

# **SOW THE WIND**

## **Contemporary speeches**



**Neville Alexander**

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## FOREWORD

VERY OFTEN IN A COUNTRY'S historical development there are those who grasp a deeper sense of that movement. They, in very many ways, act as a centralising force – unifying the tentative, hesitant and emerging ideas into a single penetrating thought. Neville Alexander as a person, and his writings as a body of thought, do both these things with strength, vision and courage.

The single thrust that runs through much of Neville Alexander's writings is the dynamic relationship he perceives between the national struggle for liberation in South Africa and the future political vision. Central to this vision, are such issues as the relationship between racism and capitalism, the role of the working class in the liberation struggle, the process of nation building and the role of education in social change.

Neville Alexander's writing enables us to witness significant pointers in the political development of the oppressed community of South Africa.

This insight into these landmarks in the historical struggle of the oppressed is not, as Neville Alexander states in his preface, his idea – not his personal possession. They are ideas that have been shaped in the furnace of the liberation struggle in this country.

It has been the result of a coming together of the times, a vision of future society and a political commitment to bravely explore the vision. What is Neville Alexander's is undoubtedly his courage and commitment to articulate these issues and in his own life to give practice and strength to these views.

Writing from a fascist prison in Italy, Anton Gramsci commented about his political development – 'My entire

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intellectual formation was of a polemical nature, so that it is impossible for me to think “disinterestedly” or to study for the sake of studying. Usually I have to engage in a dialogue; be dialectical, to arrive at some intellectual stimulation’.

In very many ways, Neville Alexander’s writings are not written ‘disinterestedly’. They are written with a passionate concern. A concern and a commitment to the national liberation of South Africa and the creation of a new nation.

*John Samuel*

## PREFACE

LIKE MOST PEOPLE, I am extremely reluctant to rush into print. The printed word, after all, is fixed, as it were, for ever. One does not have the easy exit to blame mistakes on 'a slip of the tongue'. Circumstances do arise, however, that are sufficiently compelling to persuade one that it is justified that certain representative views be exposed to a wider audience than those for whom they were originally intended. Such a confluence of circumstances has now taken place in our beloved country, over which so many crocodile tears have been shed.

To say that we are once again standing at the crossroads of South African history is to say the obvious and the hackneyed thing. Yet, even the most self-evident truths have to be articulated from time to time, lest we begin to ignore them. Some of the ideas that recur in these speeches have already had an influence on events in this country. Against the background of what is taking place in South Africa today, it is not inappropriate that they be read more widely and with the greater attention that reading rather than listening to a speech makes possible.

They are not my ideas. On the contrary, I have always been no more than a spokesperson and a conduit for views that reach back deeply into the history of our struggle and that have been shaped by the masses in struggle as well as by the leadership and by intellectuals who have tried to interpret the significance and the direction of that struggle. Others have said the very same things, often in the very same combination, sometimes even in the very same way. Many have certainly said it much better than I could ever hope to do. If there is any special merit in my particular formulations, I am hardly the person to judge this.

The abiding focus of my own contribution is on subjects such as the link between racism and capitalism; the need for and the inevitability of socialist solutions to our problems hence the crucial need to ensure working-class leadership of our struggle; the importance of nation-building in order to eliminate ethnic and racial prejudice; the link between women's liberation, national liberation and class emancipation; the vital need to initiate and to sustain educational and cultural practices today that will systematically and inexorably undermine and counter the divisive and exploitative practices that derive from the pursuit of the interests of the dominating classes in an apartheid society.

None of these is new but all of them bear constant repetition and development. I trust that every person who reads these speeches will find some point of entry into this complex of thought that is derived in the most direct possible manner from our day to day struggle against apartheid and capitalism in South Africa.

In these times of 'night and fog' when mysterious death or imprisonment can so suddenly remove one from the scene, it is perhaps an act of wisdom to publish and be damned. I have no doubt that what I have said and the way I have sometimes said it will give rise to much discussion and disagreement. That is as it should be, at least in my opinion, provided that those who disagree with me go for my ideas, criticise them and put forward feasible alternatives. The sectarian and totalitarian hubris that seduces some people who disagree with one's ideas to brand one immediately as 'an enemy of South Africa' or as 'an enemy of the people' is without any doubt the greatest danger to our liberation struggle. My appeal to such people is to allow history to decide the questions on which we disagree fundamentally. My appeal to them is to remember the words of the prophet, 'For they have sown the wind,

and they shall reap the whirlwind.'

My thanks go to all those who, directly or indirectly, have helped me to reach my positions. On the personal side, my greatest debt is due to my late mother who was a source of constant support and quiet inspiration. On the public side, I can only thank the unfathomably tolerant working people of South Africa for demonstrating again and again that we need never doubt that no power on earth can ever destroy our humanity even in the most enslaved of societies. Finally, thanks to Skotaville Publishers for their almost reckless decision to publish these speeches.

*Cape Town, July 1985*



## LET US UNITE IN THE YEAR OF THE UNITED FRONT

With the junction between Xhosa and Khoikhoi in May 1799, the uncertainty and ambivalence which had marked the first weeks of the Khoikhoi uprising came to an end. If, in the beginning, their behaviour had had something of the characteristics of 'unorganized freebooting' rather than anti-colonial warfare, of protest and revolt rather than revolution, now, in conjunction with the Zuurveld Xhosa and the aggrieved imiDange of Agter Bruintjies Hoogte, they led what seems to have been a determined campaign to drive the Boers from the district ... They seized cattle and sheep in such large numbers that they threatened to destroy the very foundations of the colonial presence ... (S Newton-King, 'The Rebellion of the Khoi in Graaf-Reinet: 1779–1803')

### **Divide and rule**

ALL OF US KNOW the slogan: Unity is Strength. We know that all serious political leaders constantly appeal for unity. They know, and we know, that unity is the main weapon of an oppressed and exploited people against the oppressors.

And yet, in spite of all the appeals, we are surrounded by signs of disunity and division. It is very clear that different people mean different things when they speak about this precious idea of unity. It is clear, therefore, that all of us who are serious about liberation, need to look more carefully at this unity which we swear by and for which all of us say we are working.

In order to appreciate the importance of this question, let

us consider briefly what interest the rulers have in it. If unity is the main weapon of an oppressed people disunity or division is, conversely, the main weapon of the ruling class in an oppressive or exploitative society. From the earliest days of conquest and dispossession of the indigenous people of our country, rulers have acted on the principle of divide and rule. They know that in order to rule people without using too much open force you have to keep them divided, mistrustful of one another, competing against the other. And in order to divide the dominated classes in a state, various instruments of the division have been tried and tested in the past and continue to be used today. Most commonly, rulers have justified social divisions and inequalities on the ground of real or supposed differences in sex, 'race', language, religious beliefs and 'culture'.

In a country such as Ireland, we have an example of social divisions among the labouring people, which are justified by the rulers in terms of religious beliefs and practices. In South Africa, as we know only too well, supposed differences in 'race', 'culture', and language are used by the rulers to justify social inequality. Thus, groups of people who arrived in South Africa at different times and under different circumstances were divided and kept separate from one another deliberately, as a matter of state policy, because it was in the broad economic and political interests of the ruling class to keep them divided. In this way, 'whites', 'Africans', 'Indians' and 'coloureds' and alter, amaZulu, amaXhosa, BaSotho, BaTswana, Vhavenda, Griqua, Malay, etc. were artificially created and made to reproduce themselves as so-called 'ethnic groups'. Today, there are supposed to be as many as thirteen or fourteen of these ethnic groups, according to ruling class propaganda. Sometimes only the four population registration groups are acknowledged.

Clearly, in such a complex situation as that of South

Africa, it is necessary to look closely at the structure of our society in order to understand the problems of unity and to find the correct approach to the solution of these problems.

## **Classes in South Africa**

After more than a century of capitalist development in South Africa, the society can be said to have the following class structure.

At the top, there is the ruling *capitalist class* consisting of various strata. For historical reasons, almost all the individuals in this class are people who are officially classified as white persons. The capitalist class is interested only in making as much profit as possible, accumulating as much capital and wealth as possible. Like all other national capitalist classes in other parts of the world, it does this by exploiting the labour of the working class.

The working class of South Africa exists as such on paper only. In actual practice, this class is divided today into a 'white' and 'black' sector. The white workers were treated by the capitalist class as a privileged group. They were able, or allowed, to organize themselves into strong trades unions by means of which they were able to reserve the higher-paid skilled and semi-skilled jobs for themselves. They were given the right to vote and to be voted into parliament and other law-making bodies. Through these two fundamental human rights (the right to form trade unions and the right to the franchise), this group of workers was able to gain for itself an extremely strong position in the South African scheme of things. This was only possible because, in the final analysis, it was not against the interests of the capitalist class as a whole that such a privileged group of workers should monopolise advanced skills in the country. The racial division of the working class was a necessary part of the process of capital accumulation until very recently. Most of the white workers became an

aristocracy of labour, the right hand, as it were of the ruling class. Their privileged position was justified on the basis of the supposed 'fact' that all whites are superior in all respects to all blacks. As whites, therefore, this stratum of the working class was said to be entitled to higher pay than their black counterparts even when they performed exactly the same kind of work.

The vast majority of the people of South Africa are black workers. Of these, the largest section consists of city workers, about a third are farm labourers on white-owned farms, and the rest are migrant workers who spend varying lengths of time in the cities and are forced to live as 'single' men or 'women' in barracks, compounds, hostels or tents. Like workers throughout the world, the black workers have no means of producing their own subsistence. They possess nothing except the power to work. This labour power they sell to capitalist bosses who own the mines, factories, farms, etc. In return, they receive a wage which is supposed to afford them and their families adequate basic necessities like housing, food, clothing, education and so on. A part of every working day is spent in producing the equivalent of this wage. The rest of the day's work is surplus and is pocketed as profit by the capitalist bosses.

In this regard, there is no difference between the white and the black workers. They are all exploited in that they are forced to work for the benefit of the bosses even after they produced enough to feed, house, clothe and educate themselves and their families. So, where does the essential difference lie? The answer is that in any capitalist country that has reached the level of development of South Africa, there is a great need for a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. In most other capitalist countries, the question of who fills these places in the economy is decided by competition among the workers. However, even in these countries, there are all kinds of things that favour or obstruct people from moving up on the economic ladder of

the capitalist system. To take the USA, for instance: belonging to a certain religious group (say Jewish), having attended a certain school, coming from a certain country in Europe (say Ireland), having descended from slave stock, and so forth – all these factors can either help or prevent one from getting a particular job. Now as we know, in South Africa, this kind of decision is made on the basis of skin colour. If you are 'white' or 'black' you will automatically be considered for certain kinds of jobs but not for others.

Among the blacks, there are further subdivisions ('Africans', 'Coloureds', 'Indians') and among these subdivisions there are even further sub-divisions, e.g. Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho etc. In general, therefore, and until recently, almost all unskilled and semi-skilled work was done by black workers. Most skilled jobs and well paid civil service jobs were reserved for white workers. In this way the working class was and is effectively divided into two camps, which are further sub-divided. For example, in the Western Cape, the ruling party follows a deliberate strategy of dividing African workers from Coloured workers by means of its policy of Coloured Labour Preference in this region. By this is meant simply that no worker that is classified African can be offered a job in this region if there is another worker that is classified Coloured available for that job.

Today, there appears to be a move away from the strict racial separation of the working class. This has to do with the changed needs of the South African economy. In the period of capitalist development where large multi-national or transnational monopolies are effectively in control of the economy, capital intensive investments tend to become more important than the labour intensive investments of previous periods. This involved, among other things, an increasing demand for skilled labour and for lower managerial and supervisory personnel. Because the whites

cannot supply this demand any longer and because immigration is inadequate for this purpose, blacks have to be trained in large numbers to fill these positions. Technical and financial considerations make it difficult and in many cases impossible to continue to operate what we may call a split labour market. While it may take many years and many struggles yet, there is no doubt that the tendency of capitalist development in South Africa at present is away from the split labour market.

### **The middle class or the petty bourgeoisie**

Between the poles of the capitalist class and the working class, there is located a diverse group of people generally referred to as the middle class or, more in classically in a capitalist country, as the petty bourgeoisie. This group is defined by the fact that, unlike the workers, they either possess some means of producing their own subsistence besides their labour power, or they possess important and scarce skills for which they have to be paid very highly. Unlike the capitalist class, however, they do not exploit the labour of other people on a large scale. Usually, they do not employ much more than the labour of their own families.

As with the working class, this middle class is also divided between a white and black sector. Speaking generally the white middle class has tended to behave like any other petty bourgeoisie: they strive to become capitalists themselves. They believe in private property much as the big bourgeoisie want to do. This tendency persists even though it can be realised for only a handful of individuals in practice. We can say quite generally that the white petty bourgeoisie in South Africa is almost totally committed to the racist apartheid state as it exists at present.

In the case of the black petty bourgeoisie, the position is less straightforward. Like all other blacks, these people are racially oppressed. They are denied the franchise and thus

have little or no say in how the affairs of the nation shall be ordered; they cannot establish their business or their practices where they want to; they have, if they are classified 'African', to carry passes and to suffer all the other humiliations to which black people are subject in an apartheid society. Although they are not directly exploited, they are oppressed. Because of their wealth and their knowledge of affairs there is a sense in which they feel the stigma and the irritation of racist oppression even more acutely than do the black workers. Many individuals from this class can speak and act radically but the class as a whole will seldom act together or sustain a level of militant action as happens among the organized working class.

The civil servants, who have acquired some interest in perpetuating the apartheid state are the least likely to be drawn into militant opposition to the state and even less so to the capitalist system as such. The traditional petty bourgeoisie of small shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and artisans will, generally speaking, blow hot and cold depending on the pressures brought to bear on them from the capitalist state on the one hand and from the working class in struggle on the other hand. The upper stratum of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' of managers and supervisors behaves similarly, whereas the lower stratum of teachers, nurses, etc., who have in very many cases close and immediate bonds with the working class, tend to be more open to the influence of the working class in struggle.

In general, it is correct to say that the black petty bourgeoisie will be compelled or will want to identify their struggle with that of the working class in so far as the latter are concerned about destroying apartheid and bringing into being democratic structures. It is unlikely, however, that this petty bourgeoisie will 'commit suicide as a class' by simply ignoring their own class interests and class tendencies. They will, as a class, tend to moderate and to act as a brake on the workers' militant struggles.

In all that has been said up to now, we have spoken about tendencies. These are predispositions that flow from the objective location of a group of people in a given system of economy. It is generally correct to say that the workers will behave in a certain way or that the teachers will behave in a different way. But this does not mean that in any concrete situation we can predict accurately how any such group or class of people will in fact behave. There is no automatic, mechanical relationship between a class of people and concrete political action. This will depend on the level of organization of the class concerned, the quality of leadership and on clarity about strategy and tactics.

## **The national liberation movement and class leadership**

The liberation movement of Azania/South Africa is based upon the black working class and the revolutionary elements of the black petty bourgeoisie. By this we mean that in the present phase of the struggle against the capitalist system in South Africa it is these two classes of people who are prepared to risk all in order to change the system.

The black workers, more than any other group of people in South Africa, stand to gain from the disappearance of apartheid and capitalism. For this reason, it is this class that constitutes the driving force of the liberation movement. For this reason, too, one of the most decisive questions of our liberation struggle is that of class leadership of the struggle. Because of the different class interests and class tendencies that they represent it is quite clear that whether the working class or the middle class leads the movement will determine the future course of events not only in South Africa itself but in the whole of Southern Africa. Whether or not countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland, Mozambique, Lesotho and Botswana can break out of the



limits set to their economic and socio-political development by their colonial and neocolonial heritage depends on which class leads the struggle for Azanian liberation.

Because the black working class, as we have shown, consists of various strata (city, farm and migrant workers), many differences of immediate interests and other contradictions do arise among the workers. However, from the outline given above, it is obvious that these differences are not necessarily hostile or antagonistic ones (unlike the difference of interest between capitalist bosses and workers). One of the most important tasks of the liberation movement is precisely to unite the different tendencies among the workers as well as those elements among the middle class who are prepared to accept the paramouncy of the interests of the working class.

It must be clear to us now that the political organizations of the oppressed and exploited people will reflect and represent the interests of one or other of these two classes or a combination of them all. Historically, the views of the petty bourgeoisie have dominated the organizations of the people, including the political organizations in the liberation movements. The main reason for this was the fact that, until recently, most people thought that the liberation struggle was in practice – whatever the theory – simply directed against apartheid, racial discrimination and racialism. Those who pointed out that the struggle against apartheid and capitalism is one struggle, were hardly heard amidst the popular anti-apartheid call. This situation is the ideal one for the black petty bourgeoisie which as a class is prepared to fight against apartheid but not capitalism. In addition to this basic factor, we have to remember that the petty bourgeoisie have a better formal education than the workers. In an immediate sense, one can say that they are more acutely frustrated by the injustice and deprivations imposed on them by the system of racial discrimination. Because they have money and high aspirations – they want

to be engineers, pilots, medical specialists, architects, etc., they refuse to accept the artificial manner in which they are denied equal opportunities for further development and enrichment in this society.

No wonder, therefore, that middle-class leaders (in origin and in orientation) and middle-class strategies were predominant in the liberation movement until the early 1970s. Since then, we have seen the growing development of working class consciousness in the organizations of the people. More and more, the interests of the workers are becoming the dominant interests in the liberation movement. More and more, the people's organizations are beginning to question not simply the fact of racial discrimination but also the capitalist system which is clearly, in South Africa, the tap root of racial oppression and class exploitation.

## **Organizations of the people**

Different organizations, it is clear, tend to represent primarily the interests of one or other class. But even if there had been only one social class involved in the struggle for liberation there would still have been more than one organization trying to organize that class for the liberation struggle. It is very seldom that one organization alone represents the interests of a given class. We need only look at the different parties that represent the interests of the (white) capitalist class in South Africa (National Party, Progressive Federal Party, New Republic Party, etc.). Differences may arise over strategy and principles that make it impossible for people to remain in the same organization. Yet, these organizations will reflect in some way the interests of the same class or strata of that class. For example, there is no doubt that although both Progs and Nats reflect mainly the interests of mine-owners, bankers, factory owners and capitalist merchants, the Nats have a

stronger link with white farmers, civil servants and with privileged white workers, while the Progs are much more strongly associated with mine and factory owners. These parties differ from each other mainly with regard to their conception of what is the best course of action for the ruling class to survive its present crisis. On the side of the people, we find the same kind of situation, i.e., different organizations putting forward different strategies, propagating different ideologies, yet representing without any doubt the interests of workers and/or the black petty bourgeoisie.

## **Unity**

Two or more organizations can genuinely represent the interests of a given class or a stratum of a class. About this, there need be no more confusion in our ranks. If there are mainly differences of strategy that divide these organizations, unity will be easier to attain than if there are serious differences of principle. But what do we mean by 'unity'? Most of us probably think that unity is something that people must simply want hard enough for it to come about. This is far from being the case. In fact, the achievement of unity is a complex process, one that is beset by problems that affect people in a most personal, emotional way. In order to bring about the situation where different organizations with different histories and different goals are prepared to plan political actions and campaigns together, much hard work is required. Many risks have to be taken in order to gain the trust of people who have all along considered 'the others' to be 'on the other side'.

## **Who is the enemy?**

The problem of unity rests on the definition of the enemy. That is to say, only those people can hope to unite their

forces who identify the enemy in a broadly similar manner. This seems simple enough, yet it is an extremely complex matter. For one thing, even if different tendencies or organizations can agree on how to define the enemy at any given moment, this 'enemy' changes from period to period. Groups of people who may yesterday have appeared to be on the side of liberation may tomorrow clearly stand against the forces of liberation.

Who would doubt today that the Matanzimas, the Sebes or the Mphephus are on the side of the enemy? These people and the power cliques that they represent have a stake in separate development/apartheid/capitalism. They have said and they have shown that, like the majority of whites in South Africa, they are prepared to die in order to defend the system with or without certain changes in the practices of racial discrimination. When we consider the leaders of Inkatha, the SAIC and the Labour Party on the other hand, many people would hesitate to say bluntly that they too have placed themselves on the side of the enemy. Yet, it is obviously a vital question as far as the attainment of unity in the liberation movement is concerned. If some of us are prepared to tolerate the collaborationist strategies of the so-called Black Alliance while others are not, this simply means that we differ as regards our definition of the enemy. It means, further, that there is no basis for unity between us. From this practical example, we can see how complicated the question of unity can become.

A point that is worth making is the fact that most of the organizations of the people, in practice if not in words, have started from an anti-white position. That is, they usually define the white man as the enemy. Unity therefore involved uniting those who were opposed to the whites. But once it became clear to most people that there are indeed many black people who gain from the system of racial oppression and who are prepared to die for it, their idea of who the enemy is had to be revised. Colour alone

was clearly not a sound enough measuring rod to decide on who our enemies or our friends are. Almost all the organizations of the black people have gone through this process. Definitions of the enemy based upon colour as the mark of friend or foe have generally speaking, tended to give way to definitions based on a class analysis of our society. Of course, this facet alone does not mean at all that people have arrived at identical conclusions. There is class analysis and there is 'class analysis'. Besides differences of theory and method, there are numerous questions and accidental issues that can keep organizations divided in spite of broadly similar approaches to the liberation struggle.

One of the most dangerous attitudes in the liberation movement is that of sectarianism. This attitude is characterised by a belief that only my party or organization is right at all times or, to put it differently, everyone who does not agree with my party or with our political line is in the enemy camp. Sectarrians ignore the fact that different organizations can in different periods of the development of the struggle genuinely represent the interests of the oppressed and exploited classes. They have the approach of those religious sects to whom alone 'the truth' has been revealed once and for all. By hook or crook they will cook up arguments to demonstrate that those who disagree with them are 'enemies of the people'. The upshot of their disastrous activities is always disunity, division and waste of precious time and energy.

### **Three levels of unity**

There are three levels or degrees of unity. These we shall call tactical, strategic and theoretical (or principled) unity.

Tactical unity is achieved when two or more organizations, starting from two different sets of principles and following two different strategies happen to adopt the

same position about a particular political event or action. Thus, for instance, both organizations may call for a boycott of a particular government-created body such as the management committee or the community council. One organization may be following a strategy of non-collaboration and therefore automatically rejects participation in such a body. The other organization may merely be opposed to the fact that the management committee or community council does not have enough powers and therefore its reason for boycotting the particular elections is the consequence of a completely different strategy, namely, that of getting more (and 'better') ethnic representation. In a case such as this, it is almost too much to speak of unity. However, the fact that the members of both organizations call on the people to do the same thing – to boycott the election – does in fact create the possibility of one influencing the other in the longer term. Usually, in such cases, there is no thought of any formal alliance because the two parties represent such totally different positions. 'Unity' in this case, is no more than a coincidence. The parties involved advocate the same action but for different, even opposed reasons.

A case in point is the community council elections in Soweto during September 1980. Azapo and other non-collaborationist organizations of the people called for a boycott of elections. At the same time, Inkatha called for a boycott but for completely different reasons. According to its publicity officer, Mr Peter Davidson, Inkatha boycotted the elections because 'at this stage (involvement in community councils) could be damaging or disastrous to Inkatha's image'. Their main objection was that the councils were not 'economically viable' because they did not own 'the land on which Soweto stands'. Davidson ended his statement by saying that 'Inkatha is not doctrinaire but practical. When and if these fundamental changes are made by the government, Inkatha will show its appreciation by

fielding candidates who are likely to produce the desired results' (*Cape Times*, 26 July 1980).

The basis for what we have called strategic unity is present when two or more organizations with different principles and conceptions of struggle define their political goals during a given phase of struggle in the same terms. A good example of this kind of unity is the case of the united front. In this case, the parties agree 'to march separately but to strike together', that is to say they retain their organizational independence but plan their actions jointly as far as is necessary and possible for the purposes of the united front.

There are many historical examples of such united fronts. This is clearly a higher form and level of unity than the coincidental 'tactical unity' referred to before. United fronts are usually fertile soil for creative and constructive debate about ideological and theoretical questions. The members of the different parties or organizations, as they learn to act together and through struggle to trust one another in spite of party differences, gradually begin to discuss these differences and to influence one another. Often, the successful united front leads to a converging and even a merging of parties that were previously opposed to or in competition with one another. The prevailing spirit in a united front is one of tolerance for the other parties' point of view within the framework of the common strategic goal. Members of the different parties continue to believe in the correctness of their own party but they accept the right of others to hold to their parties' position. In this sense, the united front is a school of democratic attitudes. The fundamental premise of the united front is the acceptance of all parties that the members of each party in the front act with integrity and that they genuinely desire to further the interests of the workers even if the members of the other parties are sceptical about their methods of doing so. While they do not give up their criticism of the other party

positions they tend not to make the points of difference into the main points of public debate.

The development of Frelimo in Mozambique is a good example of a successful united front. Out of the original three organizations that began by co-operating with one another despite bitter disputes, there emerged eventually a single organization in which there was agreement not only about the immediate goal of overthrowing the Portuguese colonial regime but also largely about matters of principle. A recent example from our own situation is the attempt that is being made to bring together the trade unions of the black workers, despite differences of approach to strategic and theoretical questions affecting trade unionism, the state and the political struggle in South Africa.

The united front should be distinguished from the popular front. This latter alliance or bloc of classes includes one or other section of the capitalist class, usually the liberal bourgeoisie. Such an alliance between the workers and the capitalist class is by definition confined to the goals of the capitalist system. In South Africa, for instance, liberal elements might be prepared under certain circumstances to make common cause with the workers and the radical petty bourgeoisie provided the struggle is directed against apartheid and not against the foundations of the capitalist system.

It was suggested above that united fronts can create the political conditions in which *principled unity* can develop. In this case, the different organizations come together to accept the same programme of principles and for all practical purposes behave as one party. This can come about because of some great national event which the different organizations decide to approach in the same way, or as the result of confidence built up through a united front strategy, as we saw in the case of Frelimo.

With this form or level of unity, we reach the highest possibility of uniting the oppressed and exploited people.



This is the final organizational goal of the broad liberation movement. To get there, much tolerance, much patient persuasion and discussion and much honouring of democratic principles and procedures will be required.

### **Build the united front**

The intensification of the struggle in Southern Africa and the mortal danger of disunity and civil war among the oppressed people have created a situation of urgency. Ever since the historic events of 1976 it has become clear to all serious-minded militants that we can work together and that we can have unity in action even though we have not reached full agreement on all principles.

Although some recent developments appear to contradict this tendency of people's organizations to work together, it is clear that most serious militants realise that such developments would constitute a modern-day national suicide. There is great need for a national debate on the principles and practice of the united front.

The time has come to combine our forces in a united front that represents the vast majority of the black workers and of the radical black middle class. The challenge to the oppressed and exploited people has never been greater in our entire history. Against the background of the heroic events since the Soweto uprising, there is no doubt that the organizations of the people will rise to the occasion and will create through united action the instruments required to meet this challenge.

Let us make 1982 into the year of the united front and raise our struggle for liberation from apartheid and capitalism onto a higher level. Let us unite for a non-racial, democratic and undivided Azania-South Africa!

## FUNERAL ORATION: JEAN NAIDOO

*(Dr Alexander delivered this paper to commemorate the death of Jean Naidoo on 2nd November 1982 at the Athlone Civic Centre, Cape Town.)*

WHEN WE COMPLETE THE READING of a book, we close it and put it away. But we do not simply forget it. We think about it, we try to recall the most striking or the most important aspects of it. We analyse it so that we can get some understanding of what it meant. Any book, even the ones we read with only superficial attention, has an influence on our thinking and on our action.

