ONE, TWO OR MANY?
ASPECTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN DEBATE
ON THE CONCEPT OF NATION

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South Africa
I express my deep gratitude

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for enabling me to do this research
What is the South African nation - or nations? Who constitutes it - or them, and what are their characteristics? If there are two nations, or several, how are they defined? What are different nations or components of one nation called? Are they tribes? Ethnic groups or nationalities? Cultural and linguistic groups?

Not only have these questions provoked heated debate over decades, they also gave rise to political differences and splits in the movement against racism and apartheid. No wonder. All parties involved in the debate had little doubt that its outcome would define South Africa’s future. The nature of apartheid theorising and volkekunde writing on ethnicity politicised what could be a purely academic subject. The way ‘the nation’ was understood in different political quarters defined their political stand. Moreover, for fighters against successive racist regimes the definition of nation was tantamount to the definition of their place in the struggle.

Lionel Forman, treason trialist, communist, journalist and academic, wrote in 1954: ‘Why worry about what [a] nation is, anyway?... [It] may seem to be academic theorising... But it was nothing of the sort. It arose out of the urgent needs of the moment - the revolutionary national feeling of the oppressed people and the need to put forward a correct policy to gain the confidence of the people and direct the struggle towards the winning of freedom... Because of this... profoundly revolutionary national feeling in South Africa we must set about, without delay, in taking the foundation which has been laid and building on it principles to guide our own demands on the national question’.

Debate on the concept of nation was connected with struggle from the beginning, when this debate was introduced into South African ideological polemics by Marxists. The struggle around the Comintern slogan of an independent Native Republic in the late twenties, polemics on the nature of the South African nation in the periodical Advance in the 1950s, the Kliptown Charter and the formation of the PAC, the Unity Movement and the Black Consciousness ideas - all these contributed to an ongoing theoretical debate on the nature of the South African nation.

The debate was no less about discovering ‘the truth’, than about presenting one’s ideological stand. The ‘correct’ definition depended entirely on one’s political agenda. Besides, the issue had become too politically sensitive. That is why, I think, few academics took part in this debate, with the exception of those who were deeply politically involved, like Lionel Forman and Neville Alexander on the one hand and representatives of volkekunde on the other.

It seems that given the new political situation in South Africa reality rather than theory, will define the future, and that policy will depend not so much on principles, as on what this policy would deliver. Yet, much is still at stake,
when it comes to definitions of the nation. What really matters is not theories per se, but the way in which they are perceived by society. They reflect contemporary mass perceptions of the issues concerned, and at the same time constitute an important element in fermenting mass perceptions of future generations.

What South African politicians preach about South African nationhood contains an important message for society, well worth studying. It is in this context, and not to take theoretical debate any further, that this paper was written.

1994 seems a convenient landmark for an analysis of concepts of nationhood in South Africa. From that year former fighters against apartheid will have to verify their concepts of the nation against the actual practice of nation-building. The new situation will influence political thinking in future, and it is important to look back at this point.

I am aware of two authors who wrote on this subject: Neville Alexander and Johan Degenaar. However important, their writings do not exhaust the topic.

I have tried to concentrate on the recent period, although the absence, scarcity and/or evasive content of recent documentation sometimes compelled the use of earlier material. This paper is largely based on official texts: documents of political parties and writings and speeches of political leaders. Some of these materials are common knowledge, others are unique.

I was fortunate to be able to interview several politicians closely involved either in formulating or implementing different theories of nation in South Africa: Neville Alexander, Rowley Arenstein, Colin Eglin, Bantu Holomisa, Ziba Jiyane, Wally Serote, Joe Slovo and Mohammed Vally Moosa.

I have limited the scope of this paper to what were perceived as essentially Black parties or opinion shapers for purely technical reasons of space and timing. I hope that I shall be able to fill in this gap in future.

‘One Azania, One Nation’

Neville Alexander, academic and politician, is the most prolific among these left politicians, who wrote on nationhood and ethnicity. If everything he wrote derives from his role as a politician, then one would have to draw the conclusion that organisations with which he associated made the study of nationality problems the key issue of their programmes. There is little to suggest that this is really the case.
The 1983 National Forum Manifesto, for example, reflected Alexander's ideas, but its conclusions were no more profound than those of any other South African political party. There was no definition of a South African nation, which was central to Alexander’s concept. The document stressed the role of ‘the Black working class’, which, ‘is the driving force of... struggle for self-determination in a unitary Azania’. The organisation pledged the 'the re-integration of the bantustan human dumping grounds into a unitary Azania’, ‘the development of one national culture inspired by socialist values’, but did not go any further.  

The Resolutions of the 1991 Conference of the New Unity Movement stated that, among other matters, violence in South Africa could be terminated only through ‘the building of a single nation’.

It would be wrong, however, to dismiss Alexander’s analysis as a purely academic exercise. His ideas represent more than just a National Forum mentality or that of the Workers’ Organisation for Socialist Action. They were popular in a wide range of anti-apartheid organisations.

It is not by chance that in the special edition of BCM(A)’s Azania Worker on the national question in South Africa there was only one contribution - by Neville Alexander. It is not by chance that Alexander’s speech ‘Nation and Ethnicity in South Africa’, delivered at the National Forum Conference in 1983, was reproduced in Work in Progress and in South African Outlook. It is also not by chance that many aspects of later political publications were reminiscent of Alexander’s ideas.

Alexander thought ‘that it is impossible to give a definition valid for all time and place of what nation is’ and that ‘all that the theorist can do is to define what the nation is in a given historical context’.

As far as the South African nation was concerned, Alexander stated that it consisted ‘of all the people, who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. It involves a determined and uncompromising struggle against all attempts to divide the population on the basis of language, religion, tribe or caste. It is based on the realisation that the colour-caste consciousness of the oppressed is a vanishing thing which is replaced pari passu by a growth in workers' consciousness and working-class unity. It proposes the solution of the national question by means of the application of consistent democracy in every sphere, by the legal equality of all the languages’.

This definition differed from the one offered by the Non-European Unity Movement in 1951 and praised by Alexander. The old Unity Movement declared that the South African nation consisted of ‘the people who were born
in South Africa and who have no other country as their motherland'. \textsuperscript{12} Unity Movement’s nation was conditional, as well as Alexander’s, but on different grounds. ‘All that is required for a people to be a nation’ - ran its Declaration - ‘is community of interests, love of their country, pride in being citizens of their country’. \textsuperscript{13} Thus, this definition left room for the hope that the South African nation may harbour different ideologies.

Alexander’s nation was conditional on ideology. Interpreted literally, his definition would mean that all those not prepared to build socialist democracy fell out. Crucial to Alexander’s logic was the inseparability of the national liberation struggle and the class struggle in South Africa. Addressing the first National Forum meeting, he said: ‘the immediate goal of the national liberation struggle now being waged in South Africa is the destruction of the system of racial capitalism’. \textsuperscript{14}

According to Alexander, in South Africa the ‘ruling class domination is not explicable simply in terms of race and racial ideology. While the latter is integral to the system of racial capitalism…, it rests upon and reinforces class exploitation’. Hence, in his opinion ‘the struggle against racial discrimination can not be unhooked from the struggle against capitalist exploitation’\textsuperscript{15} and it is ‘the consistent democratic socialist ideas which alone [can] spell death to the system of racial capitalism’. \textsuperscript{16}

Thus, although ‘the original colonial administrative unit’ (\textit{South Africa} - I.F.) has ‘created meaning’ for all the inhabitants, who ‘have been linked in one degree or another through the mechanism of the market’, \textit{the leading role in creating the new nation which ‘can only be realised in a social formation that is organised along socialist lines’\textsuperscript{17} rested entirely with the working class, the black working class in particular.} \textsuperscript{18}

Struggle was perceived as the crucial element in forging the nation. Alexander liked to quote Samora Machel to explain his own vision of its role. ‘Frelimo’, - wrote Machel - ‘turned us into equal sons of the Mozambican nation, whether our skin was black, brown or white. Our nation... arose from our armed struggle.’\textsuperscript{19}

In 1991 Alexander told the author that his concept of the nation did not undergo any substantial change since the publication of ‘One Azania, One Nation…’, it was only refined.\textsuperscript{20} It seems, however, that at least one important aspect of his concept has changed. While Alexander’s class approach to nation remained intact, he saw the potential of different classes in the process of nation building differently.

