

THE AIM OF AZANIA WORKER

1. The struggle for national liberation in South Africa is a struggle against white domination and racial oppression of the majority black population. White domination and racism are inextricably woven into the economic development of capitalism in South Africa. The elimination of white domination and racism can only be completed after the disappearance of capitalism. Thus the struggle for national liberation is a combined one with the struggle for socialism.
2. The leading role in the struggle for socialism is played by the working class. In South Africa at the present time, this role belongs to the black working class in industry, mining, agriculture and the domestic service of white households. The black workers and their families constitute not only a majority of the population but are also the most oppressed and most exploited section of the population and working class in South Africa.
3. The working class can only secure its leading role in the combined struggle for national liberation and socialism through its own independent political working class organisation which expresses its specific political, economic and social demands. We thus fully support the project of creating an independent political organisation of the working class in South Africa.
4. An independent political organisation of the working class is necessary because:
 - i) without an organisation of their own the workers will never in their own name and interests be able to struggle for, assume and maintain power; worker's power is a necessary condition for successful and meaningful social change that will bring an end to racism and capitalism and usher in a period of transition to socialism, an independent political working class organisation is the means by which the working class secures its interests and representation in any political conjuncture, now and in the future;
 - ii) without an organisation of their own the workers will not be able to press within the popular and national liberation struggle the political, economic and social demands of the working class and other dominated classes: the example of many former colonial countries shows that the popular and national struggles often end by serving the interests of indigenous middle class elites rather than those of workers and other toiling classes.
5. An independent political organisation of the working class can only be created out of the political and trade union organisations and the various socialist currents which exist at the time. For this organisation to have deep roots and a mass base in the working class itself, it cannot be built in isolation from the working class and the organisations in which the workers presently find themselves, nor can it be built by any one socialist current in isolation from all others actively involved in workers' and mass struggles. There is a need, as a step towards the building of a working class organisation for all socialists to engage in discussion. Our journal is offered as an open medium of expression to all socialists actively involved in struggles, and remains non-sectarian in that it will publish contributions which may not agree with our own.
6. Without a relevant theory and practice of social change the working class can have no organisation worthy of its leading role. Our journal is further offered as a forum in which socialists from all political currents within the trade unions, student and national liberation movements can contribute towards the development of a relevant theory and practice of social change, and in which they can exchange experiences and lessons drawn from present and past struggles.
7. In a world dominated by capitalism the struggle against capitalism is an international one. We cannot therefore conceive of a political organisation of the working class in South Africa in isolation from the organisations, experience and history of the working class and toiling masses in other countries of the world. We offer our journal as a link between the struggle in South Africa and the struggles in other countries and, to this end, extend an invitation to socialists in other parts of the world to join us in developing a relevant theory and practice of social change and share with us their experiences of struggles in a manner relevant to the workers' struggle in South Africa. In particular we seek contribution of articles which will help in the understanding of questions such as race, class, culture, ideology, consciousness and subjectivity.

AZANIA WORKER

BM BOX 4863

LONDON WC1N 3XX

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

AND BACK NUMBERS

See back page

*An
approach
to the
national
question
in
South Africa*

By

Neville Alexander

Introduction

In both the theoretical and practical political spheres, the question of the nation in South Africa has become highly controversial. Besides the predictable differences between exponents of ruling-class positions and exponents or practitioners representing the exploited and oppressed majority of the people of South Africa, major differences of approach and perception have become manifest within the liberation movement itself. All of these will be referred to and, where necessary for my purposes, discussed in this paper.

Before I can expound the nature and the range of the national question in South Africa, however, it is necessary to refer to the allegation that this is in fact a non-question. It is held by some left-inclined activists that the national question ceased to exist in 1910 (with the Act of Union) or at the very latest in 1931 (with the Statute of Westminster). The reasoning is very simple: the national question, following Lenin, is essentially a question of self-determination, i.e. a question of national independence to the point of secession from an existing multi-national state or empire. Since Britain granted dominion status and full independence to 'South Africa' (or to the national bourgeoisie) in the period 1910-1931, there is no national question. **Quod erat demonstrandum!** The short answer to this position is that it equates the national question with the colonial question and, clearly, is unaware of the full range covered by the term 'the national question'.

In another version of this thesis, it is held that the national question is 'the land question of the bourgeoisie', i.e. that it is essentially a question of the peasantry freeing itself or being freed from feudal restrictions of one kind or another. Since there is no peasantry in South Africa because of the rapid development of capitalism in the agrarian sector and because the 'Prussian road' prevented the development of an African yeomanry in South Africa, there is no national question in South Africa. **Quod erat demonstrandum!** This position reflects a very narrow Eurocentric approach to the question, which it profoundly misconceives.

In both these versions of the negation of the question, it is held that the struggle being waged in South Africa is a classical struggle between labour and capital (1), a class struggle, **not** a struggle for national liberation. On the basis of this 'banality' (Amin 1981: 191), it is argued in these circles that what is referred to as the national question by petty bourgeois ideologues is in fact the consequence of racial ideology, which is the ideology of the capitalist class in South Africa. All that needs to be done, therefore, is for the working class in its organisations, and more generally, to promote the counter-ideology and practices of non-racialism or anti-racism.

The opposite extreme, which is defended by significant groupings in the liberation movement, is reflected clearly in its entire problematic in the following passage:

A developed internal market with a clearly defined area within which a particular currency is used as a medium

(1) In an interesting passage, Samir Amin calls this the 'reactionary or bureaucratic, formal position' which 'simply denies realities other than class. It denies the importance of sex, nations, religions, or other categories, regarding them not as realities but as phenomena artificially manipulated by the exploiting classes. This position results, moreover, in tactical concessions with regard to these realities. Indeed, it leads to practical failure in the class struggle because these realities are tenacious and subtly undermine the development of the class-for-itself' (Amin 1981: 30).

of exchange is a sine qua non for a capitalist nation.

In the case of Azania, the Xhosas, Zulus, Sothos, Indians and the so-called Coloureds constitute that many different nationalities. But because they suffer from the same economic disabilities — landlessness and structured propertylessness — they also constitute a single Black nationality. Their further evolution into a nation cannot be effected without a revolutionary transformation. The repossession of land and the consequent seizure of political power is an absolute necessity for the achievement of nation-hood in the specific conditions of Azania. By the same token and precisely because they have gone through their bourgeois democratic revolution, the white settlers have constituted themselves into a nation. (Tsotsi 1982: 8).

It is unnecessary to elaborate in detail on this position at this stage. Within the liberation movement it is clearly the 'nationalist' pole opposite to that of the 'workerists'. It implies that the struggle being waged by the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa is a struggle for national liberation. This struggle is being waged by the oppressed black 'nationality' against the white 'nation'.

In some versions of this position, this struggle is held to be prior to or at least more important than the class struggle between labour and capital. In more sophisticated versions, these 'two struggles' are seen as intersecting and mutually reinforcing even though they are held to be distinct from each other. A view that is now commonly held is that the two struggles are in fact one struggle because of the fact that 'race' and 'class' coincide. In most versions of this position, its proponents believe that the struggle for national liberation is totally compatible with the struggle for the emancipation of the working class, i.e. the struggle for socialism.

We see, therefore, complete confusion and contradiction. One is reminded of the blind men, each of whom describes the elephant in terms of that part of its anatomy which he happens to have his hand on! In this paper, I want to put forward a series of propositions which I hope will throw some light on the subject so that even if it does not help to restore the gift of sight to our blind men and women, at least it will help those who are willing to see, to realise that this is a complex and vital question of our struggle, one which we ignore at our peril.

