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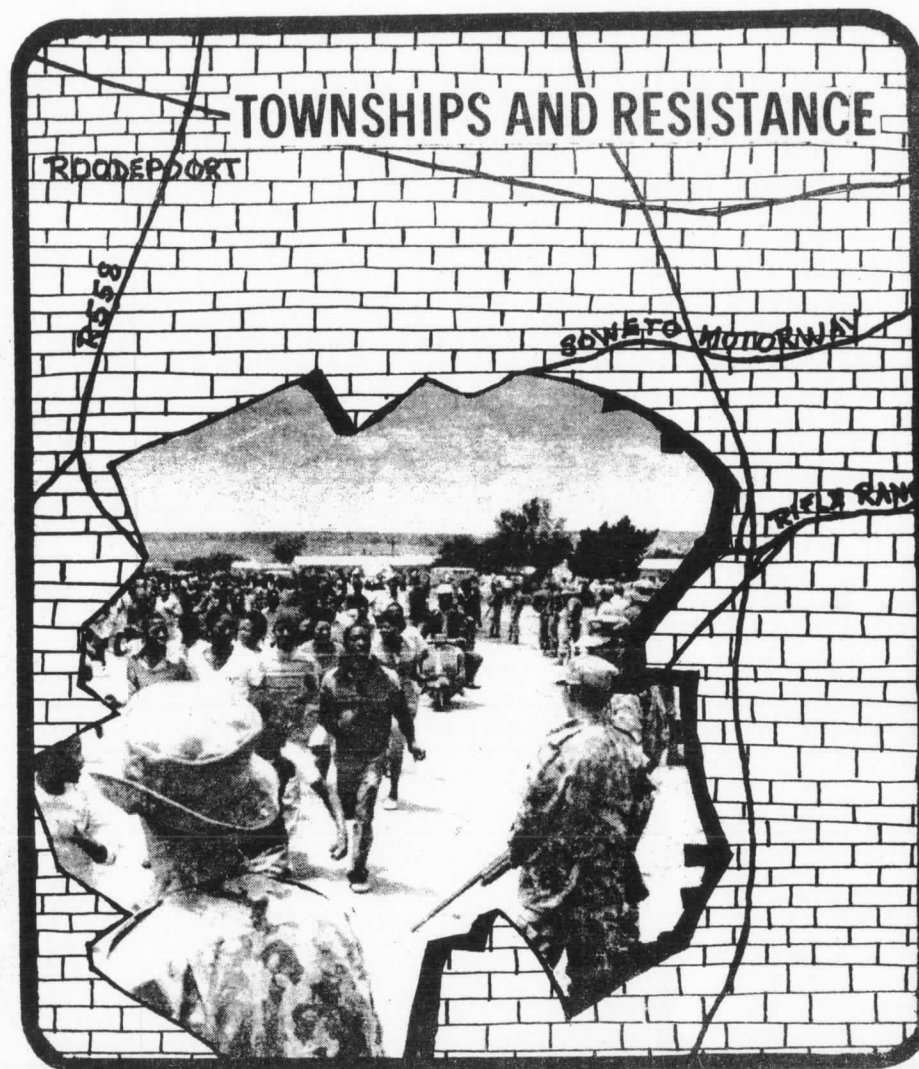
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## TO THE READER

The death of Ernest Dipale in a John Vorster Square detention cell is the second this year. The death earlier this year of trade unionist, Dr Neil Aggett, provoked an international outcry. Obviously it was not sufficient to prevent a re-occurrence.

There is no reason to expect that it should have. The violence associated with detentions is not the result of single, specific decisions, laws or events. It is inextricably bound up with the historical development of this particular social system.

The Rabie Commission proposals are only a few weeks old. Dipale's death emphasises the inadequacy of its approach. The proposals are not reassuring for the future.

If the state is sincere in its desire to eliminate the abuses endemic to its legal machinery, it must at least heed the Detainee Parents' Support Committee's demand for detainees' access to independent lawyers and doctors.

Its persistent reluctance to adopt this practice only re-enforces the suspicion that the present ineffective controls are necessary for the maintenance of a social structure.

