

## CLASS, NATION, ETHNICITY IN NATAL'S BLACK WORKING CLASS

by

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I

In 1986 Inkatha organized a May Day rally at King's Park Stadium in Durban, to show the world that it still controlled the destiny of Natal's black working people. During this mass gathering, UWUSA - Inkatha's alternative to COSATU and the Zulu movement's ideological echo on such principles as disinvestment, free enterprise and moderation - was launched. This gesture for both COSATU and UWUSA marked a test of strength with very serious implications for Natal. Most prominent in many people's minds was a harsh and vexed question: Was the cradle of South Africa's democratic and socialist labour movement about to turn into its graveyard?

Chief Buthelezi descended into the stadium on "his bird of iron", a helicopter, with UWUSA slogans draped over it. He was greeted by the roar of close to 70,000 people gathered from all corners of Natal, KwaZulu and beyond. He was also greeted by an array of banners rejecting disinvestment, chastising Bishop Tutu for his stance on such issues and proclaiming the death of COSATU. And from the raised stage he was treated to a theatrical burial: members of his youth league, led by Inkatha's formidable warlord Shabalala, carried a coffin bearing COSATU's, Barayi's and Naidu's names to its dramatic "grave". The rally's success was appreciated by the media, for it confirmed their most secret hopes and aspirations: a demonstration of Inkatha's hegemony which was successful enough to seal the fate of the region. It also allowed the media to down-play the national May Day stoppage called by COSATU, the UDF and others, which was headed by 1.5 million workers.<sup>1</sup> It certainly overshadowed COSATU's own rally at Durban's Curries Fountain, which attracted approximately 10,000 people, or the total of 28,000 gathered to mark the day at COASTU rallies throughout Natal. As an Inkatha worker-leader asserted, "it showed COSATU and all the others that the Zulu nation is angry and hungry ... it has had enough of their terroristic ideas".<sup>2</sup>

May Day was surprisingly peaceful, considering that it was the culmination of a nine-month "war" between Inkatha, its support-bases and the trade unions. This followed after the trail of an older "war" or "hunj" between Inkatha supporters, the UDF and youth congress militants in the townships. By September 1985 INYANDA, the shopkeepers' association affiliated to Inkatha, declared "war" on FOSATU in order to break the drive by unions for a consumer boycott of white shops in Natal. In November 1985, as delegates gathered for the launch of COSATU in Durban, Chief Buthelezi attacked the emergent federation as a "front" for the "ANC-mission-in-exile", set up primarily to destroy him.<sup>4</sup> The federation's elected president, Elijah Barayi, retorted a day later by attacking "homeland puppets". Loud-hailers up and down township streets, radio stations and newspapers, from then on declared a war of words against COSATU, whilst silently and away from the public eye Inkatha supporters carried out a physical war in the townships. In the process, a skilful construction of a "scapegoat" occurred: the "front" made up of UDF, COSATU and hordes of unruly, criminal youths were trying to create ungovernability, rioting and destruction and force their solutions by guns and by fire; it pointed to the violence of the Zondo and (later) the Macbride bombings that killed innocent people and that increased racial hatred and tensions; it pointed to the looting and rioting of August and September 1985 around Durban; it pointed to the "necklace" executions; it pointed to the lyrics of songs and at the revolutionary rhetoric of strikers; it pointed to the insulting attacks on the Inkatha leadership. This was an orchestrated campaign by the ANC mission-in-exile. Inkatha was left, the

argument went, with little choice but to defend itself against these "nothings" in Natal.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the formation of UWUSA was justified as part and parcel of such a defence policy: to provide a responsible trade union alternative for the black working class.

Simon Conco, a northern Natal businessman and KwaZulu MP, announced UWUSA's formation at Johannesburg's Carlton Hotel. He was to become the union's general secretary. Sicefe Gumede, a dissatisfied FOSATU shop-steward and township councillor, also from northern Natal, was to become its national organizer. Before long Richards Bay, Empangeni, Isithebe, Newcastle, and Ladysmith workers were approached, bussed around, talked to, to leave COSATU and join UWUSA.

The Zulu Royal House was brought into the conflict as well, with King Zwelethini attacking COASTU on its pro-sanctions stance. He went further still to question Barayi's right to meddle, as a Xhosa, in the affairs of the Zulu people. Pamphlets appeared in Newcastle, reducing COSATU into a Xhosa-Indian plot against the Zulu people; in the south, where bloody clashes between Pondo and Zulu people had occurred only months before, such rumours became the order of the day. Township councillors, faced with such an obvious threat on Zulu life, vowed to rid their townships of COSATU members. There followed attacks, shootings and burnings as houses were gutted, and many COSATU leaders suffered. But attempts to lure people away from their traditional unions were more difficult than initially suspected, even in northern Zululand, an obvious Inkatha stronghold. As the grassroots campaign was intensifying, Inkatha also aimed high: it decided to demonstrate how it could appropriate May Day with the maximum of humdrum. If the crowds were there, the media would do the rest: they would turn UWUSA into a household name and make it the economic hope for Natal's homesteads.

Despite Inkatha's symbolic victory, social critics of the Zulu movement insisted that the rallies were not adequate measures of worker support or strength. Rather, UWUSA's launch was the result of a well orchestrated campaign which poured tens of thousands of confused rural people, under the tutelage of chiefs, into Durban's stadium. And, they added, COSATU's rallies would have been larger, had the state and Inkatha stopped enveloping the townships in layers and layers of fear and trepidation. Of course, the campaign for the launch of UWUSA was very well orchestrated and the fears enveloping the townships were well founded: they almost appeared to be part and parcel of such campaigning, as prominent worker leaders were targeted: Jeffrey Vilane, MAWU's president and a northern Natal shop-steward, was attacked, shot at, injured, and his house gutted; Thami Mohlome, COSATU's Natal secretary, had his house attacked and shot at; and many more union members were harassed or assaulted. Furthermore, since March, Inkatha's branches, homeland chiefs, members of the KLA, the homeland bureaucracy, church congregations, and the royal house had been mobilizing with total dedication for the event. Nevertheless, two related assumptions are unfounded: that Inkatha's support is to be found only in the rural areas, and that Natal's and KwaZulu's rural population can be gathered like potatoes into a sack to be poured out into Durban's stadium.

It is instructive, then, to spend some time looking at this mobilization, starting from the countryside. King Zwelethini initiated the call for mobilization, through a broadcast to the "Zulu Nation" which urged "his" subjects to support UWUSA's launch. Thereafter, chief after chief was put in front of a microphone to call upon "their" people to attend the rally. If it was left to a simple broadcast, the question of attendance would have remained an issue of individual choice. But, as the LMG found out, it was backed by rural organization. All the chiefs of the KLA were instructed, through a circular, to mobilize 4 bus-loads each for the rally. Over and above that, people had to travel by trains running for free on the main arteries to Durban, especially provided for the occasion. In six of the nine areas surveyed by the LMG, a common call prevailed: the population was told that people from overseas wanted to take their money away from South Africa and were supported in this by some misguided political organizations. This would imply a tremendous loss of jobs, and to counter that Chief Buthelezi was calling on his people to attend the rally to show the whole world that they opposed such moves. In all, six area chiefs sent their headmen to their respective wards and homesteads to urge people to attend the rallies, and in three of these homeland police assisted by delivering letters door to door. But, even if all the chiefs did their job

effectively, a maximum of only 26,000 people could be "sacked" and delivered. Yet, according to the LMG, only in five out of the nine areas was the instruction executed and people were bussed.

Nevertheless, a sizeable rural crowd of people responded then to the KLA's and the Chief's calls. Furthermore, they were not exactly told the reasons for the Durban invasion. Whether they arrived voluntarily or not, or through fear of sanctions by headmen or the KwaZulu administration, it is very difficult to assess. What the LMG could do was to assess roughly the areas of supply of this large crowd: the highest volume of buses (80-100) came from northern/coastal Zululand, led by dignitaries like Prince Gideon Zulu and township councillors. Another 40 came from the Ladysmith and Newcastle areas, drawn primarily from relocated squatter camps and reserve homesteads. According to the Ubumbulu chiefs Mkhize and Makhanya, approximately 4,000 people, led by themselves and the feared councillor Mbongwe, arrived by buses too. That is, about half of the crowd almost certainly came from outside Durban, but, apart from rural people, it was also made up of the proletariat of the border industrial areas and the shack-settlements all over KwaZulu. Finally, allowing for those who resided in the hostels and in company compounds in Durban, we are still left with a very large crowd that could only have come from Durban's townships.