The approach to the national question

What is the national question? For a subject that is written off so easily by some people, this question has generated an astounding number of theoretical and historical treatises in most languages of the world! Whole libraries were written on this question in the Soviet Union alone before the death of Stalin in 1953 and whole libraries were (and are being) written there since 1956 when it was found that Stalin had been fallible in a number of important questions, including certain aspects of his celebrated essay on the national question. That had its own repercussions throughout the world, especially in communist parties but, interesting though the subject is, it cannot be canvassed here.

More than anything else, it has been the coming into being of the 'emergent nations' of Africa, Asia and, to a lesser extent, of Latin America, that has reopened the debate on a question that was one of the major preoccupa-

tions of all socialist and many liberal theoreticians and political parties in Europe during the 19th century. Indeed, the two phenomena are directly related. For, it soon became obvious after World War II that the nations of the ex-colonial and semi-colonial world did not correspond in form to the nations of 19th century Europe. They were possessed of very few of the features of nationhood variously considered to be 'essential' by socialist and liberal theoreticians and students of nationalism in Europe. Yet, the movements that brought these nations into being were undoubtedly 'nationalist' in some very obvious sense. Clearly, the European models were not absolute. Even for Europe itself, important differences between the modalities of Western and Eastern European nations were identified. The division of Germany and Korea into two states in 1945 with the consequent theorisation of the implications on all levels of this act, redirected the attention of theorists to the inadequacy of the existing theory.

Any treatment of the national question will be found to deal with either the problem of **national unity** or the problem of **national independence** or with both problems. Most of the works on the subject are concerned with the question of national independence and this itself reflects the peculiarly Eurocentric bias of the work in this field. The implicit or explicit assumption of all work on the national question is that nations are the mode of existence of virtually all capitalist and socialist social formations. They are the 'mould' within which the classes that constitute the modern social formations conduct their lives and their affairs (2). Even opponents of nationalism do not deny that internationalism is predicated upon the existence of nations. The formal recognition and climax of this thesis is the existence of the United Nations Organisation, in which both capitalist and socialist states are represented. However, it seems decidedly questionable whether one can go as far as Regis Debray who sees the nation as a kind of eternal in-group that is vital for the continued existence of the human species (3). There is also no inherent contradiction between the postulate that nations are the normal mode of existence of capitalist and socialist social formations and the almost universally recognised fact that the nation state is outmoded in terms of the development of the forces of production on a world economic scale. The existence of trans-national companies and political formations such as the European Economic Community indicates how the actual contradictions are (temporarily) resolved.

I shall not discuss in detail here the slippery question of the definition of the nation as I have covered some of this ground elsewhere (as Nosizwe 1979: 165-168). However, it is necessary to state clearly that

The limited scientific value of a general definition is evident not only in the fact that it is incapable of revealing the essence of nations and the laws of their development but also in the fact that it cannot characterise fully

(2) The literature is vast. However, the following works will serve as a point of orientation: Symmons-Symonolewicz 1965; Lemberg 1967; OST-PROBLEME 1967; Davis 1978; Amin 1981; Smith 1983.

(3) It is my belief that we must locate the nation phenomenon within general laws regulating the survival of the human species... (the nation) comes after a historically determined series of other modes of collective existence, from clans, tribes and lineage-systems up to secondary cultural formations, ethnic groupings, peoples and nations. However, the vital point is to see that the proposition that the nation is a transient historical category is true and false at the same time. It is quite true of the nation-state, but this is in turn only one modality of a primary variable belonging to *human nature* — a term which has had a very bad press' (Debray 1977: 28-28).

and in a rigorous scientific manner the multiplicity of forms and the peculiarities of the origins and evolution of nations in all their phases of development, and finally it cannot include all types of nations with their peculiarities under a general concept... (Mnacakanjan 1967: 63).

It is essential to stress this insight, now shared by most students of national movements (see Nosizwe 1979: 165-168) because of the catastrophic consequences of approaching this question when one is armed with nothing more than an egregiously acquired positivistic 'stipulative definition' (Smith 1971: 165-166) of a nation (4). In the context of this paper in which I argue that the building of one nation is not only a possibility but a necessity at this stage for the hegemony of the working class in the South African social formation, i.e. for socialism, it is of the utmost importance to accept that what Eugen Lemberg called 'Risorgimento nationalism' with its insistence on, among other things, the principle of **one language, one nation** (see Lemberg 1967: 320-321), is not a universally valid definition of nationhood despite the ideologues of Afrikaner nationalism and also despite the impeccable Kautskyan-Leninist pedigree of Stalin's famous definition (5) of 'a nation'. On this general theoretical level, my position is reflected in the following comment of Davis (1978: 206):

It is high time that historians, Marxist and otherwise, stop trying to fit Africa into the Procrustean bed of European development. African history has to be studied in its own terms. Nations have appeared in Africa as elsewhere in the world; but the modalities of their development and those of Europeans are different.

Without trying to derive my thesis in detail, I shall maintain the position here that nations develop in the course of the establishment of capitalist relations of production (6). How and where the territorial boundaries of any specific nation are drawn is a purely historical question which cannot be predicted accurately. It is a question that is decided in the course of the class struggle within a given social formation or between different social formations. The leading or mobilising class of the nation necessarily and 'naturally' bases its mobilising activity on the peculiarities of the historical development of the peoples concerned and in this sense every national movement is unique.

The crucial point, however, is that while the nation may mean more or less the same thing at certain times to most of those who constitute it, it more usually does not. Or, to put it differently, because the nation has to be constructed ideologically and politically on the basis of the developing, i.e. also changing capitalist forces and relations of production, each of the antagonistic classes in the social formation, generally speaking, conceives of the nation differently in accordance with its class ideology (7). We have to bear in mind, however, that

the concept of class ideology is not synonymous with the ideological configuration prevailing among the members of a given class at a given time. (Therborn 1982: 54)

(4) Consider the following, written some 30 years ago on the basis of Stalin's definition: 'Today in the Union of South Africa the process of forming two national societies continues, that of the Bantu and of the Anglo-Afrikaner. There are no grounds for assuming that one nation can be formed which would embrace the Bantu, the Coloureds and the Anglo-Afrikaners. The coloureds could not at the present time become a component of the national Bantu group, they do not know the Bantu languages and in language, cultural forms and self-consciousness they tend to identify themselves with the Anglo-Afrikaners. The Indians are a completely separate group' (Potekhin nd: 15).

This fact, indeed, will serve to explain why within the working class there are competing (non-class) ideologies which inform the different conceptions of the nation of South Africa that prevail among the workers (see page 8).

A recent contribution by Benedict Anderson (1985) has helped to clarify this aspect of the study of nationalism very much (8). Anderson's central thesis is that the development and spread in Western Europe of 'print languages' (e.g. high German or standard English) in contradistinction to 'sacred languages' such as Latin and local or regional idiolects in conjunction with the elaboration of capitalist relations of production fundamentally made possible a new kind of 'imagined community' different from previous ones which, in Europe, were mainly religious or dynastic 'communities'. He stresses, however, that though the development of printing and its intimate connection with the invention of 'print languages' is the bridge between the development of capitalism and the origins of modern national consciousness

the concrete formation of contemporary nation-states is by no means isomorphic with the determinate reach of particular print-languages (Anderson 1985: 49).

Although Anderson's book, therefore, goes a long way towards explaining the historical link in Europe between language and nationality, it simultaneously negates the Eurocentrism of most works on the national question which accept without reservation Edward Freeman's dictum that 'language is the badge of nationality'. Indeed, for my thesis, the following insight of Anderson's is an essential precondition:

Language is not an instrument of exclusion: in principle, anyone can learn any language...Print-languages is what invents nationalism, not a particular language per se. The only question-mark standing over languages like Portuguese in Mozambique and English in India is whether the administrative and educational systems, particularly the latter, can generate a politically sufficient diffusion of bilingualism...