Such a book has now been closed with the tragically early death of our friend and comrade – Jean. And now for a few minutes, let us undertake such a review of her life and its meaning for us whom she has left behind in the midst of life and in the midst of the struggle to which she was so deeply committed.

Others will say more about the personal side of life, about the mother, the wife, the mortally ill patient. But I want none the less to say the obvious thing, precisely because it seems to be so terribly important. Here was a woman who since her early youth was struck down and virtually bedridden with a cruel illness that involved her and those near and dear to her in moments and periods of bitter pain and anguish. There is a saying that only those deserve freedom and life who have to fight for it every day. I know few people of whom this was more true than it was of Jean. Her body was indeed a weak vessel for such a stormy soul. Yet, she was never far behind, she was often right up front, when something had to be done to push things forward. The thought that comes to one is if such a terribly sick person could do so much, was prepared to be

of active service 24 hours per day, how can we who have the good fortune of a healthy body, how can *young* people, shirk their national duty?

I make no apologies for dwelling on the more clearly political side of the late Jean's contribution to our lives and to our struggle. For she was nothing if she wasn't in every fibre of her body a political person; most of her relationships had a clear political dimension even though they were deeply human. There was nothing cold and artificial about her. Indeed, she was all too human. Like all of us, she had great strengths but also great and even glaring weaknesses. One of her strengths was her forthrightness, her refusal to have any truck with unnecessary and lying courtesy. She would certainly not expect us to paint a picture of some faultless superwoman. I have said she was all too human. As a result, she was sometimes unpopular with and even avoided by some of her friends. But always, her deep sincerity, her commitment, won through. She was often a difficult person to work with but once you had her agreement you could rely on her.

There are three things about Jean's political practice that I wish to highlight. (a) Ever since we first got to know the stunningly attractive and vivacious young girl when she, like hundreds of other young students, joined the Cape Peninsula Students' Union in 1956–57, she was dedicated to the ideal of unity in action. Those were the years of the ruthless implementation of the Eiselen-Verwoerd final solution called Bantu/Coloured/Indian Education. Those were the years when University Apartheid was about to become law. Students of the oppressed people throughout the country mobilised to resist these measures. Jean, together with thousands of others, tried to work towards the formation of a Progressive National Students' Union. Before this ideal could be realised, of course, the bludgeon fell and student opposition was almost obliterated for ten

silent years.

But Jean stood by those first principles. She believed passionately that oppressed people of different political persuasions and belonging to different organizations should and can work together. She accepted that in a (national) democratic movement there must be room for disagreement as long as basic principles such as non-racialism are not compromised. She refused to be drawn into the vulgar game of slandering and abusing political rivals and opponents. She herself changed her political position and organization but never denied that her former associates were sincere and genuinely committed. Whenever she could, she would use her personal relations with them in order to smooth the way for joint action on important local and national issues. If unity is a weapon, she believed, it is not one that can be made while one is sitting and talking in the comfort of one's home. It is a weapon that has to be forged in the heat of action.

(b) Everyone knows that Jean was totally committed to the youth. In a sense, she herself never grew up. She was always the young one, trying to advise and to spur on the younger ones, putting her experience and her knowledge at their disposal. In this she was giving expression to the gut instinct of the mother and the parent but also of the serious political activist who knows that without youth, a political movement soon becomes a hindrance no matter how fine the words it might use from time to time. The present regime is still desperately and vainly trying to regain the confidence or at least the neutrality of the black youth which it lost in the five fateful years between 1976 and 1980. Those were also the years when the attitude of people like Jean towards the oppressed youth ensured that youth would become the mainstay of our liberation struggle. Jean's activities were centred on the working people, especially the youth. She never doubted that it is out of the misery and humanity of this class of the oppressed people

that the revolutionary truth and the will to action is born every hour of the day.

(c) Perhaps some may think that it is not necessary to make this last point about Jean. She was a woman. But she never thought that this was some special attribute. She, like all of us who are committed to the struggle for liberation and for equality, fought for women's right to be treated as equals and to make an equal contribution to the struggle. She was careful never to separate the struggle for the emancipation of women from the struggle for national liberation and for freedom from exploitation. Her own life was a perfect example of how self-evident it is that in a liberation movement women and men, young and old, should be able and willing to co-operate as equals and how this co-operation brings into being human relations of a totally different quality from those almost anonymous people on whom the entire liberation struggle depends. Those people who do not live in the headlines but whose constant presence is a rallying point for all the forces of liberation inside our country. Jean was always there: she was one of the first people to welcome me back into the grim reality of apartheid South Africa after I emerged from the even grimmer reality of a ten-year prison term on Robben Island in 1974.

The time to say farewell to a dear friend and a loyal comrade has come. I am happy to be able to be one of those who can say publicly:

You have done your duty dear comrade. The flag you held will be picked up by one of the young people you loved so much. The struggle continues while you rest lightly in the soil of Africa. Your spirit will blow through the ranks of the young men and women whom our bitter history is calling up to do their national service for the liberation of our country from the bondage of capitalist apartheid.

To Balu, your loyal comrade, to your children, to your

family and to your friends, the only consolation I can give is to say as clearly as possible: This was the meaning of her life: Let this meaning become richer as the years go by: There is no better homage that you (and all of us) can render.

## THE NATIONAL SITUATION

*(This paper was delivered at an annual congress of the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO) in December 1982.)*

WE MEET AT ONE of the most important moments in the history of this country. For reasons which I shall expound in more detail presently, the rulers of South Africa are faced with the most severe crisis that their system of racial capitalism has yet had to contend with. A complete realignment of political forces involving a major shift in the direction of national affairs is being undertaken in order to salvage the system that guarantees for white South Africa perpetual domination of the black working people. For the politicians of the ruling class, this new situation is unexplored territory. It is a situation fraught with disaster for them and we will do well to remember this since it implies mortal danger for some of us who are defined by them as being on the left; those whom they see as terrorist predators lurking in the African bush to pounce on the apparently intrepid but actually timid 'explorers'.

The crisis of the system of white supremacy is the historic opportunity for the oppressed and exploited people of our country. How to take the tide at the flood has become the vital question in the politics of national liberation for all those who would consciously intervene in the great movement of history which is now engulfing Southern Africa. For we, too are in many ways venturing out into uncharted seas where any false tack can lead to instant and irrecoverable disaster. It ought not to surprise us, therefore, that the present controversies within the liberation movement, properly so called, concern the compass of principle, programme and policy which will help to steer us

into the safe and exciting harbour of a socialist Azania.

## **The crisis of the rulers**

Let us consider some relevant aspects of the rulers' position. The rapid development of capitalism during the last two-and-a-half decades has given rise to contradictions which cannot be resolved within the system even though this fact does not mean that the system will break down or collapse of its own accord. The decisive importance of the manufacturing industry, the increasing prominence of transnational corporations, the importance of foreign trade for the South African economy: these and many other developments have rendered the economy vulnerable to the ebb and flow of world capitalism. Gone forever are the days when shortages of skilled labour could be corrected relatively easily by importing white immigrants from Western Europe, North America and down under.

Today, profits and employment are generated crucially in the manufacturing sector even though the gold-mining industry remains pivotal to the economy. That is to say, any downward movement in the business cycle, any inflationary infection from outside South Africa, has catastrophic potential for the system as a whole. I want to draw your attention to only two important consequences of the qualitative change that has taken place in the economic life of the country.

First, adequate numbers of skilled people can no longer be imported from abroad. This means that more and more black people (those classified Black, Coloured and Indian) have to be trained to occupy skilled positions. Usually, this can only be done by kicking upstairs the white worker occupants of the job category concerned. They are graced with the title of supervisor or junior manager and remunerated accordingly in return for shutting up and forgetting about their holy cow of job reservation. Usually,



also, the former job category is diluted or sub-divided so that two or more so-called semi-skilled black workers producing much more efficiently than the pampered and sheltered skilled white workers of yesterday, earn relatively speaking only a fraction of his or her wages.

This process coupled with the overall expansion of the economy has led to a fundamental alteration in the relative strategic importance of white and black workers within the system of South African economy. Previously, white workers had the power to cripple the economy because of their virtual monopolisation of productive skills. Today, increasingly it is the black workers who are acquiring this strategic leverage. The white workers, on the other hand, are becoming more and more dispensable as a class. We shall see presently what the political implications of this development are.

A second consequence of the qualitative change in the economic life of South Africa is the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to lessen the effects of unemployment and underemployment by turning on and off the tap of migrant labour as in the past. The proletarianisation and urbanisation of the black people cannot be halted or even braked. They have to be treated as a modern labour force as in any other comparable industrialised country. Imagine for a moment what chaos would ensue if the road haulage drivers and the drivers of delivery vans and trucks in Johannesburg alone were to refuse to drive their vehicles for a few days! The dilemma for the rulers in this connection is how to reconcile the iron laws of capitalist development with the bantustan/apartheid strategy designed for an earlier phase of that development. Koornhof's Bills have in this context a historic character similar to the notorious segregatory Hertzog Bills of fifty years ago.

From within the system, pressures are building up such that it can no longer be run in the same way as before. The

acquisition of productive skills and strategic leverage as well as the dramatic increase in their purchasing power have imparted to the black workers and their children a self-confidence and a historic optimism that makes them demand ever more insistently their human rights to equality and liberty. Daily, in factories, in mines and even on many white-owned farms they prove that they are not the simple moronic labour units of Verwoerdian mythology but normal flesh-and-blood human beings who are becoming ever more conscious of their historic missions to liberate the entire population of South Africa. A whites-only government cannot represent this surging mass of humanity nor can it hope to repress them forever. Hence the political and social crisis of the ruling class.

From outside the system, taking for our present purposes Southern Africa only, new and inexorable forces have come into being and press in remorselessly on those at the helm of South African affairs. Ever since the defeat of Nazism, the days of white racism have been numbered in the world. Decolonisation was one of the processes that expressed this global demise of the master race. The notorious white south of Africa has during the past ten years witnessed in the most concrete possible manner the irreversible defeat of the force of racism and colonialism. The peoples of Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe in quick domino-like succession won their independence from European colonial power. Namibia, 'the last colony', will no doubt achieve formal political independence in the short term. In all these countries, despite problems, set-backs and zigzags, great events are taking place, events which cannot but influence decisively what is to happen in Namibia and in South Africa itself.

(Permit me to issue a warning in brackets at this point. Against the background of rapid historical change that I have sketched, it is well to remember that yesterday's revolutionary position becomes today's conservative bastion. After all, even the oppressors themselves today

indulge in the discourse of 'decolonisation' and 'non-racialism'. The very language of politics and of social theory has become suspect and though it is still very important to listen to the words people use, we have to turn them over and over again as we would do with suspected counterfeit money. It is more than ever before crucial to practice the gospel according to Dr Faustus who preached that 'In the beginning was the deed'.)

For the rulers of South Africa, the collapse of Portugal's African empire and the liberation of Zimbabwe meant quite simply the breaching of the outer walls that had for so long protected the sub-imperialist citadel against the forces of 'Marxist communism' and 'terrorism', i.e. against the African liberation movement. It meant also the possibility – even the probability – that the struggle of the African people in Southern Africa could be internationalised to the point where the South African Defence Force would be only one of a number of comparable military forces in the region. None other than the General Secretary of the United Nations Organization (UNO), Dr Perez de Cuellar, warned some two weeks ago that unless the 'Namibia question' were settled expeditiously, Southern Africa could become another Middle East. There are many lessons to be learnt from this Middle Eastern analogy and it is of great importance that we study that situation in detail.

## **The strategies of the rulers**

For the beneficiaries of the system of racial capitalism, the choice that presents itself on the political-strategic level is straightforward: either continue in the old way without conceding anything to the rising force of the black workers' movement, or try to overhaul the system in such a way that some of the pressure is taken off it. These two positions have been described very misleadingly in the idiom of the Afrikaans press as *verkramp* and *verlig*. Misleadingly,

because both are conservative positions in fact.

Let us look briefly at the *verkramp*te option, bearing in mind that our analysis simplifies a complex network of tendencies. Treurnicht and those to the right of him believe that it is possible to conduct the business of the capitalist class by more and more repression: regimentation of labour, influx control, pass laws, group areas, impoverished bantustans and by all the other coercive measures on the statute book of apartheid South Africa. In other words, follow the rule of Verwoerd by not yielding an inch, batter down any black opposition as soon as it rears its head, sit tight and wait for the world to come to its senses. They proceed from the premise that nothing has changed and that precious little will change. From the point of view of statecraft, they believe that the class alliance on which the South African state was based since 1924 continues to be adequate for the functioning and survival of the system of 'private enterprise'. In 1924, as you know, the historic compromise between the white workers and the white capitalist and middle classes resolved the bitter struggles of the previous two decades between them. The white working class became a junior partner in the class alliance that governed South Africa for the profit of the local and foreign owners of the mines, the farms, the factories, the shops and the banks. The white workers formally entrenched their vested interest in perpetuating the system of racial capitalism. More than for any other class of people on earth the belief in white superiority and white supremacy became for the white South African workers a vital principle. Millions of white men, women and children were systematically reduced to incredible monsters of racism because, in the final analysis, their economic and social privileges were reinforced by this ideology of racism.

Today, as I have indicated, the economic basis of this belief and of the relevant social practices is fast disappearing. Objectively, therefore, a Treurnicht government, were it

to come to power, would be compelled in the medium term to do the same kinds of things as those which P.W. Botha and company are trying to do today; trying to overhaul their system with a view to avoiding its total destruction.

## **Enlightened despotism**

For historical reasons, the capitalist system in South Africa is administered today by the National Party moulded in the image of the likes of the Bothas, the De Klerks, Malans and Heunis. These people, representatives in the main of the Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie, have chosen the so-called *verligte* option, one which has been called a twentieth-century system of enlightened despotism. What exactly are they trying to do in Southern Africa?

Let us look at the domestic situation first. They claim that they want 'to move away from discrimination based on colour'. They claim that they are carrying out the historic mission of the Afrikaner volk which is, in their view, to afford each of the so-called peoples of South Africa its god-given right of self-determination. The grand design in which their projected reforms, that is adaptations, of the apartheid system, will eventuate is a 'confederation of sovereign independent Southern African states'. 'Nations' rather than the 'races' of yesteryear are the social entities which have to be manipulated and accommodated in their ethnic utopia.

Decoded, this means simply that the bantustans, whether allegedly 'independent' or not, are to be brought together with the Republic of South Africa at the top through their respective elites (consisting of bourgeois and aspiring bourgeois politicians) while the labouring people at the bottom, the vast majority of the people, are to be trapped in a divisive and debilitating ethnic consciousness. In this way, the South African state is to be remoulded. Sixty years after the compromise of 1924, which led to the

co-optation of the white working class, a new alliance is being forged to broaden the base of the South African state and thus to strengthen it. Just as the Rand Revolt of 1922 signalled to the ruling classes the urgency of the times, so the Soweto uprising of 1976 signalled to the National Party the lateness of the hour.

Consequently, the alliance with the white workers is to be downgraded in importance. Instead, the junior partners in the new alliance are to be the black middle class and their political representatives whether or not they are at present collaborating in the political institutions created by the South African state. A class of black people is to be nurtured in and through a slightly modified apartheid system so that they will have a vested interest in the perpetuation of that system. From this group, the so-called leaders of the oppressed will have to go forth and be co-opted by the system. They will be advertised and put up as the models for the black workers and unless the workers produce and maintain an independent leadership, they – the vast majority of our people will in effect be rendered leaderless and defenceless. Already the bantustan misleaders, of whom the Sebe brothers are only the most vulgar and brutal specimens, are showing that a small section of black people in South Africa are prepared to imprison and perhaps even to kill other black people for the maintenance of the apartheid status quo. Let us have no illusions: the vulgarity of the bantustan leadership should not make us forget that there are other more subtle ways in which a middle class can be tied hand and foot to an oppressive system. The virtual neutralisation of our teachers as political animals through salary increases, fringe benefits and the threat of dismissals should be a salutary reminder to all of us that middle-class people can be trapped systematically unless there is an overwhelming countervailing force towards which they can gravitate.

In 1924, it was the Creswells and the Boydells of the

white Labour Party that tied the white workers to the capitalist bandwagon. We must not allow the Currys and the Rajbansis of the Coloured Labour Party and the South African Indian Council (SAIC) to tie the oppressed people to an exploitative system for another sixty years!

The political problem for the National Party is that of persuading the white workers to accept their historical demotion without allowing the black working class to fill the resultant power vacuum. They know that certain laws have to be altered in order to meet the needs of economic development; they know that some black faces have to appear to have a semblance of real power along lines similar to the bantustans, the right to tax 'their own people', to imprison them, to promote individuals and groups through the control of patronage, and so forth. These are, as it were, derived rights which, though they are not bogus, are nonetheless revocable by instances other than those that elected the incumbents to their positions of 'power'.

Now the majority of whites, especially the white workers, are intransigently and paternalistically opposed to any such 'concession', however illusory it might be. Their racism and their fears of losing their privileged position have made them into an historical road-block, an obstruction to even the modicum of reform which the theorists of the ruling class acknowledge to be necessary for salvaging the system. Parliament represents these people. Consequently, the white parliament has become a brake on progress as defined by Botha, Heunis and company. Parliament, therefore, has to be stripped of this power of blocking 'reform' and, if necessary, it should be eliminated altogether. How is this to be done? By means of a multi-faceted strategy which is now being carefully orchestrated in the guise of the National Party's amended version of the President's Council's proposals. An elaborate, but completely transparent charade is taking place before our eyes. All the actors in it, let me stress, are fully aware of the

fact that it is no more than a charade. Curry, Hendrickse and their likes are not only selling out as they have been doing since 1969, they *know* that they are doing just that.

Through the Executive Presidency proposed by the President's Council, a systematic disempowerment of parliament is being undertaken. Until they are certain that they have the measure of their ultra-right critics the Botha regime will not wish or dare to transform the so-called white chamber of the proposed tricameral parliament into the dummy parliament which is its destiny. The significant point is, however, that dummy representation is now becoming the norm for the whites also. Do not be surprised if in the next election large numbers of whites boycott the elections for this very reason.

Parliament, one of the historic gains of the bourgeois revolutions of nineteenth-century Europe, even this crippled parliament that has never meant anything to black South Africans, is thus being thrown on to the dustheap of South African history by the latter-day representatives of the bourgeoisie themselves. Let us not fall into the media-induced and liberal-inspired cliché of lamenting 'the decay of parliament'. All the laws under which we suffer, every single one of them, have emerged from the unholy bowels of that talkshop.

Of course, the disguised or open military rule which the elimination of parliament implies, will also mean that the left will be whipped with scorpions. We on the left, as defined by them, must gird our loins for Latin-American treatment. It is good to know in advance what awaits us so that we can make the necessary preparations. Those who are timid will vanish in the course of the next year or two!

'Reform from above', as with the enlightened despots of the eighteenth century in Europe. Decimation of the radical or revolutionary groups as the reward to those who are being asked to accept the need to make some concessions. These are the plans of the rulers. The dummy chambers for



the puppet Coloured and Indian MPs are instituted not so much to gain the allegiance of those people who are classified 'coloured' and 'Indian'. The government of this country, unless it is grossly misinformed, knows better than the Labour Party that since 1976 it has lost any hope of gaining the allegiance of any section of the black youth except for the few thousand who are driven by unemployment or forced by juvenile criminality to join the white armed forces. Even these young people must represent a vulnerable spot in the vaunted armoury of the South African Defence Force, if not today then certainly tomorrow!

It is as well to understand that the tricameral parliament and all the other fancy concessions made in the President's Council proposals are meant in the short term to accustom the white electorate to the idea of what is called the 'sharing of power', i.e., elite-level co-operation for the continued domination and exploitation of the overwhelming majority of the black population. Even if the oppressed people were to reject the scheme 100%, Botha and company would still have succeeded in their main intention, namely, to get the white voters to accept the idea of 'consociation'.

## **President's Council proposals and the Koornhof Bills**

This raises a fundamental question. Most people view the so-called new dispensation in the ethnic terms in which the government and its agencies have promoted and marketed it. They speak as though this is a matter affecting the 'Whites', the 'Coloureds' and the 'Indians'. But in reality, we are faced with a completely different picture once we analyse the process as a whole.

The Koornhof Bills, in particular the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill, and the proposals of the President's Council are part and parcel of a single

strategy. The Koornhof Bills are designed to formalise and entrench the division between so-called permanent urban blacks and so-called rural or homelands blacks. Millions of people are to be locked up in arid and desperate so-called homelands to become commuters and contract workers in the white paradise of South Africa as and when required. Riekert's influx control, pass-law regulations will make sure that few if any escape the net. 'Permanent Urban Blacks' will eventually get freehold rights in their locations, bogus under-capitalised local authorities (so-called municipalities) and finally a fourth chamber in the super-dummy parliament through which they will again be linked up in the confederation with their so-called rural kith and kin. Botha cannot sell this line to his voters at present but this is the logic of his position. In other words, what is happening to 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' today will be happening to 'Permanent Urban Blacks' tomorrow. The civilised coloured policy of today is the pilot scheme for the civilised black policy of tomorrow. The rulers obviously hope that by eliminating the left, they will provide time and space for a collaborationist and accommodationist middle-class leadership to emerge in all these sectors of the oppressed people who will be able to keep the system going in its amended form.

The President's Council Proposals seem to exclude African people from the so-called central parliament. In a superficial and formal sense, this is true. For us this is not a point of discussion. Once one rejects the ethnic basis of those proposals, it dare not be an objection to them that they exclude this or that group as an 'ethnic group'. It is time that we put a stop to this nonsensical discussion, which is premised on the correctness of the idea that only the National Party, with its ethnic preconceptions can bring about change in South Africa. This is the point of departure of the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and of other liberal organizations.

We who believe that the black working people are the source of all fundamental change in our society, reject that kind of reasoning as a liberal trap into which, unfortunately, many have already fallen. To put it clearly: we reject the so-called new dispensation not because statutory 'Blacks' are excluded from the so-called parliament but because it is a bogus concession of ethnic or racial representation in a kitchen parliament which in no sense can satisfy the demand of the oppressed people for *nothing less than full democratic rights*. It is high time that we stop giving the impression that the PFP, Inkatha and other such groupings are a part of the national liberation movement by using their system-bound arguments to articulate our rejection of and protest against apartheid measures. To talk about 'the coloured people' having sold the African people down the river because a few venal political pygmies have now formally 'gone inside' into their master's kitchen, without insisting that 'Blacks' be included, is to fall into the trap of playing ethnic politics as defined by the rulers and as advertised in every ruling-class newspaper in the country. Moreover, it does the Labour Party the incomprehensible honour of suggesting that it represents the 'Coloured' people. Anyone who knows the situation on the ground, knows also that the Labour Party has no grassroots support in any metropolitan area and only sporadic support in certain dorps on the platteland. Even there, indeed, the people who support them do so in the mistaken belief that the Labour Party is an anti-apartheid party which, clearly, it is not.

## **Collaboration and ethnicity**

Hitherto, I have by and large painted a picture as though the rulers are having and will have everything their way. In the short term, we must expect that their strong-man image will dominate the scene. However, theirs is a regime of

crisis, their position is riven with contradictions such as differences between Botha and Treurnicht, Botha and Slabbert, Botha and the bantustan leadership, Botha and big business, parliament and the army, and so forth. Fundamentally, therefore, this is a weak regime that has in fact lost the historic initiative in Southern Africa to the national liberation movement. The impending actions of the mass of black people will alter drastically the parameters within which the rulers will be able to manoeuvre even in the short term – but more particularly within the medium to long term.

For this reason, the question of collaboration with the regime is vital. Collaboration can expand, non-collaboration reduce those parameters. Ever since certain circles among the black middle class in town and country agreed to work within the apartheid/bantustan system, ever since the mid-fifties, the problem of political collaboration has been almost mechanically solved. We have correctly considered all those who worked in government-created political institutions to be collaborators. This remains the position today. Bantustan leaders, community councillors, management and local area committee members, SA Indian Councillors, President's Councillors and prospective members of the kitchen parliament, all these are collaborators who by now knowingly work the very instruments that oppress us. When the Labour Party's own Eshowe Resolution can state that the National Party's proposals do not answer 'the constitutional demands of our party or of our time and it entrenches ethnicity', then we need not doubt that they are fully conscious of the implications of their actions. For this, history will present them with an account one day.

I shall not waste this conference's precious time with answering the infantile arguments of people like David Curry and others, that teachers at segregated schools and lecturers at bush colleges are all 'collaborators' because they

are also party to the system. This kind of claptrap is no longer heard even among first-year university students. Instead, I want to say a few words about ethnicity and its significance in our struggle for a non-racial democratic Azania.

Ethnicity is the substitute in modern social theory for the concept of 'race' which – since the Nazis and since the discoveries of genetic science – has fallen into disfavour. In this regard, I should like to say incidentally that when we speak of non-racialism we mean that our position is determined by the scientific fact that 'race' is a non-entity. We do not merely mean that 'race' is irrelevant, because such a position still admits of the reality of 'race'. This latter usage, now so popular in liberal circles, is based on exactly the same premises as the concept 'multi-racial', on the supposition that many 'races' exist. For example, in a recent issue of *SASPU National*, I saw a photograph of a public meeting of the United Women's Organization with an astounding caption to the effect that it showed a part of the 'large non-racial audience'. Now, I should like someone to explain to me how an 'audience' becomes non-racial if one does not believe in the existence of 'race' Do the black-skinned people for example, become 'white', or vice versa? Or do they all suddenly assume the same colour? It is sad but salutary to realise how deeply ingrained ideas of 'race' are amongst us. In case it should be necessary, let me repeat one of my favourite paradoxes that though 'races' do not exist, racial prejudice, racialism and racism are as real as the food that you and I eat!

Indeed, this is the salient point. Ethnicity is almost as dangerous a myth as 'race' for the reason that its proponents can draw on prejudices which are rooted deeply in the history of a people. I cannot undertake here a sociological/historical review of the scholarly work on ethnicity but I should like to remind you that when an idea becomes the property of the masses of the people it

becomes a material force. The fashionable economic determinism of our day should not mislead us to believe that we can blithely preach 'Colouredism', 'Indianism', 'Zuluism' or any other ethnicism because somehow the fact that all of us are involved in a single economic system will lessen or perhaps even eliminate ethnic differences. *Those who sow the wind, as the prophet says, will reap the whirlwind!* Those who preach Indianism or Zuluism or Xhosaism today will be faced with separatist and disruptive communalist political/military movements tomorrow. Africa knows many instances where petty-bourgeois politicians supported by great-power weapons have nurtured and exploited ethnic consciousness to turn a country upside down in pursuit of a 'share in power'. Biafra was the most costly lesson to the people of Africa.

My indictment of the collaborationist parties is precisely that on this score, if we do not stop them, they are sowing the dragon's teeth of the civil wars of tomorrow. For the present, they are accepting a racial franchise in return for promising our boys and girls as cannon fodder to the army of the racists, an army that is fighting against our brothers and sisters in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and in South Africa itself. To accept the kitchen vote of the President's Council in return for spilling your children's blood on behalf of this brutal system is treachery indeed.

## **The Southern African cockpit**

In Southern Africa, we have entered a period during which the mettle of the liberation movement will be tested to the utmost. South Africa has embarked on a course of destabilising the states of Southern Africa in order to prevent them from building up independent, non-racial states that will serve as inspiration for and guarantors of a non-racial democratic socialist Azania. In the short term, the

even more urgent reason for this disastrous strategy is to prevent them from giving refuge to Azanian guerrilla fighters. They dread the spectre of an Azanian PLO encircling the northern borders of the country and entering it at will in order to sabotage targets, assassinate enemy individuals and mobilise the disaffected millions who are more than ready to support them. This is the reason why especially Angola, Zimbabwe and Mozambique must be turned into Southern African Lebanons that will be compelled, for the sake of their own survival as sovereign states, to expel Azanian guerrillas and refugees to countries situated further north. The South African government believes that with United States support it could, like Israel, keep the guerrilla movements at bay and essentially stalemated for decades no matter how high the cost in human life.

