zulu Hlanganani Buying and Co-operative Club, the grouping was in some important ways different from the earlier co-operatives. Stressing the need to ensure that as much money as possible circulated amongst African shantytown residents, their racism was, in common with the earlier co-operatives, firmly rooted in a desire to claim an exclusivity of trade over Indian entrepreneurs. However, the Zulu Hlanganani also assumed to prohibit Africans not resident in the shantytowns from trading in the Mkhumbane area and so to monopolize trading in the shantytown. Furthermore, whilst many of the co-operatives of the later 1940s had been an organizational basis for those Africans desiring to fundamentally restructure the nature of civil power in the city, the Zulu Hlanganani members focussed themselves solely on gaining influence within Mkhumbane. Furthermore, the grouping was never to sustain a single political perspective.

The Zulu Hlanganani had three main areas of operation. Firstly, their buying club allowed members to unite and purchase goods in bulk. Most of the members were traders. Secondly, the grouping also operated a set of roadside stalls located near the junction of Booth and Denis Shepstone roads. Most of these stalls were run by women selling only small quantities of fruit and vegetables. Thirdly, through the Zulu Hlanganani, various wealthy residents of the shantytowns invested in "shares" for the purchase of buses, the purchase of land and other costly and large scale financial ventures. The profits from these ventures, few of which succeeded or remained viable for long, would go to those who made financial investments. The Zulu Hlanganani was a combination of a wholesale agent, a licensing authority, and what Henry Sibisi calls the "Mkhumbane Chamber of Commerce": an association of self-employed business people.<sup>29</sup>

Conflict between the African entrepreneurs continued. With "money ...just spinning like this", this conflict was not merely the simple outcome of various traders trying to expand their businesses.<sup>30</sup> The seizure

28. *Ibid.*, and interviews with Mrs A Afrika, 30 November 1986, Mr R Arenstein, 22 August 1988 and Mr J J Shabalala, 29 November 1986.

29. Interview with Mr C D S Mbutho, 19 April 1985.

30. Interview with Mr J Mnguni, 20 July 1986.



of Indian stores and the proliferation of African-owned trading ventures throughout the shantytown area, with some areas having over two hundred shops by the early 1950s, produced both absolute competition and an increasingly evident differentiation between various traders.<sup>31</sup> All traders, as Bryant Mqadi recalls, started off having "to rob Peter to pay Paul"; but then, with the Indians "getting out, there were many places where the clever Africans started making real money,"<sup>32</sup> Bryant Mqadi included.

Expanding their operations and gaining increasing profits, African traders were aware of the need to justify their actions and to be assisting other residents of the area. Many of the names of the shops, co-operatives and investment groupings evoked the images of the proletarian populism so popular during the later 1940s: Zakheni MaAfrika bus company, Phaphemeni MaAfrika Ltd, Thandanani MaAfrika.<sup>33</sup> Wealthy residents would announce that their schemes were intended to "help the Africans of Mkhumbane develop so that we could all live well."<sup>34</sup> In August 1949, Mr Rasube, then a trader in Mkhumbane, called a meeting to which all those who wished to invest money in starting a bus company were invited. But not only wealthy could come. Mr Rasube desired to take up the common grievance against *shimeyane* prosecutions and thus all in the Kwa Banki area were invited.<sup>35</sup>

By the early 1950s, the trading class had become so entrenched and wealthy in the shantytown area that some began to criticize the established traders for forgetting the interests of the ordinary residents.<sup>36</sup> One commentator remarked that whilst many were struggling to secure permanent residence in Mkhumbane, the leaders of the Zulu Hlanganani were noticeably quiet about such issues.<sup>37</sup> Probably as a direct result of such comments, in 1952, the Zulu Hlanganani held the first of many Mkhumbane "Xmas Tree" celebrations in the open ground near the Cabazini shack sprawl. Held on 14 January, the anniversary of the outbreak of the January 1949 Riots, leading traders would provide a feast for all residents. Along with the slaughtering of beasts and the flowing of liquor came various speeches which paid homage to those Africans who had died in the January 1949 Riots, because "it was through their sacrifice that we are where we are today."<sup>38</sup> At the first of these celebrations, at which "orderlies" of the Shembe Church officiated, the 'mayor' of Mkhumbane, Esau Makathini, himself a Zionist, exhorted the 6,500 people present to "remember the bad old days."<sup>39</sup> Through such ceremonies the meaning of the words such as "where we are today" remained suitably ambiguous.

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31. *Ibid.*

32. Interview with Mr B Mqadi, 29 October 1986.

33. University of York; interview with Mr M B Yengwa, 23 November 1976.

34. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 19 July 1985.

35. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 13 August 1949.

36. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 19 July 1985.

37. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 17 March 1951.

38. KCAV; interview with Mr C C Majola, 20 June 1979.

39. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 1 March 1952 and 21 February 1953.

Even prior to the development of the Emergency Camp, the influence of this rackrenting and trading class was given further authority through municipal officials recognizing such persons as local leaders. The militant leaders of the shack movements and the shackshop dealers of the later 1940s gained increasing legitimacy from that quarter which had for so long been hostile to shack residents' power. In 1951, Colin Shum, then Supervisor Shack Areas, encouraged the formation of the 'Nogondayo'.<sup>40</sup> This body comprised a group of "leaders", all of whom were traders, shacklords or entrepreneurs. As the name implies, the function of this body was to seek ways in which African residence in the Mkhumbane area could be secured, and conflicts between Indian landowners, African shacklords and other African shantytown residents could be reduced.<sup>41</sup>

Members of the Nogondayo expressed the views of the vast majority of African shack dwellers. The Nogondayo affirmed the right of Africans to live permanently in Mkhumbane. However the basis upon which the Nogondayo affirmed this principle was ambiguous. The members of the Nogondayo were acquiring power by virtue of a municipal authority whose influence in the area was by no means popularly accepted. Ultimately, through the Nogondayo, leading entrepreneurs of Mkhumbane sought to stabilize shack society in a way which allowed such entrepreneurs to gain increased power in the shantytowns. However, it was the increasing power of such entrepreneurs which had partly caused the instability of Mkhumbane society.