We endorse the Detainee Parents' Support Committee demand for an end to all detentions.

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Cover by Steven Rothenberg

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## contributions

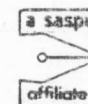
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## Drinking in a Cage: The Durban System and the 1929 Beer Hall Riots

Paul La House



### Introduction

Revisionist historians have shown that racial ideology in South Africa has sustained and reproduced the capitalist mode of production. Wolpe asserts that the productive capacity of pre-capitalist economies and the social system of African societies were maintained through the policy of segregation, in order to ensure that these societies provided part of the means of the reproduction of labour. However, there is danger in analysing the cost of reproduction of labour power in South Africa solely in terms of the reserves and African agriculture.

The presence of an African working class in South Africa has posed particular problems for capital, contradictions which if unresolved through state intervention remain subversive of a cheap labour supply. The labour force has to be reproduced not only in the reserves but also under urban conditions, the material supports of the reproduction of labour power (socially necessary commodities such as housing, educational facilities, health services, sanitation, transport etc.) must be provided. The provision of these services, which Lojkin has called the collective means of consumption, are not profitable. They are services and not commodities which can be exchanged on the market at prices reflecting the value of labour embodied in the commodity.<sup>1</sup>

Urban history in South Africa is frequently punctuated by the sounds of struggle between rulers and ruled over the level of the necessary means of subsistence of the working class whether this be the sound of police swashing drums of illicit liquor in Doornfontein in the 1920's or of gunfire in the streets of Durban during the 1929 beer boycott. This brief case study is concerned with

examining the significance of the latter within the context of capital accumulation and class struggle in the city.

### The genesis of native administration in Durban

It has been asserted that the municipality is a branch of the state and thus has the same overall function of the state as a whole, namely to assist in the reproduction of the conditions necessary for the accumulation of capital in general.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper I will endorse such a thesis, although the concept of local state has not been adequately worked through at the theoretical level. The post-Anglo-Boer war period in South Africa was characterized by increasing proletarianisation, labour shortages and worker unrest. This crisis expressed itself in Durban in terms of the following contradiction: that between economic growth and integration implied by an expanding, more stable African workforce in Durban and the need to house and control the city's necessary workforce.

In 1901 the African population in Durban numbered 15 000, by 1904 this figure had risen to 19 000.<sup>3</sup> The African female population remained in the hundreds. The response of Durban's white population to this influx of Africans took the form of a violent racism which can be seen in the formation of the Natal Native Reform League in 1904. This white petty bourgeoisie made increasingly vociferous demands for greater control, segregation, enforcement of master/servant relationships and state intervention to strengthen existing property relations. The issues ranged from keeping Africans off pavements to the perils of white women being nursed by African male domestics.<sup>4</sup> Under the surface of racist sentiment lay the fear that a plentiful, well-coerced and controlled supply of African labour was being threatened. Class antagonism became increasingly subsumed within a cultural and racial order.

Crucial to an examination of the 1929 beer hall riots and boycott is an understanding of the composition of the labour force in Durban. At the turn of the century African workers were channelled into four main labour markets: togt workers, washermen, ricksha-pullers and monthly workers. The togt workers who were employed mainly as dock labour on a daily basis seemed to embody those forces most subversive to the form of state. Theophilus Shepstone had introduced the togt system in response to the needs of the merchant capital.<sup>5</sup> The disquieting "freedom" of the togt worker was based on the fact that he was employed on a daily basis although still subject to the dictates of capital, enjoyed a comparatively greater freedom of movement and power to bargain for higher wages. Robert Jameson, veteran Town Councillor and long standing member of the sanitation committee expressed this anxiety of the local state:

(The togt worker) is left very much to his own devices .... he is undisciplined he is impatient of control, he is lazy, ..... it would be in the interest of the native himself if he were located in the compound, where he would be under proper discipline and control.<sup>6</sup>

From 1904 onwards we find the ruling classes making a concerted effort in the face of economic crisis, strikes and resistance on the Witwatersrand which were matched by the demands for higher wages backed by strike action in Durban, to develop a more sophisticated and repressive state apparatus. The reproduction of the reserve army of labour would be a means of undercutting growing worker militancy. The first togt barracks were established in 1878, in Kimberley. The first barracks were only established in 1885, and the Point barracks were completed in 1903. It was from here that the boycott of municipal beer halls in 1929 began.