‘I am not sure to what a degree [sic] we are going to sustain the position that
promoting the interests of the working class is the same as building the nation’, said Alexander. ‘That was true in apartheid days, in the days of Verwoerd, Vorster, Botha. It may not be true any more today. We have to look at that’. In the new situation it became ‘quite possible for the bourgeoisie, the monopoly capitalist class, to promote genuinely the building of a nation, obviously in the capitalist framework, but to do away with racist and ethnic divisions and so on, and insist on one nation... Politically’ - continued Alexander - ‘I do not think they have a problem any more about building the nation. What I am saying is that since De Klerk changed the rules of the game there are other possibilities today that we have got to consider’. 21

Alexander always recognised the existence of language and cultural differences in South African society. However, in his earlier writing he had stressed the idea that they were not intrinsic or even deeply entrenched in the society. In the 1990s the depth of emotion, provoked by, or provoking, violence in Natal and PWV (which he deemed purely political) led Alexander to believe that at least for the Zulus their ethnic identity became very important and gained a political momentum of its own.22

Asked about the main characteristics of the nation, Alexander stressed common economic interest, means of communication and the common struggle. Alexander had put a heavy stress on cultural values of the nation in his writing. However, cultural attributes did not figure prominently in his list.23 Thus, it seems that Alexander started to reshape his ideologically defined nation into something closer to the state nation.

Yet, there is room for doubt. Alexander put great practical and academic effort into making cultural achievements of South African peoples mutually accessible. He thought that ‘the songs, stories, poems, dances of one group should become the common property of all’, that ‘cultural achievements of the people will be woven together into one Azanian fabric’, and that ‘different aspects of one national culture’ will be ‘accessible to all’.24

Moreover, for some years Alexander has been deeply involved in working out a viable language policy for post-apartheid South Africa, at both an academic and practical level. At an academic level one of the aspects of this work was his project of ‘harmonising’ Sotho and Nguni language groups. If, according to Alexander, the South African nation were to be just a state (territorial) entity, probably of a particular class nature, but without any common cultural characteristics, why take the trouble?

In Alexander’s opinion there was no contradiction. ‘We want to give everybody a chance to participate’, he explained.25
‘We, the People of South Africa...’

The ANC and SACP concepts of the nation have undergone a long and difficult process of transformation. Both, particularly those of the South African Communist Party, have been extensively analysed from different ideological perspectives. This subject is far from exhausted, and new archival materials and publications are clear proof of that. However, I shall go into the history of Charterist views on nationhood here only to the extent necessary to understand the present.

Prominent ANC authority in the field, Pallo Jordan, noted that historically there were two ‘portions of tradition’ in the approach of national liberation movement to the problem of ‘who constitutes a nation, to whom sovereignty in a democratic society should be assigned’. One was inspired by African nationalism, the other by ‘various schools of socialism, especially Marxism’.

In Jordan’s opinion the two have finally converged, which was reflected in a rather broadly formulated slogan ‘One country, one people, one government, a government of the people of South Africa’.26

This does not mean that everything is clear about the Charterist approach to the notion of nationhood. Jordan himself remarked that ‘there are numerous inconsistencies, carelessly formulated arguments and even self-contradictory statements within... one tradition’. Jordan suggested one could deal with the problem of ‘determining which are authoritative and which are ephemeral’ by ‘selection, identifying consistent themes that run through the tradition...’.27 This method may be good for a politician, but it is hardly relevant in terms of an academic study, which presupposes presenting a whole range of views and opinions, wherever it exists.

Not many representatives of the Charterist tradition would recognise the existence of differences of opinion on the problem of nationhood within their ranks. Pallo Jordan attributed the term ‘inconsistencies’ exclusively to the past. Yet, quite recently official formulations differed in shade, and their interpretations were sometimes inconsistent both with the official theory and with each other.

The Freedom Charter begins with the words ‘we, the people of South Africa...’ and holds that ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White’. This assertion may, or may not imply that all South Africans constitute a nation. Taking into consideration the time when the document was created, it should rather be interpreted in terms of a pledge to provide for political and economic equality in a future democratic South Africa. Further in the text there is direct reference to such an interpretation: ‘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 people shall have equal
erights to use their own languages and to develop their own folk culture and
customs; All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their
race and national pride...’.

However, one can not rule out the ‘national’ interpretation as well, since
‘national groups’ may not necessarily mean ‘nations’. The idea of South
Africans being one people is repeated in many, if not all ANC documents. The
way Oliver Tambo put it in 1979, for example, sounds as an indication that
‘people’ means exactly a nation. ‘It is our hope, it is our aim’ - he said - ‘that
we should observe the 25th anniversary of Freedom Charter... which says
"South Africa belongs to all who live in it", and that we can together reaffirm
our commitment to the principle of "one country, one people, one
government"...’.

Yet, there is no clarity on this issue. Here, as well as in its later official
documents, the ANC tended to avoid outright definitions - the tactic for which
it has often been criticised, and which nevertheless seemed most appropriate for
an attempt to embrace all shades of anti-apartheid opinion.

Constitutional Guidelines, published in Lusaka at the end of the 1980s, had a
clause ‘National Identity’ (nation was not mentioned). It stated: ‘It shall be state
policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding
on all South Africans. At the same time, the state shall recognise the linguistic
and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and
cultural development’.

The ANC policy document ‘Ready to Govern’, adopted in 1992, had no such
clause. It mentioned ‘the people of South Africa’ and stated that ‘through arts
and culture a sense of national identity and pride can be cultivated’. Authors of
the document saw arts and culture as ‘a potentially unifying force in a country,
divided along ethnic and cultural lines by apartheid’. At the same time the
document recognised the ‘multilingual nature’ of the country and proclaimed
that ‘the right of all South Africans to practice their religions, uphold their
cultures and speak languages of their choice should be promoted and
protected’.

The ANC 1994 election document ‘A Better Life for All’ stated as its second
goal (out of four) ‘a nation built by developing our different cultures, beliefs,
and languages as a source of our common strength’. Here, more than in any
other document, the ANC nation looked like a state territorial unit, an
all-embracing state entity (state nation).

ANC official documents did not tie the nation to a particular class structure, nor
did they attribute a particular class character to it. Yet, this motive came out strongly at the ANC-Soviet Seminar in 1989, specifically devoted to the ethnicity/nationality problem in South Africa. The ANC official report about it stated: ‘There was a fundamental divergence in the approaches of our respective delegations. The Soviet comrades, almost without exception, made ethnicity and nationality their starting point for analysis. Consequently, they kept returning to it as an autonomous category that can be understood only with reference to itself. There seemed to be no appreciation of the social character of our movement and the relative weight of the different classes that are united under its banner’.\(^\text{33}\)

The authors denounced Russian participants for quoting the example of India and African countries as inadequate, since these countries were led by bourgeois governments. They went on to explain: ‘Most of the current conflicts and political demands which express themselves in ethnic terms are a function of the specific class ideologies that seek to manipulate aspects of popular consciousness for particular class goals. Thus in the present day, ethnicity is a function of politics and not the other way around. In the post-liberation period the issue would then become devising policies that take account of ethnic feelings while containing the possibilities of it becoming a flashpoint by timeously addressing’.\(^\text{34}\)

Definitions in all these documents are straightforward and seemingly simple. Yet, it is not easy to interpret them. Whether they imply that a South African nation exists, or it is only being formed, or it is not being formed at all, and whether ‘people’, ‘national identity’ and ‘nation’ mean allegiance to the state, or something different, is not at all clear. As a result, even within the ranks of the ANC there were as many interpretations as there were authors.

According to Pallo Jordan, ‘the concrete historical conjuncture’ in South Africa ‘indicates that only a new conception of nationhood, which takes no account of ethnicity, skin colour or linguistic affiliation, is consonant with the aspirations of the oppressed... The perspective of the national liberation alliance’ - he wrote - ‘is therefore an inclusive nationalism that seeks to weave the diverse strands of the South African population into a new nation defined by a common loyalty to a common Motherland’.\(^\text{35}\)

Strictly speaking, the formula of ‘nationhood which took no account of ethnicity, skin colour and linguistic affiliation’ was not exactly the position of the ANC documents, all of which stressed diversity. With its stress on loyalty, Jordan’s interpretation looked closer to the 1951 Unity Movement definition, but for one slight difference. Authors of the Unity Movement Declaration did not define who could be excluded from the South African nation on the grounds of the lack of patriotism. Jordan did. According to him ‘the nation is not
defined by skin colour or racial designation; its parameters are set by individual acts of voluntary adherence, which adherence requires the submergence of other loyalties to this larger unit; they are defined by a commitment to the country, its people and its future. Since committed racists could never accept such an arrangement, they too voluntarily exclude themselves'.