It is important to understand, then, that large numbers of people gathered from far and near because their attitudes to Inkatha and other organizations had been forged, whether by fiat or fortitude, by a complex history which had gone awry in the last two blazing years. Again, through loud hailers, the radio, through passers-by, from the pulpit, or through direct experience, attitudes were galvanized into convictions. For example, an 80-year old farm labourer, who is also one of the best known lay-preachers from Qatalamba (Drakensberg) to Mooi River, has been collecting attitudes and opinions which he now translates into sermons against the evil that has befallen Zulu people. Disinvestment frightened him: "If the white man left us now, how would we make steel? Even a shirt, or a spoon or eat? And as for a car where you move and you're sitting down, a table, an axe, even manure, we don't know how to make these things." Furthermore, his congregation and farm-workers in the area have been rocked by the union struggles in and around Howick, led by Sarmcol workers and MAWU. For him, all this was anathema: "They spoiled people at work, a lot of people have suffered on account of unions. The families suffer more now and the people don't eat ... This last year, it all went wrong, it's the union that makes the people fight at the factory and the children at home don't eat. These unions are all new, we always hear on the radio about unions, and the children who refuse to go to school, they destroy their schools, they don't learn well any more ..." The shift from the curse of the union to children and youth struggles is crucial because, in this remarkable worker's mind, they represent a fundamental violation of the "Zulu way of life", of "culture" and of "uhlaphanisa": that is, the discipline and respect of younger generations to the commands to elders. And he continues: "The worst thing now is crime among the children, young children carrying guns, I don't know how they get hold of them ... Now they kill each other with them ... We at home see that it's these town people that learnt all this crime, and now they bring guns back into the farms. I suspect the townspeople are guilty of this ... And in the locations people shoot each other. And in the schools they learn horrible things, like putting a tyre on somebody and burning them with petrol ..." And in this horrific world only one solution remained: "By Zulu law, if you committed a crime once, you must be killed. These criminals of now would have been killed in Shaka's day ... We must show them Shaka's rage."

These attitudes can be multiplied further afield - for example, a worker from northern Natal who had worked in the fields as a cane-cutter for twenty years before he was promoted to a mill worker, where he still works after ten years, concurs with the fears of the old man mentioned above. He adds to that a fear of the anti-Christ, the fear of a communist plot - a plot that has swallowed his brother at a metal factory in Durban, and since then his brother has been villifying the Chief and he heaps insults on the Zulu nation. Or a shop-steward from further south at Tongaat Mill who will not desert his Inkatha union in the sugar industry despite his knowledge of corruption in the organization, because it would insult his leadership. This worker actively participated in physically "chasing" the UDF out of his township. Or, further south still, the workers from the shack worlds of

Ubumbulu who, led by their chiefs Makhanya and Mkhize (who are fighting each other most of the time) are COSATU members but who, after bloody confrontations, got their areas rid of Pondo workers because, among other things, they were UDF members who spread evil influences among Zulu youth. As both their chiefs asserted, "Shaka's blood runs through our veins". Or, the Pondo spiritual guide of the "Emakehleri" church near Kwamashu, which embodies a "nativist" revival and argues that black people have lost themselves because they lost Shaka's way - a way bequeathed to the blacks as Gandhi's way was bequeathed to the Indians and Christ's way to the whites. Or, one of the worker leaders of the early '70s who had just retired from the factory floor but who was a SACTU, an ANC, and now an Inkatha activist who believes in the progressive role of trade unions. What is pertinent here is to depart from naive beliefs about the "captive" nature of the audience at King's Park. The UWUSA and COSATU confrontation marked a high point of tensions which reverberated with ethnic, national and populist rhetoric stirred together with strong echoes of class organization.

But, if the gathering for some was a defence of ancestral Zulu pride or a demonstration of "Shaka's rage", it was nevertheless a sleek and modernist affair, as strict discipline was exercised by KwaZulu police armed with semi-automatic rifles and batons. The crowds were ushered into their seats and they were discouraged from singing and chanting by the impersonal happenings on the platform, which included a band playing smooth soul/funk music and endless English speeches. The meeting was nothing like most political meetings in South Africa or Natal, with their explosive popular participation in singing, saluting and sloganizing. Nor was it allowed to develop into the carnival-like vibrancy that Inkatha's "Shaka days" are known for. It was, rather, a public spectacle, stage-managed for the international press and the media. Even Buthelezi's marathon speech to the nation was delivered in English. The only exceptions were youth-league members parading outside the stadium with raucous aplomb, and inside a jubilant group of hostel workers waving their sticks and chanting for a good half an hour, unperturbed by the proceedings.

And there to witness the birth of this "giant" was Natal's new power alliance: the sugarocracy, Natal's industrialists and commercial giants, liberal politicians, AFL-CIO representatives and foreign consuls. And without prior discussion the executive of UWUSA was appointed: it was to be headed by black businessmen, a hotel owner, two industrial relations officers, a township superintendent, and two workers, one of whom was a township councillor.

In contrast, COSATU's rally at Curries Fountain was a more "archaic" and more militant event. Its crowd was a seething body of energy: workers with their banners and slogans comprised the overwhelming majority; the rest was almost exclusively made up of youth with their toyi-toyi rhythms and jogging marches. The platform was dominated by a red and gold COSATU banner and in front of it Samuel Mthethwa, a worker leader from the Dunlop factory, led the crowds with his gruff Zulu voice the way he had led both workers and youth in mass meetings and strike gatherings for the last two years. And the oral poets Hlatshwayo, Qabula and Ramaekgele, but especially the first, got the crowds roaring with their vernacular incantations to the "diggers of the nation's wealth/Machine operators/Moulders of ores and of tyre/ ... Sons of Dlambe and Madlanduna/Children of Bambatha and Makhana/of Mshweshwe and Soshangane" ... but also comrades of "J B Marks and Neil Agget/Mabheda and Phungula ... Raditsela and Mahlangu"; and also praises of their "noble traditions/traditions woven and knitted together in courage/traditions born to your skills of perseverance".<sup>10</sup> Cultural activities encompassed traditional dancing and choir work. Owing to joint organization, the UDF shared much of the platform's speeches together with COSATU's executive.

The COSATU rally in Pietermaritzburg was also attended by about 10,000 people but it was primarily composed of township youth and a smaller contingent of workers, whereas the Ladysmith and Esikhaweni rallies, which occurred in defiance of state prohibition and Inkatha threats, attracted another 6,000 people who were overwhelmingly workers. Although the Durban and Pietermaritzburg platforms displayed an organizational alliance between the UDF and COSATU, the social

composition of the crowds out there in the midst of potential violence was made up of workers and youths. The rest of the black community either went to the Inkatha rallies or stayed away.

Mthethwa and many other worker leaders felt very vulnerable that day: "there were threats of violence everywhere ... violence could have started at the bus-stops, at the train-stations, in the town as Dunlop and Clover workers gathered at their factories to march to Curries Fountain, in the hostels as the hostel workers were divided about whom to support, at the docks, and hotheads could have tried to raid the meetings. If something happened anywhere it would have been the biggest bloodshed in the history we know. All I aimed for is to get through the day, that's all, get through the day. By the evening, when we heard that a youth was shot by a councillor on the way to Umlazi I felt weak. I realised that getting through the day was not enough. I had to get through two more days until after the funeral. And that is how it went on and on from then on."<sup>11</sup>

The next Sunday Umlazi was a time-bomb. Most people locked themselves inside their houses as large numbers of CASSPIRS and military vans patrolled the streets, ready for the youth's funeral. The councillor responsible for the shooting was alleged to have been moving around town taking shots at people gathering for the burial. Rumours abounded that the Amabutho were mobilizing for an attack on the crowd. The crowd was very small, about three hundred people, mainly youths. A small worker-leader delegation stood there worried that they were being pushed by events into the forefront of a "war" they never imagined possible: that they were being grouped by unfolding events with the youth movement of Natal - the barefoot comrade brigades. They were the "nothings" Chief Buthelezi threatened with the unleashing of Zulu anger.<sup>12</sup>

From that day onwards, a tremendous conflict exploded inside the townships between Inkatha, its "amabutho" and youth, or "comrades" - and alongside this a remarkable clash on the ground between workers for and against COSATU. Somebody like Mthethwa has not slept in his little room in Umlazi for a year and a half as four times gunmen came to "visit" him. He has also attended 36 funerals. But what was completely unexpected was the ferocity of resistance by comrades in the townships. Also their dramatic growth as a politico-cultural movement even in the strongest of Inkatha territories: from Ladysmith to Umbumbulu. The bloodshed has been extensive as in all the townships explosive confrontations were developed. In the process, both Inkatha and UWUSA were emasculated at certain fundamental levels: through the actions of its warlords Inkatha became incapable of mobilizing voluntary support in the townships for its "battles"; it also lost the capacity of mobilizing in most of Durban's hostels. Rather, Inkatha was forced to move away from the politics of hegemony to the politics of control: it had to rely more on paid amabutho drawn from the lumpenproletariat or the services of the KwaZulu police. Furthermore, its UWUSA strategy failed to proselytize significant numbers of workers in Natal. The unproblematic link between "Zulu-ness" and Inkatha has been broken, and this breaking has not only involved people who have understood the Zulu movement to be a narrow, particularistic, tribal, ethnic movement, but also by Zulu "nationalists" who feel they have been betrayed.

May Day 1987 was prohibited by a state well into its second state of emergency. This time Inkatha and UWUSA did not even bother to organize anything. COSATU also decided to abandon the holding of rallies; but worker leadership and youth unperturbed went on to hold three smaller ones: at the Umlazi cinema, at a church in Lamontville, and at the trade union offices in Pinetown. Mthethwa once again chaired the first two in his gruff Zulu voice, still without a home and still hoping to make it through another day. For him, the link between "Zulu-ness" and Inkatha, an organization he joined in 1976, has been broken; so has the belief that Inkatha contains within it the seeds of the politics of national redemption and liberation.