It is significant that with the increasing wealth and power of the shacklord and trading class, residents recall that "the fertilizer ran out."<sup>42</sup> This term, common amongst residents, in part referred to the way in which money, goods and services would constantly be redistributed amongst residents. Within the local shack economy, which residents referred to as "robbing Peter to pay Paul", it was necessary to ensure that money brought into the shantytowns by new residents - formal wages and the profits derived from enterprise - be continually recycled within the Mkhumbane area. Thomas Shabalala recalls the period after the January 1949 Riots:

It was right after the Indo-African war that the fertilizer ran out. There was nothing for us any longer. This was because of Zulu Hlanganani who had taken it all away. That was when our leaders went away with Kwa Muhle and left us.<sup>43</sup>

40. For personal reasons, Mr Shum was reluctant to discuss this group other than to state that it was the forerunner of the Cato Manor Welfare and Development Board, but that by the time this later body had been formed by the municipality "everyone knew that it was to be a place of temporary accommodation." Emphasis added.

41. KCAV; interview with Mr J Mnguni, 22 July 1980. See also interview with Mr J J Shabalala, 29 November 1986. The word Nogondayo appears to be a derivative attempt at conveying the demonstrative meanings of two other Zulu words. Firstly, the act of making one's dwelling permanent is conveyed through the imagery of hardening the hut floor surface using a hard and rounded stone or pebble. In other words, to entrench shack residence through employing the power of shack society. Secondly, the word evokes the images of straightening something out. This would clearly refer to the organization of shack society in a way which would allow the turbulence inherent in the relationship between shack dwellers and between the shantytowns and landowners and municipal power to be reduced.

42. Interview with Mr T Shabalala, 31 June 1985.

43. *Ibid.*

In the Cato Manor Farm area the Riots of January 1949 were a pogrom. In these Riots, African residents of the Mkhumbane area attempted to assert their claim to permanent land rights in Durban. Also, with the Riots residents believed that they had finally achieved their desire to develop a localized trading economy that was based upon the circulation of money, goods and services dependent on both the money derived from residents and from those, mainly weekend, visitors who frequented a liberated area, allowing for the development of a proletarian culture. For the majority of shack residents, the irony behind the changes which occurred in the shacklands after the January 1949 Riots, was that with the, albeit partial, destruction of Indian control over the area, shack society had changed in ways which were diametrically opposed to the wishes of the majority of residents.

Further changes in shantytown life were, although substantially different in origin, just as important. A direct effect of this massive movement of people into Mkhumbane was that health and sanitation conditions in the area rapidly deteriorated. The serious shortage of toilet facilities became exacerbated: "there were so many holes already covered up that you had to search for a good place ... and the flies were all around."<sup>44</sup> The effects were first felt by young children and those new entrants to the city who were either already malnourished or elderly dependants and relatives of those already living in Mkhumbane: "the older people from the farms who had not become fit yet."<sup>45</sup> In the summer months of 1950-51, a typhoid epidemic swept through the Mkhumbane area with ninety-two African children dying of diarrhea in a particular twenty-four day period.<sup>46</sup> Health and welfare clinics, operated by both the municipality and private welfare organizations, were withdrawn during the 1949 riots and were not to be re-introduced until the development of the Emergency Camp.<sup>47</sup>

In 1951, the municipality initiated a survey to gain an estimate of the number of Africans living in the shack settlements. Colin Shum, who controlled the operation, commented that his "job was to do a survey entirely unrelated to punitive action, (to ignore pass offences and shebeens etc), to get the confidence of the people, for the purposes of introducing control."<sup>48</sup> Personally Shum was respected amongst residents and thus managed to gain the "trust of those people amongst us who did not trust the White man". However, many residents rapidly viewed this survey as the first of many municipal attempts to exert municipal authority over the area.<sup>49</sup>

The attitude of the police was apparently far less discreet. Immediately after the riots the police stepped up their patrols into Mkhumbane and their pass raiding throughout the city. In the first seven months

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44. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 21 April 1986.

45. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 19 May 1985 and KCAV; interview with Mr Z A Ngcobo, 13 September 1980.

46. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 17 February 1951.

47. Interview with Ms E Law, 2 April 1982.

48. Shum Papers; C N Shum, Personal Memorandum, 3 September 1960.

49. Interview with Mr S Selby, 19 August 1980.



after the riots a total of 3,166 Africans were deported from Durban.<sup>50</sup> The number of arrests for offences connected to the brewing and drinking of illegal liquor in Mkhumbane also increased.<sup>51</sup> On the 16 December 1949 the police conducted what was apparently one of their first really big "Dingaan's Day" raids into Mkhumbane to "remind us who is boss."<sup>52</sup> By November 1951, police activity in Mkhumbane had so infuriated residents that there was a near riot after police had attempted to arrest and handcuff a man accused of drinking shimeyane. Those who attempted to rescue the man were sjambokked and in the ensuing "scuffle" the accused was shot three times before the police retreated. On returning to recover the corpse, the police party sjambokked the grieving widow and, as a result, the White policeman in charge of the sortie, well known for his zealotry in conducting liquor raids, acquired the nickname of "Thekwane": Zulu for the hammerkop bird.<sup>53</sup>

Despite African exhilaration at having "liberated" the area from forms of unwanted external authority, the land remained the legal property of the existing Indian owners or their heirs. Moreover, after a judicious absence, many Indian-owned shops again began operating in the Mkhumbane area.<sup>54</sup> Indian-owned bus services quickly resumed operations.<sup>55</sup> The return of Indians to the area not only provided clear evidence that African control of Mkhumbane was still tenuous, but also resulted in African traders and shacklords being faced with competition.

Continuing tension between African residents, wanting to ensure African control, and Indians in Mkhumbane eventually led to a renewed outbreak of rioting, looting and arson in September 1953. As with the January 1949 Riots, the incident which initiated the open conflict was hardly unusual. An African alighting from an Indian-owned bus in the Mkhumbane area fell and was killed when the rear wheels of the bus ran him over. Immediately Indian shops, houses, buses, and other property were burnt or looted by Africans, some in "well organized parties." Significantly, "most of the properties were targets for the incendiaries in the 1949 race riot and had been rebuilt."<sup>56</sup>

However despite the increasing tension and violence of late 1953, Indian property-owners began to resume rent-collecting in the shantytowns. Charles Khumalo recalls that "in the beginning they came around in the middle of the day when everything was quiet. Just very quietly, with a long coat and hat and a little face with a big smile ... they would just say to your wife, 'I have come for my rent, never mind about the other rent [back rent]. Just pay from the beginning of the month.'<sup>57</sup> Soon however residents would see Indian landlords in

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50. Ilanga lase Natal, 6 August 1949.