African mobility on the labour market was further curtailed by the Identification of Native Servants Act (1901) amendment. As R.C. Alexander said before the Native Affairs Commission: "He (the African worker) cannot go an inch without that pass." At the ideological level a penal code provided against disorderliness, provocative language and "indecent conduct". Not surprisingly, perhaps in Durban 8 000 out of 20 000 African workers were arrested per annum in terms of these oppressive regulations; proportionately more than any part of the world.<sup>7</sup> By 1904 the basic provisions for coercive labour exploitation and subjugation of workers had been laid down in Durban.

Merchants and commercial companies called for greater control over the issue of togt badges, shining excrescences of a labour coercive economy which confirmed the payment of a registration fee on the part of the African worker. Since this fraction of Durban's employers of labour relied on monthly labour they felt their labour supply was steadily being sapped by the stevedoring companies. This exerted an upward pressure on wages. This contradiction was resolved through state intervention in an area common to all fractions: that of control, accommodation and coercion of the African labour force. This intervention, however, was not made without conflict within the ruling class.

The Native Location Act of 1904 made provision for the establishment of locations on the peripheries of urban centres. Hemson has seen the debate between those in favour of locations and those supporting barrack accommodation as a battle between "segregationists" and "repressionists".<sup>8</sup> The "repressionists" represented by merchants and professionals (for example Ellis Brown, a prominent coffee merchant in Durban) advocated a barrack system under the control of municipal authorities, the corollary of which was the continued migrancy of the workforce. Jameson and Alexander both officials of the local state advocated the removal of the workforce

to the peri-urban areas facilitating greater police control and continuous settled wage labour. The debate was essentially about means rather than ends. The "repressionists" won through on the grounds that a location would be costly and would imply a separation of the workforce from the point of production. In 1921 the Stallard Commission indicated this position.

As has been hinted at above the development of the apparatuses of a labour coercive economy expressed itself, at the ideological level, in terms of a need to expunge disease from the social fabric. In 1907 it was noted that:

These centres (towns) and more so Durban, are the plague spots, the very schools wherein the Natives' mind, character and morals are corrupted and destroyed ...<sup>9</sup>; he picks up his code of "new" morals leading to disease and destruction.

What Swanson has called the "sanitation syndrome" seems a somewhat facile term for a complex phenomenon. The concern of local authorities over issues of public health and sanitation, at specific junctures, needs more rigorous analysis in terms of the changing nature of social relations in South African urban locales.<sup>10</sup> The perception of the ruling classes of the conditions under which the working class lives in the city gives rise to a myth of social pathology turning the harshness of economic inequality back upon its victims as moral condemnation. Squalid housing, crime, ignorance and poverty come to be seen as a mutually reinforcing set of circumstances independent of the economic relationships which cause them.<sup>11</sup>

The question of liquor in general and "kaffir-beer" in particular runs threadlike through the history of the African working class in South Africa. In Durban with the introduction of the Native Beer Act in 1908 this thread assumes a heightened importance, for upon this Act rested the elaboration of the "Durban System": a system of native administration which became a model apparatus for ruling class domination and exploitation of subject classes in urban centres throughout South Africa. The introduction of the municipal beer monopoly was preceded by a mobilisation of the white population against the destructive effects of drunkenness amongst Durban's African population:

Prior to the Native Beer Act in January 1909, there existed no efficient legal control over the manufacture and possession of native beer by the natives residing in the Borough .... It was not an infrequent occurrence to find the native men attending these places (shebeens) brawling and fighting and the women are mostly of immoral characters (sic). Indeed so difficult did the position become, that in order to prevent the ruination which was fast approaching a large portion of the local native population, and, in the interests of the Borough as a whole, a radical change was instituted by the government.<sup>12</sup>



Before 1908 it was reported that there were 120 shebeens in Durban, a state of affairs which undermined the power of the local state in terms of its need to establish control of working class existence in urban areas and to eliminate the informal sector.