In a world in which the national state is the overwhelming norm, all this means that nations can now be imagined without linguistic communality... (Anderson 1985: 122-123)

As I shall show presently, the value of Anderson's contribution lies particularly in the fact that it enables us to concentrate on the nation as an ideological and political construct. In fact, Anderson himself, in what appears to be a quite unintended way, firmly points to the link between the study of the nation or nationalism and the most recent researches in the fields of ideology and semiology, when he maintains that '...from the start the nation was conceived in language, not in blood, and...one could be 'invited into' the imagined community' (Anderson 1985: 133). He proposes to define the nation as 'an imagined political community — and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson 1985: 15) and explains

(5) It is perhaps useful to note that in its properly translated form, Stalin's definition reads as follows: 'A nation is an historically evolved, stable community arising on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture' (quoted in Davis 1978: 71).

(6) Whether or not nations exist prior to the establishment of capitalist relations of production is an interesting historical and methodological question which need not detain us here. For the range of the polemic in this regard, see Amin 1978: 10-12 and Kroker 1966: 20-21.

(7) For a similar approach, see Bourque and Laurin-Frennette 1975.

(8) My attention was directed to this stimulating work by an unpublished and undated essay of Stephen Gelb's entitled 'Some sociological perspectives on race, class and democracy in South Africa'.

that it is **imagined** 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1985: 15).

This is not in fact a very good definition. It smacks of idealism as it stands. In his book, however, it is at all times clear not only that the nation as an imagined community is a social reality to which individuals and groups inside and outside the nation have to respond but even beyond that, that it is an entity embedded in very concrete (capitalist or socialist) relations of production (normally) on a very concrete national territory.

For our purposes, the two most important terms in Anderson's thesis are the words 'imagined' and 'language' because they lead on directly to the examination of how national consciousness or national identity is generated. This examination, as we shall see, is in fact nothing other than the examination of the process of national unification or national unity. And it is at this point that Anderson's work via the findings of semiology becomes important for the study and the solution of the national question in South Africa.

National unity and the creation of national unity

The construction of a discursive order in a particular society is the historical outcome of struggles waged by social forces at crucial moments of contradiction and crisis. According to historical materialism, the decisive aspect of these struggles in class societies is the class struggle, and the resulting discursive order is a class order, articulated with existential- and historical-inclusive discourses (Therborn 1982: 82).

This assertion of Therborn's represents the key to understanding why the class struggle and the struggle for national liberation constitute two moments of one and the same social process in South Africa today, why, in other words, the struggle for national liberation is, from the point of view of the exploited classes, the inescapable political form of the class struggle (9). Stated as simply as possible, we can say that in South Africa because of the peculiar development of capitalism, the analysis of which has now almost become the conventional wisdom (see Alexander 1984), different strata of the working class have been 'subjected and qualified' differently. They have been 'open to' different non-class ideologies with the result that working class ideology has articulated with different existential and historical ideologies (see Therborn 1982:

(9) The whole question of the political and ideological forms in which the class struggle is conducted, though still extremely controversial in detail, has been given finality in practice. There are, quite simply no attested cases of 'pure' class consciousness or of 'pure' class struggles at the political level. Most analysts would agree with the following statement: 'So far, at least, no great modern social revolution, bourgeois or socialist, has ever been made by a unified class subject demanding a completely new social order. Rather, such revolutions have been effected in particular conjunctures when the relations of force have changed in such a way as to undermine the old regime — in other words, through the emergence of economic, political, and ideological contradictions and situations of uneven development, both within the society and in its external relations, disarticulating the previous totality and its system of affirmations and

22-27). Moreover, to quote Therborn again

It is, then, natural — and not an aberration of underdeveloped class consciousness — that class ideologies coexist with inclusive-historical ideologies, constituting the subjects of the contradictory totality of an exploitative mode of production and/or social formation. (Therborn 1982: 27).

Black workers have quite naturally experienced and explained their exploitation not simply in terms of class but also in terms of colour. Indeed, even white workers, especially Afrikaans-speaking whites, have at various times experienced and explained their exploitation in ethnic rather than merely in class terms (10). Because black workers and other black people perceive themselves as being excluded from the imagined community of the 'South African nation', i.e. they see themselves as outcasts, they have through their organised political and cultural vanguards, and in other ways, generated alternative conceptions of this 'South African nation'.

Two crucial points have to be made, however. It has to be noted, firstly, that ruling class domination is not explicable simply in terms of racism or racial ideology. While the latter is integral to the system of racial capitalism in South Africa, it rests upon and reinforces class exploitation which, as in any other capitalist social formation, is the source of surplus value and capital accumulation. Hence, the struggle against racial discrimination cannot be unhooked from the struggle against capitalist exploitation. It is simply a fallacy to claim that in South Africa, the black workers are faced with two autonomous but intersecting systems of domination, viz., a system of 'racial domination' and a system of 'class domination'. However valid it might be for specific analytical purposes to distinguish between the 'racial' and the 'class' elements that constitute the system of racial capitalism, it is impossible to transfer such a dichotomy on to the social reality in political and ideological practice, except in terms of, or for the purposes of, ruling-class mystification of that reality.

The second point to note is that from within the working class and other black strata different conceptions of the South African nation have arisen. There is no single conception that corresponds *a priori* to working class ideology. This insight is vital for the understanding of the complexity of the national question (11). What happens in practice is that the workers, like other class agents, are

sanctions. They have been consciously made when various forces, with different immediate demands pertaining to the conjuncture, have come together. The social-revolutionary import of these demands — bread, peace, land, independence, popular representative government, an end to repression — has stemmed from a constellation of clashing class forces and their organised expressions, through which certain historical social alternatives are ruled out and others opened up...The possibilities for revolutionary change should be derived from the likelihood of economic and political crisis, and from the existence of materially organised alternatives, rather than from the state of mind of a class' (Therborn 1982: 110-111). Of course, Therborn is careful to stress that class consciousness is important since the level of such consciousness and organisation will determine the degree of preparedness of the revolutionary class(es) for post-revolutionary reconstruction (see Therborn 1982: 111-112).

(10) A recent study of how the Afrikaner workers were 'recruited' into the Afrikaner nationalist movement, that draws upon some of the insights of Louis Althusser is O'Meara 1983. See especially his introductory chapter.

(11) See Therborn 1982: 71. 'Class ideologies, like class politics do not 'represent' anything other than themselves, such as 'class interests'. Indeed, the notion of 'representation' is part of the utilitarian heritage in Marxism, which should be definitely discarded.'

confronted with a range of actual and possible identities (generalised subjectivities or subject positions) from which they select those which they consider appropriate to their situation. Which of these identities will be selected is a question of practical politics, i.e. of mobilising the revolutionary classes by demonstrating to them the most effective and, from the point of view of eliminating exploitation and oppression, the most appropriate strategy (12). Of course, this choice is not arbitrary even though we may be unable to predict accurately which choices will be made by the individual or by groups of people. The choice is always materially determined, since every ideology necessarily operates through affirmations and sanctions within a material matrix.

If every ideology operates within a matrix of affirmations and sanctions, then the competition, coexistence or conflict of different ideologies is dependent on the non-discursive matrices. The power of a given ideology in relation to others is determined by its pertinent affirmations and sanctions (Therborn 1982: 34-35).

Class and nation

In another context (Nosizwe 1979: 42-61; 95-131; 172-181), I have discussed very inadequately the ways in which different conceptions of the nation of South Africa relate to the question of the emancipation of the working class. It is none the less sufficient for our purposes here to summarise the different positions briefly. Before I do so, it is necessary to undertake a slight digression in order to head off another argument which bedevils discussion of the national question. I refer to the view that nationalism and nation building are attitudes or activities which are peculiar to the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie. The working class, it is often held, is 'inherently' internationalist and anti-nationality. As such, it is held to be completely fantastic and, of course, reactionary, to claim that the working class can lead a struggle for national liberation (13).