51. Interview with Mr S Selby, 19 August 1980.

52. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 3 June 1987.

53. Ilanga lase Natal, 17 November 1951.

54. MNAD; CM/Trading, vol 1; passim.

55. Ilanga lase Natal, 4 June 1949.

56. Daily News, 21 September 1953.

57. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 3 June 1987.

"meetings" with African shacklords and "we were made to understand that they were all back together again."<sup>58</sup> Racial barriers to class unity made for complex but not irresolvable conflict.

In the same way as African rackrenters were obliged to co-operate with Indian landowners, so, during the period immediately after the Riots, African entrepreneurs were never to be completely successful in controlling the growth of new shops, shebeens and other similar ventures. Albert Vilakazi, who lived in the Cabazini area offers his recollection:

My wife was brewing at the home and selling. Not a shebeen. So our man [shacklord] comes around and says 'No! No! You cannot let your wife do this. What about the police. Too much trouble' This was an excuse. We all knew his wife was having a shebeen. So we say 'No, you cannot do this, otherwise we cannot afford to stay here and we are good people.' 'OK, this can stay [pointing at the shimeyane] but I do not want to see you driving a car. I have not got a car.'<sup>59</sup>

Whilst attempting to gain more power, shacklords and other entrepreneurs were also conscious of the need to maintain a certain equilibrium and stability in shantytown society.

There was however no equilibrium in shack society. With the growing power of an entrepreneur class, the basis of shack life was changing. However, these entrepreneurs, known by residents as "our first leaders", had not acquired full control over the area.<sup>60</sup> Mkhumbane was essentially a collection of smaller shack sprawls where power and authority was never fully established by anyone. There were few really effective structures in shack society that could reduce conflict in the shantytown area.

The only constraint against the increasing wealth of the entrepreneurs was through the proletariat living in the area evoking the moral benefits of the proletarian populism which had been widely accepted in the area during the later 1940s. The persuasiveness of this ideology became less and less powerful with the increasing class distinctions which were developing within the population.

During the early 1950s, the entrepreneurial class did not manage to gain complete control of the shack area nor quell the conflict between different leaders and traders. Immediately after the Riots of January 1949 leading residents of Mkhumbane were instrumental in establishing a civilian guard in Mkhumbane.<sup>61</sup> Many residents welcomed the formation of this vigilante force, which became known as "our own Cato Manor SAP", as there were rumours that "the Indian army [was] forming to exact revenge".<sup>62</sup> However, the purpose of this vigilante force was not merely to secure the shantytowns against outside aggressors. The vigilante force was a ragged collection of the various "impis" which already existed in the shantytowns. These forces were

58. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 12 May 1986.

59. Interview with Mr A Vilakazi, 19 August 1983.

60. Interview with Mrs D Nyembe, 8 July 1985.

61. KCAV; interview with Mrs E Africa, 25 September 1980.

62. KCAV; interview with Mrs A Mnguni, 25 September 1980. Very similar events had occurred in the Clermont freehold township during the later 1940s. See Edwards Sibisi, *passim*.

occasionally assembled by various leading entrepreneurs to protect their power and wealth. The civilian guard was a means whereby established entrepreneurs in the shantytowns sought both to protect their own newly acquired and existing commercial ventures and establish their power over shack residents. The civilian guard was never properly established and was not to last for very long.<sup>63</sup>

Lacking any really established and secure leadership element, shack residents were unable to either unite or successfully develop those strategies essential to protect their shack area from external power. Beyond an expressed desire to remain living in the Mkhumbane area, the residents of Mkhumbane were unable to resist attempts by the municipality, the government and major local employers to transform African housing in the city.<sup>64</sup>

### The Struggle for Mkhumbane

The struggle over the future of Mkhumbane shacklands was waged in the very early 1950s and not, as many assert, in the later years of the decade.<sup>65</sup> During the early 1950s, the municipality was largely able to assert control over the shacklands, denying Africans permanent freehold residence and acquiring ownership of the Mkhumbane area for the development of temporary African housing. When the large-scale African protests over the destruction of Mkhumbane developed amidst the heightened African political militancy of the late 1950s, the battle was to all intents and purposes over. By that stage the municipality was already developing and administering the temporary African housing scheme in the Cato Manor Emergency Camp, had available an ever-increasing number of permanent houses in Kwa Mashu, and was involved in negotiations with government for the development of further permanent houses in Umlazi.

Although the municipality was to have difficulty in applying municipal policy in the shantytowns, the struggle over the ultimate future of the shacklands was decided with an almost complete lack of organized African resistance. Despite shack residents asserting their desire to remain in their conquered space, there was no clear political strategy and a lack of any clear leadership. Furthermore, existing African political organizations, particularly the African National Congress, did not have the political will to struggle for the Mkhumbane shantytowns.

During the early 1950s, Mkhumbane residents responded to the altering circumstances of shack life by expressing the desire that the situation in the shacklands be rapidly restored to "normal."<sup>66</sup> The primary goal was to secure the future existence of African residence in the Mkhumbane area. It is significant that in spite of

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63. Interview with Mr T Phewa, 23 June 1985.

64. Shack dwellers' weaknesses are clearly revealed in MNAD; H18/CM; sworn affidavit of Esau Makathini (Le Fleur), 15 March 1949. For general analysis see Lloyd, *Slums*, Chapter 2.

65. See, for example, Ladlau, "Cato Manor Riots", and K. Luckhardt and B. Wall, *Organize ... or Starve* (London, 1980).

66. Interviews with Mr C D S Mbutho, 19 April 1985 and Mrs T Phewa, 23 June 1985.

the threat which the growing wealth and power of established shacklords and traders posed to the internal economy of the shantytowns, such a crucial issue was sidelined. Instead, the residents became united in believing that the social structure of shack life could be stabilized through either defending the area against external power or through controlling the nature of external intervention in the shantytowns.