By creating such a buffer zone around itself, the government of South Africa hopes to gain enough time to bring about that measure of reform that will make it respectable in the eyes of the capitalist world. If it can dupe some important African states such as Zimbabwe and Tanzania to believe that its 'confederation' of a four-chamber South African parliament and a string of so-called independent and self-governing bantustans is a 'non-racial constitution', it hopes that those states will fulfil the promise of the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 according to which the fourteen African signatory states undertook that

If a peaceful progress to emancipation were possible, or if changed circumstances were to make it possible in the future, we would urge our brothers in the resistance movements to use peaceful methods of struggle, even at the cost of some compromise on the timing of change.

Against this background, we can see more clearly why our demand for a non-racial, non-ethnic and undivided Azania is for us a matter of life and death. These are not just

nice-sounding words from some liberal political glossary. These slogans embrace for the oppressed and exploited people of South Africa their only guarantee of escaping from the bondage of neo-apartheid which is the socio-political expression of the capitalist system. We can see also that history has placed on the overburdened shoulders of the black masses of South Africa the task of liberating themselves from this system so that other nations of Southern Africa can begin to build the kind of societies they wish to live in. Southern African liberation is one. Our contribution is crucial, and we should begin by issuing a call for the immediate withdrawal of South African troops from Namibia and from other states in the region. To conclude, these are some of the steps which we have to take immediately:

We have to oppose the Koornhof-President's Council new dispensation with all the force and ingenuity at our command. The scheme must be made to fail. We must show that it has no significant support among any section of the oppressed people.

As against their 'new dispensation', we have to insist on our primary demand for the convention of a constituent assembly elected on the basis of one person one vote, at which democratically elected representatives of the nation will decide on a new constitution for Azania. The constituent assembly will not be a gathering of representatives of so-called ethnic groups. It is also not going to be convened by the present government. It is a goal for which we shall have to struggle in the years ahead with even greater dedication than before.

We have to build up a national united front of all people's organizations in order to fight for full democratic rights for all and an end to the system of racial capitalism. Such a front must not be an alliance of ethnically defined organizations but an alliance of workers, community, students, youth, sports and other organizations of the



people. Ambivalent and opportunist elements such as white and black organizations of liberals who are not committed to the total liberation of the people of Azania, those who are merely concerned with the elimination of superficial aspects of apartheid, must be excluded from such an alliance of organizations.

A national conference should be convened for the purpose of formulating a national agreement on immediate political demands.

A national campaign against the so-called new dispensation or new deal should be launched immediately under the banner slogan:

One Azania, One Nation!

## NATION AND ETHNICITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

*(This address was delivered at the first National Forum meeting on 11 June 1983 at St Peter's Conference Centre in Hammanskraal.)*

THE IMMEDIATE GOAL OF the national liberation struggle now being waged in South Africa is the destruction of the system of racial capitalism. Apartheid is simply a particular socio-political expression of this system. Our opposition to apartheid is therefore only a starting point for our struggle against the structures and interests which are the real basis of apartheid.

In South Africa, as in any other modern capitalist country, the ruling class consists of the owners of capital which is invested in mines, factories, land, wholesaling and distribution networks and banks. The different sections of the ruling class often disagree about the best methods of maintaining or developing the system of 'free enterprise', as they call the capitalist system. They are united, however, on the need to protect the system as a whole against all threats from inside and outside the country.

During the past hundred odd years, a modern industrial economy has been created in South Africa under the spur of the capitalist class. The most diverse groups of people (European settlers, immigrants, African and East Indian slaves, Indian and Chinese indentured labourers and indigenous African people) were brought together and compelled to labour for the profit of the different capitalist owners of the means of production.

Now, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western and Central Europe, roughly similar processes had taken place. But there was one major difference between Europe and the colonies of Europe. For in Europe, in the

epoch of the rise of capitalism, the up and coming capitalist class had to struggle (together with and in fact on the backs of the downtrodden peasantry and the tiny class of wage workers) against feudal aristocracy in order to be allowed to unfold their enterprise. Through unequal taxation, restrictions on freedom of trade and freedom of movement and in a thousand different ways the aristocracy exploited the bourgeoisie and the other toiling classes.

In order to gain the benefit of their labours, to free the rapidly developing forces of production from the fetters of feudal relations of production, the capitalist class had to organize the peasants and the other urban classes to overthrow the feudal system. In the course of these struggles of national unification this bourgeoisie developed a nationalist democratic ideology and its cultural values and practices became the dominant ones in the new nations. The bourgeoisie became the leading class in the nation and were able to structure it in accordance with their class interests.

In the twentieth century in the colonies of Europe, however, the situation has been and is entirely different. In these colonies, European or metropolitan capitalism (imperialism) had become the oppressor who brutally exploited the colonial peoples. In some cases the colonial power had allowed or even encouraged a class of colonial satellite capitalists to come into being. This class, being completely dependent on London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin or New York, could not oppose imperialism in any consistent manner. If it had done so it would in effect have committed class suicide because it would have had to advocate the destruction of the imperialist-capitalist system which is the basis of colonial oppression. After World War II, especially, the imperialist powers realised that this situation (backed up by the existence and expansion of the Soviet system) would put a great strain on the capitalist system as a whole. Consequently, we had a period of 'decolonisation' which as we now know merely ushered in the present epoch of neo-

colonialism which Kwame Nkrumah optimistically called the 'last stage of imperialism'.

In South Africa, a peculiar development took place. Here, the national bourgeoisie had come to consist of a class of white capitalists. Because they could only farm and mine gold and diamonds profitably if they had an unlimited supply of cheap labour, they found it necessary to create a split labour market – one for cheap black labour and one for skilled and semi-skilled (mainly white) labour. This was made easier by the fact that in the pre-industrial colonial period white-black relationships had been essentially master-servant relations. Racialist attitudes were therefore prevalent in one degree or another throughout the country. In order to secure their labour supply as required, the national bourgeoisie in South Africa had to institute and perpetuate the system whereby black people were denied political rights, were restricted in their freedom of movement, tied to the land in so-called 'native reserves', not allowed to own landed property anywhere in South Africa and their children given an education, if they received any at all, that 'prepared them for life in a subordinate society'. Unlike their European predecessors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonial national bourgeoisie in South Africa could not complete the bourgeois democratic revolution. They compromised with British imperialism in 1910 in order to maintain their profitable system of super-exploitation of black labour.

They did not incorporate the entire population under the new state on the basis of legal equality, they could not unite the nation. On the contrary, ever since 1910, elaborate strategies have been evolved and implemented to divide the working people into ever smaller potentially antagonistic groups. Divide and rule, the main policy of any imperial power, has been the compass of every government of South Africa since 1910.

In order to justify these policies the ideology of racism

was elaborated, systematised and universalised. People were born into a set-up where they were categorised 'racially'. They grew up believing that they were 'Whites', 'Coloureds', 'Africans', 'Indians'. Since 1948, they have been encouraged and often forced to think of themselves in even more microscopic terms as 'Xhosa', 'Zulu', 'Malay', 'Muslim', 'Hindu', 'Griqua', 'Sotho', 'Venda', etc. To put it differently: at first the ruling ideology decreed that the people of South Africa were grouped by god into four 'races'. The ideal policy of the conservative fascist-minded politicians of the capitalist class was to keep these 'races' separate. The so-called liberal element strove for 'harmonious race relations in a multi-racial country'. Because of the development of the biological sciences where the very concept of 'race' was questioned and because of the catastrophic consequences of the racist *Herrenvolk* policies of Hitler Germany, socio-political theories based on the concept of 'race' fell into disrepute. The social theorists of the ruling class then resorted to the theory of 'ethnic groups', which had in the meantime become a firmly established instrument of economic and political policy in the United States of America as well as elsewhere in the world. It is to be noted that this theory of ethnicity continued to be based on the ideology of 'race' as far as South Africa was concerned.

From the point of view of the ruling class, however, the theory of 'ethnic groups' was a superior instrument of policy because, as I have pointed out, it could explain and justify even greater fragmentation of the working people whose unity held within itself the message of doom for the capitalist apartheid system in this country.

The fact of the matter is that the Afrikaner National Party used ethnic theories in order to justify bantustan strategy whereby it created bogus 'nations' and forced them to accept an illusory 'independence' so that the working class would agitate for political rights in their own so-called

'homeland'.

The idea, as we all know, was to create, revive and entrench antagonistic feelings of difference between language groups (Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, Tswana, etc.), religious groups (Muslim, Hindu, Christian, etc.), 'cultural' groups (Griqua, Malay, Coloured, etc.), and of course 'racial' groups (African, Coloured, Indian, White, etc.). I need not show here how this theory was designed to serve the interests of the ruling class by preserving apartheid (grand and petty) and how ruthlessly it was applied. The literature on apartheid is so large today that no single person could study all of it in the span of one lifetime. What we need to do is take a careful, if brief, look at how the liberation movement has conceived of the differences between and the unity of the officially classified population registration groups, the different language groups and religious sects that constitute our single nation.

### **Multi-racialism, non-racialism and anti-racism**

Those organizations and writers within the liberation movement who used to put forward the view that South Africa is a multi-racial country composed of four 'races' no longer do so for the same reasons as the conservative and liberal ruling-class theorists. They have begun to speak more and more of building a 'non-racial' South Africa. I am afraid to say that for most people who use this term 'non-racial' it means exactly the same thing as multi-racial. They continue to conceive of South Africa's population as consisting of four so-called 'races'. It has become fashionable to intone the words a 'non-racial democratic South Africa' as a kind of open sesame that permits one to enter into the hallowed portals of the *progressive* 'democratic movement'. There is nothing wrong with the words themselves. But, if we do not want to be deceived by words we have to look behind them at the concepts and the actions

on which they are based.

The word '*non-racial*' can be accepted by a racially oppressed people if it means that we reject the concept of 'race', that we deny the existence of 'races' and thus oppose all actions, practices, beliefs and policies based on the concept of 'race'. If in practice (and in theory) we continue to use the word non-racial as though we believe that South Africa is inhabited by four so-called 'races', we are still trapped in multi-racialism and thus in racialism. Non-racialism, meaning the denial of the existence of races, leads on to '*anti-racism*' which goes beyond it because the term not only involves the denial of 'race' but also opposition to the capitalist structures for the perpetuation of which the ideology and theory of 'race' exist. Words are like money. They are easily counterfeited and it is often difficult to tell the real coin from the false one. We need, therefore, at all times to find out whether our non-racialists are multi-racialists or anti-racists. Only the latter variety can belong in the national liberation movement.

## **Ethnic groups, national groups and nations**

The theory of ethnicity and of ethnic groups has taken the place of theories of 'race' in the modern world. Very often 'racial' theories are incorporated in 'ethnic theories'. In this paper, I am not going to discuss the *scientific validity* of ethnic theory usually called pluralism of one kind or another. That is a job that one or more of us in the liberation movement must do and do very soon before our youth get infected incurably with these dangerous ideas at the universities. All that I need to point out here is that the way in which the ideologues of the National Party use the term 'ethnic group' makes it almost impossible for any serious-minded person grappling with these problems to use the term as a tool of analysis.

It has been shown by a number of writers that the

National Party's use of the terminology of ethnicity is contradictory and designed simply to justify the apartheid/bantustan policies. Thus, for example, they claim amongst other things that:

The 'African' people consist of between eight and ten different 'ethnic groups', all of whom want to attain 'national', i.e. bantustan, 'independence'.

The 'coloured' people consist of at least three different 'ethnic groups' (Malay, Cape Coloured, Griqua and possibly 'other Coloured'). On the other hand, 'Coloureds' are themselves an ethnic group, but not a 'nation'.

The 'Indian' people constitute an ethnic group as do people of Chinese origin, but these are not 'nations'.

The 'white' people consist of Afrikaans, English and other ethnic groups but constitute a single nation, the white nation of South Africa.

In all this tangle of contradictions, the most important point is that every 'ethnic group' is potentially a so-called 'nation' unless it is already part of a 'nation' as in the case of the whites.

We have to admit that in the liberation movement ever since 1896, the question of the different population registration groups has presented us with a major problem, one which was either glossed over or evaded or simply ignored. I cannot go into the history of the matter here. We shall have to content ourselves with the different positions taken up by different tendencies in the liberation movement today. These can be summarised briefly as falling into three categories:

For some, the population registration groups are 'national groups or racial groups, or sometimes ethnic groups'. The position of these people is that it is a 'self-evident and undeniable reality that there are Indians, Coloureds, Africans and Whites (national groups) in our country. It is a reality precisely because each of these national groups has its own heritage, culture, language,



customs and traditions' (Zak Yacoob, speech presented at the first general meeting of the Transvaal Indian Congress on 1 May 1983).

Without debating the point any further, let me say that this is the classical position of ethnic theory. I shall show presently that the use of the word 'national group' is fraught with dangers not because it is a word but because it gives expression to and thereby reinforces separatist and disruptive tendencies in the body politic of South Africa. The advocates of this theory outside the liberation movement, such as Inkatha and the PFP, draw the conclusion that a federal constitutional solution is the order of the day. Those inside the liberation movement believe contradictorily that even though the national groups with their different cultures will continue to exist they can somehow do so in a unitary state as part of a single nation.

We have to state clearly that if things really are as they appear to be we would not need any science. If the sun really quite self-evidently moved around the earth we would not require astronomy and space research to explain to us that the opposite is true, that the 'self-evidently real' is only apparent. Of course there are historically evolved differences of language, religion, customs, job specialisation, etc. among the different groups in this country. But we have to view these differences historically, not statically. They have been enhanced and artificially engendered by the deliberate ruling-class policy of keeping the population registration groups in separate compartments, making them lead their lives in group isolation except in the marketplace. This is a historical reality. It is not an unchanging situation that stands above or outside history. I shall show just now how this historical reality has to be reconciled through class struggle with the reality of a single nation.

The danger inherent in this kind of talk is quite simply that it makes room both in theory and in practice for the

preaching of ethnic separatism. It is claimed that a theory of 'national groups' advocated in the context of a movement for national liberation merely seeks

to heighten the positive features of each national group and to weld these together so that there arises out of this process or organization a single national consciousness. (Yacoob)

Whereas the ruling class 'relying upon the negative features' of each national group 'emphasises ethnicity' or 'uses culture in order to reinforce separation and division'. We can repeat this kind of intellectualistic solace until we fall asleep, the fact remains that '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'. Does not Inkatha in some ways represent a warning to all of us? Who decides what are the 'positive features' of a national group? what are the boundaries or limits of a national group? Are these determined by the population register? Is a national group a stunted nation, one that, given the appropriate soil, will fight for national self-determination in its own nation-state? Or does the word 'national' have some other more sophisticated meaning?

These are relevant questions to ask because the advocates of the four-nation or national-group approach maintain that a liberated South Africa will guarantee group rights such as 'the right of national groups to their culture' and that 'we have to accept that if the existence of national groups is a reality and if each national group has its own culture, traditions, and problems, the movement for change is best facilitated by enabling organization around issues which concern people in their daily lives, issues such as low wages, high transport costs and poor housing'. Or, as other representatives of this tendency have bluntly said, we need separate organizations for each of the national groups,

which organizations can and should be brought together in an alliance.

These are weighty conclusions on which history itself (since 1960 and especially since 1976) has pronounced a negative judgement. To fan the fires of ethnic politics today is to go backwards, not forward. It plays into the hands of the reactionary middle-class leadership. It is a reactionary, not a progressive policy from the point of view of the liberation movement taken as a whole. Imagine us advocating 'Indian', 'Coloured', and 'African' trade unions or student unions today!

There is a diametrically opposite view within the liberation movement even though it is held by a very small minority of people. According to this view, our struggle is not a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle pure and simple, one in which the 'working class' will wrest power from the 'capitalist class'.

For this reason, the workers should be organized regardless of what so-called group they belong to. This tendency seems to say (in theory) that the historically evolved differences are irrelevant or at best of secondary importance.

I find it difficult to take this position seriously. I suspect that in practice the activists who hold this view are compelled to make the most acrobatic compromises with the reality of racial prejudice among 'workers'. To deny the reality of prejudice and perceived differences, whatever their origin, is to disarm oneself strategically and tactically. It becomes impossible to organize a mass movement outside the ranks of a few thousand students perhaps.

Again, the historical experience of the liberation movement in South Africa does not permit us to entertain this kind of conclusion. All the little organizations and groups that have at one time or another operated on this basis have vanished after telling their simply story which, though 'full of sound and fury', signified nothing.

The third position is one that has been proved to be correct by the history of all successful liberation struggles in Africa and elsewhere. I have found no better description of this position than that outlined by President Samora Machel in a speech held in August 1982 in reply to General Malan's accusations that South Africa was being 'destabilised' by hostile elements in the sub-continent.

In that speech, Machel said amongst other things:

Our nation is historically new. The awareness of being Mozambicans arose with the common oppression suffered by all of us under colonialism from the Rovuma to the Maputo. Frelimo, in its twenty years of existence and in this path of struggle, turned us progressively into Mozambicans, no longer Makonde and Shangane, Nyanja and Ronga, Nyungwe and Bitonga, Chuabo and Ndau, Macua and Xitsua. Frelimo turned us into equal sons of the Mozambican nation, whether our skin was black, brown or white.

Our nation was not moulded and forged by feudal or bourgeois gentlemen. It arose from our armed struggle. It was carved out by our hard-working calloused hands.

Thus during the national liberation war, the ideas of country and freedom were closely associated with victory of the working people. We fought to free the land and the people. This is the reason that those, who at the time wanted the land and the people in order to exploit them, left us to go and fight in the ranks of colonialism, their partner. The unity of the Mozambican nation and Mozambican patriotism is found in the essential components of, and we emphasise, anti-racism, socialism, freedom and unity. (WIP, No. 26)

This statement is especially significant when one realises that for many years Frelimo accepted that 'there is no antagonism between the existence of a number of ethnic groups and national unity'. This sentence comes from a

Frelimo document entitled 'Mozambican Tribes and Ethnic Groups: Their Significance in the struggle for National Liberation'. It was written at a time 'when the movement actually was under strong pressure from politicians who were consciously manipulating ethnicity in their own interest' (J Saul, *The Dialectic of Class and Tribe*).

Even earlier in 1962 a Frelimo document had stressed that

it is true that there are differences among us Mozambicans. Some of us are Makondes, others are Nyanjas, others Macuas, etc. Some of us come from the mountains, others from the plains. Each of our tribes has its own language, its specific uses and habitudes and different cultures. There are differences among us. This is normal ... In all big countries there are differences among people.

All of us Mozambicans – Macuas, Makondes, Nyanjas, Changans, Ajuas, etc. – we want to be free. To be free we have to fight united. All Mozambicans of all tribes are brothers in the struggle. All the tribes of Mozambique must unite in the common struggle for the independence of our country.

The development of the Mozambican national liberation ideology through the lessons learnt in struggle is shown clearly by President Machel's August 1982 statement that

Ours is not a society in which races and colours, tribes and regions coexist and live harmoniously side by side. We went beyond these ideas during a struggle in which we sometimes had to force people's consciousness in order for them to free themselves from complexes and prejudices so as to become simply, we repeat, simply people.

Every situation is unique. The experience of Frelimo, while it may have many lessons for us, cannot be duplicated in South Africa. Certainly the population registration groups of South Africa are neither 'tribes' nor 'ethnic groups' nor 'national groups'. In sociological theory, they can be

described as colour castes or more simply as colour groups. So to describe them is not unimportant since the word captures the nature or the direction of development of these groups. But the question of words is not really the issue. What is important is to clarify the relationship between class, colour, culture and nation.

The economic, material, language, religious and other differences between colour groups are *real*. They influence and determine the ways in which people live and experience their lives. Reactionary ethnic organization would not have been so successful in the history of this country had these differences not been of a certain order of reality. However, these differences are neither permanent nor necessarily divisive if they are restructured and redirected for the purposes of national liberation and thus in order to build the nation. The ruling class has used language, religious and sex differences among the working people in order to divide them and to disorganize them. Any organization of the people that does not set out to counteract these divisive tendencies set up by the ruling-class strategies merely ends up by reinforcing these strategies. The cases of Gandhi or Abdurrahman are good examples. Middle-class and aspiring bourgeois elements quickly seize control of such colour-based 'ethnic' organizations and use them as power bases from which they try to bargain for a larger share of the economic cake. This is essentially the kind of thing that the bantustan leaders and the bantustan middle classes are doing today.

Because they are oppressed, all black people who have not accepted the rulers' bantustan strategy desire to be free and to participate fully in the economic, political and social life of Azania. We have seen that the national bourgeoisie have failed to complete the democratic revolution. 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 all 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 capitalist exploitation and the national struggle against racial oppression become one struggle under the general command of the black working class and its organizations. Class, colour and nation converge in the national liberation movement.

Politically in the short term and culturally in the long term the ways in which these insights are translated into practice are of the greatest moment. Although no hard and fast rules are available and few of them are absolute, the following are crucial points in regard to the practical ways in which we should build the nation of Azania and destroy the separatist tendencies amongst us.

Political and economic organizations of the working people should as far as possible be open to all oppressed and exploited people regardless of colour.

While it is true that the Group Areas Act and other laws continue to concentrate people in their organizations – geographically speaking – largely along lines of colour, it is imperative and possible that the organizations themselves should not be structured along these lines. The same political organizations should and can function in all the ghettos and group areas, people must and do identify with the same organizations and not with ‘ethnic’ organizations.

All struggles (local, regional and national) should be linked up. No struggle should be fought by one colour group alone. The President’s Council proposals, for example, should not be analysed and acted upon as of

interest to 'Coloureds' and 'Indians' only. The Koornhof Bills should be clearly seen and fought as affecting all the oppressed and exploited people.

Cultural organizations that are not locally or geographically limited for valid community reasons should be open to all oppressed and exploited people.

The songs, stories, poems, dances of one group should become the common property of all even if their content has to be conveyed by means of different language media. In this way, and in many other ways, by means of class struggle on the political and on the cultural front, the cultural achievements of the people will be woven together into one Azanian fabric. In this way we shall eliminate divisive ethnic consciousness and separatist lines of division without eliminating our cultural achievements and cultural variety. But it will be experienced by all as different aspects of one national culture accessible to all. So that, for example, every Azanian child will know – roughly speaking – the same fairy tales or children's stories, whether these be of 'Indian', 'Xhosa', 'Tswana', 'German' or 'Khoikhoi' origin.

The liberation movement has to evolve and implement a democratic language policy not for tomorrow but for today. We need to discuss seriously how we can implement – with the resources at our disposal – the following model which, to my mind, represents the best possible solution to the problem of communication in Azania.

All Azanians must have a sound knowledge of English whether as home language or as second language. All Azanians must have a conversational knowledge of the other regionally important languages. For example, in the Eastern Province every person will know English; Afrikaans-speaking persons will have a conversational knowledge of Xhosa and Xhosa-speaking persons will have a conversational knowledge of Afrikaans. In an area like Natal, a knowledge of English and Zulu would in all



probability suffice.

These are sketchy ideas that have to be filled in through democratic and urgent discussion in all organizations of the people and implemented as soon as we have established the necessary structures and methods.

## **The historic role of the black working class**

The black working class is the driving force of the liberation struggle in South Africa. It has to ensure that the leadership of this struggle remains with it if our efforts are not to be deflected into channels of disaster. The black working class has to act as a magnet that draws all the other oppressed layers of our society, organizes them for the liberation struggle and imbues them with the consistent democratic socialist ideas which alone spell death to the system of racial capitalism as we know it today.

In this struggle the idea of a single nation is vital because it represents the real interest of the working class and therefore of the future socialist Azania. 'Ethnic', national group or racial group ideas of nationhood in the final analysis strengthen the position of the middle class or even the capitalist oppressors themselves. I repeat, they pave the way for the catastrophic separatist struggles that we have witnessed in other parts of Africa. Let us never forget that more than a million people were massacred in the Biafran war, let us not forget the danger represented by the 'race riots' of 1949. Today, we can choose a different path. We have to create an ideological, political and cultural climate in which this solution becomes possible.

I believe that if we view the question of the nation and ethnicity in this framework we will understand how vital it is that our slogans are heard throughout the length and breadth of our country.

One People, One Azania!

One Azania, One Nation!

## THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN SOCIETY

*(Namibian students invited Dr Neville Alexander to lead discussions with this paper during the Döbra Conference on 11 July 1983 in Windhoek.)*

THE SUBJECT I HAVE been asked to deal with is one of the perennials of all student conferences. For this reason, it is going to be both difficult and easy for me to speak to you on this subject. Difficult because when everything has been said over and over again it requires much thought and care for one to say these things in a fresh way so that one's audience does not fall asleep after the first few pronouncements. Easy because everything has indeed been said before in a thousand different ways. But however difficult or easy, there can be no doubt that for every new generation of students, this is the crucial question they have to learn to answer. In fact, there is a sense in which all the learning and studying which any student does for all the years of his or her life is directed to the answering of this vital question: what role do or should students play in their society?

But we should not simply assume that every person who goes to a school, a training college or a university is 'a student' and that because of this fact all students are alike and that all students have the same interests. The fact of the matter is that although a university or school blazer makes those who wear it into 'students', it does not wrench them out of the total context of their existence. It does not transform them as though it were a magic wand. The school or university blazer (if you have the money to buy it) does not make you stop being, for instance, a black student, a student who – in the Namibian context – is a colonially oppressed person. In short, we need to examine first the

different groups and interests who all go under the name of 'Namibian students'.

To begin with, in Namibia there is clearly a division between white Namibian students (with some exceptions, of course) and black Namibian students. This division stems from a conflict of interests which has an economic and political basis. The vast majority of white students in Namibia are drawn from the ranks of the settler bourgeoisie. Economically and politically, the settler bourgeoisie is the instrument and ally of South African colonialism and of imperialism. It is in the nature of education as a reproductive process that this group of students is trained and taught to fill the positions reserved for the successors of the present dominant classes. Tomorrow they will be the owners or managers of capitalist farms, mines, factories, commercial and banking concerns. As such, they will be the beneficiaries and defenders of the system of colonial exploitation to which all the patriotic classes of Namibia will one day behave as their counterparts did in Angola and in Mozambique, that is abandon their colonial paradise when the forces of liberation take control of the country. The position is simply that at present the majority of white students are being prepared for life in dominant positions. Their role in Namibian society, to put the matter differently, will be almost exactly the opposite of that of the majority of black students.

Black Namibian students, the sons and daughters of the colonially oppressed and exploited classes, clearly have completely different interests from those of the white Namibian students. But let us be careful here also. It is all too easy to obscure or to blur over the important differences that exist among black students in Namibia as well as in other countries of Southern Africa. There is, of course, no doubt that every single black Namibian as well as the handful of genuinely patriotic white Namibians supports

the goal of an independent Namibia. Perhaps there are still a few black people who think that the present Namibian world in which they live is the best of all possible worlds. Such people, however, merely make one sad. We cannot stop to consider their problem.

Having said this, I believe it is correct and important to ask whether all black Namibian students do in fact share the same interests. For the moment I am using the word 'interests' to mean specifically political and economic interests. I shall come to speak of the more specific educational and cultural interests of Namibian students in due course. I believe that it is important to consider the class composition of black Namibian students. It is probably still true today to say that the majority of high school and university students come from middle class homes. Only a very few of them come from working class or peasant homes. Now, this is a vitally important fact in the Namibian context because it means that those young people who are now receiving higher formal education will all tend to believe in and work for a particular kind of Namibian society in the future unless other forces in this society push them in a different direction.