This essentially Menshevik argument has been refuted over and over again in historical practice, the most notable examples being the cases of People's China and Viet Nam.

(12) Compare Hudson's very relevant comments regarding Pecheux's notion of the 'interdiscourse'. 'It is the interdiscourse, then, which defines the available range of subject-positions in a society into which individuals are 'interpellated'. A concrete individual will then be interpellated into a number of distinct subject-positions throughout his personal history and the overall unity of these distinct subject-positions is determined by the state of the class struggle and is not guaranteed by any original or primary unity attached to the subject form in general' (Hudson 1984: 8).

(13) Usually, those who argue this way try to gain respectability for their argument by (mis)quoting the *Communist Manifesto* and by referring to numerous passages in Lenin's writings on the national question. The lines in question in the *Manifesto* read as follows: 'The working men have no country. We cannot take from them what they have not got' (Marx and Engels 1970: 51). As is well known, however, the authors go on to state that 'Since the proletariat must first acquire political supremacy, must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation, it is, so far, itself national, though not in the bourgeois sense of the word'. Also see Bourque and Laurin-Frenette 1975: 189. To the extent that Lenin was concerned mainly with the history of European nations, it is not surprising that he considered the formation of nations to be largely the work of the bourgeoisie. In any case, arguments from authority are not valid and need only be heeded in so far as they reflect or confirm concrete experience and practice.

Ever since the collapse of the Second International at the outbreak of World War I, the question of the internationalist instincts of the working class has preoccupied historical materialist analyses of concrete struggles. In the light of the experience of workers' and national liberation struggles in the 20th century, few students of this question would disagree with the view that

It is now clear that no dogmatic statement can be made about which social class is the 'natural' leader of a nationalist movement. Stalin's statement, referring to the period before World War I, that 'the national question is in its essence a bourgeois one', has been attacked even in the Soviet Union, where K. Ivanov has denied that this part of Stalin's essay was inspired by Lenin... (Davis 1978: 77).

It can be stated clearly, therefore, that in historical practice in the 20th century, working class movements and their organisations in different countries have in fact led struggles for national liberation and national re-unification and, *ipso facto*, taken the lead in building or consolidating the particular nations in their national states. Of course, this does not imply that Marxists or socialists are or should be nationalists in any chauvinistic or exclusivist sense. The point is simply that the working class starts from a national perspective rather than an internationalist one. It is precisely the task of class-conscious 'vanguardist' elements to assist in the transformation of the consciousness of the working class in order that it transcend the national sphere and encompass the entire class on an international plane (14). It remains true, despite surprisingly deprecatory inferences drawn by serious students of the question (15), that the workers of the world are structurally more equipped than any other class to overcome the abysses of nationality and national chauvinism.

In South Africa, too, the task of building the nation has devolved on the shoulders of the black working class. As in other colonial and post-colonial formations, in South Africa, too, the original colonial administrative unit has 'created meaning' (see Anderson 1985: 55; 105) for all the inhabitants, who have been linked in one degree or another through the mechanism of the market. The national question in South Africa consists in the task of unifying the nation (16) and extending equal rights to all who constitute it. In order to mobilise the revolutionary classes, i.e., the black working class and the radical sections of the urban and rural middle classes, the vanguard organisations of the black working class have **necessarily** to project an alternative conception of the South African nation. That this conception of the nation can only be realised in a social formation that is organised along socialist lines is no contradiction, as should be abundantly clear by now but, on the contrary, a guarantee that only the working class can lead this struggle for national liberation to a successful conclusion. The bourgeoisie, which is tied to imperialism, is itself the lodgmaster of national oppression in that its very continuation depends on the denial to

(14) The recent literature on the relationship between class and nation is increasing rapidly. The following references are a useful starting point: Lowy 1976: 98-100; Amin 1981: 30; Purivatra 1979.

(15) 'It is time to drop altogether the idea that the 'international working class' will bring about the revolution. There is no such thing as the international working class. Rather, there are many national working classes. In some countries there is not even a working class at all. In many others the working class, or the bulk of it, is not anti-capitalist or socialist' Davis 1978: 245).

(16) Consider Martin Legassick's laconic comment: 'Marx did... neglect the question of other cleavages in society and their relationship with those of class; it is a question Marxists have tackled thus far inadequately, as 'the national question' (Legassick 1978: 45).

the vast majority of the workers and to other black strata of the democratic rights of citizenship. Far from uniting the nation, as its Jacobin ancestors had done in Europe, the colonial national bourgeoisie evolved and implemented 'elaborate strategies...to divide the working people into ever smaller potentially antagonistic groups' (Alexander 1983: 7). The tricameral fiasco is the latest example of this strategy of divide and rule.

No class, other than the black working class, is capable of bringing about the unity of the nation in the political and cultural-ideological spheres by extending to the entire population of South Africa equal democratic rights. Allow me to quote from my address to the first National Forum:

The middle classes cannot be consistent since their interests are, generally speaking and in their own consciousness, tied to the capitalist system. Hence only the black working class can take the task of completing the democratisation of the country on its shoulders. It alone can unite the oppressed and exploited classes. It has become the leading class in the building of the nation. It has to redefine the nation and abolish the reactionary definitions of the bourgeoisie and of the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. The nation has to be structured by and in the interests of the black working class. But it can only do so by changing the entire system. A non-racial capitalism is impossible in South Africa. The class struggle against racial oppression becomes one struggle under the general command of the black working class and its organisations. Class, colour and nation converge in the national liberation movement. (Alexander 1983: 11).

Views of the nation

In an earlier paper, I wrote that it is necessary to consider which of the prevailing non-class ideological discourses are most likely to promote the objective interests of the working class. In recognition of the complexity of the question and the tentativeness of the study of how ideology articulates with other dimensions of the social formation, I pointed out that

There will be no single incontrovertible answer to this question. It is one which will have to be settled in the cut and thrust of democratic debate and political and ideological practice. It is one which the working class itself, through its own day-to-day experience will set boundaries to. But once we have gained a reasonable measure of clarity on this score, it becomes our task to bring to bear all the scholarship at our command to help to create that universe in which new subjects can be constituted.

(Alexander 1984:22)

The black working class is confronted with any number of variants of four basic views of the South African nation. These have been described schematically in Nosizwe (1979: 58-60). There is, first of all, the present regime's, or rather, the Afrikaner nationalists', view of South Africa as a multi-national state. In this view, South Africa is composed of between ten and twelve 'nations', each of which is entitled to the 'right of self-determination' to the point of 'accepting' a gratuitously proffered 'independence'. Whether in its *verkramp*te or in its *verligte* version, this view of the nation operates centrally with what passes as a scientific appreciation of the importance of 'ethnicity' (17)

(17) J Sharp (1980) has shown the inadequacy and, in many cases, the charlatanism, of this 'science' of *volkekunde*.

and, incidentally, with, in some cases, an unexceptionable 'Risorgimento' definition of the nation! Most pluralist schools of modern liberalism in South Africa operate with a similar ethnic ideology in more flexible, less crude scholarly formulations. (A typical example is Van der Merwe and Schrire 1980).

Among the oppressed classes, only the most reactionary elements of the black middle class, mainly 'tribal chiefs', headmen and some civil servants are systematically open to this ideological subjection. Clearly, numerous semi-proletarians in the reserves, migrant workers on farms and in the mines are either totally or partially subjected by this ideology. In making this point, we need to recall, however, that even in the normal course the 'Xhosa' or 'Malay' or 'Hindu', etc., worker is never a frozen Xhosa, Malay, Hindu, etc., subject. S(he) is at the same time a 'worker', a 'migrant', an 'African' or 'Coloured' or 'Indian', etc., or 'South African', perhaps even an 'Azanian'. One of the effects of successful ideological subjection would in this case be precisely that the person concerned automatically qualifies him/herself always as a Xhosa, Sotho, etc.