‘Patriotism’ and ‘loyalty’ were so important for Jordan’s concept that he even offered a definition of a specifically South African patriotism. It was bound to be ‘common, non-racial, non-ethnic’. He wrote that it would emerge as a result of ‘the conquest of power by the popular classes’ and after those classes had created the material and political basis for it. Thus, according to Jordan, ‘committed racists’ and those, who did not submerge ‘other loyalties to [a] larger unit’, would not qualify, even if they did not want to ‘exclude themselves’.

What Jordan suggested was a territorial (state) nation which, as was the case with Alexander’s nation, was conditional on ideology. His definition of who could constitute the South African nation did not have explicit class or colour (‘caste’ in Alexander’s terminology) connotations, but rested entirely on a certain kind of patriotism, specifically defined.

Jordan asserted that his understanding of nationalism was ‘inclusive’, and that it rested on a ‘national liberation alliance’ that ‘seeks to weave the diverse strands of the South African population into a new nation’. He did not go into the analysis of what steps were to be taken to make this possible. It was not often that he mentioned cultural, language or other components of this nation, and when he did, one was left with the impression that Jordan’s nation presented a conglomerate of ‘ethnic communities’ and ‘language groups’. ‘No democrat’ - he assumed - ‘would advocate the insensitivity towards the sense of grievance experienced by all black ethnic communities and language groups with regard to the relegation of their language and the corruption of their culture’. (White ‘ethnic communities’ and language groups were not mentioned). What was meant by ‘weaving the strands’ in this context may have amounted to a purely political process.

If tints of Africanism could just be traced in Pallo Jordan’s interpretation of the notion of nation, they definitely constituted the core of Mzala’s concept. Mzala, another ANC authority on the problems of nation, rejected the possibility of the existence of a single South African nation. This was because South African society lacked the characteristics which, according to Stalin’s definition, would enable it to qualify. ‘If it is acknowledged that the tendency of capitalism is to group the population with all its various classes into a single nation in a single territory and with a single language’ - he asked - ‘when did South Africa manifest this tendency? Can we talk of the existence of a single South African
nation brought about by the victory of capitalism?'.

Stalin's criteria were instantly dropped, however, when Mzala got to discussing the role of the ANC in the process of forging a nation. Here it turned out that this process lay fully in the political sphere, although Mzala asserted that 'it went along the same line as the processes elsewhere in the world'. According to him the formation of the Union of South Africa 'marked the formal creation of a single oppressor white nation', and the creation of the ANC two years later started the 'process of creating an African nation'. This process of forging a nation from 'the scattered African ethnic groups and tribes' in his opinion was 'expressed organisationally by the ANC'.

Thus, according to Mzala, South African society consisted of two nations - black and white. However, this was not the full picture. There were also 'African, Indian, Coloured, Afrikaner and English nationalities'. If the two nations were ascribed political and social characteristics, the logic behind the 'nationalities' was not clear.

Mzala's African nation (or two nations, which is implicit) concept was very close to the original position of the ANC. In 1912 the ANC declared: 'We are one people' on behalf of the Africans. It largely correlated with the position of the ANC Youth League as well. It stated in 1948: 'Our contention [is] 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...'

Nelson Mandela revealed similar ideas much later in his conversation with Neville Alexander on Robben Island. According to Alexander, Mandela told him: 'Africans constitute the nation of South Africa. It is a sacred text. Others are racial minorities'. On the other hand, Mandela's Address at the ANC meeting with Inkatha in 1991 might be interpreted as conveying a slightly different approach. 'The attempts to divide our people along ethnic lines, to turn their rich variety into a dagger with which to pierce their hearts, must be made to fail', said Mandela in full compliance with the earlier concept. But then he added: 'There can be no salvation for our beleaguered country but the realisation by all and sundry that we are one people - black and white; cast in a mould that can be different, but one inter-dependent people all the same...'.

Did Mandela mean 'nation' by 'people' here? Or was it just a different way of saying 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'? The answer may not come in the near future; theory is not likely to be among the ANC priorities in the next few years.

It has already been mentioned that the ANC Youth League approach was not
the only source of Mzala’s ideas. He was also influenced by Stalin’s concept of nation and tried to espouse the basically different Africanist and Stalinist approaches. Although his African nation was mainly defined politically (it is the nation of the oppressed) and in terms of colour (Alexander’s ‘caste’), Stalin’s influence could be traced in Mzala’s references to common language, common economy and self-determination. He wrote: ‘The ANC aimed at ending national subjugation and regaining political and economic independence. It was a national movement aimed at amalgamating various ethnic groups into a nation by creating a political inter-relationship among them, giving them a single political language against oppression, educating the new person in the spirit of respect for members of another ethnic group so that they could jointly strive for self-determination’.47

The economic factor came in to give materialistic background to the whole idea. In Mzala’s opinion capitalism did not succeed in creating a South African nation, but it played an important role in creating an African one. ‘Capitalism in South Africa formed a national market binding various African ethnic groups by economic unity’, he asserted. ‘In the mines and factories... individual tribesmen were meeting wider and wider sections of people, and this provided a favourable ground for the birth of a national movement of liberation, which also... built national consciousness and a desire towards the formation of their own national state over the whole of South Africa which they rightfully considered their native land’.48

The two nations’ dispensation, according to Mzala, was not the end of the nation-building process. He thought that ‘the solution of the national question in South Africa can only proceed from the integration of the two nations, under conditions of total equality, into a single South African nation’. If an African nation was being forged from different groups in the cause of the democratic struggle against apartheid, ‘the fusion of these (black and white - I.F.) nations... will only proceed systematically if the exercise is headed by the working class’, wrote Mzala.49

Mzala shared with other Marxists, in South Africa and elsewhere, the idea that ‘it is impossible to abolish national inequality under capitalism, since this requires the abolition of classes’ and that ‘to achieve this aim it is necessary to organise the only class that is capable of achieving this kind of revolution - the working class’.50 Thus, Mzala and Alexander both thought that a true nationhood for South Africa is conceivable only under socialism. What they disagreed about was the timing of this development. In compliance with the SACP approach, Mzala held that the democratic revolution would precede the socialist one, while Alexander insisted, as was mentioned earlier, that in South Africa the two could only occur simultaneously.
Mzala's concept presented a combination of multi-nationalism ('scattered African groups and tribes', as a basis for an African nation), two-nation and one-nation concepts with elements of Africanism and Stalinism. These inconsistencies, however, should not be attributed to him alone. They rather derive from the inclusive, albeit not always coherent character of the ANC theory of nation at large.

Wally Serote, former Head of the ANC’s Department of Arts and Culture, spoke about the importance of developing ‘a consciousness of nation-building’, ‘a consciousness that South Africans can become one nation’. He gave the example of the PWV with its ‘merging of people’, ‘culturally speaking’ and ‘in terms of language’, to show unifying tendencies in South African society. At the same he said: ‘We should encourage our diversity... I must be proud that I am a Zulu, and I must know that I have the right to express myself in Zulu. Everybody has the right to do that’. Serote saw no contradiction between a concept of nation, based on ‘merging’, and that based on ‘diversity’.

The same was true about the most proficient among Charterist theoreticians on the problem of nationhood - Joe Slovo.

It is widely believed that the South African Communist Party has not generated any original ideas but rather complied with those of the CPSU. This was not true. Even in those days, when Soviet theoretical dogma was obligatory for the world communist movement, Slovo’s writing on nation and nationhood differed from it in many respects.

Both Slovo’s publications on the concept of nation began with a tribute to Stalin’s theoretical achievement. However, in Slovo’s opinion, Stalin’s concepts, although correct for their time and place, were inapplicable to African conditions. Slovo asserted (as did Alexander) that there could be no one definition of nation for all epochs. ‘The consolidation or fragmentation of disparate ethnic groups into one or into several sovereign entities’ - he wrote - ‘cannot be judged by any universal formulas as to what constitutes a nation’.

Slovo argued that the administrative entities, created in Africa by colonial powers, had neither common language, nor culture, but gradually they acquired ‘distinct economies’. He thought that in spite of this objective process of economic consolidation, ‘colonial control for purposes of economic exploitation demanded ethnic fragmentation and inter-ethnic hostility’. Thus in his view ‘the historic process of spreading a national (as opposed to ethnic or tribal) consciousness and the national consolidation of existing state entities is, in the modern African era, generally a weapon of liberation and social advance’. Slovo asserted that ‘for most parts of Africa, the invocation of this right for regional or ethnic entities (either for secessionary purposes, or for creating
ethnically-defined political groupings) usually serves to undermine rather than to advance the right to national self-determination'. The theory itself did not define the level, regional or otherwise, at which the right for self-determination started to undermine 'national self-determination'.