## **What society? What education?**

In order to understand this question, we must first answer two other questions, namely what society are we talking about and what is education?

Our subject is the role of the student in society. I have already shown that there is in practice no such pure and simple being as 'the student'. Now, in the same way, it can be shown that we cannot speak about 'society' in the abstract. Namibian society, in which you students live and are educated, is a very different kind of society from, say, South African or Angolan society. Your role in this Namibian society will be very different from the role of

students in South Africa or in Angola.

It is important for you, therefore, to ask what kind of society this present Namibian society is if you want to understand your role in it. It is even more important to ask this question when you realise what this 'education' is that we are speaking about. Let us look at this question briefly.

Education is the name we give to those formal and informal ways in which the older generations of a society pass on their accumulated knowledge to the new generations of young people. This knowledge does not simply refer to know-how but also to the ways in which people are supposed to lead their lives. It refers to knowledge about sums, reading, writing, history, science, etc., but also to modes of behaviour, to beliefs about what is right or good and what is wrong or bad. In this way, education prepares the youth to take their place in society in more ways than one. They become workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, pilots, etc., and are taught to behave as others have done before them. They acquire not only the knowledge but also the attitudes that are necessary to fill their allotted place in the society. Education, in other words, is a process by means of which society reproduces itself more or less as it exists. Educational institutes help to entrench and strengthen the rules, ideas and values of an existing society, i.e., the ideas of the dominant class, because in any society the dominant ideas are the ideas of the dominant class. Consequently, educational institutions are among the most conservative in any society. They literally help to *conserve* the status quo.

Once one understands that this is essentially what the educational process does, one will – as a student – begin to ask extremely critical questions about the society and about oneself. It is vital that all the students of Namibia analyse the nature of that society and find out in which direction it is developing. Having done that, they will have to ask themselves whether they are satisfied with what they have

discovered. This will involve them in much soul searching since one cannot answer this question: am I satisfied with the society in which I am living, without asking some very serious questions about oneself. One could, for instance, be faced with questions like these: – would I have the courage to go to prison or to suffer in some way if my dissatisfaction with this social set-up should lead me to say or do things that the authorities consider to be undesirable? Have I the ability and the confidence to speak to other students about our problems? Am I prepared to do the vast amount of reading and listening to other people which is required in order to understand this society, this struggle and my role in it? There are countless other questions like these. Often people have no time even to pose these questions. The pressures of life simply impose the answers on them, they have no time to reflect on them. Students, generally speaking, are among the few groups in society who can afford the time and the leisure to debate these questions. And this is as it should be. Let no one tell you differently. If you make mistakes – remember it is the prerogative of youth to make mistakes – as long as you are able to admit to your mistakes and to do something about correcting them.

It is 'fortunately' not my task here to analyse Namibian society today. I trust that there will be other papers in which this very important task will be undertaken. I merely wish to stress two relevant points. Firstly, Namibian society today is an extremely exploitative, oppressive and repressive society. For this reason, a liberation struggle is being waged by almost the entire black population. Secondly, no matter what lofty ideals you may have about a modern scientific education as students and as a students' organization you will only be able to realise those ideals in a society where exploitation and oppression will have been eliminated. What I am saying is that it is your historic task to transform your present education which is education for colonial slavery into education for liberation!

## **The political tasks of the students' movement**

Lest you see this as merely some clever slogan, let me explain what I consider to be the tasks of a students' movement in Namibia today. The political tasks of the students' movement are paramount. This is so in any society where democracy does not obtain, where there is oppression and exploitation.

The first task of a Namibian students' organization is to become part and parcel of the liberation movement. This they do, not by joining this or that political party, but by preaching the message of the liberation movement, building it among the students of Namibia and in other spheres. Allow me to quote from a speech made by a friend of mine on the occasion of the formation of the Cape Peninsula Students' Union in Cape Town more than twenty-five years ago:

We recognise that there is a movement amongst the people, the leaders of whom give expression to the aspirations of the masses. We have called this the liberatory movement and we have claimed to be part and parcel of that movement. For we too desire our freedom and the freedom of the nation of whom we are a part.

If we recognised that it is only this movement which can free the people then we must do our utmost to build up this movement, that is our major task – for in the final analysis we exist to draw the students into the liberatory movement, in this way giving support to and helping to build up the forces representing progress in South Africa ... (C Brecker, 'Our immediate political tasks', in *The Student*, May 1958, Cape Peninsula Students' Union)

This is a very clear statement concerning the relationship between the students' movement and the national liberation movement. Of course, matters are never quite so simple. For the national liberation movement consists of a number

of political organizations and political tendencies. I shall not presume to suggest to you which of the many political parties in Namibia are part and parcel of the national liberation movement. This is a matter that you will have to decide, an important matter since a faulty decision can lead to years of bitter strife. The only definite statement I can make is to say that whether they are conscious of it or not, national and regional students' organizations have a relationship with the national liberation movement and to the different tendencies that constitute it. Inevitably, these tendencies compete for the allegiance of the students but until the issue of representativeness is decided in favour of one single organization (if this happens), we have to accept that a national students' organization will have to tolerate different tendencies. If this is impossible because of sectarianism, more than one national students' organization will come into existence.

The political questions that preoccupy the national liberation movement will necessarily preoccupy the national students' movement. In Namibia, questions such as independence, military conscription, ethnic governments and ethnic educational structures, poverty in town and country, post-colonial reconstruction and a thousand other questions will and should appear on the agenda of students' meetings and conferences daily, weekly, monthly and annually. Namibian students have a critical role to play in clarifying these issues through debate and through action. They will have to study the different positions of political parties concerning these national issues and after passionate and committed debate resolve to act in specific ways deemed by them to be in the interests of national liberation and emancipation. Because of the kind of society in which you are living I shall permit myself to suggest very strongly that you take up the question of women's emancipation at the same time as you do your duty in regard to the question of national liberation. It has been



truly said that the quality of a society can be judged by the position which women occupy in it. I have no doubt that the progressive students of Namibia will know what to do in this regard. Perhaps the only other piece of strategic political advice which I shall permit myself is to suggest to you that since it is the exploited workers of Namibia who are alone capable of walking and willing to walk the full distance on the long and thorny road to freedom, since they alone are able to guarantee a different Namibia where exploitation will no longer be tolerated, the students of Namibia must join hands with the workers of Namibia, follow their lead and try to make as big a contribution to the struggle as they can.

Besides engaging in overt political action (and we need not apologise at all for encouraging our students to do so), the students' movement has important political tasks in the educational arena itself.

Education, I said earlier, is one of the ways in which a society reproduces itself. I also stressed that any educational system in a society divided along lines of class is organized in the interests of the dominant class or classes. In a country such as Namibia, for instance, the educational system has as one of its goals, the production of a supply of cheap black labour consisting of individuals with the appropriate skills or semi-skills to perform the different tasks or jobs that are generated by economic development. It is, however, equally important to realise that there is no government on earth that has or can have total control over the educational process. Teachers, students and parents, in spite of the most detailed regulations formulated by government bureaucrats, have ample space and time both inside and outside the classroom in order to transform the educational process into education for liberation. Because such action will be seen by the authorities as 'coming from below', and not as being initiated 'from above', they will, generally speaking, look upon it as suspect 'political' action. For this reason, the

students' movement can and must expect to meet stiff official resistance but this should not deter it since it has a clear idea of why it is undertaking such action.

By way of example, I make the following few suggestions. In the school, we should undertake action to change the syllabuses, the content of education. We need to define for ourselves what the goals of our education are and should be. Having done that, we must act to change the existing content. We, the colonised and exploited people, must ourselves decide what we want taught in our schools. This will inevitably lead to a confrontation with those who control education in Namibia; the ethnic or national administrations. We must consider this carefully and make our plans bearing this in mind.

The present relationship between teachers and students must change. The days of the *rottang* belong to the past. Authoritarian teaching methods are totally unacceptable to a people striving for liberation. Teachers are no longer gods. They are no more than guides to the young. Teaching methods must change in order to suit the new situation. Discipline should be voluntary and democratic. It should be the fruit of proper motivation and understanding of the need for it. This is a whole new field in which new values and new ideas must be created, experimented with, criticised and altered if they are found to be destructive or counter-productive.

We should strive to have regular political awareness sessions in which the entire school from principal down should participate. In these sessions, all the main issues affecting the local and the national community should be discussed and studied. Students should never be in a position where they have to answer 'I don't know' about important issues that affect the community. Only if students are properly informed about their surroundings can we expect them to commit themselves actively outside the school.

Wherever possible, Students' Representative Councils (SRCs) should be formed. These should be democratically elected organizations that represent the real interests of the students. It is their task to give general political and cultural direction to the students at the institutional level. Students have to guard against the co-option of such representative organizations. It is all too easy for even well-meaning, good-natured principals or teachers to transform an SRC into a body of prefects who represent not the interests of the students but those of the authorities. I shall say a few more words concerning the functions of SRCs when I look at the struggle on the cultural front. Outside the institutions, communication with parents should be established and maintained. School issues should more and more become community issues. Students should create formal opportunities (for example, in civic or in church organizations) to inform their parents about events and problems at school. Students themselves should become deeply involved in community issues. In this way, solidarity is built up.

Students should form study groups in order to study those things which they cannot study in class or at school. Examples are the detailed history of a particular revolution, or the literature of a particular country in Africa. They should call on committed teachers and senior students to assist them in this. Students should attend and even join political and cultural discussion clubs that may exist in their area.

Students of an area should get together to produce regular magazines in order to inform parents and the community at large of what they are doing or thinking of doing. In this way, there will be a constant stream of ideas passing in both directions. Unity, solidarity and action will then become the watchwords of a mobilised community.

## **The cultural front**

The overt political functions of students' organizations tend to be in the forefront in periods of crisis and 'unrest'. More generally, however, students' organizations find that they have to concentrate their contributions to the liberation struggle on the cultural front. Activities on the cultural front can in a general way be described as nation-building activities.

Political action is but one facet of a complex liberation struggle. In some ways, these cultural initiatives based on an understanding of the future shape and needs of Namibian society are much more urgent simply because they will determine attitudes and ideological commitments of the new generations in Namibia. These initiatives do not have the stop-go character of crisis or sporadic political action. They are long-term, continuous and cumulative, a current that swells and eventually rushes with thunderous insistence into the ocean of our future way of life, one which will be very different from that which we know today.

There are many areas on the cultural front where the students' movement can and should play an important role. I shall mention only four important areas.

Language: Namibia is a multilingual country. All the organizations of the colonised people are agreed, I think, that English shall be the official language of a post-colonial Namibia. How this determination will be merged with a democratic language policy is a matter for debate, experiment and practice. Students' organizations – especially SRCs where they have been formed – should have an English language programme. Very few things in your country will be more important than the universalisation of English speech as a second language for all those people who do not have English as a home language. Competitions (essays, speeches, poems, etc.) and

any other means of encouraging the use of English should be tried. If such activities can be related directly to school work, this will be all the more useful to the students.

Literature and Art: Collections of oral tradition (stories, fables, songs, etc.), the writing of stories, poetry, novels and other works which give expression to the real problems, feelings and aspirations of the people: these are essential nation-building activities, as are translations from one language into another of important literary works. The same cultural content can be transmitted through different language media. All these activities can be undertaken in cultural clubs and societies organized and co-ordinated by an SRC on or off the campus if necessary. Similarly, the organizing and running of school magazines, journals, comics, etc., can be promoted with a view to providing a progressive content to the idea of Namibian nationhood. Songs of the people, both old and new, should be popularised. Important events should be captured in song and their lessons be taught to the students in this manner. The students' movement should organize clubs and societies at institutions in order to deal with all the different facets of the struggle on the cultural front. I leave it to your imagination and initiative to work out in detail all the many possible ways in which this struggle can be carried out in every school.

History: The rewriting and study of the people's history ought to be one of the main activities promoted by the students' movement. I remind you of Nosipho Majeke's famous words: 'For a people engaged in a struggle for liberation, it is necessary to rewrite the history of the past'. A rewritten past liberties the mind of the students and equips them to play their role in the struggle. It makes them receptive to new ideas which light up the road ahead. There are very many practical ways in which students can be involved directly and indirectly in the task of rewriting and learning the people's real history.

Educational Assistance: Students' organizations should help to make students less dependent on teachers and on the system, and become more self-reliant. They can organize alternative methods of study as well as additional classes where necessary so that students can get concrete benefits in the here and now from the activities of the students' organization. This is the main avenue of contact between the organization and the mass of the students. If an SRC, for instance, helps students to learn group study methods and organize special workshops at school, it would prove to the students that their representatives have their immediate interests at heart. And unless an SRC can convince the students at a school that this is the case, it will not be able to get their ear for its nation-building activities.

I should like to round off by stressing that in all your activities it is necessary that you do not depart from two fundamental criteria. You should under no circumstances become unscholarly or unscientific. Your actions should be based on properly tested information and on careful analysis. Any superficial, propagandistic or even falsified activities will at one time or another boomerang by turning around when you least expect it and exposing you as people who are not to be taken seriously, people who cannot be believed.

You should, secondly, never be sectarian. It is in the nature of complex structures such as societies that there are different views about what the best strategies are. Your struggle is one for liberation and democracy. Within the framework of liberatory politics and ideas you must be able to tolerate many different views. Provided a particular position is not clearly an enemy viewpoint, we should, as far as possible, tolerate differences, 'allow a hundred flowers to bloom and a thousand schools of thought to contend', for this is the essence of the democratic ideal.

If you find it possible to follow these ideas, if you examine these suggestions with open minds I hope that you

*Sow the Wind*

will find much that will be of use to you. As people who are building a nation and struggling to free your nation from the yoke of colonial oppression I am sure you will understand why I end off my talk with these words extracted from an Indo-Chinese poem written very many years ago:

Go to the people,  
Explain to them why they are poor;  
Tell them why they who work the Land  
Have not enough food for their children.  
Tell them why they who make the good  
Things in life, have to go bare, and cold  
and hungry.

But please, let them know that it isn't Buddha,  
Nor sin, nor drought, nor flood, nor earthquake,  
But if it is a locust, it is not a brown, or grey or a red one,  
It is a foreign locust,  
Some have a name for it, they call it Imperialism;  
But whatever its name, go to the people  
And tell them how to fight it.

## CAREERS IN AN APARTHEID SOCIETY

*(This paper was delivered at a CORIC seminar in Port Elizabeth in September 1983.)*

I MUST BEGIN BY thanking your chairman, your director and your committee for extending to me the invitation to address this gathering today. It is, in fact, the first time that I have ventured into what, for me, is essentially foreign territory. When I received the invitation I was somewhat puzzled and worried because, holding the views that I do, I could not imagine that I would have much to say by way of positive encouragement to an organization such as Careers Opportunities Research and Information Centre (CORIC). However, things are never quite as easy or as difficult as they appear. Your chairman assured me that I had *carte blanche* and trusted that I would be able to provide CORIC with some food for thought. As I pondered the question in the context of a careers guidance operation in an apartheid society – an unjust, unequal social dispensation where opportunities and rewards are based on the skin colour of the inhabitants of the country – it became crystal clear to me that it was urgently necessary to say a number of things that may not fall too gently on the ear of some. Yet if these things were left unsaid, we may be acquiescing in one of the greatest acts of injustice of the twentieth century. With these words, allow me to turn to the subject I have chosen to highlight, namely, careers in an apartheid society.

In any capitalist society, where inequality between the classes is the basis of production, exchange and distribution of the social product, careers guidance is a politically unproblematic enterprise if one accepts the basic tenets of the so-called free enterprise system. In South Africa, which



is a specific kind of capitalist society, this is not so. The system of racial capitalism which obtains in South Africa renders problematical even the most innocent-looking act of our everyday lives. Going to a cinema or participating in a sports tournament are, in our strange country, highly political acts. How much more so is this the case in respect of an area like careers guidance which is directly linked with the economic basis of this society!

The simple fact of the matter is that when you advise someone to become a nurse, a doctor, a lawyer, a technician, an artisan, or anything else in South Africa, you are by implication saying to that person: 'Go in there and reinforce the present apartheid status quo!' That is, unless you have a certain level of consciousness and an overview of the social context in which you are operating.

In this respect, careers counsellors are trapped in the same dilemma as any other educationist in an apartheid society. To understand why this is so, it is necessary to remind ourselves about the nature of education as a process. Expressed in a simplified but none the less correct manner, we can say that education is the name we give to those formal and informal ways in which the older generations of a society pass on their accumulated knowledge to the new generations of young people. This knowledge does not simply refer to know-how but also to the ways in which people are supposed to lead their lives. It refers to knowledge about sums, reading, writing, history, science, etc., but also to modes of behaviour, to beliefs about what is right and good and what is wrong and bad. In this way, education prepares the youth to take their 'place' in a society in more ways than one. They become workers, doctors, nurses, lawyers, teachers, engineers, pilots, computer programmers, etc., and are taught to behave as others have done before them. They acquire not only the knowledge but also the attitudes that are necessary to fill their allotted place in the society. Education, in other words,

is one of those processes by means of which a society is reproduced more or less as it exists. Educational institutes help to entrench and to strengthen the rules, ideas and values of an existing society, i.e., the ideas of the dominant classes because in any society the dominant ideas are those of the dominant classes. Consequently, educational institutions are among the most conservative in any society. They literally help to *conserve* the status quo.

Now, when that status quo is an apartheid capitalist society, those who are the victims of such a society – the oppressed and exploited people – are obviously caught in a triangle of contradictory needs and desires. As practitioners in the educational arena, be they teachers, careers counsellors, inspectors, or anything else, they need to earn a living. Education is as good a sphere as any within which to do that. As professionals, they have to teach their children, by way of example, the history of our country, that is, to put it mildly, extremely distorting the role of black people in South African history. At the same time, as conscious activists or as oppressed people, they need to enlighten the youth about the possibilities of changing the present reality into a new kind of society. They find themselves, therefore, having to teach their children ideas and attitudes (such as so-called South African history, geography and much of what passes as ‘English’ or ‘Afrikaans’ or other language and literature) which reinforces the daily reality of racial inequality, discrimination and inferiority. On the other hand, many of them realise that this is a terrible way to earn one’s living, that there is a sense in which it is utterly selfish to poison one’s own children’s minds with such ideas and attitudes only because one has to stay alive.

I wish I could paint the picture even more crudely. I have found that holding up this terrible mirror to educationists anywhere in our country is a kind of anti-narcissistic shock therapy that has one of three effects. In the most positive and optimistic cases, people begin to

examine what they are in fact doing and often take steps to correct their practice. At the other extreme, there are those who spot the 'communist' in these critical reflections. They are the ones who, through bureaucratic interventions, try to keep these 'dangerous' ideas out of the schools and out of the body of teachers. In the middle are the group of apathetic or supine individuals who have succumbed to the system. They have become too inert and will-less to imagine that they can do anything about their situation.

But let me not be side-tracked into this question of how our professional educationists react concretely. These examples are merely intended to underline the grotesque dilemma of all educationists in an apartheid society. Education, which has also been said to be 'subversive', by its very nature is supposed to be a process of enlightenment and illumination. Instead, in South Africa it is most generally an instrument for effecting conformity to an unacceptable system.

'Conservative or subversive?' That is the question. Which role should the educationist play in South Africa? Ever since the historic events of 1976 and 1980, this question has tended to be answered on the streets and in school playgrounds. The frustrated youth of our country have been calling out loudly and clearly to the teachers and other educationists: Give us education for liberation! We are sick and tired of education for an apartheid status quo. In this sense, the answer to the question 'conservative or subversive?' has been taken out of our hands. Educationists who are not clearly working for change in the direction of a non-racial, unitary, democratic Azania are becoming less and less credible among the black people and especially among the black youth. It would be a sad commentary on the calibre of our nation if this were not the case, in view of the earth-shaking changes that have taken place around us in countries such as Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe. Our youth see in the models that are being created in these

neighbouring countries a possible future dispensation in which they could unfold their potential.

Now, ever since the early seventies we have been promised 'movement away from discrimination based on skin colour' or more deceptively, 'the scrapping of apartheid'. As we are all aware, in a certain superficial sense, there have been changes forced upon the National Party government by economic changes in South Africa and political changes in the sub-continent. The over-arching framework in which this alleged movement is taking place is the racist utopia of a Confederation of Southern African States of which the core would consist of the 'new-deal' constitution with its unholy trinity of a tricameral so-called parliament.

I do not wish to waste your time by repeating well-worn analyses of this government strategy, but allow me to draw your attention to the centrepiece of this strategy – the creation of a black middle class. As you are well aware, government spokesmen and many business people speak openly about this option as the most important policy instrument for averting revolution in South Africa in the next decade or so. Leaving aside the pedantic question of whether a 'class' can be 'created' in this blueprint fashion, the essential fact remains that the National Party government has decided that it is a viable strategy to give enough black people enough of an economic stake in a slightly altered status quo by way of higher salaries, small businesses, professional opportunities, homes of their own, and so forth. They believe that this strategy will neutralise the potential leadership among black people, i.e., the people with drive, energy, foresight and ambition. They believe that in this way an important layer of people would stand to lose so much in the event of revolutionary upheaval that they will act as a brake on the dispossessed and exploited working masses in the towns and in the countryside. These people would use their economic and intellectual power to

prevent the black workers from engaging in extreme forms of protest, persuading them to try gradualist, constitutional means. In this way, this 'black middle class' would constitute a broadening of the base of the apartheid state, which up to now has rested on an alliance of the white capitalist owners of the wealth of South Africa, the white middle class and the white working class.

Of course, 'the best-laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley', as Burns tells us. The government is taking a calculated risk. It can only work if the potential and actual black middle class allow themselves as a group and as individuals to fit into this scheme. Let there be no misunderstanding: economic and political developments necessitate the creation of a black middle class. Such a class of people, though tiny at this stage, already exists. Nothing will stop this development. But it does not follow at all that the black middle class will behave as the government hopes that it will.

There are many reasons for this assertion into which I cannot go tonight. What I am saying, however, is that we should by all means grasp the opportunities for our children to obtain the skills and the knowledge that a grasping greedy system has denied them up to now. Let us by all means see to it that we develop one of the best trained and best qualified workforces in Africa as long as we do not have to transgress any principle that would compromise our humanity and our struggle for liberation from the shackles of apartheid. Clearly, in this context there is much room for careers guidance conducted from within the perspective provided by this kind of analysis. Such guidance and counselling would be much more than merely slotting in thousands upon thousands of naive, optimistic young people into the neo-apartheid machinery.

I want to leave the matter there. But not before I make another observation relevant to the relationship between careers guidance and the political economy of an apartheid

South Africa. Many people, both liberals and leftists, have continued to believe fondly that economic developments will do away with apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination. They have thought that once more and more black people acquire skills, economic leverage at the point of production and increasing consumer's power, the powers that be will be compelled gradually to relax first the cruder and later the more subtle manifestations of racial discrimination. This hypothesis is conceivable if we have hundreds of years within which to try out gradualist programmes. It has not been proved as yet in countries such as the USA where similar but vastly more favourable conditions prevailed. One needs, therefore, to think carefully before acting on such an assumption. I can well imagine people saying: let us get as many bursaries as possible and let us give our children the best career guidance possible because in some way or another this will undermine apartheid and sooner or later we or our children will reap the benefit.

This naive view speaks of a misunderstanding of how the capitalist system works. Historically, the wealth of this country has been concentrated overwhelmingly in the hands of people who are classified white in terms of the Population Registration Act. These people are not simply going to give this wealth to others because of some feeling of guilt about oppressing the black people. This has never happened in history and we are not going to break the rules of history in this country! If anything, our past has shown that we are a terribly obedient people and that we will have to feel the lash of Santayana's words to the effect that those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it!

Inequality of wealth, power and status will continue to be manifested along so-called racial lines. Or, to put it differently, social inequality will continue to be expressed as racial inequality unless there is a radical redistribution of wealth. How such a redistribution of wealth has to take

place is beyond the scope of my talk. I don't even know whether I am in a position to suggest the possible answers to this vital question of our history, our present and our future.

What is clear, I think, is that this analysis removes from us the comforting thought that by slotting more and more black youth into the neo-apartheid machine we are somehow in some automatic way, going to help to render that machine obsolete. I said at the beginning of this talk that things are never as easy or as difficult as they appear to be. I come to the conclusion that if we have not done so, we need to sit down and think through our role and our activities with extreme care because our youth expects from us guidance not simply as to careers but their future. That future is never simply a matter of professional qualifications and employment in the existing system.

This is a time of many questions and few answers. It may be more comfortable to accept the old conservative answers that are ready to hand. It may be extremely uncomfortable to be confronted with a series of unorthodox questions. My belief is that the latter procedure is life-giving, the former spells stagnation and death.

## EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

*(Dr Neville Alexander delivered the main address at the inaugural conference of the Education Co-ordinating Council of South Africa (ECCSA) at Pietermaritzburg in September 1983 under the theme: Education in South Africa – Limits and Possibilities of Independent Interim Action.)*

MOST SCIENTISTS HAVE GIVEN up as naive the idea that the school 'can build a social order'; that formal education can initiate fundamental social, political and economic changes. In glancing at this question briefly, I am not going to delve into the intricacies of the kind of debate usually indulged in by academics such as whether attitudes determine behaviour or vice versa. These are not unimportant questions but they are not directly relevant to the kind of problems we are trying to look at.

Let me begin by stating our question in the words and in the perspective of Theodor Hanf:

A rethinking of the role of education in a *plural* society seems particularly necessary. For, not only has the myth of education as the key to change been eroded by empirical evidence, but, likewise, the once powerful optimism about nation building as the remedy for the ills of deeply divided societies has been considerably shaken. The proponents of nation building believed that it would be possible to 'depoliticise', and, thereby, to dismantle existing cleavages between ethnic, linguistic, religious or otherwise defined communities. 'Political modernisation; was supposed to weaken traditional loyalties; a single national authority would supersede segmental authorities; a single integrated system of national education would weaken traditional primordial loyalties and create a new



national loyalty. In short, 'nation building' involved a relativisation if not dismantling of the plural character of a society. With hindsight it has become clear that this school of thought vastly underestimated the resistance of plural societies to social integration.

The same author, quite logically, rejects the aspiration of most black people in South Africa to what he calls 'the Jacobin persuasion of creating one nation and one people within one state' as much as he rejects 'the separatist idea of imposing separate identities on individuals' (Hanf 1980: 234). His solution is a consociational model based on 'groups emerging from voluntary association' (ibid.). This is, essentially, the kind of political and cultural 'solution' to the problem of educational strategies advocated by the Progressive Federal Party and related groupings.

In this brief introductory paper, I cannot address the question of the 'best educational policy for South Africa' in spite of the fact that this kind of question ought to concern this kind of conference. Instead, I shall focus on two questions related to the problem posed by Hanf in the passage I have just cited. These questions are:

If we, as people involved in the non-formal educational sector, wish to utilise the resources at our disposal to maximum effect in the belief that our efforts will help to bring about 'change', are we not fooling ourselves and everyone else involved in our projects in view of the admitted ineffectuality of education as an instrument of social change?

Can we salvage 'the Jacobin persuasion' lampooned by Hanf? Especially if we believe, as I do, that the belief in one Azanian nation is a vital necessity for the future of our society at the southern tip of the African continent?

## **Political change and education**

Let us begin by looking at the question of political change and education. The first thing to say is that it is an unnecessary Aristotelian mistake in the twentieth century to be arguing about whether educational change precedes political change, or vice versa. In any science, if we pose the wrong questions we are going to get the wrong answers or even no answers at all!