In the liberation movement, this particular schema has never had any serious adherents. One curious episode in the 'thirties involving the Communist Party of South Africa, may be noted (see Nosizwe 1979: 50-52). Of course, people like the Woltons and Moses Kotane, who actually put forward the demand for a federation of 'ethnic' soviet republics in Southern Africa, were motivated by the very opposite considerations of those of present-day Afrikaner nationalists or liberal pluralists. However, the incident does serve to underline the potentially disastrous consequences of transplanting a theory (in this case, Stalin's theory of the nation) without further amendment from one set of historical conditions into a totally different one (18). At this same time (the so-called Third Period of the Comintern), a parallel trauma was shattering the Communist Party of the USA where on the recommendation of the Comintern, the demand for a separate 'Negro Soviet Republic' in the black belt was being put forward seriously by some tendencies within the CPUSA (see Gruber 1984).

At present, this particular view of the nation in South Africa is clearly being exploited at the ideological level by the most backward and reactionary sections of the bourgeoisie in order to prosecute the politics of Bantustanisation with all that this entails. It is difficult, but theoretically not impossible, to conceive of changed circumstances in which this ethnic ideology could articulate with working class ideology in such a way as to further the attainment of socialism in South Africa.

The classical liberal position in the national question in South Africa is the so-called four-nations thesis. This view, which clearly reifies the phenomenal aspect of the South African social formation has deep roots among all

(18) For those who are unaware of the history of this period, it may be of interest to know that this slogan was derived from the Comintern. In a letter to the CPSA dating from 1932, the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) counselled the CPSA to unite the 'Native, coloured, white and Asiatic toilers of SA and the protectorates' (on the basis of a programme that included, *inter alia*, the slogans): 'Down with the British and Afrikaner imperialists. Drive out the imperialists. Complete and immediate national independence for the people of South Africa. For the right of the Zulu, Basuto, etc., nations to form their own independent republics. For the voluntary uniting of the African nations in a Federation of Independent Native Republics. The establishment of a workers' and peasants' government. Full guarantee of the rights of all national minorities, for the coloured, Indian and white toiling masses' (ECCI 1983: 14). Also see Omwony-Ojwolo 1978.



1084

layers and classes. It has been, and is, promoted by a spectrum of political tendencies and organisations ranging from the old United Party through the Progressive Party, the Liberal Party to the Congress Alliance and recently even a faction within (?) the Pan-Africanist Congress. Of all the possible discursive systems to which the black working class is exposed, this one has, until very recently, had the greatest resonance.

Three important variants of this view of the nation are identifiable. The basic liberal position, analysed in terms of a 'race relations' framework, was and remains that the four population registration groups that inhabit South Africa are 'races' which should be enabled through sound economic, political and cultural policies to coexist in 'multi-racial harmony' within a single nation state. These 'races' were never considered to be 'nations'. The franchise used to be conceded to all 'civilised', i.e., westernised, pro-capitalist, individuals within the 'South African nation'. Under pressure from the radicalised national movement, the franchise qualifications, at least in the old Liberal Party, were eventually dropped. The long-term strategic aim of the liberal establishment was, and remains, to co-opt significant layers of the black middle class, which had to be nurtured, and moderate elements within the liberation movement. Today, because of the fundamental changes in class structure and political consciousness among the labouring people in South Africa, this largely white liberal, multi-racial position has tended to blur into the more subtle ethnic ideology referred to previously. The theorists who uphold this position analyse South Africa in terms of one or other variant of pluralism.

Within the liberation movement, this position was given its most complete formulation in the writings of Anton Lembede and in the literary publications of the ANC Youth League in the early 'forties (see Nosizwe 1979: 57-8). In 1948, the Youth League declared in its manifesto that

South Africa is a country of four chief nationalities, three of which (the Europeans, Indians and Coloureds) are minorities, and three of which, (the Africans, Coloureds and Indians) suffer national oppression.

(Karis and Carter 1972: 329).

In its most widespread version, this Youth League conception of the South African 'nation' postulated that the 'African' people constitute the nation of South Africa and the other three 'nationalities' constitute 'national minorities' (19). This version eventually found expression in a more ambiguous formulation in point no. 2 of the Freedom Charter (20). Adherents of this view range from those who maintain that the 'national groups' are either actual or potential nations to those who see them as no more than 'ethnic groups' bound together in one historically evolved state. None of the politicians and theoreticians of the four-nations thesis has, except as a logical hypothesis, to my knowledge, ever put forward the right to self-determination (in the Leninist sense) of these four 'national groups' although there is much confusion and uncertainty about whether these national groups are nations or not.

The dilemma was given classical expression by Lionel Forman in a symposium held in the Mowbray Mitra Hall in Cape Town in 1954. In his contribution entitled 'National-

isms in South Africa', Forman, who took Stalin's definition of the nation and Soviet practice in the national question as his point of departure, said, amongst many other extremely interesting and courageous things, that

...if the people struggling are indeed nations, then an important part of our policy must be the demand that these nations have the right to self-determination. If they are not nations, and if they are national groups, aspiring to be nations, then in turn they have the right for the conditions to be created by which they may become nations with the right to self-determination.

This means that it will become part of working class policy to guarantee to those nationalities which have not their own territory that they will be given territory which they will be able to administer autonomously, in which their own language will be one of the official languages and in which their national cultures may flourish...

Which of South Africa's peoples are nations? I would not like to say. Possibly there are several communities in South Africa which are full-fledged nations.

But I think the majority of communities which have common language and psychology in South Africa are not full nations, but national groups. That is, I think they are aspirant nations, lacking their own territory, and economic cohesion, but aspiring to achieve these.

Because of incisive criticism of his thesis in the subsequent discussion, Forman added that his view did not imply

that one is not in favour of the obvious end aim — one single, united South African nation...But the only correct path towards a single South African nation is through the creation of conditions by which the different national cultures in South Africa may first flower, and then merge... (He conceded that the demand for national self-determination) does not imply that this is an urgent immediate issue facing us today. While I think that the time will surely come when it will be a correct and popular demand...it would not yet be correct to put forward as a major demand the right to self-determination. (Forman 1954) (21).

Bearing in mind that these words were spoken in 1954, when the Nats were implementing their Bantustanisation policies, and that these views were widely held by people in Congress and Communist Party circles, the relevance of my warning to the first National Forum is manifest:

The danger in this kind of talk is quite simply that it makes room in both theory and practice for the preaching of ethnic separatism... 'Ethnic' or 'national group' approaches are the thin edge of the wedge for separatist movements and civil wars fanned by great-power interests and suppliers of arms to opportunist 'ethnic leaders'. (Alexander 1983: 9).

Of course, it can be argued that this is not necessarily the case, and I would readily concede the point. This is, however, the essence of the debate within the liberation movement, a debate that is determined and accompanied by actual, non-discursive, practices among the working masses. What is clear, however, is that no person should blithely broadcast such views without having some notion of the implications thereof. It may well be that the propon-

(19) See Turok nd:6.

(20) *All National Groups Shall Have Equal Rights*. There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races; All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride; All people shall have equal rights to use their own language and to develop their folk culture and customs; The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime; All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

(21) A recent attempt to deny that the four-nations thesis bears this kind of interpretation and which put down all such allegations to 'mischief-making' seems to be an inept attempt to falsify history or is the result of a lack of information (see Anonymous 1984:11). Echoes of Forman's dilemma resound across the decades in Congress-CP debates and writings. By way of example: 'Africans have always retained an awareness of a separate historically constituted 'national' identity. Perhaps nationality would be more accurate. At any rate 'nation' here is not to be read as 'nation state' ' (Turok 1983).

ents of the four-nations thesis differ from other progressives in their strategic and tactical approaches to the national question and that their strategy and tactics negate the theory on which it is allegedly based. This is a question that only historical practice will decide.