There were, however, various ways of understanding how the security of African life in the Mkhumbane area could be achieved. Discussion within shack society encompassed four issues: firstly, a concern over municipal power within the city and, in particular, municipal control over the shantytowns. Secondly, the question of improved residential facilities in the Mkhumbane area. Thirdly, the insistence that Africans had gained the right to remain permanently in Mkhumbane. Finally debate over the question of political goals and the means whereby such aims could be achieved. Such ideas would be central to the political consciousness of Mkhumbane residents during the course of the 1959 Beerhall Riots and the strikes, boycotts and stay-away campaigns which formed part of a broader African political militancy during the crises of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Most people accepted the efficacy of the African populist militancy of the later 1940s and the gains made by Mkhumbane residents during the January 1949 Riots. However, many believed that through the very public profile which Mkhumbane had received, it was necessary to accept the limited goals achieved during the Riots as the limits of then possible achievable goals. African shack dwellers should however be allowed to live in the area without any external interference.

During the later 1940s, taking advantage of the municipality's inability to control the city's African proletariat, Africans had established a populous and tightly knit shantytown settlement in Mkhumbane. These shack residents preferred to concentrate upon the task of defending contested space owned by Indians. However during the course of the growth of the Mkhumbane shacklands, the area rapidly became the hub of an alternative African proletarian city culture, with shantytown residents playing a leading role in the increasingly militant African populist politics of the late 1940s. This rising political activity was aimed at both transforming and thereby improving the nature of African life in the city and in overturning the structures of civil power in the city.

With the eviction of Indian residents many proclaimed Mkhumbane to be "liberated". However, residents believed that the future security of the shantytowns depended upon people not "showing our heads" and thus inviting municipal intervention. After the Riots, the city was clearly full of people wishing to "put us in our place again." Charles Khumalo continues:

We were all happy with the Riots. All the Indians had gone, but we were scared. You see we had been living there quietly and now all of a sudden there is the navy, the police and the newspapers are all talking about us. You could go into work and the boss would say 'Ja, now we all know about you, you fucking rubbish. You think you are clever?'<sup>67</sup>

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67. Interview with Mr C Khumalo, 7 July 1985.



Tembinkosi Phewa, who by his own admission and those of his friends, was part of the mob which burnt and looted in Mkhumbane during the Riots, recalls that: "Everyone was talking about it and telling people that was bad. But everyone did those things. Everyone! But now you cannot talk about it."<sup>68</sup>

The newly found moderation of the militant Mkhumbane residents of the late 1940s was enhanced by other developments. Residents became frightened by the scale of violence which had occurred during the Riots.<sup>69</sup> Others were stung by the manner in which African leaders, such as Moses Kotane, castigated the city's African population for exhibiting such undisciplined, racist and violent tendencies.<sup>70</sup>

As a result of a commonly felt desire to de-escalate the issue and avoid continual public scrutiny, the attempts by a small group of Africans to "carry on with the battle" were to fail.<sup>71</sup> During the period immediately before the outbreak of the riots many Africans had been discussing the need for Africans to take to arms, go "underground" and revolt.<sup>72</sup> After the Riots, using Mkhumbane as their stronghold, this small group of people, some of whom were residents of Mkhumbane, and others who had retreated into "hiding" from the police and the army<sup>73</sup> into Mkhumbane, believed that it was necessary for the shantytown dwellers to continue the offensive. Ashmon Nene, a leading resident of Mkhumbane recalls the events:

When the police and the army came down onto Cato Manor during the Riots there were lots of people running into Mkhumbane. Lots, from the Indians, from the police and everyone. Now these people, this group, came into the shacks and told people to carry on.... these people were the same ones who wanted guns. The same as before the Riots. The same people. But it did not work.<sup>74</sup>

Whilst cautioning that the time was not yet propitious for a further escalation in conflict, persons holding this view believed that through their victory in the January 1949 Riots, Africans had acquired permanent control of the Mkhumbane area by "right of conquest".<sup>75</sup> Both the municipality and the Indian landowners should accept this. Many residents were thus opposed to any attempts by either the municipality or the Indian landowners to "take our land away". J J Shabalala recalls what appears to have been a popular belief: "once Kwa Muhle comes

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68. Interview with Mr T Phewa, 7 July 1985.

69. Interview with Mr B Mthethwe, 14 January 1986.

70. Kotane had in fact journeyed to Durban and stated that the Riots clearly indicated the lack of effective African political leadership in Natal. Interview with Mrs J Arenstein, 18 July 1985. See also CKM; roll 3A; 2: CC 1: 84/10; Communist Party of South Africa "The Durban Riots-A Warning to South Africa", where Kotane lays a wider blame on apartheid legislation. A W G Champion was also to appeal for moderation in a statement which was probably the only instance where he co-operated with the Natal Indian Congress. See CKM; roll 3B; 2:DA 19/2:89, A W G Champion and G M Naidoo, 14 January 1949.

71. Interview with Mr A Nene, 26 January 1984.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

74. Interview with Mr A Nene, 26 January 1984.

75. Interview with Mr C N Shum, 22 June 1985.

it comes and that land is no longer yours."<sup>76</sup> If shack residents lived quietly on land and both Indian landowners and the municipality "left us alone" and accepted the fact of African occupation, then "all the troubles would be over. Then we could tell Kwa Muhle to come and build us proper houses. But it was our land."<sup>77</sup>

Initially, such a view gained much support from existing shacklords, other entrepreneurs and those wanting to "invest" in profiteering activities as could be sustained within a shantytown relatively removed from external authority. Many of these people had been part of the militant co-operative movement during the late 1940s. As Kunene recalls, using populist images, such entrepreneurs and aspirant entrepreneurs asserted that "Africans had to show that we could get our own leaders - people of standing just like all the other races in Durban, they all had their wealthy people. We were a normal race just like the others." In order to achieve this "we had to prove that we could do things by ourselves. Us the people of Mkhumbane."<sup>78</sup>

According to a second viewpoint, however, as a result of the 1949 Riots the existence of the Mkhumbane shacklands should be recognized by the municipality. Whilst stressing the power of the shack residents, this view accepted that the Mkhumbane area had not been 'liberated' and believed that it was possible to negotiate with the municipality over the provision of essential services and the development of a freehold African urban suburb in Mkhumbane.<sup>79</sup>