There is no doubt that a strategy based simply on bringing about change in the educational sphere in the hope that this will somehow influence the political behaviour of millions of people is hopelessly naive. But while it is quite true to say that educational change, generally speaking, will not bring about the desired political or economic change, it does not follow at all that we have to wait for the political or economic changes before we begin to act in the educational arena. Indeed, it is clear from our very history that practical interventions by independent educational instances have been a major contributory factor to the growth of political consciousness among our people. And without such growth in the consciousness of the people, we cannot expect any political change at all!

What we are saying, therefore, is that intervention in the educational arena has to be conceived of as part and parcel of a general process of liberation. Such intervention is necessarily a response to the total situation in which the education of our children and of ourselves is embedded. Change in the educational arena is caused by, and in turn causes change in other facets of the system. Only if our conscious intervention is based upon the understanding of this rather obvious dialectical relationship between 'education' and 'politics' or 'economics' or 'culture' will our strategic and tactical conceptions acquire significance. If we approach the matter in this way, we shall also be able to predict, within limits, what the probably consequences of

our intervention will be.

We may approach the matter from a different angle by accepting that education is a site of class struggle. It is not only in the 'economic' and 'political' spheres that the struggle is waged between the classes that constitute any modern society. The 'cultural' sphere – in which education is included in this simple analytical model – is in all its facets equally a site of struggle. By intervening in the educational arena, therefore, we are, whether we know it or not, participating in the class struggle on the cultural front.

*Whether we know it or not!* These are crucial words. For, in most cases, if we do not 'know it', our activities tend to strengthen the ruling classes in whose immediate and long-term interests the system is organized. In what may appear to be a paradoxical somersault, therefore, we examine with extraordinary care the political and economic structures in which our educational interventions are to take place before we decide on what they should be, how and by whom they are to be undertaken.

It is not our intention in this conference to commit any individual or group or organization to approach the question of interim action in the educational arena from the point of view of any particular class. It is not even our intention to commit them to a class analytical approach to our society.

While I have no doubt that such an approach helps to illuminate the way ahead and to sharpen our vision, I obviously accept that people have a right to their own approach and that we should be willing to co-operate in practice if we find that our short- and long-term interests coincide. To quote a practical example: while one organization may do no more than to dispense bursaries to students motivated by the desire to climb up the social ladder of an apartheid South Africa, another may do the same but try to introduce its bursars to ideas that question precisely the values that make such social climbing appear

desirable. Both organizations, however, have in common the desire to help students to obtain in the here and now the means to equip themselves to cope with the demands of present day South Africa. If, in addition, there exists a willingness to perceive our situation as a changing one and as one capable of being changed, it ought to be possible for these organizations to agree on an educational strategy within their sphere of action. To a very large extent, the organizers of this conference hope that we shall be able to discuss our different approaches to our problems in this open way with a view to identifying the kind and the degree of co-operation to which we can commit ourselves.

## **Education in South Africa today: Situation and tendency**

I take it for granted that in this forum it is unnecessary to describe the manner in which the educational system in South Africa is part and parcel of the ruling-class structures and strategies of domination and control. Most of you, I am sure, are aware of the thousands of books and articles written on this subject. What I want to sketch here, very briefly, is what the rulers' general strategy appears to be and the ways in which the oppressed and exploited people are responding to this.

Both economic and political developments in the sub-continent determine that in South Africa today, the state and private industry *have* to initiate certain changes in the educational arena defined in the broadest terms. Certain sections of the black population, the so-called Coloureds, Indians and Permanent Urban Blacks, are to be 'upgraded' in a new version of the 'civilised labour policy' of General Hertzog in the 1920s and 1930s. They have to be so upgraded because of the need for certain levels and types of skills in the labour market and because of the need to expand the domestic market. These tendencies flow from

iron economic necessities. Politically, the international anti-apartheid movement has almost attained the significance of the pre-war anti-fascist movement with the consequence that would-be emigrants from Europe, North America or Australia would rather let down their roots in some less controversial soil, if at all possible. As a result, the increasing demand for skilled labour deriving from the expansion of the industrial economy is met on the other axis with a relatively contracting supply of such skilled labour in the traditional sources.

From the point of view of the ruling class, therefore, there is an unprecedented need to mass-produce skilled labour from among the ranks of the black youth. Scientific education, which was always considered to be 'above' the black child and in any case useless since it did not eventuate in employment, unless the person became a teacher, has suddenly become perfectly possible for the self-same black people. We know, of course, that it is not the people who have changed: it is the racial prejudice of the white ruling class that has had to take a knock against the anvil of economic necessity! English language skills, which were systematically lowered and even eradicated in the labyrinth of Eiselen-De Vos-Malan schooling for black children, have now again to be upgraded so that our children will be enabled to become office workers, engineers, draughtsmen, computer programmers, etc., of the neo-apartheid system.

Political developments inside and outside the country have also necessitated a shift in educational policy in order to accommodate the 'revolution of rising expectations' lest it be transformed into another kind of revolution. The growth of independent black trade unions since the early seventies, the aftermath of the Soweto uprising of 1976, the schools boycotts and other consumers' boycotts of 1980, the frequent examples of armed propaganda, the continuing class struggles in the cities and in the countryside, the liberation of Southern Africa starting with the collapse of

Portugal's African empire and the rising intensity of the anti-colonial war of liberation in Namibia: all these and many other political developments initiated 'from below' have forced the powers-that-be to bring about certain adjustments in their educational strategies. It is simply no longer possible to treat the black intelligentsia and the growing black middle class as though they were helots who had no will and no ideas of their own. The Botha regime in particular has accepted that it must adapt its policies in the educational arena as well as in other aspects of life to the inexorable requirements of a modern industrial sub-imperialist economy. Not to do so would be to hasten the end of the apartheid system.

### **What can we do?**

At this stage, I ought to plunge into an analysis of the 'new deal' constitution and the movement towards the racist utopia of a 'Confederation of Southern African States'. However, you will agree that because of recent developments in the politics of the oppressed and exploited people, such analysis is very well known and thus unnecessary. Instead, I want to say very simply that these new moves on the part of the governing party have thrown certain aspects of the system into a state of flux. Very many apparently liberalising developments in education and in other spheres are going to have to be tolerated by the regime as long as it is satisfied that it can maintain control over, or at least neutralise the leadership of the black people. This it will do mainly by dealing harshly with so-called 'leftists' and 'terrorists'.

What this does mean for us is that we certainly have the opportunity to implement, in the spaces thus created in the system, programmes which through their expansion will alter the system and help to break it up. This perspective must inform everything we do if we are to be effective or to

put it differently we have to begin to think, plan and act as a nation! The specific political implications of this approach have to be worked out by each individual or organization in the light of their specific project and its biography.

An Azanian nation is growing in the womb of the present class struggles in our country. Despite the pontifications of Hanf and others about the character of 'plural' societies in South Africa, apartheid, or imposed ethnic definitions, has brought about the rejection of ethnicity, the realisation by the working people that ethnicity is a political instrument of the ruling class for the maintenance of the status quo.

Of course, prejudice continues. It will do so perhaps for decades to come even after the economic and political structures that engender and reinforce it have been eradicated. But it is clear to anyone who has some contact with social reality in South Africa that the artificial 'ethnic' boundaries of the National Party are being erased in practice: most blatantly and deliberately among the intelligentsia and the middle class but more importantly in the organizational practice of the black working class. This process will be intensified in the next few years and it is this assessment that constitutes the point of departure for the policies, strategies and plans which we hope will go forth from this conference.

## **Mobilisation in the non-formal educational sector**

Because this is the first serious attempt to mobilise the resources of non-governmental and independent community educational organizations in our country, we do not really know what degree of impact this sector of the educational system has on official policy or even on the total environment of the oppressed and exploited people. We do, of course, have an impression from our own

experience and contact with the situation of how many individuals are, for example, helped by bursaries from such organizations, how many pre-school initiatives are undertaken and sustained, of what community educational materials are produced and distributed. We could easily add another few items to this list of actual and possible operations of the kind of organizations that we have in mind. Only once we are able to undertake the necessary surveys will we be able to gauge the potential of this sector more accurately and thus enable ourselves to plan, within the limits and objectives of each organization, our strategies, tactics and organizational requirements with some degree of realism.

It is possible, however, at this stage to indicate the aspects in which this independent non-governmental educational sector can expand, concentrate and rationalise its activities and also to suggest some of the problems that we have begun to identify as priority areas towards which our efforts and our investment should be directed. There are three main aspects of our work in which we can, through democratic co-ordination, maximise the potential of our projects without in any way having to abandon any of the objectives of our individual organizations. I should like to stress this qualification because it is vital for the success of our plans that we do not allow the impression to be created that we are trying to dominate or even 'gobble up' any community or workers' organization whether large or small.

### **Materials**

Through effective co-ordination, more and more appropriate materials will be produced by the relevant organizations. When we have established for example that in a given area there are, say, twenty pre-school institutions run by independent community organizations, we would be able after sufficient discussion and consultation to agree



on what kind of materials (books, toys, films, pictures, posters, etc.) we would like to use in these pre-schools. Through our co-ordinating mechanisms, the necessary materials could then be purchased in bulk if they already exist or created and produced if they do not. This simple example can easily be extended to other more complex areas where forward and backward linkages are possibly less easily identifiable.

### **Methodologies**

The rapid transfer of successful and creative educational methods from one organization to another in the same or in a related sphere of activity is one of the most obvious advantages of co-ordination of resources. Through such transmission impact is maximised in a short space of time. Co-ordination will also have the effect of alerting activists to developments in their sphere of activity and thus stimulate creativity and analysis of existing or possible methods which might otherwise never have been questioned.

### **Training of personnel**

What has been said about methodology holds true also for the training of personnel. However, the most important advantage of co-ordination in this respect is undoubtedly rationalisation of resources. It will become unnecessary to duplicate in the present wasteful manner scarce human resources and activists in different organizations will acquire roughly the same procedures which, in turn, will make for greater efficiency and mobility between jobs.

### **Building the nation**

It is necessary to stress that all these and many other advantages of co-ordination can only be realised if there is some broad ideological agreement that can make the hundreds of different community, worker and educational

organizations cohere. I believe that this ideological cement can be nothing other than the process of building the nation, that is the struggle for an Azanian/South African nation in which oppression and exploitation shall have been eliminated. It is only when organizations and individuals have come to realise or to accept that this is the eventual goal of their efforts, be they small or large in scale, that they will be able to find one another and to tolerate the peculiarities and idiosyncracies that all of us have.

For there can be no doubt that all of us will have different conceptions of the nation, what it is, how it should be structured, what beliefs and customs should be tolerated in the nation, and so forth. All of us certainly reject with contempt the National Party and other bourgeois definitions of nationhood in Southern Africa. But we do not necessarily agree on the exact meanings which we impart to the concept of the Azanian/South African nation. My very use of the expression Azania/South Africa speaks volumes.

However, it is vital that we accept that our differences are not antagonistic ones; that a necessary part of the struggle for national liberation is precisely the ideological conflict among different groups and tendencies with visions of the future. Through democratic debate and through mobilisation of the masses of the people, these differences will be ironed out and our historical practice will confirm or refute our theories, our visions and our dreams.

## **Priorities**

Without further elaboration, I should like to list below those problems that we have identified as priority areas. A few questions for discussion in small groups are appended:

### **National English Language Programme (NELP)**

On economic, political and ideological grounds, the universalisation of English speech has become priority

number one.

Can we spell out the significance of such a NELP? What suggestions concerning motivation, materials, methods, funds and possible problems does the conference have? Are there examples from other countries that could provide use with some guidelines? What other aspects of a democratic language policy can be evolved?

### **Rural education**

The 'idiocy of rural life' is perhaps more marked in South Africa today than ever before precisely because of the rapid and deep-going industrialisation and urbanisation that have taken place since World War II. Resettlement or relocation schemes have added a horrifying concentration camp dimension to this problem.

What can we do? What should we do? How can we do these things without getting completely compromised?

### **Pre-school education and 'environment deprivation'**

This is an area that is simply crying out for systematic initiatives by independent community and worker groups. As yet, neither the state nor quasi-state organizations have managed to gain control of this space in the educational terrain. However, well-supported attempts are now being made to do so under the aegis of organizations such as the Urban Foundation. In the context of a rapidly industrialising South Africa and a growing urban proletariat, this is a vital area of the struggle in the country.

Beyond the pre-school, we are faced with the desert-like conditions which we all know in the locations and in the rural areas. Neither the homes nor the communities, speaking generally, constitute the kind of environment that helps to prepare children to cope with the demands of a modern scientific education. Our approach, it seems to me, must be to attempt via the community to help to create such an environment by means of building or acquiring reading rooms, libraries, meeting places for youth groups, cultural

societies, etc.

What kinds of resources are required to initiate such projects? How can the initiatives be systematised? Should they be systematised? What existing civic, church, union or community resources can be relied upon in any initiative?

### **Adult education and literacy**

In this connection, we need to ask ourselves some very clearly formulated questions. We need to get a much clearer definition of what kind of 'adult education' is relevant to South Africa today. On the basis of this definition, we need to ask ourselves whether we should and whether we can persuade existing initiatives to adapt to the kind of definitions we shall have arrived at. In regard to literacy programmes, we need to find out whether small community programmes are the optimum form for such projects; whether national political organizations should get involved and if so, what the implications for service organizations could be; whether training programmes for literacy co-ordinators can and should be made more uniform and more effective.

### **Primary school drop-out rate and teacher upgrading**

These are vast areas that impinge on the government-controlled education sector.

To what extent can we get involved? How should we do this to avoid being compromised politically? How can the quality of existing independent programmes in these fields be improved?

## **Conclusion**

There are clearly many more areas and many more questions to be considered. These, and even some of those posed here, will have to be considered at subsequent meetings and workshops. We invite participants to discuss the theoretical, strategic and organizational questions raised

*Sow the Wind*

in this paper and in others. But we appeal to you to remember that we want to get down to work. We have a gigantic task ahead of us. We want to transform the cultural front.

## THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

*(The South African Domestic Workers Association (SADWA) invited Dr Alexander to talk on women's role in society at their national convention in October 1983.)*

WHY ARE WE INTERESTED in this question? Is there anything special about women that makes us pose this particular question? Is the role of women in our society different from that of men? We only have to ask the question in this way to see at once that it is one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves today.

It is clear that something has happened in the past fifteen years or so that makes it necessary for us to find an answer to this question. This 'something' is a very simple but also a very great thing: oppressed women in Southern Africa (in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia and in Azania/South Africa) have become aware of the fact that they do not have to accept their oppression. They have begun to realise that women are not inferior to men, that they are entitled to equality in all spheres of life. Women in Southern Africa, through the struggle for national liberation, have started to struggle for women's liberation. We need only to recall the heroic struggles of our mothers and sisters in KTC and Crossroads right here on our doorstep to see that these two struggles are in fact one struggle.

In the few words that I want to say today, I want to draw your attention especially to the fact that the main task of women and men in South Africa today is to bring about freedom or liberation. And freedom, as I hope to show, cannot be divided. You cannot be free as a woman if you are unfree as a black person or if you are unfree as a worker.

## **The position of black women in South Africa**

Many learned articles and books have been written on this subject. I do not have the time nor the wish to give you long lists of laws and customs under which black women are oppressed and exploited. You know these things from your own bitter experience. Instead, I want to tell you as simply as I can how I see the position of women in South Africa.

Black women are oppressed three times over. The majority of them are exploited as workers and oppressed as black people and also as women. They are, it is often said, at the bottom of the pile.

In South Africa, as we all know, your place is decided first and foremost by whether you are supposed to be a black person or a white person. This is how it appears on the surface. Until just the other day, there were very few skilled jobs which black people (men and women) were allowed to do. Most blacks were unskilled workers who had to slave away in factories and mines and on the farms. Most black women worked on the farms and in domestic service. Only very few blacks could even dream of becoming a teacher or a nurse and only a handful became doctors or lawyers. Blacks belonged to what some people call the 'lower classes' of our society. Black women, because they were and are women, were placed at the very bottom in the lowest-paid jobs. Of these, domestic service and farm work were the most important. Of course, today many black women work in factories and in offices but, as we know, they are paid much less than men even when they do the same work. They are usually to be found in jobs like food and canning and in clothes making or textiles, which are close to house work.

Let us put it differently: black women, most of whom have to work for a boss, are exploited and underpaid by the bosses. They are oppressed as a class. Then, like all other black people, they are discriminated against because of the

colour of their skin. They are oppressed under the system of white minority rule or white domination. Thirdly, they are oppressed by their own menfolk. They are forced to do all the dirty work in the house, to come home after a hard day's work to make food for the family, mend and iron clothes, wash dishes and so forth, while the men can put up their feet and relax even when they have not been working. This happens in most homes today even though there are exceptions. What I am saying is that it is because the men stand to gain from this situation that they allow it to happen. In fact, they make very sure that it does happen.

## **The liberation struggle**

Let us say it clearly once again: When we speak of the struggle for liberation we are speaking of the struggle against all three of these kinds of oppression. We are not speaking of three different stages or three different struggles. No! We are speaking of one struggle. As I said earlier: freedom cannot be divided. You cannot call yourself 'free' as long as one or the other of these types of oppression exists.

People often say that we must first struggle against apartheid or racial oppression, then against capitalism or class oppression and after that against sexism or the oppression of women by men. Nothing can be more wrong than this idea. When we look at some of the freest countries in Africa such as Mozambique and Angola, we see that the position of women has not improved very much. Of course, in those countries the governments are actually struggling very hard to help to free women from sexism. In some of the other countries of Africa which have got their national independence from Britain or France or Belgium the situation is almost as bad as it was before independence. Women are oppressed by men just as before. Prostitution is one of the most profitable businesses in many of these



countries. Very little has changed and it is clearly impossible to change the situation of women unless the whole system is broken down.

If we are serious about liberation, we have got to see to it that the whole question of how men treat women amongst us and how our women behave towards the men becomes part and parcel of the programme of liberation for which we are fighting. Some months ago, while I was busy helping my friends in our tenants' association with normal organizational work, I came across a very instructive example of this very problem. Most of the people in our organization are women. One of the most active of these women had managed to get her husband to allow her to join the association. Like all such husbands, he did not 'mind' if she got involved in civic work 'as long as she did her duties at home'. Of these duties such as earning a wage, looking after the children, doing the shopping, washing, ironing, cooking, etc., the most important as far as he was concerned was feeding and clothing himself. Most such men are monsters of selfishness, as you well know. One night when she came back from a meeting she found herself locked out of the house with a half-drunken husband accusing her of not buying his cigarettes for that evening. After much talking to him we managed to get him to let her in. And afterwards, of course, we had many talks with him to show him how his behaviour was part of the whole system of oppression that rested most heavily on women such as his wife.

But I tell this story only to show clearly how the struggle for national liberation from racial oppression and the struggle against the exploitation of the workers by the bosses cannot be separated from the struggle for the liberation of women. This struggle for the dignity and humanity of women (more than one-half of the human species) will at the same time free their menfolk from the terrible chains which bind the oppressor as much as they

bind the oppressed. It is of the greatest importance that our men and our women fight together as equal comrades in this great struggle which we are waging in Southern Africa against the backward beliefs and practices of racism and sexism.

## **What women have done**

For many years now, women have played a leading role in the day-to-day struggles of our people. Whether on the factory floor or in the locations, in squatter camps or in the resettlement camps and even in the homes of their pampered madams and masters, oppressed women have shown that they are the equals of men in standing up for their rights and fighting against injustice and oppression. Thousands upon thousands of women have landed in jails, often with a child at their breast, because they dared to resist the pass laws, the removal schemes, the increases in rents and transport costs or the slave education dished out to their children. 'Politics' is certainly no longer taken to be the concern of men only as it was in earlier years. Women have taken their rightful place in the struggle.

But even more important than this is the fact that women have again begun to organize themselves as women. In trade unions and civic associations women play a major role but now they have begun to form organizations where they can discuss with one another or help each other to deal with those problems that women particularly have to face. These women's organizations form part of the liberation movement. They do not work against it just because they teach women how to help men to treat women as equals and to put the spotlight on important questions such as the family, child care, pre-schools, abortion laws, family planning, and so forth. These things are as important as all the great questions of which politics is supposed to consist. But the most important thing about these women's

organizations is that they are not simply appendages of the political or other public organizations of the people. They are equal in status to these organizations. Women's organizations are no longer like women's auxiliaries which make tea and provide catering at national conferences. Today, these organizations take part in all the major campaigns and decisions of the people's organizations. The road forward is clear. We need stronger women's organizations that will insist on all the finer details of liberation in the practical behaviour of men and women in our struggle.

## **Our tasks**

In order to understand what our tasks will be in the next few years, I want to end off by asking a few very practical questions:

Do you as a worker belong to a trade union? Do you as a woman belong to a women's organization? Have you as a member of the organization(s) to which you belong, looked at its programme and its policy to see what it says about the position of women and the role of women in the struggle? What are you doing in practice, on a day-to-day level, to further the cause of women's liberation (and of the liberation of men)? Are you a member of a discussion group where all these questions and others are regularly discussed?

Only if you can give a satisfactory answer to these questions can you feel sure that you are making your contribution to the liberation of our people.

We must not have false hopes. The belief that 'white' people are superior to black people is only a few hundred years old. Yet it may take another few hundred years before this backward idea can be laid to rest. The belief that men are by nature superior to women is probably a few thousand years old. It is very clear that we cannot wait that

long to do away with this superstition. To ensure that we don't have to wait that long, we have to begin our struggle today and thus continue the struggle begun by those who have gone before us.

## **'LET US FIGHT AGAINST THE ORGAN-GRINDER': BACKGROUND TO THE NKOMATI ACCORDS**

*(Address delivered at the National Forum Summit under the auspices of the National Forum Committee (NFC) on Sunday 22 April 1984 at the Lay Ecumenical Centre, Pietermaritzburg. This paper was prepared jointly by J. Pease, N. Dollie and N. Alexander.)*

ADDRESSING A MASS RALLY in Inhambane in March 1982, President Samora Machel told the crowd that the working people of Mozambique had not only defeated Portuguese colonialism but had had to fight against and defeat the Smith regime of Rhodesia. He then continued:

Now we are called to war once more, this time to liquidate the armed bandits who are the agents of the racist and minority regime in Pretoria, the agents of international imperialism ... Let the South Africans come themselves. We don't want the agents we want his boss. Let's fight against the organ-grinder, not the monkey.

It is now a matter of history that the South Africans did come. They went to a place called Nkomati where they signed the so-called Peace Accords. with the self-same President Samora Machel.

How are we to explain this sudden somersault, this breathtaking reversal? From the point of view of the national liberation movement, what are the consequences of the 'non-aggression pact'? In this brief paper, we attempt to throw some light on these two questions.

At one level, the answer is terribly simple. There is general agreement on the obvious facts that drought-ravaged economies coupled with the economic and military

sabotage carried out by Renamo and Unita bandits, backed by South Africa and world imperialism, have brought the social fabric of Mozambique to the point of disintegration. The 'peace' was therefore one signed at gunpoint. This decision inevitably involved scaling down the material support of these countries for the armed elements of the liberation movements – the African National Congress in Mozambique and South West African People's Organization in Angola.

Pressure on SWAPO to bring about 'a settlement of the Namibian problem' has increased to the point where most people expect Namibia's political independence to be imminent. This despite the fact that such independence would hardly free the colonially oppressed and exploited people of Namibia from the shackles of colonial exploitation. Most people assume that the African National Congress movement will go into decline.

The South African and Western propaganda media have hailed the accords. It is justification of the USA's policy of 'constructive engagement'. It appears to defuse the potentially explosive situation in Southern Africa – a threat to the stability needed for capitalist progress in the area. It also demonstrates the willingness of the South African regime to move closer to the liberal outlook of manipulation politics. For this P.W. Botha will no doubt receive the overt Western recognition his regime has so ardently sought, along with papal blessings to boot, when he tours Europe soon. He will, no doubt, be demanding an end to South Africa's isolation and pleading for a chance to implement his internal reforms.

### **Southern Africa in geo-strategic perspective**

According to the American Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester Crocker, 'a wide range of vital Western interests, and US interests in particular, are

engaged in the Southern African region.' In order to understand this admission, it is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves in Orwell's year of 1984, that for the strategists in the White House every country in the world is viewed in terms of the epochal contest between the capitalist and the socialist systems.

The USA is the undisputed leader of the capitalist segment. The USSR represents the main strength of what Rudolf Bahro called, with a mixture of resignation and criticism, the actually existing socialist countries of the world.

To complete the Orwellian picture, we should mention the People's Republic of China, which to the Soviet leadership represents the 'revisionist' forces in the world. So, to all intents and purposes, these three superpowers are constantly attempting to bring under their influence or control whatever part of the world they come into contact with.

Of course, this is a highly simplified horror picture of the world in 1984. Historically, capitalism is on the strategic defensive. Socialism is gaining ground, not least of all because of the devastation wrought by colonial and neo-colonial regimes in less industrialized parts of the world. There is no question here of treating the 'superpowers' as though their respective strategies are of equal status and value. For an oppressed people today, whatever criticisms its leadership may have in regard to Soviet policies and practices, there can be no doubt at all that it must support, in general terms, the socialist road. Revolutionary and even reformist movements in the less industrialised parts of the world inevitably come to be seen and even to see themselves as part of the world movement towards socialism.

Many, if not most of these claims are doomed to be merely rhetorical in the short term. Those who remember the history of the French Revolution which inaugurated the rapid transition from feudalism to capitalism in Europe,

will recall what desperate and sometime sinister groups and movements suddenly became 'democrats' or even 'Jacobins'. Historically, the centres of revolutionary development in the world exercise a magnetic attraction on any social movement anywhere in the world.

In the global context certain parts of the world have been conceded as 'belonging' to one or the other superpower. Thus the NATO countries are regarded as being within the American sphere of influence, whereas the Warsaw Pact countries and Indo-China fall within the Soviet sphere – although China contests Soviet hegemony in the latter region. Certain regions of the world, because of their strategically vital character are centres of intense superpower competition and conflict.

In these regions, wars and class struggles are carried out mainly by the local states and their populations, armed and supported by the competing world powers. The three most important of these are undoubtedly the Middle East, the Caribbean Basin and Southern Africa.

In the Middle East, world imperialism backs, in particular, Israel; in the Caribbean, the United States itself plays the role of 'regional gendarme', while in Southern Africa the main counter-revolutionary force is South Africa.

Again, this is a highly simplified outline of a complex picture – but it is a necessary background in order to grasp the significance of events in our part of the world. The stakes, as we have seen, are very high indeed. For this reason, political leadership has to weigh carefully every word uttered or written, lest we play, unwittingly, into the hands of enemy forces.

## **Why is Southern Africa important to the capitalist world?**

Southern Africa is one of the main treasure houses of the world. Like the oil deposits in the Middle East, this makes



this region an arena of potential superpower conflict. Two conservative authors, Gann and Duignan, give expression in the following statement to a widely held view among Western strategists and business people:

As a source of strategic raw materials, South Africa is of vast importance to the Western world ...

Whether in peace or in war, such supplies would be hard to replace were they denied to the West, or if they came under Soviet influence.

Although the United States, for instance, is interested in all the mineral wealth of Southern Africa, it is particularly concerned that South Africa's deposits of chromite ore, antimony, vanadium and platinum metals should not fall into Soviet hands or under Soviet influence. One understands the vulnerability of the capitalist world in regard to these strategic minerals when one realises that the USSR and South Africa together produce 99% of the world's platinum, 97% of its vanadium, and 84% of its chromite ore (with most of the rest being produced in Zimbabwe). From the point of view of the cold-war paranoia of the so-called Free World, Southern Africa in respect of those minerals is one of the 'choke-points' of the West not unlike the Straits of Hormuz.