Although these views were held mainly by activists in Congress and Communist Party circles, earlier 'Trotskyist' and Unity Movement writers on the subject held similar, if less clear-cut, views on this question (see Nosizwe 1979: 111-112). Debate on the issue has continued in the Communist Party particularly (see Nosizwe 1979: 100-111). More interesting is the fact that a certain section from within the Pan-Africanist Congress has, via a Maoist path, come to identify itself with an amended version of the old ECCI position of colonialism of a special type and ended up accepting what is theoretically the same position as that of the South African Communist Party, despite bitter attacks on the supposedly 'opportunist' tactics of that party (see Nosizwe 1979: 120-121). A recent formulation of this position, clearly mindful of the development of the black consciousness movement and ideology since 1969, has it that

While the African people are the pivot of the new nation their main allies are the so-called Coloureds and the Indian people. They form one bloc with the African peoples, take the latter's Africanist aspirations as their own, regard themselves as Africans living in an African country, identify with the history of the African people as their own... (TLHATSI 1983: 2).

It is the right of the African people to self-determination that is the heart of the national question. This struggle for self-determination is something the other Black national groups identify with as part of their own liberation. (TLHATSI 1983: 3).

The ironies of history are indeed profound! (See note 4 below).

Another variant of the colonialism of a special type thesis is that associated mainly with the Black-consciousness and PAC tendencies. This represents a third view of the nation that is available to the black workers. In this view, there are two nations in South Africa, an oppressing white and an oppressed black nation, sometimes referred to as a 'black nationality' (as in Tsotsi 1982) (see Nosizwe 1979: 121-125). There is no need to go into any detailed discussion on this position on which much has been written, both pro and contra. It is noteworthy, however, that the exponents of the black-consciousness position have tended to conflate 'race' and 'class' to the point that in some version all whites are projected as capitalists while all blacks are seen as workers.

Classes are inherent in all capitalist societies. In any industrial and capitalist society we have those who own or those who manage the productive processes on behalf of the owners on the one hand and, on the other hand, those who do not. In fact the workers, blacks, are the most ruthlessly exploited in South Africa for they are the dispossessed; they do not own land, they do not own any means of production, they do not wield any meaningful and significant power...

...The fact that one, as a member of the black race, is deprived of meaningful political power does not make him a member of the white group (sic) which wields both political and economic power. Whites en masse are the perpetrators of this exploitative status quo. (Mthembu 1982: 163).

A distinctive aspect of this 'two-nations' thesis is that it, not unlike some variants of the four-nations thesis, holds that the struggle for national liberation will eventuate in one (socialist, Azanian) nation. The oppressing white nation, it is to be supposed, will disintegrate, in that very

many whites will refuse to live in a free Azania and will emigrate to more racially congenial climates. Those who remain will identify themselves with the Azanian nation and cease to belong to the white 'nation'. Consequently, the proponents of the two-nations view see no contradiction between it and the now universally known slogan of One Azania, One Nation! This slogan, clearly, represents a political programme of national liberation involving in some interpretations the leadership and emancipation of the black working class. The tactical-strategic inference often drawn from, or justified by, this theory of the nation that individuals classified as white cannot participate in the organisations of the black people, i.e., that identification by individual whites with the Azanian nation is only possible after liberation, is a point of dispute within the liberation movement. At bottom, it would seem that there is a certain metaphysical assumption about the ways in which oppression and exploitation qualify those who suffer these phenomena. It seems to be assumed that whites in South Africa, because they are not oppressed, cannot identify at certain unspecifiable deep psychic levels with the oppressed and with their struggle.

However that may be, there is no doubt that among the exploited and oppressed, this view of the nation has become extremely resonant. Indeed, during the late 'sixties and all of the 'seventies, it was unquestionably the dominant view among black activists. So much so, in fact, that even adherents of the four-nations view began to consider tentatively that this may well be the way in which the liberation struggle and capitalist development were sharing the people of South Africa. Since the theory is generically the same as the colonialism-of-a-special-type theory (22), which holds, amongst other things, that 'Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself', it is not a very large jump to make. Consider the following:

The great disadvantage of the one-nation thesis is, then, that it obscures the colonial nature of our society and in consequence the national character of our liberation struggle. It is this flaw that the two nations thesis is deliberately designed to counter... This view holds essentially that South Africa is a colonial situation of a special type in which two nations, an oppressing nation and an oppressed nation, live side by side within the same territory... (Molapo 1977).

Both the tentativeness of this position and the **mortmain** of Stalin's theory of the nation become evident in the torturous qualifications which Molapo hangs on to his thesis.

The two nations thesis is, in my view, the correct one, but it is not always clear what is meant by 'nation' in this context. Both the oppressing nation and the oppressed nation fail to meet the general conditions stipulated by Stalin's classical definition of the nation... It may be that it is preferable to reserve the term 'nation' as such for a fully developed national community that satisfies all four components (of Stalin's definition) rather than for a community that is advancing along the lines of national organisation. In this case the two nations thesis in South Africa while designating the general character of the class struggle in South Africa needs slight adjustment, for neither of the nations is complete in the fullest sense. (Molapo 1977).

The fundamental problem with the two-nations thesis and with any other many-nations thesis in the South African context is that it holds within it the twin dangers of anti-white black chauvinism and ethnic separatism. It may

(22) Gelb (nd) has challenged the theory of internal colonialism along a broad front. Its specific implications for theory and practice in the national question have been outlined in Nosizwe 1979: 105-111.

not be possible with the ideology of a single nation to tap all those currents in the South African social formation which are systematically opposed to such divisive ideologies and thus to avoid completely the danger of petty bourgeois controlled movements based on anti-white chauvinism or ethnic separatism. To the extent, however, that the revolutionary classes in South Africa accept that they are part and parcel of a single nation, the liberation struggle becomes ideologically insulated against these dangers. It seems to me to be the merest wrongheadedness on the part of progressive people to deny that this is so. Of course, believing in something is no guarantee that it will happen. The objective basis for the realisation of the idea has to exist, otherwise it remains no more than a dream and an illusion. In a number of previous attempts (see Alexander 1983; Alexander 1984; Nosizwe 1979 *passim*), I have tried to demonstrate both the feasibility and the superiority from the point of view of a socialist or working class project in South Africa of the one-nation thesis. In doing so, I have tried to reconcile the theoretical implications of this view with the view that the struggle in this country is one for national liberation at the same time as it is a struggle for class emancipation.

The position of this fourth view of the nation can be put concisely and summarily. Its antecedents, particularly in the Unity Movement and in the Pan-Africanist Congress, have been dealt with in some detail in Nosizwe (1979: 111-120). According to this view, the people of South Africa are being moulded into one unified nation by the twin forces of capitalist development and the class struggle resulting from it. The national bourgeoisie, for reasons of capitalist accumulation, in effect aborted the nation in 1910 by fragmenting and freezing the population into four 'races' and a number of 'tribal' or 'ethnic' groups. As long as primary, especially extractive, industry was the dominant sector of the South African economy, or as long as the development of a large and diversified domestic market for the products of secondary industry and for tertiary services did not exist, this system produced the superprofits that justified it. In the course of the ensuing class struggles, and especially after 1945, the black workers gradually became the decisive force that will determine the direction of the entire system of racial capitalism. The oppression of the totality of the black people, which is one of the main features of the system, is akin to colonial oppression in a number of respects. It is national oppression in the sense that the vast majority of the people are denied the rights and privileges of nationhood, i.e., democratic rights, purely on the basis of the colour of their skins.