Support for this view was almost certainly enhanced by Havemann's statements in the early 1950s. Havemann maintained that he desired a "stable" African city population; that pass laws and pass raids could be abolished; that the dirty beerhalls could be replaced by "bars"; that shops would be provided in African suburbs and that hostels could be replaced by "boarding houses" and "small lodging" premises.<sup>80</sup> To Mkhumbane residents, Havemann seemed to be saying that the municipality was ready to accede to many of the demands made by Africans during the later 1940s. Indeed, during the course of 1950 various reports indicated that Mkhumbane would be set aside for permanent African accommodation.<sup>81</sup>

With regard to the possibility of negotiating with the municipality over permanent African residence in Mkhumbane, Charles Mbutho expresses what was clearly a popular view: whilst accepting that you had to be "very careful" about negotiating with the municipality, "we were all proud people who wanted to develop and be decent people. We should not be treated like rats who have to scurry into a hole when the White man comes."<sup>82</sup> Jason Shange, a resident of Mkhumbane from the early 1940s comments:

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76. Interview with Mr J J Shabalala, 18 November 1986.

77. Interview with Mr A Nene, 26 January 1984.

78. Interview with Mr M O D Kunene, 12 May 1985. For the similar ways in which African traders legitimized their entrepreneurial ventures in Clermont see Edwards, *Sibisi*, p 15.

79. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

80. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 10 June 1950 and 27 January 1951.

81. *Ibid*, 3 June 1950.

82. Interview with Mr C D S Mbutho, 19 April 1983.

We wanted to stay in Mkhumbane. It was not a nice place but it was ours. This we wanted to keep. Why not put all the things we have here in Kwa Mashu in Mkhumbane. That is what we wanted. This we told the City Council. They knew what we wanted.<sup>83</sup>

Others resented the nature of life in the shantytowns and revealed a growing sense of working class consciousness. Albert Vilakazi believes that "I did not want to live next to a tsotsi and shebeens. That was not what I wanted. All those people the municipality must send away and give us good houses."<sup>84</sup>

This was a view which found favour amongst many of those previously militant shackshop keepers who now desired to gain licenses to operate shops in Mkhumbane. The lawyer representing the Zondizitha Buying Club spoke of these peoples' newly found "abject humility"<sup>85</sup>:

Let us say when you have a cow wishing to milk it and it runs away but at that time it changes its mind and comes to you. I believe that you shall never neglect it, because no matter where the beast may go, it remains and vest[s] in your powers; this [is] what applies to these Native Traders for they are yours and they shall always remain under you.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly in an endeavour to halt the January 1949 Riots, certain unnamed, African "leaders" met "secretly" with the Chief Native Commissioner for Natal and offered to halt the killing and looting if Africans' "grievances" could also be discussed.<sup>87</sup> While there is no record of how such discussions progressed, they were almost certainly part of those attempts by some Mkhumbane residents to gain a secure residential area in Mkhumbane.

Neither of these views acquired any coherence in the shantytowns during the critical period of the early 1950s. There were no internal social structures capable of reducing conflict within shack society; nor was there any real means of formulating a single policy. Although all residents wanted to be allowed to both own land houses in Mkhumbane, there was considerable disagreement over how this could be achieved. Some believed that the municipality should provide formal housing which would be sold to residents. Others wanted a continuation of shack-type dwellings, with only the provision of improved basic facilities. Others saw no need to alter the existing conditions in Mkhumbane: no good could come from any external intervention in the lives of the shack dwellers. In many ways these discussions reflected the nature of class distinctions within the population. Some could afford to purchase land and housing, others could not. For the underclasses of Mkhumbane, Mkhumbane was a secure area of residence precisely because it did not conform to the aspirations of many other shack residents. Furthermore, the often increasingly wealthy shack leaders lacked any clear notion of the future of Mkhumbane. Some saw a future in a township, while others accurately perceived that with the development of such a township, the very material bases of their existing power would

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83. Interview with Mr J Shange, 21 July 1985.

84. Interview with Mr A Vilakazi, 19 August 1983.

85. Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie*, p 304.

86. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p 305.

87. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 22 January 1949.

be very threatened. Mkhumbane society was rent with disagreement and confusion over the very issue which was both so central to their lives and a key foundation in their notions of community unity.

With the 'liberation' of Mkhumbane during the January 1949 Riots, many of the established leaders had simply sidelined their earlier interest in politics and concentrated on advancing the aspirations of the African trading class. Among them were to be found the only coherent group of Mkhumbane residents, who, during the early 1950s, would continue to advocate the use of violence to attain their objectives: not the gaining of permanent residential rights in Mkhumbane, but the entrenching of African traders' rights. In a letter to the municipality, the Zulu Hlanganani maintained that

Trading rights are still in the hands of the Indians. We therefore present these grievances to you, Sir, so that they can be immediately rectified. It is not our wish to see another bloody war in this said Area, but unless things can come our way within the short space of time it is possible that our respect and endurance shall no more prevail.<sup>88</sup>

These demands were essentially those of an organized trading class desiring to gain control of all trading ventures in the area.

Such entrepreneurs, responding to the growing criticism of their leadership by residents, endeavoured to sustain, through celebrations such as the Mkhumbane Xmas Tree days, a radical populism within the area. However these and such like celebrations embraced few concrete strategies aimed at maintaining the future of African residence in the area. Furthermore, some of the entrepreneurial leadership in Mkhumbane saw such ceremonies as the limits of their 'involvement in politics - I was a businessman and I have to look after my shop.'<sup>89</sup> Others however, used their increasing status in Mkhumbane to gain power within local political organizations.

Along with some local Congress Youth League leaders, many Mkhumbane leaders became interested in the Moral Re-Armament movement. This movement, which established a local presence in Durban during the early 1950s, was an international semi-religious organization which believed in the benefits of promoting reconciliation between various opposing political organizations. Profoundly conservative and offering material advantages to local leaders, some African leaders viewed the movement as the means to reduce class conflict, gain further individual status and wealth and acquire the trappings of 'normal' life. This is clearly evident in the way in which one of the African leaders of the movement in the Johannesburg area gained financial assistance from the movement to erect his own house, which he then called 'This Is It'.<sup>90</sup>

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88. Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie*, p 305. It is entirely possible that this letter and the general strategy of the Zulu Hlanganani was worked out in conjunction with Rowley Arenstein who was then one of the key lawyers assisting the Zulu Hlanganani.