Mozambique, South Africa, Namibia and Angola are all important countries on the strategically vital Cape sea route. Along here passes much of the capitalist world's commerce. This is especially true of its vital oil supplies, since most crude oil is now carried in very large crude carriers of more than 160 000 tonnes, too large to pass through the Suez canal. The Cape sea route, with the highly developed port and repair facilities of the Republic of South Africa, has regained the strategic value it held before 1869, the year in which the Suez Canal was opened.

Gann and Duignan calculate that more than half of Western Europe's oil supplies, a quarter of its food and nearly seventy percent of its strategic minerals come around

the Cape. They argue further that the Cape route 'is not likely to lose its present importance in relation to the Suez Canal'.

But an increasing volume of trade from the capitalist world no longer circumnavigates the Cape. Instead it goes to the Cape. South Africa has become one of the top twenty trading countries in the world. Some of the countries of Western Europe, such as Britain, are critically dependent on exports to South Africa for the maintenance of a high level of employment in vital sectors of their economy. The USA in 1980 had invested directly no less than \$7 200 million.

All the larger capitalist countries have invested heavily in Southern Africa. About 60% of the USA's investments in Africa south of the Sahara are concentrated in the ten nations of Southern Africa. Because of the extremely low cost of labour in apartheid South Africa, US investment in the Republic has grown much faster than in the rest of Africa. By 1975 more than 40% of US direct investment in the whole of Africa was placed in the Republic of South Africa. More than 360 US companies have direct operation in South Africa and about 6 000 companies do business with the Republic. South African capitalists often boast that apart from the oil countries, the Republic affords its foreign investors the highest return on every dollar invested. How important apartheid is in keeping down the wage levels of the black working class can be gauged from the fact that 'in 1973-74, the average profit rates for US mining firms and financial institutions were three times higher in South Africa than in the rest of the continent, and manufacturers reported rates six times higher' (ICP 1167 - 30/11/81).

What has been said here about US investment and trading with Southern and South Africa applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to all the large capitalist countries. Britain, particularly, has a very high level of investment in the region and Japan, a relative newcomer, has been increasing its share rapidly.

## **Constructive engagement**

Dr Chester Crocker is widely regarded as the creator of the term 'constructive engagement' which has come to stand for Reagan's policy in Southern Africa and which is supposed to contrast with the Carter policy of 'disengagement' and hostile criticism of the apartheid state. A clear enunciation of this policy of constructive engagement was given by the US ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, Herman W. Nickel, on 16/2/83 in an address to the American Chamber of Commerce in South Africa.

He said that

constructive engagement is a regional policy, directed not at South Africa alone, but at all of Southern Africa. Progress towards a more representative government in South Africa and economic progress throughout the rest of Southern Africa are inseparably linked to region-wide stability. This is why we have been working towards a set of interrelated goals. These include:

1. an internationally recognised independence for Namibia;
2. a negotiated withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola;
3. some form of detente between South Africa and the states in the region, and, since internal conditions in South Africa also contribute to regional conflicts;
4. the peaceful evolutionary change in South Africa towards a constitutional order to be defined by South Africans themselves but one firmly rooted in the principle of government by consent of the governed;
5. recognition of the need for internationally supported programs for the economic development of the region.

Here, as in a miniature, we see all the features of the

imperialist conspiracy in Southern Africa. Here, in a nutshell, we find stated the reasons for a Yankee imperialist policy of 'peace' in Southern Africa. In a region where the capitalist mode of production is dominant and not yet seriously threatened, a policy of peaceful adaptation to the new balance of class forces without any fundamental change in the relations of production serves the best interests of the capitalist class – both locally and overseas. This is the meaning of the same Ambassador Nickel's assessment of Soviet policy in a very recent address on 'America's role in peaceful settlements in Southern Africa',

We know that our global adversary, the USSR, can best advance its interests in a climate of conflict and confrontation fueled by mistrust, suspicion and political and social injustice.

According to this American view, the USSR has no specific strategy for Southern Africa. It is merely taking advantage in an opportunistic manner of pointing out conflicts or 'targets of opportunity' so as to 'keep the region in turmoil'.

These basic guidelines of imperialist policy for Southern Africa were laid down after Dr Kissinger's visit to the region in 1976. Reagan's policy is the same as that of Kissinger and in their essence, Carter's and Andy Young's. Nathan Shamuyarira, now a cabinet minister in Zimbabwe, in a seminar paper on 'Liberation Movements in Southern Africa' held at Indiana University in 1978, outlined the imperialist strategy very clearly:

The imperialist US strategy for Southern Africa encouraged explicit recognition of and support for South Africa ... The US also accepted South African hegemony over the bantustans and the neighbouring states of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and Zimbabwe even if the last two states fall under *controlled Black rule*. Finally, the US supported strengthening the neocolonial ties among the frontline states so as to *weaken the rear*

*base for liberation movements ...*

In terms of this analysis, which we support, the twin aims of imperialist strategy are to install in all countries of Southern Africa, but not necessarily in the Republic of South Africa, controllable black majority regimes. Where more independent, or less controllable, regimes are in power, as in Mozambique and Angola, its strategy is to 'weaken the rear base for liberation movements'. This, it should be said, is the real meaning of constructive engagement, this is the real purpose of the alleged policy of 'peace and stability' in Southern Africa. Despite episodic and tactical disagreements, all the imperialist powers are agreed on these aims.

The policy of 'constructive engagement' is hedged about with a military shield which is prepared for the worst, should it happen. NATO has been authorised to operate in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans in order to 'protect' the Cape sea route and 'to go to the aid of our potential allies in Southern Africa if the need should arise' (NATO official). But more of that later.

The Nkomati Accords demonstrate that the Botha regime has accepted the United States blueprint for Southern Africa. The Afrikaner National Party is going to play the game according to the ground rules designed in Washington. None other than the United States Secretary of State Mr George Shultz, has pointed to where the dog lies buried when, in a recent speech, he explained the role of the USA in the peace negotiations:

We have helped foster a dialogue ... between South Africa and Mozambique. Ours is a balanced role whose only tilt is toward the principles of peaceful settlement and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty ... We have made it clear to both sides that our goal is to nurture mutual security. In such a climate we are prepared to do our part to assist in Mozambique's development and to bolster its

chances for genuine non-alignment. And we have moved swiftly to respond to cyclones and drought that have repeatedly brought Mozambique to the edge of disaster. ('The United States and Africa in the 1980s', 2.2.84)

## **Soviet policy in Southern Africa**

The global policy of the USSR consists, theoretically, of propagating and facilitating the world socialist revolution. In practice, this general project can take many different and contradictory forms. This is not the forum in which to analyse or discuss in detail the dynamics of Soviet foreign policy. Suffice it to say that the USSR has, as part of its strategy, supported (since their inception) the nationalist movements for independence from imperialist control – even if these were mostly led by the middle class.

In Southern Africa, in the case of the former Portuguese colonies, Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa itself, the USSR has generally supported those armed movements which in the estimation of its leadership were 'authentic' representatives of the oppressed and exploited people. This policy has often reinforced extreme divisions within the liberation movement. But this is not the question we want to consider here.

What is more pertinent is the fact that Soviet strategy has, generally, encouraged the 'non-capitalist road' of development for these newly independent states. Where a socialist intelligentsia has been able to come into being during colonial times, a national democratic struggle as a first stage towards eventual socialist reconstruction has generally been advocated. Socialist-oriented regimes have been given preferential treatment but most observers have remarked on the reserved character of Soviet policy towards them. Winrich Kühne gives the following explanation of this phenomenon:

... The most outstanding characteristic of Soviet policy in Africa has been the imbalance, or disproportion, between its ability to export arms and provide military aid, on the one hand, and its low performance in trade and economic relations, on the other. This discrepancy not only explains the typical fluctuation between gains and losses in Soviet African policy but also will almost certainly rule out in the foreseeable future that certain parts of Africa will fall victim to an eastern European type of Soviet hegemony. The fact that certain African regimes ideologically lean on Moscow and cooperate with it does not guarantee any lasting and comprehensive Soviet control. For these regimes, socialism is primarily a means of pursuing certain goals of national development and of legitimising their own rule and methods of governing. It is for this reason that they have entered into an alliance with the Eastern alliance – not because they want to promote Soviet global policies.

This applies to Angola and Mozambique, who have not been invited to join Comecon, nor have they been beneficiaries of Soviet economic aid on a large scale. One of the results of this situation has been to reinforce the natural tendency of the relevant liberation movements or parties to maintain their independence.

Whether or not it is correct, as many Western analysts maintain, that the Soviet leadership does not trust these parties, what is clear is that the USSR is not prepared to create 'a second Cuba' in Africa because it has no vital strategic interests there. On the other hand, by tradition and conviction the Soviet Union will support and encourage any anti-imperialist impulse.

Though the model of superpower competition is undoubtedly valid at a certain level of description, there seems to be little reason to share the reported fear of the Chinese Communist Party leadership that as a result of the

## Nkomati Accords and

in the face of Washington's offensive under the banner of peace, Moscow certainly will not reconcile itself. It will surely adopt some counter-measures to defend its influence. It has already made clear it is not in favour of the moves taken by Angola and Mozambique for improving relations with South Africa.

## **The accords and the liberation of South Africa – the Frontline States**

What has emerged as 'frontline collaboration' in Southern Africa reflects two principal themes in the dynamic interplay which is Southern African politics. In the first place, the alliance between Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Botswana and – since 1980 – Zimbabwe, bears testimony to the decisive role that the apartheid regime continues to play in determining socio-economic patterns of development in the sub-continent.

In the second place, the very existence of a 'Frontline coalition' is in certain respects an indictment of the OAU and its role, not only in Southern Africa but throughout the continent. Nkrumah's dream of a united all-African government in accordance with the philosophy of pan-Africanism, has rapidly faded in the past decade. The OAU has become little more than a miniature UN for African heads of state. To understand why this is so, we need perhaps to remind ourselves that the OAU charter of May 1963 stressed only the need to end colonialism on every inch of African soil – it did not commit the signatories to an anti-capitalist road. The varied methods of capitalist domination in Africa coupled with the low level of development of the productive forces have reduced the OAU to observer status in the political and economic development of the continent. Because of its ineffectiveness,



a frontline strategy in Southern Africa became necessary.

## **Frontline collaboration**

The intensification of the struggle for Zimbabwe led to dramatic changes and shifts in alliances within the nationalist movements. These, in turn, led to changes in attitudes and policies in the surrounding states and governments which provided sanctuaries for the guerrillas. This led to increased diplomatic participation by the four presidents of Angola, Tanzania, Zambia and Mozambique in the anti-colonial war that was being waged by ZANU and ZAPU.

On the surface, the interventions by the 'Four Presidents' appeared to be directed solely against the Smith settler regime. However, the basis for collaboration became intimately linked to the scale and scope of the conflicts engulfing the sub-continent. It was assumed that an end to white minority rule was indispensable to 'regional security'. Towards the end of the 1970s, this became the principal ideological premise for Frontline collaboration. With the electoral victory of ZANU (PF) in 1980, new contradictions became meshed into the Southern African conflict. The transformation to majority rule in Zimbabwe did not bring about the much-desired land of milk and honey. In actual fact, the very processes and structures which set into motion the Lancaster House option brought into being contradictions of great significance for the liberation movements not only in Zimbabwe, but throughout the African continent. Issues such as the relationship between the national and class struggles, national liberation and the struggle for socialism became major questions in the struggle for Zimbabwe and clarity on these questions has become vital for those of us engaged in the liberation process. At this stage, we should remind ourselves of the contents of the Lusaka Manifesto of 1969, in particular the

sections dealing with the liberation struggles in Africa:

... We have always preferred, and we still prefer, to achieve [liberation] without physical violence. We would prefer to negotiate rather than to destroy, to talk rather than to kill ... If peaceful progress to emancipation were possible, or if changed circumstances were to make it possible in the future, we would urge our brothers in the resistance movement to use peaceful methods of struggle even at the cost of some compromise on the timing of change ...

The 'liberation strategy' of the Frontline States stems directly from this manifesto of 1969. What is more, the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration of 1974 reinforced the approach adopted by these states. Among other things, the armed struggle was endorsed as a tactic in Zimbabwe and Namibia, but not in South Africa. These are controversial conclusions of which the liberation movements must take cognisance.

There can be no doubt that the Frontline States have contributed to the apparent unification of liberation movements in Zimbabwe and, at the level of diplomacy, tried to promote the Geneva and Lancaster House conferences. But, and this is the salient point, to quote Nathan Shamuyarira again,

... As a result of this involvement, the Frontline States have been caught in the imperialist network and face contradictions within their own societies.

Indeed, agreements on words like 'majority rule', 'peaceful settlements' and others conceal wide differences between the regimes comprising the Frontline coalition. Pertinent questions like what does Kaunda represent, what class or combination of class interests does the party in Zambia embody, should be thrashed out. If we are genuinely looking for explanations of the activities and dynamics of the Frontline States we should not be afraid to confront

these kinds of questions. To avoid them means that we cannot evolve an effective strategy for Southern African liberation.

## **The SADCC – ‘From poverty to economic liberation’**

In almost every commentary on developments in Southern Africa, mention is made of South Africa’s dominance. Because of its capitalist ascendancy in the region, South Africa maintains an economic and military stranglehold over the independent states. Against the increase in dependency on South Africa, we have seen since 1980, among other things, the creation of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC).

Even though South Africa’s population of thirty-four million is only half of that of the nine countries within the SADCC, its gross domestic product of \$85 billion is almost four times the GDP of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Malawi. To exacerbate the problem of underdevelopment, the independent states have been battered by cyclones, floods and droughts. Perhaps more important for our analysis, the Frontline States have been brought to heel by South Africa’s destabilisation campaign. In a leading article of the *London Observer* reprinted in the *Argus* of 11 September 1981, one aspect of South Africa’s role in Southern Africa was put succinctly:

... In brief, it is to create a Lebanon situation in Angola, with Jonas Savimbi’s UNITA forces playing the role of the Lebanese Christians, and South Africa playing the role of Israel ...

Today we can add that South Africa’s operations have been extended into Swaziland, Lesotho and Mozambique. But this shift in South Africa’s subcontinental policy towards

systematic economic and military intervention in neighbouring countries is a direct consequence of the failure of its previous strategy of offering economic incentives to the independent regimes in order to draw them further into the web of the much acclaimed, but still-born, Constellation of Southern African States. Against this possibility, the independent states formed the SADCC. *The Economist* of 11 February 1984 carried an article which expounds clearly the character of the organization:

SADCC is united against South Africa and the weather, but divided against itself. Swaziland, Botswana and Malawi have free-wheeling capitalist economies; Angola, Mozambique, and increasingly, Zimbabwe, are socialist. Nearly all produce raw materials which they cannot sell to each other and need to ship to western markets via (you guessed it) South Africa.

These are some of the dilemmas that the Frontline States and SADCC are forced to contend with. In the short to medium term, the capitalist axis between Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zambia may well provide the opening for further capitalist exploitation of the black workers in the region. One line of thinking which has gained some ground among the strategists of the 'Free World' is a linking up of South Africa and SADCC in one powerful bastion of capitalist enterprise. Thus, for instance, the view of DA Etheridge of Anglo-American Corporation:

... The process of regional co-operation has taken important steps since the independence of Zimbabwe. But for real progress South Africa must participate and the SADCC, which has made a promising start, needs in my view to subjugate its hostility towards South Africa to the crying needs of the states of Southern Africa.

The imperialist powers have taken a 'soft line' on the organization. But this soft line is dictated by the iron laws of

capitalist accumulation and expansion. The strategists in Washington, Berlin, London and Melbourne are motivated by a long-term perspective of consolidating the Southern African link in the imperialist chain. Against possible overthrow of the capitalist bastion in Southern Africa, the strategists of finance capital are seeking to expand the regional base for continued domination in the subcontinent. This view is fraught with contradictions since Southern Africa will continue to be wracked by political instability and the weak infrastructural networks that presently exist will not facilitate the expansion of capitalist markets.

Most states prefer to back a strategy to continue large-scale investments in the Republic of South Africa because of the cheap labour market and the very high rate of exploitation, and because the South African regime appears powerful enough to maintain the necessary law and order.

As for the socialist-inclined representatives within SADCC, their motives for participation appear to be just as complex as those guiding the capitalist initiative. It is their view that the interdependence of economic life in Southern Africa will persist. This view is premised on the correct belief that the migrant labour system, the 'bedrock of capitalism' in the subcontinent, has linked the working people of the region into a single regional economy. In addition, transport and communications networks have become indispensable to regional growth. Independent initiatives on the part of the neighbouring countries in these fields are necessary conditions to undermine dependence on South Africa. However, it is not very clear whether these initiatives will succeed.

The singularity of the Southern African political economy is the necessary context within which any attempts at economic liberation must be conceived. Consequently, if we want to develop a coherent strategy we need to trace the development of contradictions within South Africa itself, for here lies the key to the conflicts in

Southern Africa. It is here that the intricacies of the opposing social forces at work can be unravelled. It is within the contradictions of South African society that the understanding of the Nkomati Accords can be found, because South Africa's future and that of the rest of Southern Africa are inextricably interwoven.

The only real accords are with imperialism, not those with Southern Africa, whose needs objectively are diametrically opposed to those of the South African regime. Botha has won a brief respite in order to turn his attention to the problems at home.

### **The shifting images of South African politics**

But what exactly is the scenario at home? It can be summed up in one word – *change*. Of course, change means different things to the forces of progress and those of reaction.

World Imperialism, as we have seen, has come to play a more direct and intense role in the political direction of South Africa and in the affairs of sub-Saharan Africa. In the past twenty years, investment in South Africa and expansion of industry through multinational corporations have multiplied ten times over. Direct overseas investment is estimated at fifty billion rand, American shareholders alone hold more than forty-five out of every hundred gold-mining shares, foreign countries are in total control of the electronics industry and three-quarters of the annual turnover in the car industry is accounted for by foreign firms. These few observations out of a host of others serve to underline the important fact that South Africa is an industrialized capitalist country, but heavily dependent on foreign investment and technological assistance. It has already been mentioned that a large proportion of strategic raw materials are concentrated in Southern Africa. Manufacturing industry has overtaken the mining industry in the production of wealth and there has been the recent

development of a South African finance capital sector – which does not mean that the country is moving towards bourgeois democracy as a result of the so-called ‘objective needs of capitalism’.

The fact of the matter is that the more wealth is accumulated by the bourgeois camp the less it is possible to call into question the prison camp conditions imposed on the black population. The evolution of capitalism in South Africa each day further erodes the base of its continued existence.

The changes which have occurred on South Africa’s borders and with the fall of the Portuguese empire in Africa and the rise to power of socialist-oriented states in Angola and Mozambique, the overthrow of the Smith racist regime in Zimbabwe and the escalating conflict in Namibia coupled with the rising tide of consciousness of the oppressed inside South Africa against the background of the world-wide recession threw the ruling class into a state of crisis.

Change for the ruling class is therefore evidenced in the polarisation of white attitudes. The depth of their crisis is indicated by the fact that PW Botha was prepared to split Afrikanerdom in the search for white survival and the continued reproduction of capitalism. The bitter internecine splits in Afrikanerdom are merely a fight about means – there is absolute agreement on maintaining white domination. The ‘verkramptes’ at one end will have no dilution of apartheid in its pristine form because they see concessions as the beginning of the end; the slogan ‘adapt or die’ sums up the position of the ‘verligtes’. The latter are so close to the position held by the official opposition as to make no difference.

PW Botha and his henchmen have come to understand, at long last, that sheer survival depends upon a change in tactics. They are prepared to jettison whatever aspects of apartheid they may have to – provided that the reforms are

within capitalist, economically centred solutions. Also any power sharing must be one which totally excludes the black majority exercising democratic rights in an undiluted system of adult franchise. There is also the 'white backlash' to contend with. Most whites are not prepared to give up their privileges, euphemistically called the 'South African way of life'. A poll indicated that 74% of them were prepared to fight to maintain it. However, the white electorate gave the present regime a resounding go-ahead in the recent referendum although if its initiatives fail, the Herstigte Nasionale Party might be the next government the electorate will choose.

A new ideology of 'economic growth' is now proposed as the panacea. There is the growing belief in some quarters that unfettered growth will sweep away racial prejudices and obsolete political structures and at the same time produce the stratum of black middle-class leaders who will help to give capitalism a long lease of life. They will be the representatives of the oppressed who they hope will have accepted the 'free enterprise system' as one to defend, if necessary, with their lives. These black leaders will find it in their interest to negotiate with the ruling class, a political dispensation based upon the structures of economic co-operation which would arise due to capitalist expansion.

This ties in well with the USA's policy of constructive engagement – new legislation has been passed for more defence aid to sustain economic growth and to restructure the economies of African countries with the emphasis on small and medium US firms pooling expenses and setting up joint operations with their African counterparts. The imperialist organ is being tuned in readiness.

Various changes have therefore been made in South Africa towards this end. A new political dispensation has been worked out to co-opt the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' layers into the white laager – a tricameral parliament is implemented, with effective power safely within white



hands. A new deal has been worked out for the urban 'Blacks' to buy off a section which they hope eventually to co-opt with sops like leased land, various 'rights' in the white cities, a few schools to absorb those who can pay the exorbitant fees and a few concessions to black traders. Middle class aspirations will be catered for.

But the contradictions remain. All 'reform' can only be made within the confines of racial segregation – *Ethnicity* is the fundamental organizing principle of South Africa's political economy. *The historic implantation of capitalism into this country rests squarely upon the apartheid structure* – the migrant labour system; a controlled, exploited labour force rigidly under influx control laws which are essential to the very existence of capitalism in this country.

Also, if the economy is to expand, so must the numbers of skilled employees. Therefore some of the educational 'changes' – as proposed by the De Lange commission – will be put into effect. These are mainly to provide a basic literacy with the emphasis on making students '*werkgereed*' and with opportunities being created within the educational planning for students to drop out at convenient points for slotting into the needs of industry. The private sector will then be expected to play their part by footing the bill for black training. The Carlton Hotel and other government-business conferences cemented these agreements – business groups are no longer just pressure groups' but bargaining partners – recognized by government. It is important to note that at the Carlton Hotel conference not a single businessman spoke about black political rights.

To accommodate Western pressures for giving blacks some civil rights, and to give substance to 'reform', while yet working within the confines of apartheid policy – the bantustans are to remain. There, 'Blacks' will exercise their political rights as separate nationalities outside of the Republic of South Africa – independent but economically

integrated.

Mass migration to the cities will be curbed by tightening up the influx control laws via the Koornhof Acts and by decentralisation of industry. The decentralisation strategy is aimed at providing the economic base for the population mass removals needed to retain ethnicity as the fundamental organizing principle of the society. Government expects the private sector to assist in ensuring the economic viability of the homelands so that its constitutional and political goals can be realised. This will also play a pivotal role in influx control – it has become essential that control of movement should rest less on coercion and more on where the work is. So, hand-in-glove with economic strategy goes political partition – the New Deal can therefore never be seen as a move towards a non-racial constitution, nor even as a point of departure towards such a goal – it represents no less than the entrenchment of ethnicity. The only changes are those to co-opt a wider layer of black collaborators!

But for an expanding economy, markets are needed. South Africa's strategy to create these markets in Africa had therefore to incorporate a diplomatic offensive to win acceptance by African states, despite their abhorrence of apartheid.

There is a real contradiction between the necessity for the racist regime to play the role of imperialist policeman in Southern Africa, and its need to gain crucial markets. The only solution was to install governments with a more conciliatory attitude to South Africa in these regions.

Destabilisation of the economies of the surrounding states would serve many purposes – by blocking industrial growth in Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana there would be no competitors for South African industrialists; economically stable states on South Africa's borders, especially if these were hostile to South Africa and particularly if they were socialist-oriented, would not only

serve as a source of inspiration to the oppressed and exploited masses inside the country but would give these countries economic independence to host guerrillas and give assistance to liberatory movements.

South Africa could only accomplish this by military intervention on the one hand and economic subjugation on the other – actually two sides of the same coin. South Africa's policy for Southern Africa is therefore tailor-made for the imperialist gendarme of Southern Africa.

### **Economic subjugation of Southern Africa**

The tentacles of South African capital, led by the Anglo American Corporation, are spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa, dominating production, employment, trade, finance, transport and communications. This joint exploitation with other imperialist powers of Southern Africa's resources and black labour heightens the unequal economic relationships and siphons off large profits to Johannesburg and South Africa's overseas investors.

South Africa has direct or indirect trading links with nineteen African countries. A significant amount of South African capital is invested in the area. South Africa dominates the economies of Botswana, Malawi, Lesotho and Swaziland. They are dependent upon South Africa for most of their food, they send a large workforce as migrant labour to the mines and all these states belong to the South African Customs Union. This union allows relatively free trade amongst the states and assures South Africa of a captive market.

South Africa is the colonial power in Namibia, holding 47% of its foreign investment, and importing 80% of its goods. South Africa has extensive investments in Zimbabwe with which it trades and it exerts a strong influence in Zambia's mining sector. It also supplies Zambia with food. Its influence extends to Zaire, the Congo,

Mauritius, Tanzania, Reunion and the Central African Republic. In Mozambique the port of Maputo is run by South African personnel while the giant Cahora Bassa Dam exports most of its power to South Africa. Through De Beers, South Africa has considerable influence in Angola, too. The South African communications network extends over most of the subcontinent. Most of these countries are dependent on South Africa for food. For 1980, South African exports to Africa increased by 66,6% to reach a level of 1,1 billion rand.

The Witwatersrand is not only the industrial and financial capital of the whole of Southern Africa – it is also the centre of the migrant labour system which weaves the working class of almost all the Southern African countries together in a single web of exploitation and oppression.

South Africa is a sub-imperialist metropole and will be used by the West to safeguard capitalism in Southern Africa.

## **Militarisation**

South Africa has acquired a sophisticated and bristling arsenal, as South Africa's air force chief said,

[n]ot only to defend the fatherland but to establish stability in Southern Africa and to establish ourselves as guardians of peace and freedom in this subcontinent.

A clear echo of Chester Crocker's views on constructive engagement. It is aimed at upholding capitalism and white supremacy in South Africa while its substantial economic and political interests beyond its borders propel it to function as a regional policeman.

As guardian of imperial interests the partnership between Washington and Pretoria has grown. Washington quietly went on arming South Africa – as evidenced by the increase in open sales of aircraft which can be used for

military purposes. The Cape sea route is well covered by NATO's contingency planning. In Silvermine we see a more direct NATO collaboration in technology which gives South Africa a radius of 5 000 miles surveillance.

There was discreet backing of South Africa's invasion of Angola – an invasion thwarted only by Cuban aid to Angola. The conservative governments of Thatcher and Reagan are a source of encouragement to Botha who has set out to prove what a powerful ally to the West South Africa can be. The tacit approval of the West is shown by the co-operation by France and the USA in developing South Africa's nuclear potential.

By 1978 all sectors of the white community, including women, children, pensioners and immigrants, were being drawn into the military machine and an increasing number of blacks was being trained as soldiers. Owen Horwood declared in his budget speech of 1978 that 'military preparedness remains our first priority'. The budgets reflect this fact – the defence vote increased from R493 million in 1973–74 to R1654 million in 1977–78, an increase of 235% over four years. After the Nkomati Accords it was announced that there would be no let-up in military spending. The stability of the region depended upon South Africa's military domination of the region.