In Slovo’s opinion, specific features of the African situation, largely attributable to the continent’s colonial past, were also fully applicable to South Africa. It was the SACP thesis of ‘internal colonialism’ or ‘colonialism of a special type’, strongly criticised by Alexander and Africanists, that made this possible. In terms of this theory South Africa was seen as a country, in which colonial power and colonised people co-existed on one and the same territory.

‘Despite the existence of cultural and racial diversity, South Africa is not a multi-national country’ - wrote Slovo - ‘it is a nation in the making; a process which is increasingly being advanced in struggle and one which can only be finally completed after the racial tyranny is defeated. The concept of one united nation, embracing all our ethnic communities, remains the virtually undisputed liberation objective’. There is little doubt that what he implied was a territorial state nation.

Slovo did not describe socialism as a precondition for the creation of a South African nation. He did not ascribe any class characteristics to it. However, he thought that ‘in the South African case it is certainly the emerging proletariat which has become the key class force for nation-building. As the most politically conscious and advanced social force in our revolution’ - Slovo wrote - ‘our black working class is, at the same time, the most internationalist and the most committed to national cohesion’.

Slovo stressed that ‘cultural diversity did not stand in contradiction to a national unity’, unless it amounted to a form of territorial or constitutionally entrenched ethnicity. He wrote: ‘multi-nationalism, whether in the form of independent ethnic "homelands" or parliaments based on colour-group rights constitutes the main racist recipe for the continuation of national domination by other means’.

The same approach was even more clearly expressed by Slovo in his interview with this author. ‘I think it will be a culturally diverse nation. And I don’t think there is anything inconsistent with cultural diversity and nationhood. In that respect I departed from Stalinism’, he said. ‘It seems to me that you can have a united nation, a common patriotism, common loyalty to a national entity without rejecting the diverse cultures of the groups that make up the nation’. He also mentioned ‘diverse ethnic communities’, maintaining their traditions, literature, language and religion, and the necessity of mother tongue education.
Slovo stressed the necessity to protect and develop different cultures. 'It is absolutely clear that cultures are going to be protected... There's no question [but] that we will encourage and support, not just morally, but even with resources, the flowering of those cultures which have been exploited for apartheid purposes', he said. And again: 'the elimination... of cultural diversity... will never, and ought never to be worked for'.

Yet, at the same time Slovo strongly believed in the merging power of urbanisation: '...Seventy five percent of all South Africans will be urbanised by the year 2000... They will be a complete mélange... Obviously in time, as it happened in the United States, what will have to emerge will be a sort of a common culture, and a common language, eventually, not immediately... the national culture..., which is shared by the different ethnic groups will emerge'. This is something different from the concept of the state nation embracing different ethnic groups. Slovo seemed to believe that if a process of merger was well extended in time, say, for several generations, then its outcome would be the opposite to what the policy was aiming at ('flowering of cultures').

To sum up, there was no one 'authentic' ANC concept of nationhood, and certainly not a more general Charterist one. There were as many tendencies as there were writers, all within a tradition of broad all-embracing alliance thinking. The ANC has often been criticised both by friends and enemies for its alleged inability to create a viable theory. True as it might be, inconsistencies permitted inclusiveness, and pluralism of opinions left room for debate.

'Part of One African Nation'

'The African people of South Africa recognise themselves as part of one African nation, stretching from Cape to Cairo, Madagascar to Morocco, and pledge themselves to strive and work ceaselessly to find organisational expression of this nation in a merger of free, independent African states; a United States of Africa, which will serve as an effective bulwark against the forces of imperialism, colonialism, herrenvolkism and tribalism, and as a sure and lasting foundation for an Africanistic Socialist democracy' - stated the 1959 PAC Manifesto.

This romantic ideal of an Africanist nation has undergone little change over the years. A stress on the 'African nationhood' was eased in favour of 'African nationalism' in the 1989 PAC policy document, but the concept was still intact. 'The PAC believes and strongly holds that the African people in Azania are oppressed as a nation...' - asserted authors of the document - 'The Struggle in
South Africa is part of the greater struggle throughout the continent for the restoration to the African people of the effective control of their land. The ultimate goal of our struggle therefore, is the formation of a United States of Africa'.

In the constitution of the Pan Africanist Movement, adopted in 1989, the concept of the African nation was replaced by ‘the unity of the African people’ and by ‘one national front on the basis of African nationalism’. In this document the idea of ‘a United States of Africa’ was dropped, but the spirit of all-African unity still prevailed.

The 1990 PAC Constitution stated that its first goal was ‘to unite and rally the African people into one national front on the basis of African nationalism’ and stressed ‘the right of self-determination of the African people’. It also mentioned the necessity of ‘promoting unity among the peoples of Africa’, which seemed to concede that at the continental level a single African nation might still not exist. The concept of one African people at the national level, however, still remained intact.

There were not many interpretations of African nation at the continental level. Edwin Makoti’s pamphlet *The National Mandate in Azania*, published, probably, in the middle of the 1980s, stated: ‘Africans are one people, and therefore out of their heterogeneous peoples must emerge one African nation’. ‘The creation of a continental Union of African States’ would be ‘a concrete institutional form for the African nation’.

The concept of one African nation at the national level was present in many PAC documents. Straightforward and coherent, it was, however, not sufficiently explicit on the main point: what constituted the African nation? Who were the Africans? PAC documents rejected the idea that this notion might be based on race, as well as the notion of race in general. (What they recognised was ‘human race’ and ‘the three branches of this race: the Caucasoids, Mongoloids and Afrinoids’.)

There was no lack of definitions of the African in Africanist documents. The 1959 Manifesto stated: ‘The African people will not tolerate the existence of the other national groups within the confines of one nation. For the healthy growth and development of the African nation, it is imperative that all individuals must owe their first, and only, loyalty to the African nation, and not to their ethnic or national groups. The African people regard the influence of material conditions in the development of a nation as being of greater significance than mere ethnic origin. Within the social environment of the African nation there will be room for all individuals who identify themselves materially, intellectually and spiritually with the African nation’.69
This definition signalled that representatives of all three 'branches of the human race' were invited to join the African nation, on condition of their loyalty, and in case they identified themselves with the African nation. The 1972 definition confirmed this. It offered even more liberal terms for participation in the African nation: '...everybody who owes his loyalty to Africa, who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority, being regarded as an African'. The same definition of an African was repeated in the 1989 document. The 1994 Election Manifesto began with exactly the same words.

Clearly expressed, this definition, nevertheless, posed a problem. If the term 'African' was being defined, the term 'African majority' could not be considered self-explanatory. 'African majority' could be interpreted as synonymous to Black majority, in which case 'African' would incorporate Black majority and all those, who accept Black majority rule. 'African majority' could in itself mean Black majority and those, who accept its rule. In this case the definition of 'African' would be just a tautology. In both cases, however, this political definition would be acceptable to a great majority of South Africans, including the majority of the Whites.

This did not mean that all of them would be automatically considered 'Africans' by the PAC. The Africanist definition of the 'settler' showed this clearly. According to the PAC the 'settler' was not only 'any person who does not owe allegiance to Africa and is not willing to submit to rule by an African majority', but also 'anyone who espouses and promotes eurocentric and colonialist values'. Nothing wrong with it in principle, except that no objective criteria were offered as to what was eurocentric and colonialist, and what was understood by 'espouse' and 'promote'. This was left to a subjective judgement.

Other PAC writing was more explicit on the issue of the 'African', than the official documents. An undated PAC pamphlet distinguished between the 'indigenous African nationals' and 'immigrant European foreign nationals', condemning Charterists for their statement 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. 'To them [the Charterists - I. F.], stated the document, 'indigenous African nationals and immigrant European nationals - the dispossessed and their dispossessors, the victims and their robbers - are all countrymen. For them the progressive and the reactionary - the African subject and his foreign overlord, the African nationalist and the colonialist - are all brothers'. There was still room to suppose that the admission of Europeans to the Africanist nation would depend upon their ideological convictions. However, this was not the case.

The 1972 Policy and Programme... declared: 'The PAC recognises the existence in South Africa of minority national groups of European and Indian origin. Contrary to all other parties, we recognise the so-called Coloureds as Africans'. The authors could not possibly presume that all Coloureds are
Africanist, socialist and democratically minded, yet, they were recognised as Africans en masse.

On the other hand, even those representatives of the ‘minority national groups of European and Indian origin’, who joined the liberation movement, did not automatically qualify. The pamphlet explained, why: ‘The tragedy of the South African political situation is that many allegedly progressive white intellectuals fail to outgrow the racist environment into which they are born and bred. As a result, they seek to infiltrate the liberation movement in order to shape its policy and programme in the image of their intellectual wavering. They seek to import into the movement the racist antagonism of the white man against the Africans. This antagonism becomes particularly acute when the Africans refuse to serve the private political interests of the ‘progressive’ white men’.  