## II

Mthethwa's predicament and working life, although unique, are at the same time commonplace in Durban's industrial life. As a recent survey of shop-steward leadership in Durban showed, most worker leaders were like him: migrant workers who reside as tenants, renting rooms, in township houses. They had all left behind them, in the countryside, both homesteads and dependants. Most of them are 30-year olds, and average a standard six education. At best, they speak broken English. On an average, they would have left school in 1967 for economic reasons and tried to make their way into Durban's industrial life. On an average, again, it would have taken them about five years to enter manufacturing employment. Mthethwa worked as a domestic worker before he got a job with Durban Engineering. In 1973, most of them flooded the streets of Durban in the strike wave which was to be the impetus for trade unionism in the area and in South Africa. Most of them were locked in bitter disputes with managements, and, although trade union members since the early to mid-sixties, they managed to entrench their power only in the 1980s. By the mid-1970s they were to carry two cards: a union card and an Inkatha card. By the 1980s they are all lost to Inkatha.

As a newly proletarianized labour force, they brought to the city their own historical legacies and memories. For example, let us look at one shop-steward, Nyambose: his grandfathers were settled near Eshowe in lands that were given to them for their achievements in military campaigns of the 19th century. Yet their clan was more concentrated near Empangeni. Their land near Eshowe was seized as part of the northward coastal expansion of white farming. But the 1906/7 rebellion stopped the owner from coming to settle. Afterwards, the owner came, and apparently he was such a derelict man that he did not know what to do with it. He sold it to a Mr Lindhurst (pseudonym) who in turn demanded labour from the Nyambose people; he also demanded that their cattle be removed from the land. They decided to migrate back to their clan's place near Empangeni and ask for land from the chief there. They left behind two of their sons to earn wages. They were well received by their clansmen.

Nyambose's actual grandfather was one of those left behind, who worked on the farm trying for mixed farming, for tobacco and cotton, until they settled for sugarcane. He worked there most of his life and became an induna, supervising other people - who were recruited from Hlabisa and Ingavuma. The story goes that they killed him through bewitching him: he ran away; he went to Iscor and died there of an accident.

In 1959 Nyambose's father was dismissed from the docks in Durban for taking part in stoppages. He was employed in 1944, together with others from his area, including Izinduna, to replace workers who were involved with Phungula's organization in the Durban docks. He was brought to the Point Barracks as part of a conscious effort to diversify employment and stop worker self-organization in Durban. People from Ixopo were particularly victimized. There, in the barracks, apart from participating in a culture of drinking, dancing, singing and working hard, they started organizing themselves once more. He became one of "Luthuli's men" in 1959. But, dismissed, he went back home and sought work at Mr Lindhurst's sugar plantation, where his father worked. The old man was very pleased to see him and made him into an overseer. But he was seen, allegedly by black policemen, visiting Luthuli's house in Stanger. The farmer was informed, and fired him on the pretext of stealing wood. He died in 1964 of tuberculosis, but before that he had become a drunken menace in the homestead.

Nyambose, as a young man, was appalled by his father's drinking habits: he has not touched alcohol, and instead devoted himself to the Methodist church and the "scriptures". But it was his turn to earn money, so he started his sojourns in Durban. From then on his profile is like that of the others: by 1974 a union member, by 1977 an Inkatha member, by the 1980s a lapsed Inkatha member.

## III

Inkatha's leadership argues that, as a cultural and political movement, it is the inheritor, protector and carrier of the pride of the Zulu nation and people. Its leadership's rhetoric is saturated with historical reference, analogy and prowess. These historical connections in all their complexity are utilized not only to inspire popular support but also to bestow on the leadership legitimate authority: they become heirs in a long line of political craftsmanship.<sup>14</sup>

There are three pillars that support Inkatha's ideological panorama: the first is its linkage with the Shakan revolution which founded the Zulu "nation" - a nation which was subordinated by imperial colonists but whose spirit has remained unbroken. Buthelezi is seen to be a leader who, like Luthuli in the 1950s, has inherited the spirit of Shaka and who, like Shaka, dreams of a broader pan-South African unity.<sup>15</sup> A great emphasis is placed within Inkatha on the celebrations of Shaka's Day. Secondly, Inkatha is seen to be the continuation of Luthuli's ANC, the real ANC, as opposed to the "ANC mission-in-exile", and to that effect it continues to mobilize for a peaceful struggle for black rights, with all the symbols and flags. Thirdly, it is a cultural organization that embodies and preserves the Zulu people's way of life, of moral and social conduct: and, as such, it is concerned with moral discipline, with uhlaphanisa - the obedience of youth to their elders and the preservation of patriarchy and respect. These pillars, according to Bonginkosi Nzimanda<sup>16</sup>, converge to create Inkatha's school syllabi, propagated through KwaZulu education departments.

Furthermore, Nzimande challenges COSATU's cultural activists by asking a vexed question: If these are the constituents of "abantu batho", of the politico-cultural ideology of the Zulu movement, can they provide for alternatives? Is it possible to construct or to forge any convincing alternative, any counter-hegemonic project in Natal? Any answer has to tread carefully through issues of the "nation", "ethnicity", "culture" and "class", because over and above its scholarly or academic merit it concerns the plight of self-definition, identity and confidence for every carrier of a COSATU card in Natal and beyond.

COSATU's Cultural Co-ordinator and oral poet, Hlatshwayo, argues that Inkatha's pillars are "propaganda", an "invention of a tradition" but a powerful one as such, because it is based on a real but distorted history. "... you can't ignore history. It is powerful because it did take place and it lives within the people ..." And, by focussing on the preoccupations of an ordinary worker, he argues that the gravitational pull of such "propaganda" is being torn apart by novel historical currents: "I want to be a man. A proper man. I want to respect my chief. I want others to respect me. But there are opposite forces fighting inside of me. On the one hand I am an organised worker, on the other I am a captive of this Zulu propaganda. Despite my respect for these figureheads I am practically challenged by the forces of revolution in the townships, I am surrounded by conflict, and the capitalist system is hammering me, I am being knocked in, I am harassed ... then the chiefs are doing nothing about my situation ... they drive big cars and demand total obedience and the children are saying that all this respect is fokall. The whole thing is being torn apart ..." Yet he admits that "we do not have any alternative, another invention. We are not saying, No man, forget about Shaka we are giving you this instead. We are creating a different type of movement which is developing through this crisis, as the forces of revolution are tearing things up." Their duty is "to struggle to transform the ways people look at it. You have to start from where people are and go with them where they take you. I mean if you are thrust in this struggle then you have to engage in people's social views and visions."<sup>17</sup> Such a struggle and such an engagement are also novel: it is a departure from deep-seated convictions about nationalism and class organization in the region.

## III

In Natal's labour movement the issue had been pre-decided early on in the development of trade unions. It was formulated as a response to pro-Inkatha arguments pioneered by the mercurial lawyer and listed communist Rowley Arenstein and as a response to pro-SACTU activists in South Africa. For Arenstein, it was and

is impossible to construct an alternative hegemony in Natal - that is, a national or cultural project that is not simultaneously a Zulu movement for self-determination.<sup>18</sup> Following closely Stalin's definition of the "national question", he argues that the Zulu people, sharing a common history, a common cultural lineage and a common language, constitute a necessary regional pillar for a new South Africa.<sup>19</sup> On the basis of this he argues it is imperative for socialists to align themselves with Inkatha; furthermore, the rapid development of the economy, of the productive forces in South Africa, has created objective opportunities for change - part of this is the development of a stable black working class in industry, but it extends to disaffected sectors of the entire society, including South Africa's bourgeoisie. For him, socialism is not on the current historical agenda - the material interests forcing forward the overthrow of Apartheid and the strength of the Apartheid state militate against it; rather, "on the basis of Marxist analysis a concrete situation is to be found in the establishment of a bourgeois democratic republic with safeguards for minorities and welfare provisions"<sup>20</sup>, and this can be achieved, despite the ANC's road of violence, through "negotiation and peaceful means".<sup>21</sup> It is only then that such a bourgeois republic will liberate the forces of production to create the real pre-conditions for socialism.

Trade unionists in Natal have argued the "obverse" of Arenstein's position, but did so by accepting his fundamental premise: that the development of the productive forces, or the '60s "economic growth" or changes in the labour process, has created the conditions for strong grassroots organization at the point of production.<sup>22</sup> They also concurred that socialism was not on the historical agenda and agreed that the state was too strong for confrontation - rather, a long, protracted struggle became necessary where slowly a strong, democratic labour movement had to be built, starting from the shopfloor. It also had to abstain in the interim from politics and treasure its independence. This was necessary for two reasons: that Inkatha's nationalism in Natal exercised a remarkable degree of authority over workers and to align oneself with that would be lethal - national movements shared one characteristic, their non-class nature and ideology. Whether this was a result of the survival of pre-capitalist formations, or an invention of petty bourgeoisies, was not important. What was important was the experience of trade unionism in the 1950s: SACTU, by subordinating its independence to the national campaigns of the Congress Alliance, failed to advance the organization of black workers in South Africa, and abdicated its class goals for a populist ideology.