The Act of 1908 laid down that profits from municipal beer halls were to be channelled into the Native Administration Fund (later to become the Native Revenue Account) for the purposes of defraying expenses in connection with the administration of the act and for "native welfare" or "any other object in the interests of the natives residing in or resorting to a borough or township". The altruism expressed in the act is deceptive: between 1908 and 1930 revenue from the monopoly was ploughed into the maintenance of the apparatuses of the local state. In 1916 the revenue from the monopoly facilitated the establishment of a Municipal Native Affairs Department with J.S. Marwick as its first manager. The monopoly was in fact the material platform for a complex system of control over Durban's African population, at the same time white property owners in Durban were not touched. It is significant that, with the exception of two years after the 1929 beer boycott, Durban remained the only city in South Africa with a self-supporting Native Revenue Account.<sup>13</sup>

Politically, the monopoly was presented as a voluntary system as workers were not compelled to drink tshwala. The male African workforce - women were not allowed into beer halls - funded "native administration" in Durban more from monopoly profits than direct taxation. In short the worker subsidized his own reproduction.

Stedman Jones has pointed out the dangers of a loose usage of the concept of "social control" which leads to a static metaphor of equilibrium of social control he insists, can be distributed and then reasserted on a new basis. Class conflict is a permanent feature, not a sign of breakdown. The conditions in which class conflict may assume revolutionary forms bears only the emptiest resemblances to a crude notion conveyed by the phrase "breakdown of social control". If the beer monopoly in Durban represented a successful form of social control, at the time its establishment generated new contradictions, new problems of "social control." An examination of the beer hall riots and boycott of 1929 must be viewed within this context.

#### The 1929 beer hall riots

There has been a tendency to reject all African worker resistance prior to the existence of formal worker organisations as populist. In other words where a manifestation of class consciousness is expressed through forms other than overt political organisation such consciousness has been deemed not worthy of analysis. The beer boycott of 1929-30 on the one hand does not have to be examined in terms

of the "nooks and crannies of everyday existence" but on the other hand it does not reflect formal worker organisation in a more vigorous sense. The struggles of 1929-30, including the pass-burning campaign would appear to mark an important stage of transition in the history of urban struggle in Durban.

By 1921 the African population of Durban was 29 000, having risen from 18 000 in 1918. The Urban Areas Act of 1923 represented an attempt to cope with the growing contradictions consequent upon increasing numbers of Africans in South African cities. The efficient operation of the "Durban System" was being called into question. In the early period numerous tensions between the municipality and employers of African labour made themselves felt. For example a compound manager for a stevedoring company had complained that "we are at present experiencing great difficulty in getting a lot of the boys to turn to at 6pm in a fit state to go to work." But if in 1915 consumption of municipal liquor was proving potentially disruptive of the workforce (a problem which was resolved through closer collaboration between the NAD, Borough Police and employers of labour) by 1928 the nature of the problem had changed: workers in Durban were increasingly forsaking the prison atmosphere of the barrack environment over weekends and consuming alcohol in peri-urban areas:

Having limited facilities for recreation ..... the Native is naturally tempted to forsake the atmosphere of his compound for the outskirts of the Borough and there abandon himself to drink which is readily obtained from the illicit manufacturer.<sup>15</sup>

In 1929 60% of the arrests for drunkenness occurred over the weekend. The shebeen in a peri-urban area represented an alternative cultural expression to white bourgeois hegemony, a class expression of how and where leisure-time was to be spent.