This quotation made it clear that if the Whites, even those in the liberation movement, could count on being admitted to the Africanist nation at all, it could only happen on the grounds of their compliance with the PAC programme and policy. No other political agenda, however close to that of the PAC, would be acceptable. In fact the closer it was, the more severely it was denounced as anti-African.

Edwin Makoti was most straightforward on the meaning of the Africanist nation. He described the major contradiction of South African society in terms of black and white, not just the oppressor and the oppressed or the African and the foreigner. ‘We... claim Africa for the Africans, and Azania is part of the black continent’ - declared the author - ‘Africa is a black man’s continent of which South Africa was an indivisible part’. He did not use the term ‘black nation’, but spoke of the ‘black people’.

Makoti counterpoised ‘local agents and lackeys’ of the ‘foreign usurpers and oppressors’ against the black majority. He duly admonished M.G. Buthelezi and other homeland leaders for their participation in ‘tribal administration’. Yet finally he graciously pardoned ‘the ethnic authorities’ on exactly the grounds of logic, perfectly fitting into the apartheid doctrine: ‘We are not going to expand our energies fighting against the ethnic authorities. If land recovery is a pillar of the liberation struggle, ethnic lands are already in the hands of our people and how those lands are administered and distributed are matters for the local people to determine’.

However, the author was completely irreconcilable to the role of some representatives of the ‘minority national groups’ in the struggle. The SACP in general and Joe Slovo in particular were not given any credit for joining the struggle. According to Makoti, Slovo was ‘the only white man in the ANC/CP military wing’, and what he was doing amounted to no more than planning
'how the blacks ought to die for their country'. Evidently, Makoti believed that the struggle was to be organised along colour lines. He asked: 'Slovo, Dadu and others: Where are your guerrillas?'

Makoti found two main faults with the SACP: its failure to stick to the Comintern slogan of an independent native republic for South Africa (he thought that the SACP dropped it on racial grounds) and its inability to find 'a revolutionary formula', uniting 'the exploited black people' with 'the white working class', and thus 'a proper role for itself'. In his opinion, 'the leaders of the Africans must come out of their own loins as no foreigner would ever be a true and genuine leader of the African people'.

The SACP was perceived as alien, not an African party, and its leadership described as 'white'. Makoti was indignant about its relations with the ANC. 'All power and authority in the ANC and its policy and programme have been usurped by the leadership of the South African Communist Party', he wrote.

Over time it was becoming increasingly difficult for the PAC to dissociate Whites from the struggle. The 1986 Plenary session of the PAC Central Committee discussed this problem. The 1949 ANC Youth League (to which the PAC deems itself a successor) Programme of action was quoted on the African nation. It was stressed that the ANC Youth League defined the African nation 'politically rather than racially, in order to give whites, as human beings, the freedom to become co-builders of a democratic Azania'. This was considered insufficient, and the task 'to decide upon the role of whites in the struggle against national oppression' was listed among the most urgent for the PAC leadership.

Finally the PAC opened its ranks to representatives of all 'branches of the human race'. Yet, the idea that 'almost the whole of the White community is an occupation army' was still not entirely alien to Africanists. Their slogan 'Kill the farmer, kill the boer' even on the eve of the 1994 elections was a testimony to that.

Unlike Neville Alexander and many Charterists, the PAC did not consider the anti-apartheid struggle to be a necessary precondition for creating a nation. The struggle was crucial for the nation and endemic to it, but rather as a liberatory, than a formative factor. For Africanists South Africa was a colony and the key-word to characterise the struggle was 'self-determination'. For them, as well as for Alexander, 'the national question and the class struggle are two inseparable aspects of the revolutionary struggle'.

Socialism and nationhood went closely together in the PAC concept. There was no mention that the Africanist nation was to be socialist by nature, but among
four 'historic tasks' that the organisation pledged to fulfil, three were connected with forging the nation, and the fourth was 'the establishment of an Africanist Socialist Democratic order of society'. The 1989 PAC document did not mention socialist democracy, but it was clearly implied. 'Africanist socialist democracy' reappeared as one of the PAC goals in the 1990 Constitution.

One issue featured more prominently and emotionally in the Africanists' concept of nation, than in any other. It was the issue of land. It was the land question that made the PAC so bitter about the ANC slogan 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it'. Every PAC document emphatically stressed crucial importance of land for the African nation. 'Our position on the question of land has always been that every grain of soil in Azania is the non-negotiable property of the African people', stated the PAC Election Manifesto. The document asserted that 'the settlers bought no land from our people', and pledged nationalisation and redistribution of land without compensation.

'We, the Black People of Azania...'

Black Consciousness offered several self-definitions which gave an insight into its interpretation of the notion of nation. Solidarity, official organ of the BCM(A), put it this way: Black Consciousness 'is a collective assertion by those who have been colonised by the foreign white minority that they are entitled to define and obtain their own liberation. Black people, the so called Bantu, Indians and coloureds, who recognise that they are oppressed, exploited and discriminated against, have been rallied around this philosophy... to fight for liberation without guidance or advice from whites, liberal or otherwise'.

An AZAPO pamphlet, devoted to commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising, held that 'Black Consciousness may be simply understood as the essential consciousness of the Black people of themselves as the vital engine to [those] engaged in their own liberation, i.e. a people for themselves... Black Consciousness... is a culmination of a fruition of the experiences of the oppressed and exploited in their struggle against racial capitalism and land dispossession'.

The only definition that directly mentioned the nation and thus gave the concept its shape was found in the AZAPO membership drive leaflet. 'Black Consciousness is a philosophy that aims to unite the oppressed people' - states the leaflet - 'It is a nation-building philosophy. While the system seeks to divide the oppressed people into "Xhosas", "Zulus", "Indians", "Pedis", "Griquas", "Coloureds", etc., Black Consciousness says that Black people can only get anywhere if they stand together as one solid Black nation'.
An American analyst of Black Consciousness, C.R.D. Halisi thought that this unifying anti-ethnicity stand was crucial for the BC philosophy in general. He wrote: 'In many respects, the BCM evolved as a counter-ethnicity movement; its young members were the victims of government experimentation with retribalisation policies'.

The key word in the BC concept of nation was 'Black'. Definition of this term was official, it did not vary from one document to another. In the opinion of the AZAPO 'Black people are those, who are by law or tradition economically, socially and politically discriminated against in South Africa and who identify themselves as a unit in the struggle for Azania'. This definition was no less political, than that of the term 'African' by the PAC. BC organisations often stressed this fact to negate charges of racism, as, indeed, did Steve Biko himself.

The BC concept rested on the assumption that South African society consisted of 'two sets of people, black and white - white society constitutes the ruling class and black society constitutes the oppressed and exploited'. Solidarity explained why it was possible to put all Blacks into the category of the oppressed: a 'small number amongst the colonised have accumulated some money or property', that 'these assets are just a pittance' in comparison with what big international capital owns and those who own them are nonetheless subject to abuse. The BC shared this idea of correlation between race and class with Africanists.

Another important part of the BC philosophy, also shared with Africanism, was its assumption that Blacks 'identify themselves as a unit in the struggle'. The BC insisted on the policy of 'non-collaboration and non-co-operation with the structures maintaining and sustaining the system of economic exploitation, political oppression, and social degradation of the Black majority'. The BC Movement conceded, however, that there were 'collaborators among the oppressed'. Logically enough, 'these people cannot be called Black because they do not identify themselves as a unit in the struggle for Azania. They also cannot be called white. Therefore, AZAPO calls them non-white'.

Those who were neither fighters nor collaborators were considered black. 'All those people who identify as a unit in the struggle need not necessarily be actively conscious of that' - stated S. Moodley, author of a BC pamphlet - 'It becomes the responsibility of the vanguard of the revolutionary movement to conscientise this potentially revolutionary class... We do not have to actively search out for those who identify as a part of the struggle. All we need do is to look at those people who have unequivocally thrown in their lot with the system or ruling class'.

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Membership in the BC’s organisations was thus conditional on the political agenda of a prospective candidate. However, the AZAPO constitution stated that ‘membership shall be open to Blacks only’, and whatever the definition of the ‘Blacks’, Whites are not admitted in any case, whatever their ideology.