Of course, by the late 1970s this, essentially tactical, argument was being confused with a more principled one, inside and outside FOSATU. For example, SAAWU in Natal began organizing by attacking FOSATU for not recognizing that a black worker did not only exist at the point of production: he was also a member of the community. As a member of the black community, Sam Kikine argued, any black worker was also a member of a black oppressed nation.<sup>23</sup> He ventured also to argue that it was this failure in FOSATU's vision that was making it decline in Natal as against SAAWU's robust growth. In short, in Natal there has been a constant reference to "nation", "ethnicity", and so on, those uncontested "givens" in social life which are becoming like a new ontology.<sup>24</sup> And alongside that there has been an either/or: either one sees "Zulu-ness" as a genuine national sentiment or as a product of Apartheid-induced false consciousness. What is common in most accounts is that all these non-class sentiments are of one hue: they co-exist alongside the class order of society and exercise an independent pressure on social outcomes. It is important to examine this in more detail.

#### IV

To start, then: the feeling of "nationhood" or "ethnicity", the commonality of national sentiments amongst people, is experienced (to echo Benedict Anderson) as a "deep, horizontal comradeship".<sup>25</sup> We are aware of the phenomenon: despite actual inequalities, status distinctions, stratification and downright exploitation that might prevail in a society, people experience and articulate sentiments, beliefs, and act in ways that reflect such "comradships". These sentiments cut across classes and have no necessary class connotation. At one level, then, nationalism and ethnicity are similar in so far as they both contain such horizontal

identifications. Yet, for our purposes, nationalism shall denote identifications which extend to bind people together under a state's territorial sway; and ethnicity shall denote any regional identification which has in most cases its origins in pre-colonial societies.

Africanist scholarship has traced adequately the ways in which the early exponents of colonial nationalisms set about mobilizing people and constructing national identities. These "lonely bilingual intelligentsias, unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies"<sup>26</sup>, created the first waves of protest in the continent. We are aware, too, that the movement for African nationalism in South Africa shared similar origins and actions in its plight for incorporation into the political life of the Union of South Africa.<sup>27</sup> We are also aware, though, that after the ANC shunned its elitist orientations in the 1940s it revitalized itself: it gained a mass base in its pursuit of a popular democratic programme of struggle for the achievement of political rights in the country.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the ANC bound together the destinies of black worker and intellectual,<sup>29</sup> professional and trader, etc, in a tradition of resistance against Apartheid.

For the black working population in Natal, the Congress legacy was not extinguished when the ANC was outlawed, when the South African Congress of Trade Unions was dismantled in the 1960s and all opposition to Apartheid repressed. It simply lost its coherence. For the 1960s and a good part of the 1970s it was driven into quiescence by intimidation and fear. But it remained, nurtured by individuals here, groups there, in the midst of an expanding economy. Some of its symbols, songs and slogans were appropriated by Inkatha from the mid-seventies onwards. Nevertheless, Davies and O'Meara are correct that the local working class is not some "collective tabula rasa" on whose back are inscribed the insignia of organization. But, at the same time, we also have somehow to explain our own nightmares: that, over and above exploitation in the factories and oppression as a black majority, worker experience adds another complication: at the moment, in Natal/Kwazulu there is a sense of belonging amongst black people, based on their "Zulu-ness". We all concur on the phenomenon but differ in our explanations of how this ethnic ideology has become both dominant and, for multitudes of workers, compelling.

Whatever this ideology and the people it spins around it share, and the actions that flow from it entail, whatever the status we accord it - whether a Zulu nationalism or ethnicity, tribalism, or regional populism - our modern theories tell us that it was "interpellated". In other words, we are ready to accord a peculiar degree of autonomy to ideological discourses so that those who are formed through them can, despite class or status, share a common identity.

This "interpellation", or the formation of Zulu "subjects" and "identities", has a two-fold springboard of operation (and here I am being sketchy). Firstly, "administrative fiat": after the subjugation of the Zulu kingdom, the colonial powers defined both a category and a territory of "Zulu-ness" and squeezed individuals inside them. This also involved individuals, homesteads and chiefdoms which, in some cases, did not even belong to the Zulu kingdom in pre-colonial times.<sup>30</sup> This policy and practice continued and was perfected throughout the last century from Shepstone to Koornhof.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, by black petty-bourgeois invention and "imaginings": since the 1920s and the 1930s urban and rural petty-bourgeoisies, with differing intensities and responding to, and on the basis of, the abovementioned colonial interpellation, mobilized people in the area as "Zulu", forging in the process those deep and horizontal comradeships of an imagined nation.

For example, Neville Alexander argues eloquently the first case: "in order to justify these policies (of oppression and exploitation over the black majority) the ideology of racism was elaborated, systematized and universalized. They (the people of South Africa) grew up believing that they were 'whites', 'coloureds', 'africans', 'indians'. Since 1948, they have been encouraged and often forced to think of themselves in even more microscopic terms, as 'Xhosa', 'Zulu', 'Malay', 'Muslim', 'Hindu', 'Griqua', 'Sotho', 'Venda', etc."<sup>32</sup> These categories, together with the physical creation of Bantustans, allows for the easy flow of the

second abovementioned argument. For example, G Mare has argued that Inkatha's populism is a resonant, ethnic interpellation (using non-class elements) which is articulated by a petty bourgeoisie on the basis of homeland policy and its location within the KwaZulu Bantustan.<sup>33</sup> In short, "Zulu-ness" was extruded through a double-sided historical press-mill: on top, the rulers' ideology; nearer the bottom, black petty bourgeois strivings. As a product, we evidence these days the magnetic pull of a submerged Zulu nation and an ethnic mobilization - Inkatha - as its basis.

There is much that I share here: of course, in the post-1948 period, with the ripening of homeland policy and with Bantustan creation underway, a physical coherence is given to Zulu imaginings and horizons. This carving out of territories and the creation of homeland structures (e.g. Tribal Authorities) is the backbone of what Mare denotes as Inkatha's populism.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Mare goes on to analyse the conditions that create black people's availability to such discourses. What is of worry, though, is a small point of dissonance that has very serious politico-cultural implications: the wholesale acceptance of theories of ideology which treat subject-formation and popular identities as a resultant of structural "interpellations" - a course pioneered by Louis Althusser and creatively extended by Ernesto Laclau. These theories, influential as they are, leave little space for active appropriations of tradition by ordinary people, as shall be elaborated below.<sup>35</sup> Shula Marks's recent collection of essays asserts such an appropriation, yet it is methodologically difficult to see how: her concern with "agency" and ordinary people leads her to castigate structuralism's elimination of the subjective from history<sup>36</sup>, yet in the same stride she uses Laclau (whose *raison d'être* is such an elimination) to explain Zulu-based "ethnic nationalism" in Natal. The following pages are an attempt to redress this small worry, which leads through a critical assessment of Laclau, Benedict Anderson, and ends with a need to overhaul our "press-mill" idea of Zulu-ness.

#### V Laclau, Anderson and Cultural Formations

The quarrel I would have with historical materialists who address themselves to the issues of ideology and phenomena like populism or non-class comradeships, especially influenced by Laclau or Benedict Anderson, is three-fold: firstly, it is vital to separate "subject-formation" from ideological interpellations; the implication of this is that ordinary people can, through their own institutions (whether they manifest "adjustments" or "resistance" to the "system"), regulate "subject-formation" despite dominant ideologies. Structuralist theories, Ernesto Laclau's included<sup>38</sup>, collapse subject-formation to being no more than the result or the outcome of ideological interpellations; by implication, oppositional cultures are the effects of contradictions in the structures of social formations and cannot be seen to arise from people's attempts to control their conditions of life.

Secondly, it is necessary to resist interpretations of "Zulu-ness" which treat it as a populist experience "interpellated" from "above" by either dominant ideologies and/or petty bourgeois imaginings. Rather, "Zulu-ness" must be viewed as a negotiated identity between ordinary people's attempts to create effective and reciprocal social bonds (or functioning cultural formations) out of their social and material conditions of life and political ideologies that seek to mobilize them in non-class ways. Both the former and the latter set for each other strict limits of operation.

Thirdly, despite the non-class elements utilized, the myth-complexes that are generated, the identities that are produced, the common experience of a black oppressed majority, the nature of the abovementioned "negotiation" is constrained by class determination. Once these are clarified below, the argument here can be released to (a) show in which ways the black working class bears its own traditions, heritage and ideologies - how, in short, it is not a "tabula rasa" - and (b) explode the mythology of an all-encompassing "Zulu-ness" which verges on becoming an ontological argument in Natal. (For a more detailed critique of Laclau, see Appendix A.)