A number of white farmers have abandoned their farms in the Northern Transvaal; 58% of farmers bordering on Zimbabwe have deserted their land. These farms have been handed over to young farmer-soldiers who in time would be able to buy them on very favourable terms – operating along kibbutz lines. There is a concerted effort to secure the border regions. Marnet (a military area radio network) extends along the entire border from Namibia to Mozambique and was to be extended throughout the Eastern Cape area. Military bases are being set up along the borders and deforesting of bush areas has created a clear 10 km-wide strip between South Africa and its neighbours.

The white electorate has been prepared psychologically for the 'total onslaught'. A concerted effort to involve the whole white community has been made during the past few years – cadets were increased at schools, national service was extended, more women drawn into the military, and legislation became more severe for draft dodgers. A point of contention was the drive to recruit black volunteers. The high unemployment rate made this proposition appear relatively successful. The 'combined manoeuvre', a strategy for policing urban black townships, has been developed – military camps have been established near Soweto and other large black areas and at strategic points along the homelands borders. Periodically, members of the police, army, civil defence and commando units mobilize and surround a black area, usually around midnight. For twelve hours every person and vehicle going in and out of the area is searched, while riot police conduct house-to-house raids inside the township. These manoeuvres are passed off as a blitz on criminals – a number are usually apprehended.

Total armed forces numbered 65 000 in 1979, the army mustering 50 000 (43 000 conscripts and 2 100 women), literally bristling with arms. There is a navy of 5 500 men and airforce of 10 000 with thousands of reserves. Paramilitary forces number 110 000 commandoes – 13 air commando squadrons with private aircraft, 35 500 SA police and 20 000 police reserves. The picture is that of a police state in a state of siege – and so the Nkomati Accords do not represent a genuine peace. Vigilance remains the word for the ruling class.

Why is this so?

With an influence that extends thousands of miles beyond its borders, the biggest industrial base in Africa, a powerful military machine controlling its borders and internal unrest, the apartheid regime seems at the peak of its power.

That may be the perspective for the ruling class.

From the point of view of the oppressed, all the frantic military build-up and diplomatic and economic coercion demonstrate only one thing – there has been a shift in the balance of power between the black working class and the white ruling class. Slowly but inexorably over the years, as one after another African country threw off the colonial yoke, the consciousness of South Africa's oppressed has passed to new heights. The overthrow of the Portuguese empire and the coming to power of ZANU (PF) in Zimbabwe was a source of great inspiration to the oppressed. The black working class started flexing its muscles in the early seventies and trade union organizations gained ground. At present there is a concerted effort being made at unity. The government was forced to recognise the danger posed by the mobilizing workers and the Wiehahn and Riekert recommendations were formulated to control this threat.

The ideology sweeping through the liberatory movement embodies a belief in a single, anti-racist and non-racial South Africa – a total rejection of the carving up of South Africa into ethnic bases; a demand for complete unqualified equality between human beings and a rejection of white dominance.

More and more the class question is being raised where it constitutes the core of the general political crisis in the area. It is an idea whose time has come. This is the real catalyst for change in Southern Africa and has created the new milieu in which the organizations of the liberatory movement of South Africa must operate.

In the final analysis, the 'hearts, minds and actions' of the oppressed and exploited will determine the outcome in South Africa. The inter-relationship – economically and politically – of the Southern African states, the weaknesses and vulnerability of the Frontline States and their dominance by South Africa, underscores the fact that only partial and limited advances can be made within the

confines of one country. The solution to our problems can be found only on a regional and, ultimately, an international basis.

## **The accords and the liberation of South Africa**

To conclude this paper, we need to consider briefly how the Nkomati Accords and the so-called South African peace initiatives will affect the national liberation movement. For this purpose, we put forward a few statements without arguing our case in detail.

The immediate consequences of the Accords are obvious. Organizations such as the African National Congress which have been operating to a large extent out of external bases will have to reconsider their military strategy. Although there is some evidence that the leadership of these organizations was informed about the probable course of events some time earlier, it is clear that the pressure from rank-and-file members on the leaders is intense. If the newspapers are to be taken seriously, there appears to be growing resentment at the Mozambican decision to sign the Accords. According to a report of 17 April 1984,

In a communiqué to the Mozambican Government the ANC executive council expressed 'deep disappointment' at the Nkomati Accord, which it described as 'a wounding blow to the struggle of our people'. ('Summit Talks on ANC' – *Argus*)

The journalist from whose pen this article stems, Glenn Frankel, maintains that

the ANC was facing its most serious crisis in a decade as it pondered how to continue an armed struggle against white rule in South Africa following its eviction from Mozambique. Confronted with what they conceded was a potentially crippling setback ... the congress



leadership says it intends to continue using Mozambican territory as an infiltration route in defiance of the new pact.

We do not have to believe all this but it is abundantly clear that a truly agonising reappraisal of strategy and tactics has been placed on the agenda of the entire liberation movement.

The policy of building up internal bases through political organization and mobilisation remains valid and relevant regardless of what detailed changes are made by the forces concerned in the tactics of armed struggle. The inevitable calls from the inevitable quarters for the abandonment of the armed struggle are as futile as they are opportunistic. This is a decision which has to be made by the freedom fighters. The logic of their position at this moment seems to indicate an amendment, not the abandonment, of the struggle they have waged up to now.

Peaceful coexistence between South Africa and its neighbours cannot and does not mean that there is class peace between the rulers and the ruled. The class struggle continues as before. Those who now call for 'dialogue' between the 'authentic leaders' of the people of South Africa and the National Party government, since the latter is prepared to talk to Presidents Machel and Dos Santos, are either naive or devious. We are not yet in a position where we can talk as equals or from a position of superior strength to the present regime. We have to work very hard to get to that situation. To pretend to talk to them on any other basis is merely to fool the masses of the working people into believing that talking can take the place of organization and struggle. Our organizations must prepare the soil, we must force this government or its successors to ask to speak to us when they can no longer continue. The Accords of Nkomati must not lead us to propagate, as do the Buthelezi and the Hendrickses, a spurious peaceful co-existence between the oppressor and the oppressed. To do so would be to create a

climate in which treachery, compromise and collaboration could flourish. Let us be on our guard against this temptation.

*Let us fight against the organ grinder! Let us force them to change their tune!*

Despite the Nkomati Accords, victory is ours and victory is certain.

## RACE, ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM IN SOCIAL SCIENCE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

*(Paper delivered at the 15th annual congress of the Association for Sociology in Southern Africa at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, on 3 July 1984.)*

IN THANKING YOU FOR the invitation to address your congress, let me not conceal from you the fact that when I agreed to do so I was motivated largely by the consideration that the occasion could provide me with an opportunity to set the cat of (hopefully) creative controversy among the apparently slumbering pigeons of Southern African social science. For it would seem to be a fact that after the decade-long murmuring and even perturbation that was occasioned by the ideas of the 'new school' of South African historiography, first characterised as such by Frederick Johnstone in a now famous lecture delivered in this same university some six years ago (Johnstone 1978), the debate between the 'radicals' and the 'liberals' seems to have got blurred and out of focus. To such an extent, indeed, that in some circles it produces endless tedium when it does inadvertently get an airing. Of course, we all accept that the so-called radical contender has scored if not a knockout victory then certainly a decisive victory on points over the superannuated liberal former world champion. And now, so it would seem, all that remains to be done over the next couple of decades is to rehash Southern African history, sociology, anthropology, etc., in terms of the new paradigms. Although, undoubtedly, the new kinds of questions that are being posed have had a high heuristic value in that they have opened up new fields of inquiry, I have begun to sense that we are well on

the way towards establishing and entrenching a new orthodoxy. One which will in years to come in its turn have to be shaken up by younger minds less respectful of the sacred cows that graze on the lawns of the academy.

My paper this evening will attempt to take the matter beyond the limit that seems to have been drawn by consensus among the practitioners of social science in this country. Because I am about to venture into relatively unknown territory in some parts of this paper, I want to invert the normal procedure of the court by pleading in mitigation before you, even before you have had an opportunity to hear my case and to consider your verdict. I am neither a trained sociologist (whatever that might mean) nor have I had the inestimable advantage of trying out some of my ideas among competent and critical colleagues before displaying them to you tonight. Except for a few tangential discussions about the meaning of words such as 'reality' and 'materiality', I have arrived at my position by way of a curious soliloquy which I hope will find some place in the broader dialogue that should be going on in Southern Africa. Forgive me for belabouring what is perhaps not even a felicitous metaphor: that cat I am about to inflict upon you is quite frankly a wild cat that will have to be tamed and called to order by your criticism. I hope that it will not be killed off immediately by contemptuous condemnation, or worse, by stony indifference. Should this happen none the less, I console myself with the thought that cats are reputed to have nine lives and that at least some of the suggestions I want to put forward here tonight will lead on to research and thought that will help to alter the landscape in which all of us work.

## **Class analysis and the organic intellectuals**

Even today, more than ten years after the university-based radical assault on the liberal approach to the study of

societies in Southern Africa began, almost every new contribution has to submit to the tortuous necessity of debunking the myths of liberalism. One of the latest of these is the brilliant introductory chapter to *Volkskapitalisme* by Dan O'Meara (1989). I shall return to this book which has lightened my task considerably. I believe, however, that the time has come for us to draw a line under the tedious and unnecessary Aristotelian debate about whether 'class' or 'race', 'class' or 'ethnicity', 'class' or 'nationalism' is the salient causal factor in the development of a given social formation. Cast in these terms, the debate becomes repetitious and circular; deciding for one option rather than the other ends up being no more than an act of faith, usually in some admired teacher or colleague.

What seems to me to have become necessary if we want to move forward is that we should accept without further debate the validity of the historical materialist approach, question where necessary the validity of categories such as 'race', 'ethnic group' and 'nation' and generate a conceptual universe through a new, consciously cultivated scientific language that reflects more accurately and facilitates the new kind of thinking that the situation demands of us. Even though acrimonious and sectarian polemics are conducted within the camp of historical materialism, we have, as I have said, won the battle against the liberal approach to the study of society. There is no longer any need to concentrate on the debunking of fetishistic history or sociology. After all, even first-year university students from the post-1976/post-1980 schools are alienated by that kind of material. We have to continue analysing and debunking particular mystifications where necessary and appropriate, but it has become much more urgent for us to alter our conception of our tasks by becoming, in Gramsci's phrase, 'organic intellectuals' whose functions are firmly based on the interests of the working class – in South Africa, the black working class! (see Hall et al. 1983: 50). This means

quite simply that we have to re-phrase our questions radically. It is not, for example, the end of our endeavours to demonstrate that, let us say, the so-called coloured people (see Goldin 1983) or for that matter the Xhosa-speaking people of the Transkei constitute or do not constitute an 'ethnic group'. We have only completed our task when out of our analysis it becomes manifest by what routes it would be possible to help to constitute those people as an 'ethnic group' if this is what the interests of the black working class dictate or, vice versa, to undermine any such ruling-class or petty bourgeois project as is now being pursued with these two groups of inhabitants of South Africa if it is contrary to the interests of the black working class. The arbiters in the decision concerning what is in the interests of the black working class are not – at present at any rate – to be found in the corridors and seminars of the universities but rather in the democratic organizations of the working people. Because of an abiding interest in the character and the modalities of the national liberation struggle, I have chosen to demonstrate my approach by examining briefly the subject of 'Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Southern African Social Science'. Two impressions that arise from this bald title have to be corrected immediately. The first is that I am going to focus on the problem of 'ethnicity' and will deal only very briefly with 'race' and nationalism; the second is that I shall refer only where necessary for my argument to the actual work of social scientists in Southern Africa since my purpose is of a much more general and fundamental character.

Put in a sentence, what I hope to show is the ideological function of concepts such as 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'nation' and by examining their articulation with the ideological discourse that represents the interests of the working class, suggest how through a new approach to language in conjunction with political practice these concepts can be either disarticulated from or articulated with the ideology

of the working class. What O'Meara has begun to do for South African historiography with his work on Afrikaner nationalism has to be broadcast on the field of the social sciences generally and expounded within a more general theoretical framework. It is perfectly correct and for most purposes adequate to point out that

the specific forms of organization ... and ... ideology of various class forces are a vital element in the determination of the manner in which the temporary resolution of class contradictions takes place. Any analysis of the state and state policy must necessarily pose for itself the question of organization and ideological forms of the collective harnessing of the forces of this or that class or alliance of classes.

Sociologists, however, cannot rest content with this effort. They have to examine the ontological status of the transitory 'organizational and ideological forms' in which the contending class forces are mobilised. For only if they have acquired clarity on this level can they suggest or even prescribe under certain circumstances effective intervention in the interests of the working class. And this, as I have stressed, is the purpose of progressive social science.

### **Remarks on 'race'**

The work of the 'new school', starting with the seminal articles of Wolpe (1972) and Legassick (1973) has changed the entire approach to the study of Southern African social formations. I shall not trace that process here since it has become part of the assumed intellectual equipment of social scientists in Southern Africa. Johnstone's characterisation of the essential achievement and purpose of the 'new school' remains a useful summary of the contents of the early writings:

The basic problem with the traditional liberal

school, from the Marxist standpoint, was and is its idea that capitalism and racial domination in South Africa have somehow had nothing to do with each other, and have actually been essentially dysfunctional for each other; its failure to see the ways and the extent to which important forms of racial domination have actually been integral and functional components of South African capitalism, which have been utilised by it and been highly beneficial for it.

The essential thrust of the new Marxist school has been precisely along these lines – to completely re-conceptualise, re-theorise and re-analyse the relationship between the economic system and the racial system in South Africa, and indeed the whole nature and historical development of the South African social formation, economic system and racial system, and thereby to elucidate and specify the specific class nature, class determination and class dynamics of the racial system, as well as of other aspects of South Africa. (Johnstone 1978: 101–102. See also Gool 1983: 9)

In expounding this approach, the ‘new school’ questioned and eventually torpedoed the race-relations framework within which almost all previous liberal and avowedly Marxist analyses had examined the South African social formation. What they did not do, curiously, was to examine the relevance and the validity of basic concepts of the race-relations framework. In particular, the concept of ‘race’ was left standing as though it could not be shaken. This, in spite of the fact that it must be a major gain in the war of position between the two fundamental classes to be able to show that some of the crucial concepts of the ruling class are devoid of the reality claimed for them. Hitler, certainly, understood what an important crutch the concept of ‘race’ was for the work of the Nazi party even though he acknowledged that the concept had no valid basis in biological science. He is reported to have said in 1934:



I know very well that in a scientific sense there is no such thing as race. As a politician, however, I need a concept that makes it possible to destroy the historical bases that have existed hitherto and to put in their place a completely new and anti-historical 'order' and to give to this new order an intellectual basis. (Quoted in Görschler 1961: 73 from Wilhelm Girnus, *Wer macht Geschichte?* Berlin 1946, p. 16)

The 'debate over race' (Lieberman 1975) conducted among physical anthropologists, geneticists and other scientists continues. Today, the debate no longer concerns the eighteenth century question about the monogenic or polygenic origin of 'races' or the essentially nineteenth century question about the equality of 'races' but quite straightforwardly the question of whether 'races' exist or not. The 'lumpers' (no-race theorists) are on the strategic offensive and it is merely a question of time until the 'splitters' (many-races theorists) put up the white flag. Lieberman, after careful consideration of the available data within a sociology of knowledge framework takes the position that

the data and the assumed future world social structure are better formulated in terms of the lumpers' position ... By using the splitters' definition of race, races can exist, but they are no more typical of the human species than hermits are of human societies.

In this very useful and suggestive essay, Lieberman adumbrates the thesis which I am expounding in this paper as follows:

The role of scientific data in past disputes over race and the present dispute over the existence of races has been largely controlled or made possible by changes in social structure. The role of science in this view is that of a catalytic agent which can speed and channel the change by developing one or another of the possible alternative formulations for

conceptualizing biological differences. *It is the hope of action-oriented intellectuals that adopting one formulation rather than another will lead to changes in man's future which transcend the limits of the social structure that made the formulation possible.*

(Lieberman 1975: 39. My emphasis.)

In a racial capitalist system such as has developed in South Africa it is a matter of great importance to be able to query or even to reject the assertion that 'the present consensus of opinion recognises the existence of races as *valid biological entities*' (Tobias 1972: 4) since such knowledge helps to disarm those who underpin their racist practices with the claim that 'science' warrants for the reality behind the concept of 'race'.

But the problem will not be solved so easily precisely because it arises not from the alleged objective biological reality of human 'races' but from the less clearly defined social reality of 'race'. According to a typical undergraduate textbook:

In sociology a 'race' is understood as a category of persons whose social positions are defined in terms of certain physical or other characteristics that are *believed* to be hereditary ... If individuals or groups act on the assumption that genetically determined racial differences exist and govern social behaviour the consequences for society are the same, even if the assumption has no scientific foundation in human biology. Whether or not biologists continue to use the term, the reality of race as a socially defined attribute cannot be denied. (Richmond 1972: 1)

This view is so widely held that it appears to be almost reckless for one to draw a line through it as a teacher would through a hastily written, ill-conceived piece of homework. For it is perfectly obvious that what is 'real' here is not some phenomenon called 'race' but rather the awareness of 'race' or racial prejudice. The questions of how this awareness or

prejudice arises and why it persists belong properly to the total analysis of a social formation, more specifically at the level of ideology. I shall, therefore, return to this question when I examine the problem of ethnic consciousness since the two are categorically identical.

### **'Ethnicity': Elegant variation for 'divine will'?**

Glazer and Moynihan (1981), who first published their influential book on *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* in 1975, were aware of the fact that they were treading on dangerous ground by appearing to elevate to the status of a general theory the potential of the notion of 'ethnicity' to explain a multitude of social movements and entities (see Glazer and Moynihan 1981: 1–26). While they carefully avoid claiming an explicit theoretical status for the set of propositions implied by their conception of ethnicity (see Glazer and Moynihan 1981: 25–26) they none the less clearly suggest that a new theory of modern society can and probably will emerge from the research they expect to spin off from their publication.

Ethnic theories and conceptions indeed abound worldwide. Paradoxically, the United States and the Soviet Union are the two main countries in which ethnic studies are promoted and from which ethnic theories are exported. One need only glance at the prescribed textbooks in undergraduate sociology and anthropology courses at South African universities to discover the extent of this ethnic industry – at least as far as the publishing trade in the USA is concerned! It cannot, however, be my purpose in this paper to tackle this monstrous phenomenon though I believe that it is a task that ought to be undertaken.

In Southern Africa, we are concerned about 'ethnicity' for two reasons. Firstly, because of the obvious and crude ways in which the present regime has 'moved away' from racial terminology into ethnic terminology to effect the

same purpose, justifying the disorganization and exploitation of the working class. It is in the immediate interests of the working class to debunk the view that 'ethnic group' describes better what people normally refer to as 'race' (see Shibutani and Kwan 1976: 97).

But there is a second important reason for concern. This is the fact that even though both liberal and radical theorists in Southern Africa reject the pseudo-scientific findings of *volkekunde*, the vast majority of them none the less adhere to some notion of 'ethnic groups' and 'ethnicity'. And since this approach has definite consequences for action both in the academic and in the more 'mundane' social spheres, I believe that it is vital, especially at this juncture in our history, to confront the problem squarely. Just how important the question really is, is attested by a considered remark in Glazer and Moynihan:

Formerly seen as *survivals* from an earlier age, to be treated variously with annoyance, toleration or mild celebration, we now have a growing sense that ... [ethnic groups] may be *forms* of social life that are capable of renewing and transforming themselves. As such, perhaps, the hope of doing without ethnicity in a society as its subgroups assimilate to the majority group may be as utopian and as questionable an enterprise as the hope of doing without social classes in a society.

This is not an assertion to be passed lightly. If true, a very great deal of radical and even liberal doctrine of the past century and a half is wrong ... (Glazer and Moynihan 1981: 4–5. Emphasis in the original.)

Although the whole question hinges on an understanding of the relationship between consciousness and reality, it will be useful to begin by making a few observations about the lack of precision inherent in the term 'ethnic' and its derivatives. Right at the beginning of what one might dub the debate over ethnicity, Max Weber rejected the term as

inadequate and useless.

All in all, the notion of 'ethnically' determined social action subsumes phenomena that a rigorous sociological analysis ... would have to distinguish carefully: the actual subjective effect of those customs conditioned by heredity and those determined by tradition; the differential impact of the varying content of custom; the influence of common language, religion and political action, past and present, upon the formation of customs; the extent to which such factors create attraction and repulsion, and especially the belief in affinity or disaffinity of blood; the consequences of this belief for social action in general, and specifically for action on the basis of shared custom or blood relationship, for diverse sexual relations, etc. – all of this would have to be studied in detail. It is certain that in this process the collective term 'ethnic' would be abandoned, for it is unsuitable for a really rigorous analysis ... (Weber 1968: 394–85)

In the 1940s, certain geneticists and anthropologists, in an attempt to get away from the overtones and implications of the word and the concept of 'race' suggested that the term 'ethnic group' be used to describe temporary human breeding populations. They chose this word precisely because of its lack of precision, because it left the matter of exact characterisation open. It could encompass the genetic phenomenon they were trying to label no matter how the particular population had come into being, whether as the result of natural, social or cultural factors (Montagu 1964). The moment, however, the concept is not confined in this artificial manner, to describe one specific aspect of the social category concerned, it suggests the existence of some overall similarity among diverse groups of people. This is indeed what has happened. From having been used by sociologists and other social scientists largely to refer to minorities and marginalised groups, social scientists now

'tend to use the term "ethnic group" to refer not only to subgroups, to minorities, but to all the groups of a society characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent . . .' (Glazer and Moynihan 1981: 4).

Finally, from among an almost infinite number of possible definitions, I have chosen the following which is both typical and embracing:

Ideally suited ... is the term *ethnic*, which corresponds roughly to what German scholars mean by *volk*; the term is used by anthropologists to refer to a 'people'. An ethnic group consists of people who conceive of themselves as being of a kind. They are united by emotional bonds and concerned with the preservation of their type. With very few exceptions they speak the same language, or their speech is at least intelligible to each other, and they share a common cultural heritage. Since those who form such units are usually endogamous, they tend to look alike. Far more important, however, is their *belief* that they are of common descent, a belief usually supported by myths or a partly fictitious history. A people do not necessarily constitute a nation; although men who regard themselves as being of a kind tend to move in that direction, they are not necessarily united under a single government. (Shibutani and Kwan 1976: 97-98)

What is of concern to us here is not the obviously descriptive character of this definition. It is true that 'ethnicity' is invoked by its prophets as some kind of divine will or biological-cum-cultural fate that allegedly 'explains' why collectivities of people behave in certain ways but I think it unnecessary to grace such an irrational assertion with a systematic refutation. What is of greater interest to us is the implication that 'ethnic groups' simply exist somehow. In most cases little effort is expended on tracing the evolution of the relevant groups. It is simply assumed that something called 'ethnicity' makes the group cohere.

(A notable exception to this trend was the international conference on the history of ethnic awareness in Southern Africa held at Charlottesville in the Carter G Woodson Institute of the University of Virginia on 7–10 April 1983.)

It is at this point that I should like to call to my assistance Dan O'Meara's exposition of this problem in relation to the phenomenon of Afrikaner nationalism, which is supposed to be the quintessential instance of ethnic-group formation in South Africa. In his introductory chapter to *Volkskapitalisme*, he shows clearly how almost every one of the scholars who have studied this phenomenon, whether from an Afrikaner nationalist, a liberal or a social-democratic point of view, has simply accepted the existence of an 'ethnic group' called Afrikanerdom. In terms of this historicist notion, he argues, it is assumed that all white Afrikaans speakers irrespective of class somehow 'instinctively share the innate "Afrikaner" conservative traditional cultural values, and are always available for ethnic mobilisation in terms of their common "Afrikaner" interests' (O'Meara 1983: 6). He grants that there were certain periods in South African history – especially the thirty-nine years between 1948 and 1978 – when large numbers of Afrikaans-speaking whites were politically mobilised in one party on the basis of exclusivist ideologies.

However, it is equally clear that at other junctures, Afrikaans-speaking whites of various classes have differentially resisted such 'ethnic mobilisation' and have been organized on other (and varying) bases. Moreover, the various Afrikaner nationalist movements in South African history were always constituted by a differentiated and shifting ensemble of social forces – each clearly articulating widely different conceptions and expectations of the 'volk' and what 'its' interests were. (O'Meara 1983: 6)

This line of argument leads him to conclude that the

essential question which has to be answered by the analyst is 'why, and under what conditions do differentiated collectivities of people come to be organized in terms of one ideology rather than another?' (O'Meara 1983: 8). Specifically, in regard to South Africa the question which he examines is

why specific but differentiated collectivities of social agents incorporated in specific but differing social conditions, come to be collectively mobilised in a particular historical conjuncture in terms of an ethnic ideology of Afrikaner nationalism rather than one or other of the competing ideologies of the period ('South Africanism', socialism, etc.). (O'Meara 1983: 11)

Some three years earlier already John Sharp (1980) had confronted Southern African anthropologists with the significant question: 'Can we study ethnicity?' He relentlessly demolished the pseudo-science of *volkekunde* from a self-consciously new-school perspective and upbraided the Malinowskian social anthropologists for not questioning the ethnic delimitation of their study field. He found their self-assurance in this regard 'at first sight oddly at variance with the paucity of theoretical debate about the concept of ethnicity within South Africa and with the tentative nature of most theoretical pronouncements on the subject elsewhere' (Sharp 1980: 1).

Sharp's essay is exceptionally interesting and stimulating but his argument can be pushed much further. In my view, he appears to falter when he concedes that

for present purposes one may take [ethnicity] to be the invocation of symbols of common origin as agents for the articulation of perceived common interests. (Sharp 1980: 8–9)

Insofar as this formulation suggests that groups of people who really or reputedly have a common origin possess some cohesion-inducing property called ethnicity it



provides, as I shall show, an unnecessary opening to the ethnicists and flaws what is otherwise an unexceptionable argument against *volkekunde*, functionalist and transactionalist anthropology.

## **Consciousness, ideology and reality**

This brings us to the crucial question of ideology. Again, I can only advise those who are interested in the question to read O'Meara's concise but masterly exposition. Because I want to attempt to move beyond theoretical analysis to a more direct realisation of theory as a guide to action, I shall lift out of O'Meara's treatment two ideas that will help us to understand what I am trying to do. On page thirteen of his work he stresses that

an analysis of ideology must begin with the historical development of capitalist production relations – the concrete process of class formation and class struggle, and the political and ideological forms these took. (O'Meara 1983: 13)

A little further on he provides us with an important hint for our understanding of the relationship between consciousness, ideology and reality.

... The ideas, the mental images, the systems of representation which social agents hold of the material world form a vital part of the processes of social reality. As both products and representations of material reality and struggle, ideologies constitute the system of representation through which various collectivities of social agents define for themselves the parameters and limits of social interaction (class struggle) and so mediate their positions within that process of class struggle. As such, ideologies form the lived and imaginary (ideational) relation with their real conditions of existence ... As ensembles of past and present practices, and comprised of contradictory and

differentiated elements, ideologies ideationally embody their conditions of existence in a partial but misrepresented way. (O'Meara 1983: 14–15)

Thus far, for the present, O'Meara. For purposes of this paper, I want to put forward the following propositions against this background:

Consciousness and the social practices in which it is manifest constitute part and parcel of material reality. Consciousness is not some kind of epiphenomenal illusion. Material reality enters consciousness and is itself shaped by consciousness in the labour process. (A fascinating but for our purposes tangential examination of this relationship is that undertaken by David Bohm 1980: 48–64 and 172–213). This statement is necessary in order to insulate us against any temptation to treat ethnic consciousness as though it did not exist or as though it is not a 'pertinent effect' in the class struggle. This statement also touches on the pre-Freudian question of 'false consciousness'. Even when this phrase is taken to mean a consciousness that is not objectively in the interests of a particular class to which a group of people belongs it is a misnomer since there is no ideal-typical, invariant 'consciousness' peculiar to a given class at any given time or place.