Solidarity stated two reasons for that. The first was that ‘whites who want a dismantling of the colonial state, and a return of the land and the wealth to its rightful owners, and who want to take part in the process which will make this possible, regardless of the costs to their families and relatives... are so few that it would be unproductive for Blacks dying under the wheels of colonial oppression to spend valuable time... in search of these rare people...’. The second was ‘the risk of infiltration. Black infiltrators have been easier to expose because [of the] ready access to their backgrounds through friends, families and relatives, the majority of whom will report in suspicious movements such as visits to, and by the police’.

The 1988 NACTU Conference witnessed a heated debate on the difference between the terms ‘African’ and ‘Black’. It resulted in replacing ‘Black’ for ‘African’ in the Constitution of this organisation. As a follow-up the Durban branch of the Black Consciousness Movement produced the ‘Position Paper’. The main idea of the document was to prove that the programmes and practices of the two representatives of ‘Azania school’ - the PAC and the Black Consciousness movement - were very close.

Important for the purposes of this paper was not the fact that there was little basic ideological difference indeed, but some arguments used in the polemics. They gave deeper insights into the interpretation of both terms by the BC. The document stated: ‘The word African reflected a... definition of the National question which sees the indigenous African as the core of the Azanian nation, with the other Black groups being appended to this core, and forces a choice - either with the African majority or with the settler minority. The term African positively defines an emerging nation and identifies with the rest of Africa, rejecting the geographical boundaries imposed by colonialism and neo-colonialism.... The term Black specifically excludes white participation. Since the exclusion of whites is also central to the Pan Africanist programme, the definition of Black is reflective of a clear cut approach which takes Pan Africanism to its logical end’.

The authors had more arguments ‘to show that BC and Pan Africanism constitute part of one ideological family’, rightly mentioning their common approach to self-determination, liberation, ‘oppressed class ideology’, socialist aspirations, and ‘liberal and reformist position of the Kliptown Charter’. They particularly stressed that ‘both ideologies regard the strategy of white exclusion as pivotal to their programmes’. What Africanists appeared to be uneasy
Black Consciousness often used the terminology of Soviet Marxism (although not the Marxist approach), dealing with the concept of a nation. Typical examples were writings by Dabi Nkululeko and Bangani Tsotsi. Both used Stalin's triad - tribe, nationality, nation, albeit in a creative way.\textsuperscript{109}

Nkululeko described nineteenth century Nguni and Sotho as 'nationalities' (arguably correctly in terms of the doctrine), and Khoi-Khoi just as 'people', (it should have been 'tribe' in terms of the doctrine, but the author tried to avoid this term). Nkululeko was aware that according to Stalin's theory there could be no nations in Africa before the 20th century (Soviet Marxists associated this term only with capitalism and socialism), and even less so, one Black or African nation. Thus he invented a new term - 'the entire nationality' when he spoke about the resistance of South African peoples to the European invasion.\textsuperscript{110}

For some unclear reason Nkululeko, as well as many other South African Marxists, thought that Lenin ascribed the right of self-determination only to nations, not nationalities. That is why he could not accept the fact that, according to Stalin's definition, colonised peoples were not nations. He wrote: 'colonial conquest... has led to the emergence of two nations, the colonising and the colonised'.\textsuperscript{111}

Tsotsi felt free to call African peoples 'tribes', since (as he put it in compliance with the Soviet theory), 'the cultivator had not yet been transformed into a peasant - the social basis of nationality'. According to Tsotsi (and the Soviet theory), the transition of those peoples 'from tribe to nationality signalled the victory of the ox-driven plough and irrigation over the wooden and iron hoe'.\textsuperscript{112}

At this point, however, Tsotsi parted with Stalin's dogma. He wrote: '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'.\textsuperscript{113}

Contrary to Nkululeko, Tsotsi thought that even 'the acquisition of political power does not necessarily mean the achievement of nationhood' and that 'the Nguni, Sotho, and the so-called Coloured nationalities' still existed, as well as the Black nationality, which 'is none other than our old friend, the working class nationality'. This assertion was the result of Tsotsi's interpretation of Lenin's thesis of the two nations in one nation. Tsotsi wrote, for example, that there were two English nations - the English bourgeoisie and the English proletariat.\textsuperscript{114} It was not quite clear from Tsotsi's writing when nationhood
would be reached, and the Black nation would come into existence. However, together with many Africanists, he thought that only socialism would provide the solution of the nationality question.\textsuperscript{115}

\textbf{‘An Individual Within a Particular Cultural Milieu’}

Inkatha produced more official policy documents and materials than any other party in South Africa that did not rule the country. However, its conceptual framework was not easy to define. Other organisations can be blamed for not having brought their theories of nation to the level of full consistency or for not having developed them in detail. Inkatha did not develop any theory at all. Yet, there was a traceable concept.

Nowhere did Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi state his approach to the concept of nation more clearly than in his speech at the Luthuli Memorial Foundation meeting in 1976. ‘I shared his patriotism which transcended just Zulu horizons’ - he said, referring to Luthuli - ‘I was like him, an African Nationalist, who, however, did not believe that one must try to erase one’s ethnic background, in order to be seen as an African Nationalist par excellence. I did not believe, just as he did, that I must apologise to anyone for being born into my family, into my ethnic group in order to be acceptable to anyone as the veritable super-black or Super African patriot, to anyone... I see no contradiction in my cultural concept of "nationality" on the one hand, and my concept of a multi-ethnic South African Nation...The realisation of this concept of "Nation" we are still as committed to, as he was’.\textsuperscript{116}

‘Our being one African family or Nation does not mean that we should try to snuff out our various ethnic experiences or values’ - said Buthelezi - ‘We need not make such a sacrifice, it is as unnecessary as it is unrealistic. The proliferation of our multi-ethnic experiences enriches our African Nation. To encourage it is not necessarily to preach a narrow tribalism as such. These multi-ethnic experiences of our African family should be encouraged to flower in their various ways to enrich our larger African or total black experience. This is not contrary to the formula of fighting our common enemy on the basis of one black consensus and one black struggle. Our commitment to the larger concept of Nationhood cannot be harmed by these cultural values which have flowed but of our multi-ethnic history and experience’.\textsuperscript{117}

Later on Buthelezi repeated the same idea, though without mentioning the word ‘nation’: ‘When I talk about the high ideals of the Zulu people, I am not being ethnocentric... One cannot be a Black person without being a Zulu Black person. I cannot be a South African without being a Zulu South African. There is no clash between being a South African and being a Zulu South African.
History calls on me to lead as a Black man in the Black struggle for liberation and it calls on me to mobilise Black forces... I accepted the challenge of history and brought into being a mighty Black force in the KwaZulu area..."  

Buthelezi’s nation was a three-step ladder-type. At the lowest level there were different ‘ethnic groups’. Judging by how often Buthelezi spoke of ‘Zulu nation’ (elsewhere), they could also be called ‘nations’. King Goodwill Zwelithini, who could not be considered a spokesman for Inkatha, but until recently used to be close to it, corroborated this. During his clash with the South African government over the transitional constitution in the beginning of 1994 he stated: ‘The Zulu nation has always felt that it belongs to the community of nations which form South Africa’.  

Further up there was an ‘African’ or a ‘Black’ nation - in this case there was no difference between the two. Since there is no definition of the term ‘Black’, it was not clear whether Indians and Coloureds came into this category or formed their own groups. General Secretary of Inkatha Ziba Jiyane said in his interview with this author that Indians and Coloureds, as well as Zulus and Sothos and others, expressed themselves culturally differently, but they all formed the Black alliance.  

On the other hand I have not come across any mention of ‘White nation’, although Buthelezi often referred to a ‘White group’, ‘White unity’ and White nationalism, in spite of the fact that ‘Whites are also multi-ethnic’. Whatever happened at lower levels, at the highest level all groups arrive to become members of ‘a multi-ethnic South African nation’. Ziba Jiyane stressed that in this respect, as well as in many other, Inkatha’s approach is not substantially different from that of the ANC.  

Buthelezi did not give his definition of the nation, but it was obvious that what he meant had nothing to do with ideology. At the bottom of the ladder each of his nations or ethnic groups had its own culture, ‘ethnic experiences and values’. At the top the South African nation was definitely a political phenomenon and as such was rather a matter of self-identification. The ‘White group’ in the middle was based on its alleged political unity, while there seemed to be little to define the ‘African Nation’. Buthelezi quoted at length H. R. Isaacs, who connected nationhood with political independence, but mentioned South African, not African nation, when speaking about the struggle for independence: ‘...multi-ethnic South African Nation for whose sovereignty we are still striving’.  