Fourthly, a central problem in Laclau's theory is its abstract vagueness: authoritarian populisms could be assumed to be involved in popular-democratic struggles; any appeal to the "people", whatever its form, against whatever power-bloc, could be seen to be of the same social value, and so on. But, more importantly, the organizational form that underpins "interpellations" of the "people" can be elided. As Davies and O'Meara have noted<sup>39</sup>, there is a great difference between a populism that effaces class contradictions and "popular-democratic" organization that insists on class alliances. But, furthermore, within the latter historic blocs, there is a great difference between popular-democratic alliances which involve the presence of the working class in an organized form as against political fronts which assume the presence of the class, in an amorphous way, as part of the "people" - by definition. Each, I would argue, would generate its own unique interpellations, even when discursive elements involved are irreducible to class.

In short, Laclau's innovation in the theory of ideology<sup>40</sup>, despite its impact on historical materialists in South Africa and despite its effects through transmission belts from the academy to popular organizations, has serious implications. It started as an explanation of why working-class struggles and ideologies link up with national or populist projects - which, at the time, was innovative. But now it has been turned upside down: it provides people with an assumption which guarantees behind all "non-class interpellations" a class presence (in the final instance, after all, they are all overdetermined by class struggle). If such a presence can be assumed, then it matters little what organizational form it takes. His theory, however compelling<sup>41</sup>, fails to provide us with the necessary anchors to distinguish between authoritarian forms of populism, democratic class alliances, poor people's movements, etc, in which discourses one can find elements of no necessary class connotation. There is no one nationalism, populism or ethnicity; there are varieties and each one of them brings with it a host of implications.

It is to the variety of such politico-cultural experiences that Benedict Anderson's book, Imagined Communities<sup>42</sup>, pays homage. His discussion of the origins of discrete forms of nationalism has opened up a new space for the discussion of contemporary movements and their "imaginings". In the context of Africa and Asia, feelings of national brotherhood and comradeship are shown to be creative constructs and imaginings of "small reefs", of "literate" and "bilingual" intelligentsias (i.e. intellectuals and professionals). Unlike other national movements, they are "unattached to sturdy local bourgeoisies".<sup>43</sup> These oppressed but privileged petty bourgeoisies crafted the imaginings of submerged and dominated nations to usher a period of decolonization on to the historical terrain. Nevertheless, such imaginings became possible through the development of certain socio-cultural pre-conditions: the rise of print capitalism, the decline of world religious empires and different apprehensions of time - these created the first models. But in the case of formations dominated by imperial powers, discriminatory practices against these "creole" groups, together with the careless carving of new boundaries for colonial administration, completed the backdrop. For example, Tim Couzens's biography of H I E Dhlomo and the latter's volume of collected writings capture in an amicable way the emotive depths and imaginative leaps that come to construct a national sentiment.<sup>44</sup> This moving linkage of a people to a history, a territory and a destiny generates deep resonances, strong self-identifications and solidarities, which are irreducible to class.

But here, as in Laclau's case, Anderson - although constantly hinting at popular identifications from "below" - mainly concentrates on the imaginings of these tiny literate reefs and the models of nationhood they interpellate from "above". He fails to show how these horizontal comradeships, articulated by contemporary non-class movements, are absorbed by the lives and take root in the affairs of those "below". That is, the rise of models of nationhood and ethnicity initiated by literate leaderships - who imagine the nation and mobilize for its territorial carving - fails to explain one crucial component: the passion for these comradeships of a "movement", a "nation", amongst non- or semi-literate multitudes of people. His concentration on scripted signs ignores that these solidarities are constructed from "sounds": this construction takes place in the public and oral world of mass movements which are dominated by rituals of solidarity embedded in

popular cultures and symbolic spectacles of mass power. In short, in the din of this construction we find the performance rituals of solidarity embedded in ordinary people's cultural formations. Any cursory experience of popular gatherings in Natal - from Inkatha's to COSATU's - betrays a tension: there is always a process of "interpellation" descending on the crowds from the platforms, like rain, yet there is also the homology between the rhetoric of grassroots leaders, the izimbongi incantations, the impromptu prayers, the songs and other cultural practices which rise from the crowds upwards to flood the platforms. As J Cronin states, "the oral arts are alive and struggling for their freedom in South Africa ...", in the context of mass meetings.<sup>45</sup> Movements generate collectivities by appropriating this popular culture from "below" and construct identities and solidarities through popular rhythms, sounds and "words of fire".

But, in the discourses of movements, from "above" as it were, one can register their organizational priorities, and their libertarian content: one needs to distinguish between "interpellations" that are communitarian and those that rely on political mythology to justify leaderships and directions. To make this distinction, it is necessary to discuss sketchily the social role of "mythologies".

"Myths", states V Turner, "treat of origins but derive from transitions..." - in other words, they are narrated in anxious, "liminal" moments, during crucial "rites of passage" in order to preserve and recreate common identities. And, he continues: "myths relate how one state of affairs becomes another; how an unpeopled world becomes populated, how chaos becomes cosmos; how immortals become mortals; how the seasons come to replace a climate without seasons; how the original unity of mankind became a plurality of tribes and creation"<sup>46</sup>, and so on. Godelier<sup>47</sup> insists that myths were in pre-class societies what ideology becomes in class society: they legitimate a social order, naturalize its inequalities, and they mystify the majority by consoling it, by effacing or eliminating contradictions.<sup>48</sup> Political mythologies, though, emerge in the transitions from<sup>49</sup> clan to class societies and continue thereafter: thus, the "early" forms of state generate the first political mythologies of "origins", to legitimize the right of rulers to rule, to empower the ruling strata, and simultaneously to create collective subjects. Such mythologies are effective if they manage to link proto-communities with shared meanings, rites of passage, forms of symbolism, a sense of a common past with a myth of a **founding** community - an origin.

It becomes possible, then,<sup>50</sup> to register differences between populist and popular democratic interpellations: the former appeals to black people in South Africa through a political "mythomoteur" - it always, apart from effacing class contradictions, legitimates its leaders' rights to rule through the establishment of a political mythology of origins. This, furthermore, does not challenge existing cultural formations - rather, it leaves them intact. For example, Inkatha, whatever its original intentions were<sup>51</sup>, legitimates both its leadership style and its popular mission through such a founding mythology: the Shakan revolution which constituted the Zulu nation. All its subjects are available for its call no matter what they do, how they behave and what classes they come from. They were bequeathed to Inkatha to be led forward, and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is its natural leader through chiefly lineage.<sup>52</sup> This is over and above the norm, an authoritarian populism. As long as the complex forms of kinship and ritual in ordinary people's cultural formations (rural or urban) find a home in a movement like Inkatha, and in so far as the latter preserves a special place for their ways of life and practices, they are available for ethnic identification; they, in turn, gain without effort a political past and a destiny. Such populism can lose its axiomatic grip if, for instance, it banned Christian beliefs or declared education and the scripted sign as a non-Zulu phenomenon, or it went around whipping husbands for ruling over their wives, and so on: such challenges to existing cultural formation would undermine it. Because, finally, it subsists on the destinies of people carved out on an ethnic space by the Apartheid state, it is also an ethnic movement despite protests from its central committee.

In contradistinction, popular democratic interpellations are incapable of producing such a political founding mythology. Either they have to resort to an absurd pluralism of many ethnic units with their own political mythologies of

origin, each one equal to the others, brought together as a multi-ethnic, poly-colour alliance, or they have to found their interpellating mechanisms on a moment of general dispossession and on common attempts in struggle to forge a common destiny. The leadership's mandate comes from an actual historical social contract with the people - the first SANNC conference, Kliptown, 1955, etc - and the relationship between people is a levelling one and a communitarian rhetoric prevails. In this instance, appropriations of cultural formations are, by necessity, transformative. In the first case, as in the case of Inkatha, movements need not engage in struggles on a mass basis against power-blocs; for the latter, common identities can be formed only through common struggles. In the former, political mythologies are crucial, whereas in the latter they are ambiguous. In both, political subjectivities are not interpellated from "above" alone.

Finally, what is the relationship of "class determination" in this world of non-class interpellations? There is no doubt that those "interpellations" are shared by more than the black working class. Similarly, there is no doubt that cultural formations are not exclusive to classes; furthermore, that cultural practices are common, **without** any "necessary" class contents. How, then, do we persist with the issue of class? "Class determination", one's existence, in other words, as a worker, is not only "definitional", "theoretical", etc, it sets limits to the ways of life possible and available to people. Workers exist in a world of pressures that make available some institutions in society but at the same time **exclude** them from many parts. Furthermore, their lives are divided into two neat parts: a world of work in which they are supposed to abdicate their productive power to others and subordinate themselves to the social and technical dictates of production demands; and a leisure time where they are supposed to regenerate themselves and/or occupy themselves as they wish. In South Africa, the latter is further constrained through racial controls and poor substructures for survival. Your class determination is carried over into your everyday life as "fate", with unique pressures that provide little space for creativity or cultural practice. In short, you are **shaped** into a way of life by virtue of your class location. But workers do not "adjust" to systems of dominant interpellations; rather, as I have shown elsewhere, they react by forming "defensive combinations" from which spring up "proto-communities" or cultural formations.<sup>53</sup> And, within these, the issue of control over conditions of life and subjectivities is of paramount importance. It is on the basis of these that cultural practices proliferate which generate both adjustments to dominant interpellations and resistance. In Natal, these cultural formations have generated a very vibrant tradition of practices and performances, primarily oral, which cannot be seen simply as an imposed culture of adjustment.