89. Informant to remain anonymous. Whilst information supplied by this informant has been quoted and fully acknowledged elsewhere in this work, this somewhat self critical reflection was provided on condition of anonymity.

90. *Ilanga lase Natal*, 8 February 1952 and University of York; interview with Mr M B Yengwa, 23 November 1976.



Most of the Zulu Hlanganani leaders became interested in pursuing political careers outside Mkhumbane. For a while during the early 1950s the Zulu Hlanganani was formally allied to the Bantu National Congress which established a significant presence in the city, albeit for only a brief period, during the early 1950s. This organization was heavily funded and possibly initiated by a Natal Nationalist Party member of Parliament and led by a grouping of local African herbalists, those involved in various lotteries and scams, and independent African traders. The movement was lead by S S Bhengu, a local herbalist and president of the powerful Natal Bantu Medical Association.<sup>91</sup> The Bantu National Congress was formed to combat the growth of African political organizations opposing government policy, to allow for the growth of an African political alliance between conservative chiefs and urban Africans, to support the election of National Party members as African representatives in the Senate, to and provide international legitimation for government apartheid policy.<sup>92</sup>

The Bantu National Congress was rabidly anti-Indian, supporting the repatriation of all Indians, and stressed the need for an exclusive African racial identity. Employing those sexual images so integral to such politics, the leader of the Bantu National Congress endeavoured to create a 'rape scare',fulminating against sexual relations between Indians and Africans and maintaining that through such contact, Indians were attempting to reduce the power of the African 'nation'.<sup>93</sup> The Bantu National Congress also supported apartheid policy and maintained that only Africans should be allowed to trade in African areas.<sup>94</sup> By the mid-1950s the organization had disappeared through public ridicule and lack of support; and the government had becoming increasingly embarrassed by the crassness of the organization's public statements.<sup>95</sup> For a while at least, however, the organization did represent the political ideas of a significant number of the entrepreneurs of Mkhumbane.

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91. Ilanga lase Natal, and Kuper African Bourgeoisie, p 305.

92. This was an issue which had begun in the late 1940s when se the Nationalist Party attempted to oppose Senator E Brookes re- election to the Senate. Initially the Nationalists had tried to obtain the support of Champion who equivocated. The Nationalists finally gained support from H P Ngwenya, a highly middle class person who was a member of the executive of the A N C in Natal. Although failing to win the seat, the Nationalists used both Ngwenya and S S Bhengu to start "rival groups" such as the Bantu National Congress. This was an issue which worried both Champion and the post-Luthuli A N C. See CKM;roll 3B; 2:XC9:30/84; A W G Champion-H S Msimang, 5 April 1948; roll 15 A; 2: XC9:30/84; A W G Champion-H S Msimang, 5 November 1948; roll 3B; 2:DA 19: 30/13; A N C (Natal) Executive Committee, 20 December 1952 and S Deanne (ed) Black South Africans (Cape Town, 1978), p 151.

93. See for example The Guardian, 22 November 1951 and 18 September 1952, Ilanga lase Natal, 6 October 1952 and Advance, 25 December 1952.

94. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983 and Kuper, African Bourgeoisie, p 305.

95. The Union Government was to withdraw their invitation of Bhengu to address the United Nations on aspects of apartheid policy and Indian African relations. See interviews with Messrs B Nair, 27 June 1985 and H J Bhengu, 21 November 1986. Mr S S L Bhengu was later convicted of fraud and forgery and sentenced to three years imprisonment. See Ilanga lase Natal, 24 April 1954.

Prior to the dissolution of the Bantu National Congress however, a split developed within the ranks of those Mkhumbane traders who belonged to the Zulu Hlanganani.<sup>96</sup> This conflict was partly rooted in competition over markets, and in the political alliance between the Zulu Hlanganani and the Bantu National Congress. As a result of this split some members of the Zulu Hlanganani, many of whom had always opposed the political and economic ambitions of A W G Champion, moved towards the reviving African National Congress in Durban, whilst others "stayed to run our businesses."<sup>97</sup>

In the same way as the leadership in Mkhumbane failed to perceive correctly the nature of municipal policy, or to organize any effective opposition, so the African National Congress in Durban failed to organize any struggle to ensure that Africans would be allowed permanent residence. While AWG Champion expressed private and public joy with the outbreak of the riots of January 1949,<sup>98</sup> he was generally contemptuous of the Mkhumbane shack dwellers.<sup>99</sup> Champion saw in the riots and the eviction of Indians the chance to boost his flagging political fortunes both nationally and locally and further his own trading and investing ventures.

In spite of being chairman of the local Joint Locations Advisory Board, Champion often ignored or misunderstood City Council policy towards the area. After councillors Nicholson and Spanier Marson set out the idea of temporary African housing in Mkhumbane, Champion praised the two councillors for their desire to establish permanent African settlement in the area. Later, realizing his mistake, Champion retracted his statement; but we went on again incorrectly, to praise the City Council for wanting permanent African housing in Cato Manor Farm.<sup>100</sup>

Champion's main activities during this period concerned his conflict with the Congress Youth League attempts to undermine his leadership of the African National Congress in Natal, his attempts to gain the support of chiefly authority in Natal and his desire to expand his material interests in Mkhumbane.<sup>101</sup> While failing in the first two activities, his entrepreneurial ventures in Mkhumbane did expand. Already a backlord in

96. Interviews with Messrs C Khumalo, 23 June 1985 and Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1986.

97. Interview with Mr J J Shabalala, 28 November 1986 and interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms P Naidoo, n.d.

98. CKM; roll 15B; Native Locations (Combined) Advisory Boards meeting, 13 August 1947; A W G Champion-President General A N C, 31 August 1948; Resolutions passed at a public meeting held by the A N C (Natal) and the Native Locations (Combined) Advisory Boards, Durban, 12 February 1949; N S Msimang-A W G Champion, 25 January 1949 and 14 November 1949 and interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms P Naidoo, n.d.