In April of 1929 the Sydenham Local Administration and Health Board obtained the exclusive right to manufacture and sell beer under the provisions of the 1923 Urban Areas Act within the boundaries of Sydenham - a suburb of Durban. Opposition to this acquisition came from two areas. Initially from the Durban municipality itself because Sydenham was not a proclaimed area in terms of the 1923 Act and hence revenue from beer sales "could not be credited to a fund to be utilized solely for the benefit of natives."<sup>16</sup> Secondly from African workers in Durban led by the ICU yaseNatal. On 5 May and for three subsequent Sundays large bodies of Africans marched in protest from the ICU Hall in Durban to Sydenham. As was recalled by the Secretary of the Health Board, Charles Lewis, before the de Waal Commission of Inquiry into the June disturbances:

They were headed by a brass band proceeded by a native in Highland costume - a kilt. They had a Union Jack and a red flag with a hammer and sickle on it. It is a Soviet symbol I believe. Many of them were dressed in uniform and carried sticks in military positions.

Wickens claims that AWG Champion general secretary of the ICU yaseNatal was casting around for a suitable grievance to exploit in the interests of reviving the ICU's following in Durban.<sup>18</sup> This kind of explanation, located outside the context of the overall changing nature of the system of production and domination, inhibits a clear understanding of the class actions of 1929.

It is significant that there was talk of a boycott of beer halls in Durban as early as 1926. At a meeting at Cartwright Flats the Natal Native Congress resolved:

That in consequence of the said harsh and illegal action (reference to recent police raids on compounds in connection with collection of taxes) of the police towards the Native population of Durban, it has been resolved to BOYCOTT the Durban Corporation beer canteens.

These protests had drawn out clearly the connection between the beer monopoly and the apparatus of the Native Affairs bureaucracy. Prior to the Sydenham beer hall issue Champion had been protesting at the large profits which the municipality derived from its beer monopoly and at the same time the lack of "welfare" provided for urban African from these profits.

Champion had written to the Sydenham authorities on May 4 1929 voicing the ICU's protests:

We protest against any local Health Board making attempts to obtain monies from the low paid natives for the purpose of financing their funds for their own advancement, at the expense of the voiceless members of our community who have suffered untold pains at the hands of certain people who are out to make them a football.

We object to have our growing people to be taught by Europeans to drink kaffir beer (sic). We feel that this is the step destined to deteriorate our race if all the surrounding suburbs of Durban will have their kaffir beer hall to obtain money from the natives who will not resist such a temptation.<sup>20</sup>

He adopts the racial ideology of the ruling class in expressing his protest. Throughout the struggle of 1929 definite differences of ideology and strategy between a radical petty bourgeoisie, influenced by Afro-American intellectuals, and Durban's African working class can be seen. What emerges starkly from the findings of the de Waal Commission is the failure of white officialdom to fully comprehend the complex forces at work within Durban's African population. When asked about outside influences in the disturbances of 1929 A.S. Ashby, overseer at the Bell St.

barracks replied: "It might be ICU or communist: I do not know if there is any difference between them." Within settler categories of explanation an agitator thesis presented itself as the most satisfying way of accounting for social phenomena, hence the branding of Champion as the instigator of the boycott and riots.