Black workers<sup>54</sup> in Natal do not perceive the category "Zulu" as an invention of divide-and-rule. Rather, they see it as an outcome of the Shakan revolution which created a kingdom and a powerful state based on the common identity of many clans and chiefships. They all accept its historical importance and derive dignity, pride and coherence out of it. But this does not mean that they all accept Inkatha's definition of it, nor do they attach to it the same social and political significance. At the most general level, all accept that they are "children of the reed", they share similar allegiances to ancestral lines, similarities in custom, familial prohibitions, and similar hardships in the struggle to preserve the functioning of a homestead economy or an urban household.

They all understand that there is some "social bond" knotting them together; this they understand as their "Zulu-ness". But there are different modalities of this "Zulu-ness" subsisting on different working-class formations. The following section argues that there is no "Zulu-ness" held in common by all black workers in Natal, despite the fact that most of them identify themselves as "Zulu". The appropriation of this ethnicity by black workers is related to their varied forms of historic experience. Indeed, if one reassembles the experiential memories of ordinary black workers in Natal on the broadest possible terms, i.e. their relationship to land, dispossession, proletarianization and chiefships, one notes the springing up of heterogeneous clusters of meanings and traditions of resistance. In selecting from the contemporary labour movement a stratum of leadership which is known for its oral power and symbolic "brokerage" all over Natal, in tracing the residues of traditions that have informed their values and

ideologies, one can demonstrate sufficient evidence. It will also permit some statement on the issues of the "real traditions and ideologies" that make the local proletariat anything but a "tabula rasa".<sup>55</sup>

#### VI. Four Traditions of resistance

I shall argue here, however sketchily and provisionally, that "Zulu-ness" is by no means a common univocal or unilateral experience in Natal/KwaZulu. I shall do this by selecting four examples of different appropriations of this sense of horizontal comradeship. At the broadest level, we can distinguish between four main traditions of resistance in Natal, which imply by their existence a different experience of being Zulu: the black workers of Howick/Mpophomeni; the black workers of the Lower Umfolozi (e.g. Empangeni/Richards Bay area); black workers in Durban; and, finally, those on the margins - the Pondo and Zulu in the shack worlds of Umbumbulu.

Black workers from the Howick/Mpophomeni areas and further afield in Lions River and the peri-urban areas that surround them understand themselves as "Zulu". But this identity is perceived by them in terms of linguistic and cultural characteristics. Socio-politically, though, they see themselves as part of a broader, **dispossessed** African nation. To identify oneself as a political Zulu subject would be divisive and would serve no purpose. Although they would have no problem in being characterized as Zulu people, they are unavailable to political, non-class interpellations on an ethnic basis. For this, they are impervious to Inkatha's mobilizing drives, despite early membership of many of them.<sup>56</sup>

What makes them available to imaginings that take them to feel as part of a broader African nation are their concrete experiences of land alienation: they imagine many proto-communities like theirs, throughout South Africa, who share with them a horizontal sense of solidarity. In their cultural formations, despite rituals in every-day life similar to many other communities in Natal, they have no space for political mythologies of common origin. What makes them different is their specific past and volatile present.

Here, they share a common history of two major **dispossessions**: popular memory speaks of them as dispossessed "labour-tenants" from white farms or dispossessed agrarian wage-labourers. Most of them came from agrarian families who were dispossessed once before by white colonists and settlers and made into "labour tenants" on white farms. The area has real linkages with the Bambatha rebellion and the ICU agitation on white farms in the 1920s. By the time of their fathers, a slow but persistent process of proletarianization had already begun; it was a process that made them into wage-labourers on the farms, or edged them out towards contract work at Howick or Johannesburg. But, although by the 1970s most of them were landless, the land question haunts them, concentrated as they are in urban villages to serve the labour needs of Howick, Mooi River and Nottingham Road. Their rituals of mutuality are deeply rooted in an agrarian culture mediated by Christianity.

As wage labourers, as people churned out of land relations, they were also faced with more **urban** evictions. Some of them were relocated three times: from a growing slum-yard world of Howick to a township (Zenzele), they were finally removed to Mpophomeni in order to make space for expansion of Midmar Dam, to serve white agriculture better. In all this history their relationship to chiefship had been broken, and existed in most cases for instrumental reasons: many who wanted land for their cattle after the abolition of labour-tenancy sought out age-old allegiances to chiefs in the Impendle region.

Furthermore, they made themselves available to both labour and political organization, with stubborn consistency, since the 1950s - which consolidated their identity of being a dispossessed part of an African nation and workers exploited in the factory. Moses Mabhedha and Harry Gwala were their organizers then, and managed to link agrarian grievances, like the dipping and culling of cattle, which were affecting "labour tenants" (in many cases, they were the workers' own kin), and industrial issues through trade unionism. They were part and parcel of all the late 1950s' campaigns. Their proletarianization, their class determinations and their

regional dynamics have shaped them into a unique tradition of resistance in Natal: the "land question", "white domination", "worker rights" have a unique resonance there.

But there are marked differences between them and black workers in the Richards Bay/Empangeni areas: they, too, understand themselves as "Zulu" but their "Zulu-ness" has its own modalities. They understand themselves to be a separate and a distinctive people: they are tied together by a common culture and a prior political community (state) which was destroyed by imperialism; they strongly believe that the Zulu nation needs its own territory and a government that represents them; their political unity is mediated through chiefs and they are available to Inkatha's non-class interpellations. In fact, the majority of them are members. They join trade unions readily but trade unionism looks after people's necessities at work, whereas Inkatha looks after their community needs.

For the majority, dispossession has not occurred as it has in the Midlands. Most still enjoy access to land, which, however overcrowded and underdeveloped, is still a meaningful component of their lives and those of their kin. Chiefship - and its relationship to headmen, and headmen's relationship to heads of commoner homesteads - is still a functioning social system with reciprocal duties and obligations.

Their proletarianization has occurred slower over time, with migrancy playing a dominant role in the lives of homesteads. Large tracts of land around Ingavuma, Empangeni and Lower Umfolozi have remained intact: that is, although ravaged by war and poverty, popular memory ties specific localities to experiences that go back three generations. A lot of them were cordoned-off for the sugar plantations to work at cutting cane for minimal wages.<sup>57</sup> Others were cordoned-off for the coal-mines further inland at Hlobane, Vryheid, and Dundee. Both experiences have created an aversion to that kind of work, and, as places of drudgery, they were avoided as far as possible. In Mahlabathini, for example, one can witness a gradual transition from the time of the grandfathers, who only entered short-term contracts (3-6 months), to the time of the fathers, who started proper oscillating migration to the Witwatersrand accompanied by izinduna to work for firms like Iscor, etc. By the 1960s and 1970s, as these processes continued, the rise of industries in the border areas like Isithebe and Richards Bay had absorbed people who were becoming permanently proletarianized. Indeed, as the urbanization of border areas indicates, and the concentrations of townships in and around the Lower Umfolozi area betray, this process of total proletarianization has been accelerating.

For white management, it is the "story of the conversion of unhealthy, illiterate, undernourished, tribalized and superstitious Black people into skilled industrial workers ... This achievement was realised in less than five years - starting from scratch." And this process has been achieved through co-operation of the royal house, chiefs, and the KwaZulu homeland structures: "we organise special functions in the King's room. We lay on good food, drinks, music, we invite the Zulu liaison committee; we invite the local chiefs, we invite the press and Radio Bantu ... of course we dramatise the event and we give the chiefs opportunity to speak ... We predict and control human nature to conform to our wish."<sup>58</sup>

In this area, where the centrality of the homestead remained intact or, in cases of total proletarianization, it is seen as reversible in the future, a different tradition of resistance has been accumulating, mediated by and in opposition, in some cases, to chiefs. Now that cracks are appearing through the COSATU and UWUSA conflict, the tradition remains as Inkatha is shunned for violating and transgressing unwritten codes of moral behaviour.

Durban's black working class - the largest in Natal - in contradistinction has elements of both traditions outlined above amongst its constituents. But there is another which is unique to it by virtue of its urban and industrial specificities. Many workers' views are being shaped by segregationist rhetoric: that they are a separate and distinct group (from the Amapondo and Indians) and that Zulu workers constitute a separate culture. They all agree that this common culture had a political, national history which was destroyed by the whites. And many see Inkatha as a cultural movement that revives a pride in the past which is in danger

of being destroyed. They have also had a unique pre-history, adjacent to petty bourgeoisies - traders and shop-keepers - who, in turn, clashed with Indian interests over attempted monopolies of racially exclusive markets.<sup>59</sup> Their history of urban existence, controlled by the Durban system and rigid influx controls, and their history of urban slum cultures (Cato Manor), of political campaigns (late '50s and early '60s), have not detracted from the Zulu self-perceptions which make for the kind of tensions I have described elsewhere.<sup>60</sup>

These legacies make Durban's proletariat both the most advanced and the most backward-looking in the country: the most experienced in organization and renewal but the most attached to traditional institutions. This demands a thorough review of the tremendous changes experienced in the last twenty years in the communities and the factory: changes that have made workers seek, through Inkatha and its township cells, a return of the moral authority of the past, of patriarchy in the face of collapsing households - yet changes that have opened black workers' cultural formations to the most modernist of influences and sub-cultures.