Because of the peculiarities of capitalist development in South Africa, the only way in which racial discrimination and racial inequality, i.e., national oppression, can be abolished is through the abolition of the capitalist structures themselves. The only class, however, which can bring into being such a (socialist) system is the black working class. On it, by virtue of its unique historical position, devolves the task of mobilising all the oppressed and exploited classes for the abolition of the system of racial capitalism. In doing so, it has to unite the workers and their allies by undermining the divisive factors which have as a matter of policy been retained and invented by different ruling class governments in order to disorganise the South African proletariat. Beyond that, the working class has to devise counter-hegemonic strategies and practices which prepare the ground, in fact will constitute the ground, upon which the Azanian nation will stand.

Although it is a secondary question, we have to add to this analysis the fact that the physical and political reintegration of the so-called independent homelands consti-

tutes another aspect of the solution of the national question. National unification and national reunification are part and parcel of the same process of national liberation. In this view, the workers of South Africa are exercising the right of self-determination by rejecting, in concrete mass struggles as much as in the programmes of their political organisations, the partition and balkanisation of our country.

Constructing the Azanian nation

The positive historical task of the black workers in solving the national question in South Africa is the construction of the (socialist) nation of Azania. This construction takes place in all the dimensions of the social formation, i.e., economically, politically and ideologically.

Although certain economic forms and structures relevant to a South Africa free of exploitation and oppression are emerging out of the present struggle, it is in the nature of the process of liberation that the political and ideological construction of the new nation precedes its socio-economic realisation. Indeed, such politico-ideological construction is an inescapable precondition for the formal realisation of the nation both as having new socio-economic content and as a juridical entity, i.e., as a new state. Gelb (nd:10) has drawn the correct inference from Anderson's work that

...nationalist struggle involves a process of ideological construction of this different nation, rather than simply reflecting a pre-given nation.

Besides the many ways in which the workers in struggle construct the new nation — and it has to be emphasised that this is the ground on which everything else rests, without which all other efforts by individuals and organisations would be mere voluntarism — specific tasks fall to the 'organic intellectuals' of the working class in systematising the discourse in which this struggle is conducted (see Alexander 1984: 2-4; and see O'Meara 1983: 15 for the useful distinction, derived from Gramsci between 'Literary' and 'Popular' forms of an ideology).

One of the ways in which organic intellectuals can use their access to scientific or scholarly skills is precisely by assisting the class in which they are rooted to fashion an oppositional or, more accurately, a counter-hegemonic ideology. This they do by, amongst other things, careful attention to the language which is inserted into and generalised in the political programmes and actions of the organisations of their class. The importance of this scholarly activity derives from the fact that it is in and through language that the individual is constituted as a subject. (Alexander 1984: 15).

lest I be accused of generating an elitist notion of the role of intellectuals in the process of liberation, I hasten to add that the process of ideological production is not a unidirectional one in which intellectuals fill the empty minds of proletarians or of other class agents with a symbolical instrumentarium appropriate to their 'class interests'. It is a 'complex two-way process of learning and unlearning' (Therborn 1982: 73). Therborn, indeed, reminds us that significant ideological mobilisations do not

seem to owe much to the correctness or conjunctural adequacy of elaborate programmes or grand theories. The key figures in processes of ideological mobilisation

are not theoreticians and writers of books, but orators, preachers, journalists, pamphleteers, politicians, and initiators of bold practical action. (Therborn 1982: 119).

I have stressed elsewhere (see Alexander 1984) that one of the main tasks of the organic intellectuals of the working class in South Africa today is to counteract the reification of concepts such as 'race' and 'ethnic group' which are clearly being promoted by traditional intellectuals and by organic intellectuals of the ruling class to facilitate the perpetuation of the domination and subjugation of the exploited and oppressed classes.

By accepting, for example, the reality of entities such as 'ethnic groups' as part of what has been called the Cartesian Order 'which is suitable for analysis of the world into separately existing parts...', we deprive ourselves a priori of the possibility of probing alternative, possibly more constructive discourses. For by doing so we reinforce the ethnic stabilisation or freezing of our audience through our ideological productions (Alexander 1984: 21).

To put it differently: it is necessary for the organic intellectuals of the working class to undertake a process of deconstruction of existing ideological discourses to which the black workers are subject, by 'analysing the process and conditions of (their) construction out of the available discourses' (see Belsey 1985: 103-124 on 'Deconstructing the text'). An excellent example of this process is O'Meara's *Volkskapitalisme* where, using the example of Afrikaner nationalism, he demonstrates 'why and under what conditions...differentiated collectivities of people come to be organised in terms of one ideology rather than another...' and in doing so, he successfully attacks Adam and Gilio-mee for failing to explain this in their work on Afrikaner nationalism because they use 'the highly circular concept of 'ethnic mobilisation' in which a priori 'ethnically organ-

ised groups' compete with each other for scarce resources' (O'Meara 1983: 8).

Much of what is possible and what has to be done, I have already dealt with elsewhere (see Alexander 1985). What has to be stressed, however, is the vital political and social importance of creating a new discourse, the urgent need to realise that language is much more than a passive reflection of a pre-existent, autonomous reality, that, indeed, the language we use, by virtue of the fact that it is the medium through which the historical subject is constructed, helps to construct the reality within which we act and to which we react. While we have to guard against all idealist temptations and test everything we do against the non-discursive practices and possibilities of the working class, we need to realise that attention to this formative role of language is the province par excellence of the organic intellectual.

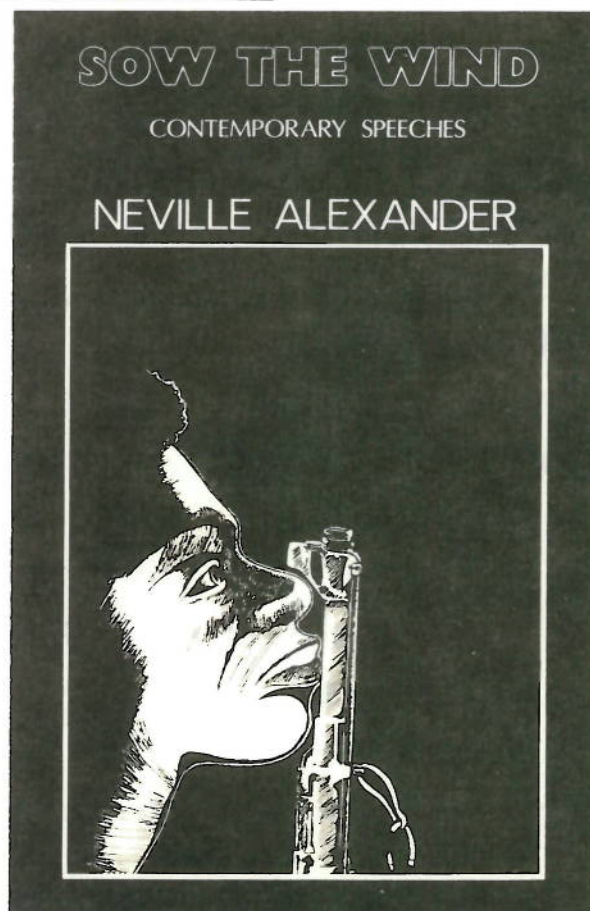
How to let a combination of word and deed render irrelevant possible ethnic identities and existing ethnic consciousnesses and subsume them under a larger national consciousness without destroying the rich cultural diversity of the people of South Africa: that is the stuff of politics, especially of cultural politics today; this is one of the major points of dispute on the national question between different political tendencies. How, further, to prevent national consciousness from being transformed into an exclusivist or sectional-communal consciousness that will undermine the struggle for a South Africa free of exploitation and oppression, i.e., for a socialist Azania: this is the other side of the national question in South Africa. Both sides of the question are answered positively only if the leadership of the working class in the national liberation struggle is ensured. This practical side of the national question requires another paper, one which I hope this paper and others I and other essayists have written previously will help to make possible. For activists in the national liberation movement, such a paper is a dire necessity.