99. Throughout his political career during the later 1940s and early 1950s Champion was continually directing most of his energies towards gaining support from the African urban elite and chiefs and was often heard to be contemptuous of those whom he referred to as part of the 'cultural amalgam': the proletariat. See interviews with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985 and Mr S Bourquin, 7 July 1988.

100. MNAD; H 2/ CM, vol 1; A W G Champion-Town Clerk, 1 December 1949.

101. See for example CKM; roll 3B; 2: DA 19:96/; A N C (Natal) Presidential address, 3 August 1946; reel 15 A; 2: XC 9: 2; A N C (Natal) report of provincial secretary, 1949 and M W Swanson, *The Views of Mahlati*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1981) pp 84-91.

Mkhumbane, Champion met frequently with and invested in the Zulu Hlanganani. Champion was also active "behind our backs", meeting with various evicted Indian traders and, in partnership with them, began to establish at least one wholesale "agency" in the shantytown.<sup>102</sup>

The main focus of the Congress Youth League in Durban was to ensure Champion's political demise. This virtually all-consuming political battle was fought not just at the level of attracting popular support for the Youth League, but over control of advisory boards and the local organizational structures of the African National Congress.<sup>103</sup> In fact, during the later 1940s, many Youth Leaguers had accepted that with the growing opposition of Durban's African proletariat to any participation in the Advisory Board system and their lack of enthusiasm for the African National Congress, it was likely that the Youth League would "have to fight alone."<sup>104</sup>

Throughout the early 1950s, this battle continued with the Youth League finally de-throning Champion and installing A J Luthuli as Natal President of the African National Congress. From then onwards all the energies of the Youth Leaguers became focussed on improving the organizational structures of the ANC, conducting the Defiance Campaign, popularizing the newly elected leadership of the organization, and with establishing closer links with the national leadership of the Defiance Campaign and the ANC.<sup>105</sup> For instance, local Congress leaders endeavoured to gain support for the campaign against the government's proposed removals from Sophiatown.<sup>106</sup>

During the period when the municipality, employers and the government were discussing the future of Mkhumbane, the newly elected members of the African National Congress in Durban made no attempt to conduct a similar campaign. The issue of permanent African residence in Cato Manor Farm had been discussed during Defiance Campaign but had been summarily dropped.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless many Congress Youth League leaders, including M B Yengwa, did use the "vacuum" created by the expulsion of Indians from the area to develop their own entrepreneurial ventures in Mkhumbane.<sup>108</sup>

The question of permanent African residence in Cato Manor Farm was difficult to resolve. In spite of Mkhumbane residents' claims, the land remained Indian-owned and, in accordance with the municipal Group

102. Interview with Mr J Hlope, 29 July 1985.

103. CKM: Jordan Ngubane "I Shall Not Be Silenced", unpublished manuscript. See also University of York: interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Dr T Lodge, 23 November 1976, interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms P Naidoo, n.d. and interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*

106. CKM:roll 3B; 2: DA 19:30/16; A N C (Natal) executive committee meeting, 6 June 1954. When discussing municipal attempts to relocate African residential areas in the city, the A N C studiously avoided the issue of Africans in Mkhumbane and focussed on the future of the African freehold areas of Good Hope and Chateau Estate which adjoined Mkhumbane. See CKM; reel 3B; 2:DA 19:30/15; A N C (Natal), report of the secretariat for the year ending 30 September 1955.

107. Interview with Mr S S L Mtolo, 10 June 1983.

108. Interview with Mr M B Yengwa by Ms P Naidoo, n.d..

Areas plans, formed part of those Indian-owned lands which the City Council wanted to demarcate for White residential development.<sup>109</sup> For Congress members to argue for permanent African occupation of the Mkhumbane area meant taking land away from Indians. This policy was opposed to both the wishes of the NIC and the joint stand taken by both the NIC and the ANC with regard to the Group Areas Bills then tabled before parliament. Both congresses were committed to resist any evictions or change in the existing basis of land-holding in the city, and they sought the abolition of all racial barriers against land holding.<sup>110</sup> Whilst accepting this policy there was nevertheless considerable sympathy among the ANC leadership in Durban for the Mkhumbane shackdwellers. M.B. Yengwa was particularly vehement in insisting that the Mkhumbane area be allocated for African freehold ownership. Throughout the campaigns against the Group Areas legislation, the Natal Indian Congress was to receive muted support from the ANC in Durban.<sup>111</sup>

In effect, the joint stand on land allocation was both inane and simply aimed at preserving the existing pattern of land ownership in the city. Whilst the majority of Durban's population was African, the only freehold areas available to Africans were the small areas of Chateau and Good Hope Estates adjoining Mkhumbane. Nevertheless aware of the problem, but insistent that the rights of Indian landowners should be protected against intended municipal "plundering", the NIC attempted to make what was clearly a secret deal with the City Council.<sup>112</sup>

In the early 1950s, the NIC suggested that the municipality should merely develop essential infrastructural services in the Cato Manor Farm area. With these improved facilities, Indian landowners should then be permitted to erect officially approved accommodation for renting out to a "better class of African." Indian shacklords would thus be able to resume operations halted by the 1949 Riots, albeit after having provided better residential facilities on their property.<sup>113</sup> This attempted deal was an attempt by the NIC to entrench the Indian rentier class through assisting African to live in the area but without any claim to land rights. This strategy was apparently undertaken without the knowledge of the ANC.<sup>114</sup> The City Council turned the proposal down.<sup>115</sup>

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109. City Council Group Areas map no 314/53. See also *Durban Housing Survey*, pp 409-407.

110. Interview with Mr R Arenstein, 1 August 1985 and *Advance*, 5 March 1953.

111. See for example CKM:reel 3B, 2:DA19/1:30/9; ANC (Natal), executive committee meeting, 21-22 January 1956 and *Advance*, 3 May 1961.

112. For details on Indian opposition to the Group Areas legislation see S Bhana and B Pachai (eds) *A Documentary History of Indian South Africans*. (Cape Town, 1984), p 313-220 and interview with Mr B Nair, 27 June 1985.

113. MNAD; H2/CM, vol 2; Native Administration Committee Agenda tabling the protests of the Cato Manor Residents Association, 21 December 1949.