Finally, the Amaondo in Durban have had a history of marginalization by the "Zulu" which spans many years. They see themselves different only in dialect, but feel themselves to be part and parcel of a black working population which includes Zulu. The latter, though, differentiate themselves culturally; "the Mpondos are different, they are stupid, they are good fighters, they take all the 'shit' jobs." Some, interestingly though, make themselves available to non-class Zulu-based interpellations. Further, many have joined Inkatha, perhaps because Inkatha councillors control housing. Nevertheless, the majority of them have a different relationship to non-class interpellations.

Most of them have homesteads in the Transkei and migrancy is their lot: some stay in the shack worlds of Inanda or Malukazi, some in rented rooms in the main townships and others in hostels or company compounds. Their history of working in Natal goes back a century: sugarcane workers who to this day form the majority of the agrarian labour force.

The Pondoland rebellion against "Bantu" or "Tribal" authorities and "betterment" schemes was remarkable for both its resilience and duration and its devastating results: it hastened the immiseration of a large number of homesteads, so that an increasing reliance on migrant labour became the order of the day. It also drove a wedge between popular experience and chiefs. During the struggles of 1959-61, the commoners' Hill Committees came to embody a remarkable degree of self-organization, leadership and popular control. Recent interviews point to, especially in Flagstaff, more Congress influence than was hitherto imagined.

But their relationship to their homesteads and the homestead head's relationship to chiefs are different from those of migrant workers from northern Zululand. These relationships were severed during the Pondoland rebellion, where chiefs identified themselves with "betterment" schemes and the Government. Chiefship, for most, is now an administrative burden "dressed up" with ritual. "Land has got too small and taxes have gone up. This was the plan of the Government in the 1950s. They have taken our land. There is no work and too much tax. Chiefs are not for the people, they are working for the government. They tell us what the government tells ..." "The Government, they steal the land. Land is useless because of the Government plan. There is fighting now because the chiefs are no good any more. The chiefs are traitors of the Pondo people. They are now taking the people's possessions, like cattle." Amongst them, one finds a very crucial component of worker leadership in Natal.<sup>61</sup>

From our oral evidence, it seems that the 1960s were marked by an increase of migrations from Pondoland to Durban which, by the 1970s, turned into a flood. Large areas of Inanda-Bambayi, Amauti and Africa have become catchment areas in the north-west of Durban and Umbumbulu in the south. And in these areas shacklords, exploiting the scarcity of housing and amenities that Apartheid has generated, have been party to the growth of these sprawling concentrations of recently proletarianized people. Such people have been migrating from all over KwaZulu and Natal: in Umbumbulu, next to the Pondo worker concentrations, one finds people from

Harding, Ixopo, Polela, and the Underberg. But the latter together with the traditional residents, led by local chiefs and homeland leaders, have unleashed a movement of ethnic separatism which has turned to violence against Pondo people.

According to Chief Mkhize and Chief Makhanya, the Pondo people had to go because they were taking jobs that really belonged to Zulu people; and, although the Zulu people were hospitable during times of economic boom, now, with unemployment in the area, Zulu people needed the jobs that were available in factories built by the whites on their land without even asking for their permission. Pondo workers were also a bad influence because they were against Inkatha and they were poisoning the minds of Zulu youth. Now the Zulu people, with "Shaka's blood" in their hearts, would be led for reclaiming their land, by their chiefs.

In short, there is no one appropriation of "Zulu-ness", nor is there - to swing the argument around - one culture of resistance: there are many.

### Conclusion

The argument, stated so broadly, suffices as a simple demonstration: that "Zulu-ness", as an ethnic self-identification among black workers in Natal, although common, registers different experiences and comradeships from area to area. It is the turn of the historians to show whether this differs over time. But it is also their turn to enrich further our understanding of local histories, because it is on such a local understanding and traditions that labour organizations can engage, with "social views and visions", to echo Hlatshwayo, in order to begin providing for a resonant alternative to Inkatha's myth complexes. In the process, the delicate relationship between the chiefs and commoners, the unwritten record of the Congress movement in Natal, of religion, etc, will have to be explored. So far, most scholarship in and on Natal has boosted Inkatha's self-confidence as the logical heir of Zulu legacies; it is time that it boosted the self-confidence of ordinary people.

- 1 Most of the material here is from the research and findings of the Natal-based Labour Monitoring Group. For the May Day stay-aways and rallies it conducted extensive research into patterns of mobilization, both urban and rural, and has monitored the rallies, newspapers and radio broadcasts in detail. It involved 32 researchers and has produced one report: "The Mayday Stay-aways in Durban", ASSA Paper, University of Natal, 1986.
- 2 O Mthethwa, Interview, July 1986.
- 3 On the generalized conflict in Durban's townships, see my "Where Wealth and Power and Blood Reign Worshipped Gods - An Analysis of the Durban Troubles, August 1985" in South African Labour Bulletin, Vol 11, No 7.
- 4 Daily Mail, 5 November 1985.
- 5 E Barayi, "Presidential Address", COSATU Launch documents, 1985.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 I Mbelu, Interview, November 1986.
- 8 Inter alia, interviews with J Ntuli, O Mthethwa, Chiefs Makhanya and Mkhize, O Mkhize, O Gumede, J Gwala, September-November 1986.
- 9 Transcribed from May Day video recording, Culture & Working Life Project, Natal, 1986.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 S Mthethwa, Interview, June 1986.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 On Inkatha's formal ideology, cf G Mare's and G Steven's forthcoming book (CIIR, London, 1987).
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 See, for instance, Masizi Kunene's preface to the Emperor Shaka the Great (London, 1979), where Buthelezi is praised as a modern-day Shaka. Also cf T Couzen's last chapter of The New African (Johannesburg, 1986) for Dhlomo's praises of Luthuli in a similar vein.
- 16 cf B Nzimande, "Abantu Batho - Inkatha's Pedagogy", mimeo, 1987.
- 17 M Hlatshwayo. Interview, May 1987.
- 18 R Arenstein, "Socialism in the South African Context", mimeo, 1986.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid., p 13.
- 21 Ibid., p 11.
- 22 See J Maree's PhD Thesis, "South Africa's Independent Trade Unions, 1973 - Present" (1986).
- 23 Kikine.
- 24 Morris, Screiner, Lambert, et al.
- 25 B Anderson, Imagined Communities: reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism (London, 1984), p 16.

- 26 Ibid.
- 27 On early ANC history, see, for instance, P Walshe, The Rise of African Nationalism in South Africa (London, 1970).
- 28 See T Lodge's Black Politics in South Africa (Johannesburg, 1982). See especially introduction and chapter 1.
- 29 See J Cronin and R Suttner, 30 Years of the Freedom Charter (Johannesburg, 1986). Also H J and R W Simons' Class and Colour in South Africa, 1850-1950 (Harmondsworth, 1969). Note, though, that the process of radicalization was much slower in Natal than the rest of the country.
- 30 On the Zulu kingdom, see the first chapter of J Guy's The Destruction of the Zulu Kingdom (London, 1979).
- 31 S Marks's Reluctant Rebellion (Oxford, 1970) offers still one of the most convincing outlines of the socio-political implications of segregation and reserve-carving in Natal.
- 32 N Alexander, Sow the Wind: contemporary speeches (Johannesburg, 1985), p 44.
- 33 G Mare, "Inkatha: What content to populism?", African Studies Seminar Paper, Pietermaritzburg, 1984.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 cf L Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in Lenin and Philosophy (London, 1971).
- 36 S Marks, The Ambiguities of Dependence: class, nationalism and the state in twentieth century Natal (Johannesburg, 1986).
- 37 Ibid., pp 9-10.
- 38 Ibid., pp 111-12. P Hudson, "Some Problems and Advances in the Theory of Class Struggle", ASSA Conference Paper, 1984, charts out a different critical project, based on Laclau's shortcomings. His subsequent work has shifted away from the considerations I outline here and a critical interchange is out of place here.
- 39 R Davies et al., op. cit., pp 104 ff.
- 40 See, for instance, the work of P Hudson, op. cit., G Mare, op. cit., but also M Swilling's East Rand and East London work.
- 41 This critique was initiated by N Mouzelis in New Left Review, 1979.
- 42 B Anderson, op. cit., pp 104 ff.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 T Couzens, The New African: a study of the life and work of H I E Dhlomo (Johannesburg, 1985), pp 241 ff. See also H I E Dhlomo, Collected Works, edited by N Visser and T Couzens (Johannesburg, 1985).
- 45 J Cronin, "Review of 'Xhosa Oral Poetry'" in Social Dynamics, Vol 11, No 2, 1985, p 91.
- 46 V Turner, "Myth and Symbol" in the International Encyclopedia of Social Science, Vol 10 (New York, 1968), p 576; despite the subjective emphasis of myth transmission that Turner's account generates, it is remarkably close to Levi-Strauss's more structuralist/binary one: cf E Leach, "Levi-Strauss in the Garden of Eden: an examination of some recent developments in the analysis of myth", New York Academy of Sciences, Division of Anthropology, 1961, pp 386-96.