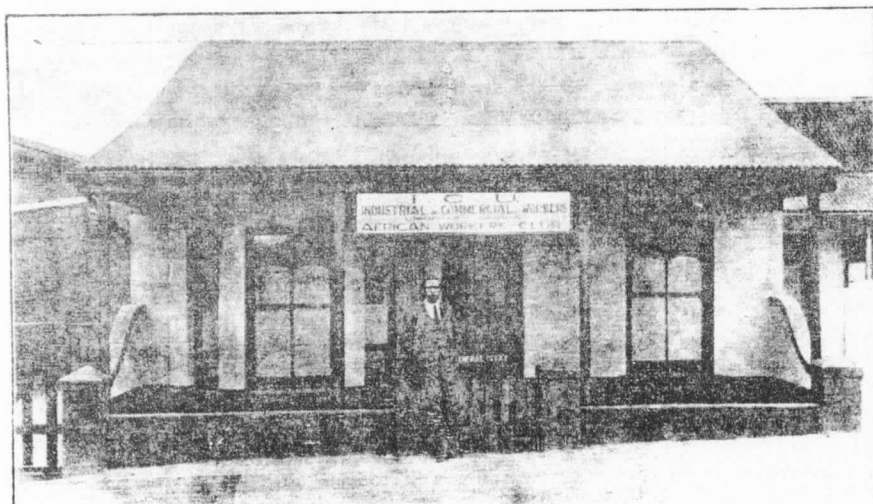
The incident which sparked off a boycott of beer halls was trivial but if should be seen in the context of heightened militancy. In January of 1929 organisers and members of the Communist Party came to Durban and addressed numerous meetings.<sup>21</sup> On 19 May two white motorists were assaulted by a group of workers. Towards the end of the month disturbances spread to the Point barracks. The windows of the beer hall were smashed and the overseer office raided. The compound manager at the Point had ordered an end to brewing and sale of mahewu (a nutritious non-alcoholic beverage). One togt worker Mcijelwa Mnomezulu complained that an Indian storekeeper who sold the ingredients for mahewu was behind the prohibition. Makati Luhlongwana, induna at the barracks and sergeant in the Borough Police, alleged that Mnomezulu had intimidated workers into halting purchases at both the store and the Point beer hall. At the end of May Mnomezulu's badge was confiscated by T.J. Chester chief clerk in the NAD. He was only informed of his dismissal 12 days later, since Mnomezulu was seen to be the source of rumours advocating a boycott the NAD thought it useful to watch him for a while.

The confiscation of the togt badge became the immediate reason for a call to strike action. Champion - who had only directly intervened on request of the Indian shopkeeper and was hoping that Champion could resolve the boycott of his store-always caught between his desire for a position of strong bargaining power either as a leader of a general workers strike or as the moderate leader of the African people - addressed a meeting of workers near the Point on 12 June making an appeal to the workers not to strike but to boycott beer halls. "I also say the beer is bad and we should not drink it." A more systematic working class strategy was formulated through an alliance between the ICU and togt workers; of Durban's African population of 38 000 membership of the ICU numbered between 2 000 and 2 500. Pickets were formed at the Point beer hall and the Anti Kaffir Beer Manufacturing League co-ordinated a generalised boycott of the several municipal beer halls and issued a pamphlet which reflected a clear understanding on the part of togt workers of the oppressive and exploitative nature of the Durban system:

..... Natives must be told that they must part company with Kaffir beer ..... because their funds have become exhausted through buying beer not knowing what benefit they derive except to build compounds and barracks which are full of bad laws and disagreeable control; because a Native who lives in these barracks is like a prisoner ..... these barracks were built in order to control them by laws of partiality. Those in charge forget that these places

were built with Natives' money which they spent on kaffir beer.<sup>22</sup>

A deputation comprising Mnomezulu, Mtehelwa Udhlovu, Bazu Zikali (all togt workers) and J.H. London was turned away by the NAD on the grounds of being unrepresentative of Durban's workers. The grievances they had hoped to put were: the dismissal of Mnomezulu, the Sydenham beer monopoly and Durban's lack of proper location and advisory board. Borough police clashed with armed pickets at the Point in mid-June. One June 16 Champion, J.T. Gumede and one Mapumulo addressed a meeting of 5 000 at Cartwright Flats. Throughout Champion's position vis-a-vis the working class was ambivalent: "natives at the Point are earning a very good salary" - he blamed their lack of money on excessive consumption of municipal beer. He continued: "The ICU is taking up the burden of the togt boys and are in sympathy with them, and are willing to die with them." Whatever the opportunism of Champion the ICU did provide the togt worker with organisational structure. J.T. Gumede, recently returned from Russia, came closer to the essence of the issues at stake: "Now let us combine and take our freedom, and if the other fellow doesn't want to give it, let us take it."<sup>23</sup> The speeches were followed by a lengthy list of grievances which go some way in indicating the daily oppression of workers living in barracks. While the grievances were concerned with day-to-day living issues (filth in the barracks, early closure of stores, wives could not stay in the barracks, inadequate lighting, no visitors) the target of their protest was also aimed at the total system of coercion and social control; the Durban system, its web of coercive regulations and penal sanctions.