(23) The internal quote is from D Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, p.xiv.

SOW THE WIND

*Collected
Speeches
of
Neville
Alexander*

available from
Skotaville Printers
414 Hampstead House
46 Biccard Street
P.O.Box 3283
Braamfontein 2017
SOUTH AFRICA



List of publications cited.

- Alexander N. 1983. 'Nation and ethnicity'. *Work in Progress* 28. (August) 6-13.
- Alexander N. 1984. 'Race, ethnicity and nationalism in social science in Southern Africa'. (Paper delivered at the fifteenth annual congress of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, on 3 July 1984). (Unpublished mimeo).
- Alexander N. 1985. *Sow the Wind*, Johannesburg, Skotaville Publishers.
- Amin S. 1978. *The Arab Nation. Nationalism and Class Struggles*. London: Zed Press.
- Amin S. 1981. *Class and Nation*. London: Heineman.
- Anderson B. 1985. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Anonymous 1984. 'Some notes on the call for a national convention'. *SOCIAL REVIEW*, October (26/27) 6-12.
- Belsey C. 1980. *Critical Practice*. London and New York: Methuen.
- Bourque G and Laurin-Frenette N. 1975. 'Social Classes and nationalist ideologies in Quebec, 1760-1970'. G. Teeple (ed), *Capitalism and the National Question in Canada*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.
- Davis H 1978. *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism*. New York and London: Monthly Review Press.
- Debray R. 1977. 'Marxism and the national question'. *New Left Review* 105.
- ECCI (Executive Committee of the Communist International) 1983. 'Letter of the Comintern to the Communist Party of South Africa - 1932'. *TLHATSI* 22 (October) 12-16.
- Gelb S. nd. 'Some sociological perspectives on race, class and democracy in South Africa'. (Unpublished mimeo).
- Gruber H. 1984. 'The comintern and the negro question'. (Paper delivered at the Internationale Tagung der Historiker der Arbeiterbewegung. 20 Linzer Konferenz 11-15.ix.1984) (Unpublished mimeo).
- Hudson P. 1984. 'Some problems and advances in the theory of class struggle'. (Unpublished mimeo).
- Karis T and Carter G. 1972. *From Protest to Challenge: A Documentary History of African Politics in South Africa 1882-1964. Vol 2. Hope and Challenge, 1935-1952*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institute Press.
- Kroker W. 1966. 'Zur Diskussion uber den Nationsbegriff in der SBZ'. *Deutsche Studien* 4 (13) 10-24.
- Legassick M. 1971. 'The concept of pluralism: A critique'. Gutkind P and Waterman P (eds), *African Social Studies. A Radical Reader*. London: Heineman 1977.
- Lemberg E. 1967. 'Nationalismus. Definitionen, Tendenzen, Theorien'. *Moderne Welt* (viii)
- Lowy M. 1976. 'Marxists and the national question'. *New Left Review* 96 (March-April) 83-100.
- Marx K and Engels F 1970. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Mnacakanjan M. 1967. 'Keine Nation ohne 'nationale Staatlichkeit''. *Ost-Probleme* 19 (2) 60-63.
- Molapo B. 1976. 'On the national question'. *THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST* 66 (3rd Quarter) 82-93.
- Mfhembu K. 1982. 'One people in one Azania'. *PACE* (September) 162-163.
- Nosizwe 1979. *One Azania, One Nation. The National Question in South Africa*. London: Zed Press.
- O'Meara D. 1983. *Volkskapitalisme. Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press.
- Omwony-Ojwolo 1978. 'The national question and revolution in South Africa'. *Dar-es-Salaam*, 5-8 May 1978. (Unpublished mimeo).
- OST-PROBLEME 1967. 'Um den Begriff der Nation'. *Ost-Probleme* 19 (2) 45-63.
- Potehkin I. nd. 'Extract from The Formation of the South African Bantu into a National Community'. (Mimeo).
- Purivatra A. 1979. 'Tito's Beitrag zur Theorie und Praxis der Nationalfrage'. *Sozialistische Theorie und Praxis* 6(2) 62-84.
- Sharp J. 1980. 'Can we study ethnicity? A critique of fields of study in South African anthropology'. *Social Dynamics* 6(1) 1-16.
- Smith A. 1971. *Theories of Nationalism*. London: Duckworth.
- Smith A. 1983. *State and Nation in the Third World. The Western State and African Nationalism*. Brighton, Sussex, Wheatsheaf Books Ltd.
- Symmons-Syonolewicz K. 1965. 'Nationalist movements: An attempt at a comparative typology'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (vii) 221-250.
- Therborn G 1982. *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*. London: Verso.
- TLHATSI 1983 (Party Journal of Azanian Marxist Leninists). 'General statement of aims, views and objectives. Introduction and some notes on the national question'. *TLHATSI* 22 (October) 2-7.
- Tsotsi B. 1982. 'On the national question'. *Solidarity* (9).
- Turok B. nd. 'Class structure and national ideology in South Africa' (Unpublished mimeo).
- Turok B. 1983. 'Black consciousness is not false consciousness'. Extract from B. Turok, *Strategic Problems in South Africa's Liberation Struggle. A Critical Analysis* (1974), published in *Azania Frontline* 3 (August) 8-9.
- Van der Merwe H and Schrire R. 1980. *Race and Ethnicity. South African and International Perspectives*. Cape Town and London: David Philip.

AZANIA WORKER

Contents of back numbers

AW Vol. I No. 1 (1983) Price 90p.

Prospects of Trade Union Unity	Roseinnes Phahle
Revolution in the Caribbean	Caro Bivanho
Trade Unions and the Struggle	Dora Katzis
History of the ICU.	Sipho Buthelezi

AW Vol. I No. 2/3 (1984) Price £1.20.

Background to the Nkomati Accords.	J. Pearse, N. Dollie and N. Alexander
--	--

**Mozambique's Rapprochement with
South Africa.**

Jo Hendrickse

Gold, South Africa and Imperialism

Geoff Morris

Democracy and Revolution

Nimrod Nkoto

What is UDF and Where is it Going?

SA exiles in Europe

UDF, Colour and the Split in MWASA.

Roseinnes Phahle

Cape of No Hope (Book Review)

V.A. February

AW Vol. 2 No. 1. (1985). Price 90p.

Alliances (author unnamed)

After the August Elections (author unnamed)

Struggles in Education (author unnamed)

Changing Class Relationships Enver Mohamed

After Kennedy "Dambisa"

Open Letter to Archbishop Hurley Buti Tlhagale et al

AW Vol. 2 No. 2 (1985). Special Edition

An Approach to the National Question in South Africa

Neville Alexander

**Any of the above copies available on order from AW, BM Box
4863, London WC1N 3XX.**

SUBSCRIBE

AZANIA FRONTLINE

For an update of news and statements of liberation organisations and trade unions inside South Africa.

Rates for six issues:

Individuals:	UK £3.50
	Overseas £7.00
Institutions:	UK £6.00
	Overseas £9.00

All subscriptions to be paid in sterling to: Azania Frontline, BM Box 4863, London WC1N 3XX.

AZANIA WORKER

Subscription rates to be paid in sterling. Three issues per year:

UK and Eire:	(individuals) £4.00
	(Institutions) £6.00
Europe	(individuals) £4.50
	(Institutions) £7.00
Rest of the World	(individuals) £7.50
	(Institutions) £10.00

Send your subscription to: Azania Worker, BM Box 4863, London WC1N 3XX.