Independence, or sovereignty, or ‘self-determination’ was one of the most important characteristics of a nation for King Goodwill Zwelithini. He, however, spoke about self-determination for the Zulu nation only. In his view
'Zulu self-determination could have been expressed by the acceptance of a federal structure in this country'. The failure to provide federalism would mean an attempt 'to completely obliterate us as a people from the face of South Africa'. To agree to anything less than federalism on the part of the Zulus would mean 'to commit National suicide'.

'Sovereignty' for Zwelithini 'is expressed in matters related to the monarchy, indigenous law and communal property', and these could not be provided for through unitary structures of the new transitional government.

Jiyane's definition of nation was much more sophisticated. 'The primary determinant of what the nation is, is what the people subjectively think', said he. At the same time he stressed cultural diversity and importance of cultural self-expression.

Buthelezi insisted that his interpretation of the notion of nation was close to that of the ANC Youth League. Jiyane thought that positions of the two organisations on this issue were generally close. He said that the ANC recognised cultural differences between South African peoples, aiming at creating a South African nation in the end, while Inkatha stressed diversity, but 'politically does not say that there is not a level at which South Africans will be one sovereign people'.

Yet, there were differences. The most important of them was that the ANC seemed to be hoping to weld South African peoples into one cultural 'milieu' at some distant future, while Inkatha seemed to be working to the opposite end. Earlier Inkatha documents were more explicit on that, than later ones. Whether the reason was censorship, or ideological transformation was difficult to judge.

Among the aims and objectives of Inkatha the first version of its Constitution listed the following: 'To foster the spirit of unity among the people of KwaZulu throughout South Africa, and between them and all their African brothers in Southern Africa...'. 'The people of kwaZulu throughout South Africa' could be no other than the Zulus. One of the next clauses contained Inkatha's pledge 'to establish contact and liaise with other Cultural groups in Southern Africa with a view to the establishment of a common society'.

There was nothing wrong about the idea of fostering unity, cultural or otherwise, of any particular people, but in the context of South African history it could be perceived as playing into the hands of the regime. And it was certainly perceived that way by many, first of all, by Charterists. In later versions of the Constitution the first clause was reformulated: 'To foster the spirit of unity among Black people throughout South Africa and between them and their Black brothers in Southern Africa...'.

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The first version of the Inkatha Constitution mentioned ‘the wealth of the Nation’ and pledged ‘to inculcate and foster a vigorous consciousness of patriotism and a strong sense of national unity based on a common and individual loyalty and devotion to our Land’.\textsuperscript{132} Since the document began with the assertion of Zulu unity it was not clear whether these clauses referred to the whole of South Africa, or to KwaZulu only. In the later version of the document these clauses appeared as well, but with a different point of departure – ‘Black people throughout South Africa’.\textsuperscript{133} The ambiguity was gone.

Propagation of Zulu unity began to disappear from Inkatha’s official documents and Buthelezi’s speeches in the late seventies, giving room to the image of Buthelezi as a Black national leader first and foremost. In the 1980s he spoke of his Zulu identity largely at local meetings, and even so mainly on appropriate occasions, such as King Shaka day.

At that time Inkatha documents rather stressed cultural development and cultural identity. In the first version of Inkatha Constitution there was just a pledge ‘to promote and support worthy indigenous customs and cultures’.\textsuperscript{134} In a later document this pledge was supplemented by a basic statement, in which culture became a focal point of Inkatha’s concept of nation. In fact it presented a definition, albeit without mentioning either ethnicity, or nation. ‘We believe’ stated the document – ‘that the identity of an individual within a particular cultural milieu is essential to his identity as a South African, but we believe also that culture belongs to all men and that no social, economic or political impediments which hinder the free movement of individuals from one cultural milieu to another are in any respect justified’.\textsuperscript{135}

The KwaZulu-Natal Indaba Bill of Rights contained an extended declaration of ‘ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural and educational rights’. The first clause of the declaration held it that ‘a person belonging to an ethnic, religious or linguistic group shall not be denied the right to enjoy his own culture, to profess and practise his own religion or to use his own language’.\textsuperscript{136}

Both statements were very close to the corresponding clause of the ANC Constitutional Guidelines: ‘... the state shall recognise the linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development’.\textsuperscript{137} The first was even reminiscent of Alexander’s idea that ‘the songs, stories, poems, dances of one group should become the common property of all’.\textsuperscript{138}

The texts were very much alike, but the points of departure differed. The Constitutional Guidelines clause began with the assertion that ‘it shall be the state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans’.\textsuperscript{139} Inkatha asserted that ‘the identity of an
individual within a particular cultural milieu is essential to his identity as a South African. It is here that Inkatha differed with the ANC, and still more with other South African political organisations under consideration.

Moreover, insignificant differences at the theoretical level became important, when it came to the realisation of ideas. Alexander put a lot of time and energy into the idea of ‘harmonising’ Sotho and Nguni, and the KwaZulu Minister of education and culture put no less zeal into ‘promoting the Zulu language’. It is not going to be easy to ‘harmonise’ the efforts of the two. Ultimately, the difference of ‘minor stress here and there’ contributed a great deal to bringing South Africa on the verge of civil war before the April 1994 elections.

Inkatha deemed itself ‘avowedly non-ethnic’, since it was ‘open to all black people of South Africa’. Later, the organization was opened to white South Africans as well. Yet, it has been consistently accused of being ethnic. Asked, why this is so, Ziba Jiyane said that the reason was Inkatha’s homeland origins. Buthelezi’s attitude to homelands put his whole concept of nation in a definite structural-political setting.

In 1986 Buthelezi said: ‘I campaigned vigorously against apartheid and for the rejection of the so-called homeland policy - a policy of dividing Black South Africa into ethnic groups with their own political identities and each with their own political machinery... As a Black leader I rejected this policy from the outset, just as I continue to do so vigorously today’. Twelve years earlier, in 1974 he had written: ‘I am convinced that the homelands concept could easily be the formula for the basis of a future South Africa, provided certain conditions were met’.

The search for inconsistencies in any politician’s ideas, especially if the time-span taken is long, is not only an ungratifying task, but also an unfair undertaking. The change of views may prove anything, among other things the ability of a politician in question to develop. I mention this fact only because in spite of the obvious contradiction, Buthelezi’s logic was always consistent.

In 1974 Buthelezi thought that since separate development reached the point of declarations of independence by several homelands it was a good moment for ‘a meaningful dialogue’, and a ‘dialogue without any prior condition’ at that, about the homeland policy. He thought that this dialogue was urgent, because, as he put it, ‘we have so little time’ in order to prevent ‘a revolution from below’. Buthelezi, in fact, started this dialogue in his Alfred and Winifred Hoernle Memorial lecture, when he put forward his constitutional proposals for South Africa. As we have already seen, he did not object to the establishment of independent homelands. However, he insisted that they should be truly independent.
The plan, offered by Buthelezi, was based on the idea of 'separate autonomous states linked together through a federal formula'. He said that the boundaries should be delineated according to the ethno-territorial principle: 'states in which the interests of an African ethnic group are paramount; states in which the interests of White people are paramount; special or federal areas which are multi-ethnic in character'. Each of the states should guarantee the property rights, freedoms and citizenship to all those who do not belong to the dominant 'national group' but live on its territory. Homeland citizens should have South African citizenship as well. The states should be truly independent and their legislatures should not be subordinate to a central parliament. Resources and economy should belong to all.¹⁴⁹

There is no need to go into further detail, since many aspects of this plan were, in fact, realised in the government's homelands policy and Buthelezi's KwaZulu Natal Indaba - but for one: true independence for 'ethnic territories' never materialised. Could it be otherwise?

Strange as it may seem, closest to Buthelezi's 1974 plan and especially his 1986 KwaZulu Natal Indaba constitutional proposals was the Soviet constitutional model. Suffice it to say that an ethno-territorial federation as proposed for South Africa, was a cast from the territorial structure of the Soviet state; the structure and composition of the bi-cameral KwaZulu Natal parliament and of the Soviet Supreme Council were exactly the same.¹⁵⁰ At least partially these curious parallels could be attributed to the influence of Rowley Arenstein, who at that time advised Buthelezi on many issues, and who regarded (and still regards) the Soviet model as an ideal solution of the ethnicity/nationality problem.¹⁵¹

The most important coincidence, however, was the authoritarian (totalitarian in the Soviet case) and repressive nature of central governments in both countries. This sole point was sufficient to make structural adjustments, aimed at any degree of independence, unworkable. In 1974 Buthelezi tried to brush this problem aside. He wrote: 'the whole issue of power at the centre... which bedevils any mutual understanding and mutual confidence could at least be postponed for several generations'.¹⁵² If he ever believed that it was possible to do so, he soon changed his mind.