Champion outside the ICU Office in Durban

As the violence of June 16 spread the municipality called for Champion - who agreed to call off the boycott without consulting the workers. After having declared that he was prepared to die for the boycott he was now prepared to bring grievances before the Town Council in a "constitutional manner". Baston, the District Commandant of the SAP was apparently proud of him. The struggle had assumed a momentum over which Champion had little control. Whites who had witnessed the disturbances of the previous days and particularly a clash between the police and an ICU patrol on June 17, gathered outside the ICU Hall in central Durban. By late afternoon 500 whites had besieged the hall. Violent clashes occurred between the 270 strong police force and vigilantes on the one hand and workers on the other. Two "relief columns" of workers each numbering 700, and which had swivelled considerably before their arrival at the ICU Hall, marched from the Point and attacked the besiegers. Sticks were used against police and vigilante guns. By night-fall six workers and two whites lay dead on Durban's streets; the injured numbered 102.

Justice de Waal presided over a commission, appointed by central government, to investigate the June disturbances. The Commission vindicated the beer monopoly and the Durban system as a whole:

Taking all in all the housing facilities in force at Durban, and as supplied by the Borough are a model which might be emulated by other large urban centres.<sup>24</sup>

The commissioner's perception of the smooth running of the Durban system made an agitator thesis plausible: "The system worked apparently without opposition, except perhaps from the low class shebeener" and "most grievances were exploited by Champion to foment trouble." In the Commission's eyes the Durban system had created a generally healthy environment for the African worker. In short de Waal discovered in Durban a model system of control of the workforce who subsidized their own reproduction as well as the salaries of bureaucrats, police and municipal departments through the consumption of beer. At the same time little had been provided in the direction of welfare and housing. The only justified grievances, according to the commission, were the absence of a Native Advisory Board and a proper location.

The riots of June 1929 did not see the end of the boycott of municipal beer halls, indeed it lasted well into 1930. In late 1929 it was noted that "the boycott of our municipal beer halls still continues to the detriment of the Native Revenue Account."<sup>25</sup> An examination of the return of revenue from Durban beer halls for August 1929 in comparison with a year earlier is indicative of the profound impact of the boycott.

Sale of Beer	1929	1928
Victoria St. Eating House	£ 1 . 0. 0	£ 1970.13.19
	15. 0	1050.13.06
	- - -	1307.12.00
	2 . 5. 9	142.07.00
	£ 4 .10. 6	£ 4671.07.00

Source: Native Administration Committee Report Book October 1929.

The revenue reforms for the following months bear similar scars of the boycott.

#### The Response of the Local State

The establishment of a Native Advisory Board in 1930 should be seen in terms of the need to co-opt a section of the subject classes in the interests of control of all the dominated class in Durban. The events of 1929 had clearly illustrated to the ruling classes that their hegemony, which had been significantly threatened, needed to be strengthened. The establishment of the Advisory Board was a "good-will gesture" on the part of the municipality: it could not be constituted as a Locations Advisory Board (which was statutory in terms of the 1923 Urban Areas Act) as Durban had no location.

The Board was constituted of ten African representatives and four town councillors. Two representatives each were nominated by the ICU and NNC while the Town Council nominated four Africans from various municipal institutions and two from government barracks. From the outset the NAB reflected the emerging class differentiation within the dominated sections of Durban's African population. Champion - "the ICU is anxious (that) a clean chapter ..... should have in its pages nothing but the writings of mutual understanding between the native workers and city fathers with all who employ native labour" - <sup>26</sup> was one of the two ICU representatives on the first Advisory Board. The issues dealt with by the Board affirmed the distance between Durban's African petty bourgeoisie and the majority of workers in the city. This distance Champion had expressed to the de Waal Commission:

As barracks pure and simple I do not object to them they are good for the class of people they are provided for ..... but they do not meet the needs of other classes of natives. <sup>27</sup>

From the gaunt, grey world of Durban's barracks came a telling protest. The workers of the Point barracks did not know "their" representative on the Board:

We do not wish to be led by a man we do not know. We were only told by the authorities that he is our leader and we know nothing of him. <sup>28</sup>