- 47 M Godelier, "The Origins of Myth", New Left Review, 1983.
- 48 cf J Larrain, The Concept of Ideology (London, 1979); see his discussion on structuralism.
- 49 See the interesting collection of essays in Claassen and Skanlik (eds), The Early State (Amsterdam, 1978).
- 50 See above, R Davies et al., p 4.
- 51 See G Mare's discussion, op. cit., of the main features of Inkatha's populism.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 A Sitas, PhD thesis.
- 54 There are many oral interviews capturing this experience in the Department's Worker Resistance in Natal Project and its Culture and Working Life Project
- 55 To do this, I have focussed on contemporary leaderships with oral power: the symbolic brokers of a class culture. I have selected a grouping of worker leaders so that their fathers' homesteads would give one an adequate spread across Natal's and KwaZulu's countryside - Pondoland, Ubumbulu, Underberg, Impendle, Umvoti, Lions River, Empangeni, Lower Umfolozi, Ingavuma and Mahlabathini. If the homesteads range over such vast tracts of land, their experience, accumulated, is immense. The worker leaders come from larger factories like AECI Umbogotwini, Unilever, Dunlop, Frametex, Bata, Coronation Brick and Tile, Bakers, SA Stevedores, Alusaf, SAPPI, Amatikulu Sugar Mill, Hulett's, Hulett's Aluminium, BTR Sarmcol.
- 56 Most of this is from D Bonnin's work, interviews and surveys: for a sample, cf "From Labour Tenant to Industrial Worker: the case of the Sarmcol strikers", paper submitted as evidence in the MAWU vs BTR/SARMCOL industrial court case, 1986. Also, from conversations during and after the construction of the Sarmcol Workers' play, The Long March. Also, Inos Mbelu: from labour tenancy to wage labour in Natal, edited by J Woodhouse and A Sitas (University of Natal, Durban, 1985/86).
- 57 On Ingavuma's political economy, see the work of Derman and Poultney, "The Pongola Floodplains of Northern Natal", mimeo, 1986. On Richards' Bay, see M Bryerly's honours thesis, "The Richards' Bay Bus Boycotts", University of Natal, 1985. Also H L Watts (ed), A Socio-Economic Baseline Regional Survey of the Richards Bay and Empangeni Region (Durban, 1985). Also interviews: Ntombela; Vilane.
- 58 Dr J C Van der Walt, "White Involvement in Black Advancement ..." (NDMF), p 52. R D Nunes, The Development of Industrial Relations at the Alusaf Plant, 1971-1984 (1985), p 15.
- 59 See I Edwards, "Living on the Smell of an Oil-Rag - Life in Cato Manor Farm in the 1940s", History Workshop Paper, University of Natal, 1983. Also, "Swing the Assegai Peacefully? 'New Africa', Mkumbane, the Cooperative Movement and attempts to transform Durban society in the 1940s", mimeo, 1987. Also, G Maarsdorp and A B Humphreys, From Shantytown to Township: an economic study of African poverty and rehousing in a South African city (Johannesburg, 1975).
- 60 Interviews. See above.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.

### Appendix

Ernesto Laclau offers historical materialists a general theory of ideology and a specific theory of political ideology, viz populism. (1) In both instances, he attempts to argue a "non-reductionist" theory of ideology which does not yield its power to economic interests or class contradictions. (2) Both facets of his argument are important for the discussion of ethnicity or ethnic self-identity in South Africa. His general theory runs as follows: the basic function of **all** ideology (of whatever social stratum or class) is to constitute or "interpellate" individuals as **subjects**. Ideology is, in other words, a **discourse** (3) made up of messages, statements, texts, images and sounds which interpellate or constitute us in sets of beliefs, values and norms. As individuals - as these desiring, sexual animals of speech, and as these bearers of social structures - we are transformed by ideology into specific **subjects**, or we are "fixed" into particular subjectivities. Furthermore, as social individuals, we are the sites for many interpellations which are sometimes coherent but often contradictory. Yet, these contradictions emanate **outside** us and **despite** us: although all social groups and classes are capable of generating ideologies, they are, according to Laclau, "constrained" by the dominant contradictions in modes of production and social formations. (4) But, if this is the "function" of all ideology, what unifies it into a coherent and systematic **discourse**?

For Laclau, classes or class contradictions cannot be presupposed as the "unifiers" of ideological discourses, otherwise his theory would be **reductionist**: rather, the unifier is that which it constitutes: "the **subject** (my emphasis) interpellated and thus constituted through this discourse". (5) So, according to Laclau, although all ideology interpellates individuals as subjects, we can differentiate between them through inquiring what **kind** of subject is being interpellated. And since this subject is formed through many non-class elements, it is pointless to ask a priori which class interpellates. We can only derive or decipher class hegemony (6) by pinpointing the "articulating principle" that regulates the modalities of this "subject".

Although, in principle, the departure from reductionism is welcome, it is important to drive a wedge between ideological interpellations and subject-formation in society: the last decade of struggles within and against institutions in South Africa, from the school to the government bureaucracy, from the factory to the church, and so on, have taught us that the "wedge" is a prerequisite for any theory of ideological struggle. After all, all social institutions generate discursive practices or ideologies to the extent that (a) they embody power structures which have their own legitimating "mythologies", and (b) they attempt to create, construct, inculcate "functional individuals" - i.e. they attempt to create subjectivities (and "attempt" is the big word here) that ensure their long-term reproduction. In this sense, they all "interpellate" individuals as subjects, and they all use non-class elements to do so. But can we assume that these interpellations are **effective**? Within each one there are no guarantees that subject-formation is interpellated by institutional ideologies. If institutional discourses do not achieve internal coherence, between two institutions contradictory "subject-intepellations" might prevail, and so on. The point is that, in all these institutions, interpellation takes place as an **attempt** at forging functional subjects: individuals who perform their lives according to institutional rules and who share the value orientations dominant at any particular time. But, however much we want to remain "non-reductionist", we have to note that all institutions embody power relations and, as sites of power, they embody more than ideological interpellations; they all employ disciplinary techniques and controls over their populations. Although there might not be a **necessary** class connotation in their ideologies of power, we cannot deny that at the same time class ideologies might proliferate as they are all at close scrutiny, **sites of struggle**. Nevertheless, the main point here is that there is an attempt at subject-formation.

Looking at "interpellation" this way preserves Laclau's concern with non-reductionism: there are no prior guarantees that a class ideology is dominant (and what is **crucial**, even if it is dominant), there are no guarantees that it is

effective. We can only speak of a dominant ideology if, and only if, the legitimating "mythologies" which enshrine power in institutions, and the functional subjects they seek to construct, are homologous throughout a social formation's important institutions. This presupposes, though, control of or hegemony of institutions by power-blocs, strata or classes. If this is the case, we can argue the case for dominant ideology which proliferates throughout the social body. (Feminists, for example, would argue that "patriarchy" is an ideological cornerstone of all social institutions.)

But, even if in principle ideology (or ideologies) does not have a necessary class connotation, that does not mean that class connotations are always absent: they can even be dominant. (7) Furthermore, a dominant ideology might create functional individuals through force or sanctions, but it does not necessarily form subjects. We can, in the same breath, argue then that, despite Apartheid ideology, despite the control of most institutions in Natal/KwaZulu by power-blocs that "interpellate" African people as Zulu subjects, there is no guarantee that their interpellation is formative. Far from it, because within such institutions and outside them oppositional cultures are generated, nurtured by ordinary people, as they collectively attempt to control their conditions of life. (8)

As mentioned above, Laclau offers also a theory of political ideology-populism: he argues, consistent with his general theory, that ideological elements taken in isolation have no necessary class connotation. Over and above class contradictions in capitalist society, there is another one of primary importance: this contradiction generates political subjectivities, where individuals are interpellated as parts of the "people" in struggle against power-blocs. He calls this the people/power-bloc contradiction and claims that it is dominant in political life. It generates and unleashes popular-democratic struggles (only overdetermined in the last instance by class contradictions). Therefore, what is identified as populism (these appeals to the people against power-blocs) cannot be reduced to being simply petty-bourgeois ideologies. Rather, they are common to all classes struggling against the powers that be, and their symbolisms and traditions are available to all; their class nature cannot be presupposed. Rather than reducing it to class interests, its articulating principle should be established through an examination of political subject-formation that regulates the unity of its discourse.

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#### Notes

- (1) E Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (London, 1977).
- (2) Ibid., p 99.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Ibid., p 100.
- (5) Ibid., p 101.
- (6) Ibid., p 105.
- (7) I conflate here dominant with hegemonic ideologies, which need to be separated if we are discussing competing political projects. For example, Inkatha might provide the dominant interpellations in KwaZulu through institutions it controls, but this cannot be assumed to be an index of its hegemony.
- (8) See A Sitas, PhD thesis, Chapter I.