A federal model, based on ethno-territorial units and bi-cameral parliament, surfaced again recently in the form of Inkatha constitutional proposals for post-apartheid South Africa.¹⁵³ It has played a role in shaping the kind of regionalism that was finally adopted by the Transitional Executive Council and came into existence after April 1994 elections.
Looking into the concepts of the nation that evolved among different South African opposition parties, one is struck by the degree of homogeneity among them. However bitter the political controversy, all the movements under consideration, except Inkatha, in this or that way connected nation-building with socialism. All of them, except Inkatha, stressed the role of the black working class in the process of nation-building. For the majority of them nation - be it an African, Black, or a South African one - was conditional on ideology. Struggle was an important component for either building the nation - or liberating it - or both.

All parties recognised the existence of cultural differences in South African society, but differed on how to deal with them: whether to incorporate them into a territorial nation that would amount to no more than a political union, or try to merge them into one cultural and linguistic entity. The problem of Whites seemed to be the main stumbling block for a consensus. Whether they were to be admitted on a definite set of political conditions, excluded altogether or accepted without any conditions at all - these questions ranged among the main issues defining political affiliations.

The PAC, the BC and Inkatha seemed to be inclined to perceive the nation (or nations) as a phenomenon endemic to human society, although they meant completely different things by it. Other parties claimed that nations are built, forged or constructed, and thus in this or that way 'susceptible to manipulation'.

Many of the differences were terminological, others were the result of a particular set of political grievances, which different movements had in their dealings with each other and with the regime. It would depend upon the political situation and not on the concepts themselves whether the ANC and Inkatha, for example, could brush their differences aside. The same is true of different Marxist parties. The most popular concepts cross party lines and become the common property of mass consciousness.

Steve Biko said once: ‘...People are shaped by the system even in their consideration of approaches against the system...'. It is certainly true of South African perceptions of nation and ethnicity. Ethnicity was the focal point of the apartheid doctrine, and it could not be otherwise for the liberation movements. Apartheid insisted on ethnic divisions among the Africans, and the opposition could not assert anything other than unity or, more specifically, one African or one South African nation. Apartheid was associated with capitalism, and there was no way the opposition could avoid connecting socialism with building a new nation in the post-apartheid South Africa. Ethno-territorial administrative structures were the embodiment of apartheid, and the liberation movements could not fail to arrive at the idea of a unitary state. Apartheid doctrine asserted that nations or ethnicities were a god-given, natural phenomenon, the opposition
deemed nations 'made', 'forged', created. The regime used its concept of nationhood against the majority of the South Africa’s population, and the opposition proclaimed a nation that is in the interest of and for the benefit of the majority.

In other words, most interpretations of nationhood by South African anti-apartheid movements were based on the rejection of apartheid concepts. Inkatha’s approach was based on adjustment, rather than rejection. In any case it was the apartheid situation that formed the mentality and ideology of the opposition to it, and thus to its concepts of nation - at least to a very large degree.

The opposition to apartheid has worked out alternative concepts of nation with a definite practical purpose in mind. If the apartheid doctrine was created to justify and forge Afrikaner nationalism, the purpose of the opposition was to mobilise the masses against apartheid. Who exactly was mobilised depended upon the authors of this or that particular concept.

Apartheid came to an end, and we seem to be witnessing a tendency for different concepts to draw even closer together than before. This process is more striking at the level of practice, than theory. The mobilising role of the alternative concepts of nation is not over yet, however. Now they often serve the purposes of mobilisation in the struggle for power, which can hardly depoliticise the issue.

Which of the concepts will prevail in the end? I do not believe that this question is correct. South Africans experience a cross-section of identities in their everyday lives. The one threatened most - or perceived to be threatened - at a given moment will become the most important. A particular understanding of a concept of nation, whatever it is, may not be a priority on the list of reasons for self-identification. It may become that if other priorities fail to bear fruit.

Will the old concepts be adapted to the new circumstances? Will they be able to mobilise people for creative purposes? What will be their role in the new situation, and what, in fact, was the role they have already played? Only the future will tell.
Endnotes


8. ‘Work in Progress’, No.28, August 1983.


15. Alexander N., in *Azania Worker*, p.6 (see footnote No.3).

16. Alexander N., in *Sow the Wind*, pp.55-56 (see footnote No.3).

17. Alexander N., in *Azania Worker*, p.7 (see footnote No.3).

18. See, for example, Alexander N., in *Sow the Wind*, pp.55-56; and *Azania Worker*, p.7.

19. Alexander N., in *Sow the Wind*, pp.51-52. See also *No Sizwe. One Azania, One Nation*, pp.50-51.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


29. Tambo O., Ibid. (see footnote No.26).


34. Ibid.


39a. According to Stalin, the nation 'is an historically formed stable community of people which comes into existence on the basis of a common language, common territory, common economy and psychological characters which manifests itself in the common culture'. 'It is clear' - Stalin wrote - 'that a nation, as every other historical phenomenon is subject to the laws of change, and has its own history, its beginning and its end'. Stalin I.V., Sobraniis Sochinenij (Collected Works), Moscow, Vol. II, pp.296-297.


41. Ibid., p.39.

42. Ibid., p.54.

43. We Are One People. Clarion Call for African Unity.


47. Comrade Mzala, Revolutionary Theory, p.39.

48. Ibid., p.40.

49. Ibid., p.54.

50. Ibid., p.54.


54. Ibid., p.29.

55. Ibid., p.30.

56. Ibid., p.30.

57. Ibid., p.30.

58. Ibid., p.29.

59. Ibid., p.35.


64. [Draft Constitution of the Pan Africanist Movement of Azania]. Adopted at the PAM congress in December 1-3, 1989, p.1. My copy does not have the title page.


68. *The 1959 Pan Africanist Manifesto*, part I.

69. *Ibid.*, part K.

70. *Policy and Programme...*, part 'Ultimate Goals'.

71. *Political Foundations...*, part D.

72. *It's PAC for True Liberation. Election Manifesto of the PAC of Azania*. N. p., n. d. (1994), part 'Glossary'. One obvious difference with previous definitions is the spelling of the word 'Africa'. In this document it is spelled as in Bantu languages: 'Afrika'. The 'African' is still spelled according to the rules of the English grammar.


74. *Who are the Africanists?*. N.p., n.d.

75. *Policy and Programme...*, part 'Africanism'.


85. Ibid., pp.34, 45.


88. The National Mandate in Azania..., p.33.

89. Policy and Programme..., part 'Historic Task'.

90. Political Foundations..., parts E & F.

91. Amended Constitution..., p.43

92. It's PAC..., pp.6, 8.

93. 'What Is Wrong with Black Consciousness?' (Some common questions and answers), in Solidarity, December 1986 (no.13), p.20


97. AZAPO on the March..., p.2.


99. What is Wrong..., p.20.

100. Advance, Resist, Defend..., p.6.

101. AZAPO on the March..., p.2. See also What is Wrong..., p.21.

102. Moodley E.S., Definition of the Term 'Black', p.11.


104. What is Wrong..., p.21.

105. 'Draft Position Paper on The Ideologies of Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness as They Have Developed in Occupied Azania (i.e. South Africa)' in Frank Talk, 1989/90, vol.3, p.91.

106. To stress its derogatory attitude to Whites the authors ignore capital letters when mentioning them.


108. Ibid., pp.89, 90.


111. Ibid., p.67.


113. Ibid., p.8.

114. Ibid., pp.8, 13.

115. Ibid., pp.12, 13.


117. Ibid., pp.7-8.


119. Memorandum for presentation to the State President, the Hon. F.W. de Klerk, DMS, by His Majesty King Zwelithini Goodwill ka Bhekuzulu, King of the Zulus. (Mimeo). Durban City Hall, Committee Room: 14 February 1994, p.2; Memorandum for presentation to the State President, the Hon F.W de Klerk, DMS, by His Majesty King Zwelithini Goodwill ka Bhekuzulu, King of the Zulus. (Mimeo). Durban City Hall, Committee Room: 22 February 1994, p.4.


122. Remarks Made on the Occasion..., p.9; White 'ethnicities' and nations are often mentioned elsewhere.

123. Jiyane Z., Ibid,


125. The two points of view are not inconsistent. Buthelezi spoke earlier and under different circumstances. King Zwelithini repeatedly praised Buthelezi's resistance to the 'so called independence' of KwaZulu under apartheid governments.


129. *Ibid*.


133. *Inkatha and the Struggle*..., p.8.


151. Interview with R. Arenstein, 21 October 1993, Durban.
152. *White and Black Nationalism*, p.11.


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