114. None of those ANC leaders whose interview transcripts I have consulted have ever made mention of this issue. Those ANC members whom I have questioned on the matter could not recall the issue at all. There is no mention of the proposed deal in any of the local newspapers.

115. City Council minutes, 12 December 1949.



The probable reasons for the failure of the ANC to organize around the issue of permanent African residence in Mkhumbane are complex. It is clear that the local Congress leaders were attempting to sustain notions of non-racial unity so tarnished by the 1949 Riots.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, it is likely that when the issue was discussed by the ANC and the NIC, the NIC pointed out that their once powerful local branches in the Cato Manor Farm area were rapidly being taken over by the more conservative, "racist" Natal Indian Organization.<sup>117</sup> This was true, but also rather a disingenuous ploy.

Throughout the late 1940s and particularly the early 1950s, NIC branches in Cato Manor Farm comprised traders, other entrepreneurs, members of the Indian working class and residents in the Indian sub-economic housing scheme in the area. The land was owned by both entrepreneurs and workers and many of these local NIC branches were continually calling for the eviction of Africans from the area.<sup>118</sup> The NIC's own constituents were opposed to African land-ownership in the area.

The main reason for the ANC willingly dropping the issue of permanent African residential rights in Mkhumbane was almost certainly due to the way in which the newly elected ANC leadership was both eager to carry out the policies of the Johannesburg based National Executive and relied on and deferred to the more established leadership of the more wealthy Natal Indian Congress. Perceiving such an unequal relationship between the two organizations, many Africans in Mkhumbane and elsewhere in the city failed to support the Defiance Campaign.<sup>119</sup>

As a result, support for permanent African residence in Mkhumbane was almost completely lacking from those political organizations which claimed authority from and influence amongst the urban African population. With shantytown society never developing an alternative leadership or gaining any realistic view of strategy, shack residents were in many ways left to their own devices. Their attempts to avoid further militant action, to assert their desire to live permanently in the area, and stabilize shack society were to fail.

Recognizing that their security of tenure in Mkhumbane was directly threatened by municipal plans, some residents left the area whilst many more tried to sell their shacks.<sup>120</sup> With many residents having invested much money in shacks in an area whose future they believed was relatively more secure than those

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116. See for example discussion concerning the economic boycott and racism in CKM; reel 3B; 2:DA 19: 30/13, A N C (Natal), executive committee meeting, 6 June 1954. See also CKM; reel 3B; 2:DA 19/1:30/8; ANC (Natal) executive committee, 26-27 November 1955, *The Guardian*, 13 November 1952, *Advance*, 6 November 1952 and L. Kuper, *Passive Resistance in South Africa* (London, 1956).
117. MNAD; H2/CM, vol 1; Cato Manor Indian Economic Housing Scheme Ratepayers Association-Town Clerk, 13 September 1949 and 13 November 1949; vol 2; Secretary, Natal Housing Board-Town Clerk, 17 February 1951 and interview with Mr B Nair, 27 June 1985.
118. See for example MNAD; H2/CM, vol 1; Natal Indian Congress- Town Clerk, 14 September 1949; vol 2; Cato Manor Ratepayers Association-Town Clerk, 21 December 1949 and *Inkundla Yabantu*, 24 September 1949.
119. University of York; interview with Mr M B Yengwa, 29 November 1976.
120. MNAD, H/ Shacks, vol 2; Mr V Khumalo-Manager, MNAD, 22 July 1952 and interview with Mr M Kunene, 21 April 1985.

other shack settlements in the city, there was thus a flurry to dispose of often newly acquired property. Other residents, desiring stay in the area, became panic-stricken: 'when we heard that Kwa Muhle was coming to us, lots of us got very frightened because we knew that we were finished. This was when we were in Thekwini.'<sup>121</sup>

The idea that Mkhumbane was only within the city with the development of the Emergency Camp in 1953 is, in terms of spatial and administrative boundaries, quite absurd. Yet, such feelings do reveal the way in which shack society had developed as an alternate society, within the city but outside effective municipal control. Whilst being in conflict with civic and state authority, the legal rights of the existing land-owners, and the power of industrial and commercial employers, the Mkhumbane shantytowns were still very much part of the city in which their power to determine their future was limited.

### Conclusion

During the later 1940s, the African proletariat living in Mkhumbane had become conscious of their own political power and the often undisguised weakness of municipal power. With the eviction of Indian residents, traders and land-owners from much of Cato Manor Farm during the January 1949 Riots, shack residents believed that they had 'liberated' Mkhumbane. At the very least the victors in the 'battle of Cato Manor' had shown both Indian property-owners and the municipality that they desired to live permanently in Mkhumbane.

Yet through the very riots residents became very more aware of how the municipality was determined to alter the conditions of shack settlement in Cato Manor Farm. To residents, the need to defend what people believed was their land was of the utmost importance. The problem could be solved through residents of the shacklands controlling the manner in which external powers could intervene in the shacklands.

However the very changes which had occurred within shack society in the period subsequent to the January 1949 Riots made the possibility of any form of community consensus around the central question of the future character of the shacklands and the role of the municipality highly unlikely. Within a period of heightened class conflict within the shacklands, residents had very different notions of how their own material and social needs could be furthered through changes in the residential structure of Mkhumbane.

To such problems was added the fact that the shackland residents had no really effective forms of internal organization or a leadership element of any truly representative kind. The existing shack leaders pursued their own material interests within the shacklands and somewhat indecisively sought to acquire a wider political influence. Their quest for a broader political leadership was based on their existing power within the shacklands. However, their very calls for populist unity within the shacklands and an acceptance of their leadership was contradicted by the very changes within the shacklands through which entrepreneurs had increased their own material wealth in Mkhumbane.

These weaknesses within Mkhumbane society were simply compounded by the failure of African political organizations to develop any clear leadership or political strategy to ensure permanent African

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121. Interview with Mrs T Phewa, 23 June 1985.

occupation of Mkhumbane. Neither the ANC of Champion nor that of the Congress Youth Leagues ever really confronted the problem during the very years when the issue was so crucial to the future of Mkhumbane. The purpose of those failed organizations and movements which attracted the interest of the Mkhumbane entrepreneurs had very little to do with Mkhumbane. What the shantytown residents had struggled for for so long would be lost in a relatively short period of time.