It has been pointed out that in 1929 an alliance was made between the ICU and the togt workers. By 1930, however, the struggle in the city became further radicalized by the presence of the Communist Party in Durban. As was noted by the Native Welfare Officer in December of 1930:

The ICU prolonged their meeting (at Cartwright Flats) till late that evening in order to keep away their members from going across the railway line where the communists were holding their meeting. <sup>29</sup>

Two days after this report was made Johannes Nkosi, who as leader of the Communist Party in Durban had spearheaded the pass burning campaign, and three others died from police violence. the death of Nkosi appears, in retrospect, as having a powerful symbolic significance. The struggle between rulers and ruled over the level of the necessary means of subsistence of the working class had, by the end of 1930, resolved itself in favour of the ruling class.

By the time of the constitution of the second Advisory Board the ICU and the NNC had their representation cut by half, their places being taken by representatives from Christian bodies. Deep splits emerged within the leadership of the NNC and in 1932, the ICU - by which time Champion had been banished from Durban by the Minister of Justice. Finally Nkosi, who appeared to embody many of the radical elements present during the boycott of a year earlier, lay dead on Cartwright Flats, as silent as a pool of tshwala on a municipal beer hall floor.

#### FOOTNOTES

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4. cf. Hemson, D, "Class Consciousness and Migrant Workers: Dock Workers of Durban", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, 1979
5. South African Native Affairs Commission (SANAC), 1903-05, Minutes of Evidence Vol. III, p. 655
6. SANAC, 1903-1903, p. 751
7. ibid. SANAC, 1903-1905, p. 645
8. Hemson, 1979, p. 100
9. SNA 1/1/367, 1907
10. Both Ndabeni and Klipspruit, for example, were established "in the interests of public health". Geographically they were extremely far apart.
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16. Monthly Report of the NAD, Durban, May 1929
17. Minutes of Evidence Native Riots Commission, July 1929
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19. Native Affairs in the Borough, Vol. 48, File No. 467:1, (Town Clerk Files)
20. Enquiry, Durban Native Riots, Exhibits. Ref. K22B1, Champion to Secretary Sydenham Local Administration and Health Board, 4 May 1929
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24. Report of the de Waal Commission of Enquiry into Native riots at Durban, p. 3
25. Kaffir Beer, Vol. 17, File No. 91:2, (Town Clerk (Durban) to Town Clerk (Newcastle) 21 Nov. 1929
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27. Minutes of Evidence p. 400
28. Native Advisory Board, File No. 1. Amos Gumede and Simon Ngcongco to NAB 21 Nov. 1930
29. Native Advisory Board, File No. 1. Report of the Native Welfare Officer, December 1930

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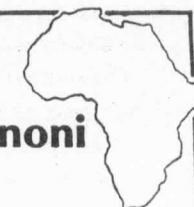


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## Twatwa: The Working Class of Benoni During the 1930's

Julian Cohen



An historical materialist analysis of the South African working class begins with two complex dialectical processes. It examines the ways in which the working class 'made itself'; the forging of a working class culture and the form and content of working class struggles. It also examines the ways in which the working class 'was made'; the forces of capital and state which shaped and controlled the lives of working people. However, this analysis must recognize and explain the immense regional and temporal variations in these processes. The particular local patterns of control and resistance which emerged played an important role in shaping working class culture. Thus regional and local histories are an essential prerequisite towards a full analysis of the history and nature of the South African working class.

Within a regional analysis of the history of the working class, the East Rand stands out as a key area of struggle. Today it is a centre of working class organization, militancy and community struggle. This paper is a preliminary sketch of the social history of the working class on the East Rand. It is confined to one town - Benoni - and to one decade - the 1930's. (1)

The paper is divided up into three parts. The first is a brief description of the physical and social conditions in the Benoni location, especially in the context of the depression of the early 1930's. The second section points to those aspects of working class life which became a focus of concern for the Benoni Town Council, and explains the reasons for the crystallization of a strategy of control. The third section examines the measures of control implemented by the local authority, and the resistance which they evoked from the working class in Benoni.