Ethnic, or specifically racial, religious, regional, national, etc., consciousness exists, when it does, as 'common-sense' for the individual. It is therefore, one of a number of alternative or 'potential bases for militant consciousness' (Moodie 1979: 340). As Moodie has stated and O'Meara (1983) and Bozzoli (1981), in a slightly different context, have demonstrated

Achievement of consciousness ... on the basis of any of these alternative sources must involve a complex of actual patterns of repression, experiences of oppression, formulation of ideologies, leaders and parties and the passage of time ... (Moodie 1979: 340)

Ethnic groups do not exist: and since 'ethnicity' is an

attribute reputedly possessed by 'ethnic groups', it follows *a fortiori* that it is, in the happy phrase of Terence Ranger, an 'invention' (see Ranger 1983). There is no logical reason whatsoever to argue for the existence of entities called 'races' or 'ethnic groups' simply from the fact of racial prejudice or ethnic awareness of whatever kind. It is anti-scientific (even if it is pragmatic in the best empiricist traditions) to conclude that because a very large number of people in the world believe in the existence of ghosts and hence behave as though ghosts really do exist by, for example, avoiding cemeteries after dark or whistling loudly when they are alone in a strange house at night therefore a category called ghosts has to be invented. Hundreds and even thousands of millions of people believe in the existence of an omnipotent god and a large proportion of our planet's day-to-day economic, political and cultural activities are still determined by the reality of this belief and of the needs and actions that flow from it but I have never yet been told that this is a sufficient reason for anyone to accept the reality of such a deity. This 'argument' has been canonised by some of the most illustrious names in the pantheon of the social sciences but, as I have said before, we can quite confidently pull a red line through it.

Our task, as O'Meara has shown, is to demonstrate why, for instance, so-called racial, rather than language, or religious features of a group of people or other possible bases were used or could be used to mobilise some or all of the people concerned in the course of specific class struggles. In doing so, we will inevitably show how the elements of the ideology concerned were assembled from 'popular' and from 'literary' or 'scholarly' levels (see O'Meara 1983: 15). The particular identity acquired by the mobilised subjects in the course of the struggle cannot then be described globally and *a priori* as an 'ethnicity' which had, as it were, lain dormant awaiting its Hegelian moment to make its appearance on the stage of world history in

order to 'motivate' and 'cause' certain political, economic and social events.

To the oft-posed question: does nomenclature really matter all that much? We have to answer: decidedly *yes*, if we see ourselves as organic intellectuals rather than as mere 'bats of erudition'. 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 organizations 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. Writing about the organic intellectuals attached to the nascent bourgeoisie in South Africa, Bozzoli says:

The intellectual's grasp of language and his ability to convey meaning to his audience through its use, were the foundations of the intricate symbolic and political formulations that he developed. The choice of medium through which he worked, the vocabulary, syntax and structure of his ideas, and their creative content, provide the context within which an understanding of the craftsmanship of the organic intellectual is advanced. (Bozzoli 1981: 12)

She stresses that their mode of operation differed from that of mere propagandists and ideologues in that they mixed 'ideology' with 'policy' and thus not only created 'a world-view for the bourgeoisie' but sketched 'the broad outline of its ideal world as well' (Bozzoli 1981: 12).

Because the dominant ideology – especially in times of crisis – does not occupy the entire field of the class struggle, organic intellectuals can help to create an ideological discourse, and therefore a subjective consciousness, which

helps to undermine and eventually to break up the hegemony of the ruling class.

## **The role of language**

In view of the active role of language suggested here, because language is not simply a passive reflector of 'ideas' or 'thoughts', it is somewhat disconcerting to realise how very few social scientists take more than a superficial interest in the functions of language. Consider, for example, the following almost facetious censure of No Sizwe's book, *One Azania, One Nation*, on the national question in South Africa:

You deny the reality of race as a biological entity. Hence you deny the existence of racial groups. For the limited purpose of genetic science, however, you are prepared to describe such groups as 'breeding populations' ... Changing the description does not change the practice – but the practice can taint the description till that ceases to be neutral (so that for racism we merely substitute 'breeding populationism'). (Sivanandan 1982: 162)

Leaving aside the question of the accuracy of Sivanandan's reading of the text he is commenting on, if this were all that the author had meant to convey, Sivanandan would, of course, be perfectly correct. To believe that it is possible to do away with racism or 'ethnic conflict' simply by using a different terminology would indeed be 'metaphysics' (Sivanandan 1982: 162). There is clearly no point in jettisoning a particular term such as 'race' or 'ethnic group' while we retain the 'conceptual space' which it designated (see Hall et al. 1983: 61).

To believe, however, as Sivanandan clearly does, that language is irrelevant or, at best, merely reflective, is to deny that 'we act according to how and whether reality has been socially defined through acts of symbolic designation

(and that) through language – the means of symbolic designation – we come to know reality.’ In a work which appeared in 1977 for the first time and which is bound to assume major importance for the social sciences, Coward and Ellis (1979) have compelled us to take a much closer look at how, as intellectuals, we use language and what measure of power a materialist approach to language places in our hands. Their work is essentially an elaboration on the pathfinding studies of Althusser, Kristeva and Lacan and while much of it remains problematical and controversial, it would seem to me that it has become urgently necessary amid the haze of ruling-class discourse that suffuses the South African social formation that the main consequences of their study be concretised in the practice of the social sciences in South Africa.

Two basic propositions which they advance will serve to indicate the scope of the research work that is opened to those of us who are ready to accept the challenge:

Because all the practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed. In other words, men can be seen *as language*, as the intersection of the social, historical and individual. It is for this reason that work on language has created consideration of man as ‘subject’, that is, the individual in sociality as a language-using, social and historical entity.

(Coward and Ellis 1979: 2)

The second proposition, to which I have already referred in passing, reinforces this view.

Ideology is conceived as the way in which a subject is produced in language able to represent his/herself and therefore able to act in the social totality, the fixity of those representations being the function of ideology. (Coward and Ellis 1979: 3)

Without attempting to derive what I am about to say from

the 'developments in semiology and the theory of the subject', let me say that what follows from these propositions for me as a would-be organic intellectual is quite simply the essentially political task of helping to transform elements of the popular discourse in which working-class subjects are constituted in order to create a new universe of discourse in which new subjects can be constituted. If I am going to approach this task in the idealist spirit of the Gospel according to St John where the Word is posited as the beginning of all things, I shall of course, be taught a severe lesson by the actual historical process. However, I cannot assume that the inarticulate act is the beginning either. There is a dialectical relationship between action and articulation, between reality and consciousness which is my task to discover and to build upon in the case of each concrete problem as it arises. Mere pontification from the *ex cathedra* seclusion of a university or of some similarly remote institution is never enough because enunciation of what is 'correct' is only one moment in the process of transformation.

The way in which the manipulation of language – in conjunction with economic and political processes – can structure an identity for a group of people is demonstrated very clearly by Terence Ranger (1983) in a paper entitled 'Missionaries, Migrants and the Manyika: The invention of ethnicity in Zimbabwe'. In parenthesis, I should say that a whole genre of socio-historical studies on 'the emergence of ethnicity' among African peoples has come into existence during the last ten years or so. The theoretical framework within which most of these studies are formulated is that expounded in John Saul's well-known essay on 'The Dialectics of Class and Tribe'. The main conclusion of this view is that the new identity (of modern post-conquest African people)

has emerged out of an awareness of the benefits arising from the mobilisation of ethnic group

solidarity for political ends. It did not emerge from a transfer of tribal values to the workplace but was rather the expression of an extended group consciousness which arose out of the political economy of capitalism. This ethnic awareness is then less a process of evolution from early tribalism than a means of coping with, and benefitting from, a new and markedly different social and economic environment. (Harries 1983: 3)

To return to Ranger: the special interest of his paper in the present context derives from the manner in which he approaches the question of so-called ethnicity. He wants to show, amongst other things

from where the *idea* of such entities as the 'Manyika', the 'Zezuru' and the rest has come. [He explains that] these entities certainly do *not* represent pre-colonial 'historical fact', nor can they in the present be properly described as 'tribes' or 'clans', no matter that both Africans and European commentators employ these terms. Yet they evidently *have* come to possess a subjective reality in the minds not only of commentators but of participants.

He finds the answer to his question in the activities of an amalgam of social agents comprising missionaries and their converts, African labour migrants and, later, colonial officials, chiefs and others. However, in his paper he demonstrates how the literary and 'scholarly' activities of missionaries of different Christian denominations helped to invent different 'ethnic identities' among the Shona-speaking people of Zimbabwe. By cutting up the Shona language continuum into different dialect zones and freezing each dialect through transliteration and through the production of different Bible translations, hymn books, catechisms, printed collections of folklore, stories, etc., 'languages' – and in the course of time corresponding ethnic identities – such as Chimanyika, Chizezuru and



Chikaranga were literally invented. Through their network of contiguous and far-flung mission stations in which converts laboured and lived and through conscious but also inevitable comparison with other denominations and their doings, gradually both European missionaries and African converts acquired an ethnic consciousness' Particular groups of missionaries acquired a vested interest in particular versions of the Shona language (and, secondarily, in the corresponding ethnic identity). So much so that uproar was caused when – in the case of the Roman Catholic mission stations – it was proposed by the rationalising Jesuits that only one catechism should be used throughout Mashonaland since

There is but *one* language in Mashonaland ... It may be called Chiswina around Salisbury, Chimanika near Inyanga, Shona, Shuna generally, Chikaranka ... about Victoria, but the language is essentially the same ... There is and should be only one language for our Mashonaland stations ... (Ranger 1984: 20)

From this literary or scholarly level of the production of an ethnic ideology, Ranger then shows how the Manyika identity acquired popular forms through church and school books until – in Gramsci's sense – consciousness of being Manyika became 'common sense'. Economic necessity and convenience as in the case of labour migrants in the cities of Southern Africa, who found support and succour in various 'Manyika' clubs and other regionally based Manyika 'homeboy' associations, reinforced this sense of being Manyika.

Ranger's study clearly confirms the propositions I have advanced here about the tasks and possibilities open to organic intellectuals and about the active role of language in structuring the ideological discourse of the working class. He concludes from his study of the sources that

[B]y the 1930s the Manyika identity was a reality in Makoni, Umtali and Inyanga districts and in the

migrant diaspora. It had arisen as a result of the operation of the main forces which transformed Makoni district under early colonialism – participation in peasant agriculture, labour migration, and as a corollary of both, the grassroots demand for literacy and education ... whites and especially the missionaries had played a key role in the definition of the Manyika identity but in such a way that the idea was open for all sorts of uses by Africans. Plainly there had developed many vested interests in Chimanyika and its implied ethnic and cultural identity. (Ranger 1984: 26–27)

Of course, Ranger is very careful not to suggest that the existence of this identity reduced the Manyika to one uniform, declassified and transhistorical 'ethnic group'. His very last words indeed explicitly negate such a conception since he insists that this identity did not develop out of some 'megalomaniac tribalism' but as 'a very human and often constructive response to socio-economic change', one which must now be 'replaced by the development of other kinds of consciousness in a period of even sharper transformation and contradiction' (Ranger 1984: 28).

Once we have realised that the constitution of the subject is an ideological process that takes place in and through language, that there is, in fact, no consistent and unified subject, even though it is precisely the function of ideology to 'close off the contradictions of the human subject with the imaginary identifications of unity' by articulating

the fixed relations of representation to a specific organization of reality, relations which establish the positions that it is possible for the individual to inhabit within the social totality, (Coward and Ellis 1979: 78)

we can survey the map of possible identities scientifically. We can make our decisions in accordance with our understanding of or feeling for the class interests with

which we identify, bearing in mind that our options are not unlimited, that we have to be guided by the real social, political and economic conditions in which we operate. The present government, certainly, is completely clear about these possibilities. As recently as February 1980, it appointed a committee under Mr J F Mentz 'to investigate the desirability or necessity for the Griqua to have and retain an own identity'.

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 stabilization or freezing of our audience through our ideological productions, we help to produce 'a specific articulation which necessitates a certain subject for its meanings' (Coward and Ellis 1979: 94).

We need, therefore, to consider against the background of the history of the development of capitalism in South Africa what kinds of ideological discourse are appropriate to the promotion of the interests of the black working class, if that is the class with which we identify. 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. By now, it must also be abundantly clear that I am not simply referring to the coining of words or the debunking of concepts and theories. Like the missionaries in Manyikaland, we have to help to establish organizations and networks in which the ideology

we are helping to produce will thrive and provide new meanings to those who begin to live their lives in it.

I can do no better than end off this section by referring to Leon Trotsky's injunction to Afro-American members of the Fourth International at the time of the heated debate about whether or not the 'Negroes' constituted a separate nation and whether or not they should demand a separate state. He explained that it was not the business of the workers' party to prescribe to the blacks, especially not to tell them that they should demand separation since this would be taken to be an expression of racialism on the part of the largely white Communist Party. But he then went on to say in the terminology current at the time:

Our Negro comrades can say, the Fourth International says that if it is our wish to be independent it will help us in every possible [way] but that the choice is ours. However, I as a Negro member of the Fourth, hold a view that we must remain in the same state as the whites, and so on. *He can participate in the formation of the political and racial ideology of the Negroes.* (Trotsky 1970: 31)

## **Nationalism**

Let me conclude with a few remarks on nationalism. In the concluding sentence of his paper on the invention of ethnicity in Zimbabwe, Terence Ranger speaks about the need to develop 'other kinds of consciousness in a period of even sharper transformation and contradiction' (Ranger 1984: 28).

I have myself, in fact – in a speech delivered to the first National Forum at Hammanskraal in June 1983 – tried to sketch the unmaking of ethnic identities through the nation-building process understood as a class struggle waged in the course of national liberation with reference to the example of Mozambique. In that speech, I showed how

Frelimo from accepting in the early years the fact and the permanence of different 'ethnic groups' discovered in the course of the armed struggle that these differences were historical and often artificially perpetuated. By August 1982, after twenty years of struggle, the original Frelimo position was completely negated and President Machel could proclaim proudly:

Frelimo, in its twenty years of existence and in this path of struggle, turned us progressively into Mozambicans, no longer Makonde and Shangane, Nyanja and Ronga, Nyungwe and Bitonga, Chuabo and Ndau, Macua and Xitsua ... Ours is not a society in which races and colours, tribes and regions coexist and live harmoniously side by side. We went beyond these ideas during a struggle in which we sometimes had to force people's consciousness in order for them to free themselves from complexes and prejudices so as to become simply, we repeat, simply people.

National consciousness, clearly, belongs to the same genus as ethnic or race consciousness. It is as much apart of the social reality of people as is the belief in 'race' or 'ethnic' difference or sameness. It is, similarly, a historical phenomenon that comes into being in the process of political, economic and cultural struggle under the aegis of the leading class in the nation.

At a deeper level, however, national consciousness is attached to much more definite, in fact finite, structures than is ethnic or race consciousness. The historiography of nationalism is a vast and ongoing undertaking. In general, however, modern nations appear to have arisen either because of the integrating activities of capitalist entrepreneurs and their political representatives or as revolts against imperialist oppression and exploitation. In Europe, most often pre-existing feudal monarchies or dependencies provided the terrain for the creation of

capitalist markets and the bourgeoisie mobilised the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie on the basis of community of language. On the other hand, in Africa, in Latin America and to a certain extent in Asia as well, arbitrarily defined colonial polities became the terrain on which and on the basis of which the petty bourgeoisie and colonial bourgeoisie mobilised the peasantry and the usually tiny working class for anti-colonial national liberation struggles.

In this sense, therefore, although there is no neat and absolute rule, national consciousness adheres to and is based upon a territorially and economically defined or bounded community of people whom we call a nation. I maintain, therefore, that nations exist as clearly defined collectivities of people which can be and usually are also legally instituted and acknowledged as such by other similarly constituted nations. Certainly, class struggles within a nation state can give rise to successful or unsuccessful attempts by specific class agents to mobilise groups of people on the basis of a real or presumed ethnic identity. We have just referred to the debates conducted among Afro-Americans in the 1930s and, of course, we are all aware of the numerous separatist movements that exist in Africa. The question of whether such movements are examples of genuine revolutionary nationalism or merely bogus movements aimed at weakening or destroying existing state structures is one that can only be decided empirically on the basis of detailed analysis of the class forces and class interests involved in the relevant struggles.

I should like to conclude on this note since it brings us directly to the present situation in South Africa where – as we all know – a well-orchestrated, large-scale attempt is being made by the ruling party to find petty bourgeois and other class agents to mobilise groups of (mainly black) people on the basis of alleged ethnic identities for the purpose of acquiring bantustan independence. The

bantustan strategy has, however, not succeeded. On the other hand, no single counter-hegemonic ideology has yet come into being. The matter, in a very real sense, remains open.

If what I have tried to say in this paper is anywhere near being plausible, I believe that social scientists in Southern Africa can and should do research concerning the variants of the ideological discourse which promotes the interests of the working class in Southern Africa. They have to do this, however, in conjunction with the workers themselves if the whole undertaking is not to remain a sterile exercise.

## EDUCATION IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

*(Address delivered at the second annual conference of the Education Coordinating Council of South Africa, Cape Town, 14 December 1984)*

THE DRAMATIC AND OFTEN heartbreaking struggles which have shaken the Bantu Education structures from top to bottom during 1984 demand a careful examination of the position in the educational arena today. If we are not to get trapped in the vicious circles of indefinite school boycotts, police repression, shutdown, drop out and, perhaps, exile, we need to inform ourselves in as precise a manner as possible about the objective constraints on mass action in education. We need to look with great care at the possibilities for short-and long-term action by students, teachers and parents.

### **De Lange and the White Paper**

It is necessary, first of all, to state as bluntly as possible that the appointment of the De Lange Commission was a defensive response on the part of the government to the traumatic events of 1976–81. It was appointed to defuse the dangerous situation that had developed in the schools. Some such commission would undoubtedly have been appointed somewhat later as part of the series of similar commissions (Wiehahn, Riekert, Steyn), the main purpose of which was to ‘modernise racial domination’ by, *inter alia*, co-opting the black middle class and controlling the leadership of the black working class.

The National Party government was compelled to appoint the De Lange Commission long before it had wanted to do so, because the 1980 schools boycott



threatened to develop along lines that would have led to even more catastrophic economic and socio-political consequences than 1976. In particular, the initial involvement of mainly students classified coloured – the children of the very group that was about to be wooed with so-called political rights in the fraudulent tricameral dispensation – was a warning signal to the tacticians of the National Party.

This point is being made simply to stress that, viewed in the context of government's total strategy, there is absolutely no reason for surprise and least of all for disappointment because the White Paper appeared to negate the supposed concessions recommended by De Lange. It is indeed one of the misconceptions of what one can only call liberal analysis to make a spurious distinction between the Report and the White Paper. The Commission was as much a part of government strategy as the views enunciated in the White Paper. It was part and parcel of a crisis management manoeuvre that fitted squarely into the global strategy of the National Party.

In brief, what is this strategy? At the inevitable risk of over-simplification the long-term strategy of the present regime can be characterised as follows. Because of changes that have occurred through economic and social development (from export-oriented secondary industries, rapidly increasing urbanisation, the entire population with the consequent growth of the domestic market for manufactured commodities, the expansion of the tertiary sector, bottlenecks in the supply of skilled labour, etc.) and through the decisive political developments in Africa and in the world, the South African ruling class has found it necessary to 'move away from discrimination based purely on race'. One of the consequences of this realisation was (and remains) the bantustan fragmentation of the black people into eight so-called nations and two or three more incipient 'nations'. The labyrinthine intricacies and amazing

ramifications of the theory and practice of bantustan nationality have been analysed and commented upon in countless works. By and large, however, the bantustans are deemed to accommodate adequately, for the present, the economic, political and social aspirations of African people in the rural areas. They are, in theory, also supposed to constitute an adequate framework for the accommodation of the aspirations of so-called urban blacks but, in practice, the regime is preparing to deal with this question along lines that are formally different from the bantustan path.

Another way of seeing the strategy by way of a first approximation is to accept that the economic and social developments which have generated new classes and new objectively possible alliances necessitate a broadening of the base of the state. On the narrow base of the white capitalist class (underpinned by foreign capital) and the white middle class supported by the white working class, the South African state could not survive the explosive changes that started in the 1960s and continued into the 70s and 80s. To have continued to exclude the black middle class and the aspiring black bourgeoisie from the corridors of power would have rendered the entire system endemically unstable.

Incidentally the fact that the Afrikaner National Party has been willing and able – within narrow limits – to alter course from the rhetoric and practices of Verwoerdian apartheid to the rhetoric of Brazilianisation, liberalisation and ‘reform’ should serve as a warning to the simpleminded amongst us, that however crude some of the exponents of the strategy may be, we are faced with a cunning, positivistically informed but ruthless indigenous privileged caste of politicians and strategists that has a very good idea of what it is about. First the bantustan middle classes and now the urban (African, Coloured and Asian) middle classes are to be co-opted or, at least, neutralised, given a semblance of power until their vested interest in

maintaining one or other liberalising variant of the status quo transforms them into implicitly trustworthy allies of the ruling class, at which point more and more real power could devolve on them. One of the infallible criteria for the degree of their trustworthiness is undoubtedly the extent to which they will go to exercise the repressive powers of the apartheid state against their 'black brothers' and 'black sisters'. By this rule of thumb, people such as the Sebes, Matanzimas and Mphahlele are indeed far gone! Clearly in line with this analysis, the Labour Party, the Reform Party and the others have – in their own words – 'gone inside'.

Their task, at its bluntest, is to control the black working class in the interests of the ruling class. Every ideological fabrication, every economic carrot and every political illusion is to be deployed in the process of debilitating the black workers, who hold the key to the country's future in their hands. The black middle classes are to be taken on board without the process rocking the boat by setting off or encouraging radical revolution on the part of the black workers or counter-revolution on the part of the white workers and the more backward sections of the white middle classes.

It is this delicate balancing act that explains – in the short term – the apparent zigzags and vacillation of government policy in all spheres. As long as the regime has to take cognizance of the voting power of the white electorate and as long as it cannot be sure of the 'loyalty' of the black middle class it is not going to abolish any of the pillars of racial discrimination. For as long as this is the case, we are doomed to repeat the sickening dialectic of reform and repression. Until, of course, the black working class in its organizations finds the answer to our strategic dilemmas and develops the power to negate the apparent impregnability of the rulers of South Africa. We are, if all things remain equal for the rulers, to see a gradual process of 'reform' during which the whites are to be educated to

tolerate the theoretical equality of all blacks and the occasional corporeal presence of black middle class people in business, at hotels, theatres, cinemas, private schools, etc. They are to become accustomed to a thin layer of relatively prosperous black people moving around furtively among them while the vast majority of the urban and rural poor remain in the ghettos and confined to resettlement (concentration) camps providing the labour as well as the reserves of labour that make the wage system function for the profit of the capitalist class.

While a small number of black people are to be given a little more of the cake, the capitalist system of social inequality is to continue to be reproduced as a system of racial inequality because the wealth of the country (land, mines, machines, shops, factories, etc.) remains concentrated in the hands of white capitalists. Fiscal and other budgetary measures to transfer some of this wealth to people classified black will never (and are not intended to) penetrate beyond the thin line of the black middle class.

## **Implications of the government strategy in the educational arena**

These propositions have very clear implications in the educational arena. For people in the urban areas we can expect slow but definite improvements in the material conditions under which schooling is carried out. There are not going to be any once-and-for-all dramatic solutions if the government has its way. In the words of Jennifer Shindler, the government proposed new policy for financing education is the following:

- A subsidy formula is being designed in terms of which the government's financial responsibility towards each racially-based education department will be determined;
- the education departments for each race group

will be authorised to supplement their available financial resources by means of levies; and – the possibility of financial contributions by parents is being investigated (with the proviso that the educational opportunities of children of needy parents should not be impaired). (J. Shindler, 'Separate but Equal: Some Comments on De Lange and the White Paper.' *SAIRR Topical Briefing* 31/8/84, p. 6.)

Needless to say, this is simply a disguise for continuing white privilege in education while allowing some physical improvements in the education of black children.

One misconception that we should clear up forthwith is that we are not to get a single ministry of education. It is incredible that so many people are simply repeating this facile and superficial notion of a single ministry of education as a panacea for all the ills of apartheid schooling. The simple fact is that as long as we have a single government in South Africa, we have a single ministry of education no matter how this may be disguised through bureaucratic fragmentation. I, for one, do not believe that there is more than one government in what was previously called the Union of South Africa. All the so-called Departments of Education (fifteen at the last count) on our national territory are mere sub-departments carrying out a single, carefully-orchestrated policy of racial discrimination in education. By merely bringing all these sub-departments formally under one minister we shall change very little.

The problem is not one of administrative structures. The problem, as we know all too well, is one of ruling-class policy. We have to change the policy, not simply the administrative structures. Of course, in a symbolical and ideological sense, it would constitute a gain if we were to revert to the pre-Verwoerdian days of one Ministry of Education for all. But, as those very days demonstrate all too clearly, education for whites and blacks would still be

completely different and unequal precisely because racial discrimination and class exploitation constitute the basis of South African educational policy. To believe otherwise, or to try to make others believe otherwise, is to deceive oneself and to disarm oneself tactically.

We can expect the government to make available more funds in order to improve 'education for employment'. That is to say, immediate steps will be taken by both the government and the 'private sector' (local and foreign businesses) to improve the quality of training (not of education in any serious sense of the term) so as to eliminate eventually the skilled labour bottlenecks.

According to Mr Dennis Etheredge, former chairman of the gold and uranium division of the Anglo American Corporation, the private sector is obliged to be, and is, interested in contributing towards education reforms and improvement, because a more equitable system will contribute towards industrial peace and will help in the provision of the skilled manpower which South Africa needs. (J. Shindler, 'Separate but Equal: Some Comments on De Lange and the White Paper.' *SAIRR Topical Briefing* 31/8/84, p. 8.)

Frantic but largely superficial attempts are already being undertaken to improve the qualifications and training of black teachers. Inadequately trained teachers are, clearly, one of the main sources of the inferiority of the schooling of black children. We can expect much more money to be spent on the technical and scientific training of black children since such training, as we have noted, will contribute directly to countering the skilled labour shortages.

But all these initiatives will be undertaken mainly in the urban areas in the short term. It is to be expected that the rural areas in general and the bantustans in particular will continue to be overlooked or disadvantaged as far as the

financing of education is concerned. This, as ought to be clear, fits in with the present global policies of the government. We should also expect that government educational policy will tend to stress in the content of all subjects taught at schools the superiority of confederal and perhaps federal systems of government, as well as ethnic pluralist approaches to social and cultural studies. Crude racist and overtly apartheid approaches will tend to disappear, at least from prescribed textbooks but ethnic consciousness and a multiplicity of ethnic identities will be encouraged to flourish.

### **Resistance: Goals and modality**

Most progress in education, as in other spheres of South African society, has come about because of class struggle and resistance to ruling-class policy and practices. It is only by putting the powers-that-be under constant pressure that they are brought to undertake significant reforms. In this sense, it is clear that educational policy can be and is determined within certain definite limits by the consumers of education, i.e., the students. Teachers, too, the retailers of the commodity education, ought to be able to influence the quality and the content of education. For a number of reasons peculiar to South Africa, teachers in this country have as a group had very little power to influence the educational process other than as mere instruments of the rulers.

The recurring cycle of resistance to Bantu Education by students, particularly since 1976, reflects not merely the cumulative frustration of students with an educational system that they reject with contempt but, more significantly, the 'revolution of rising expectations'. Out of the negation of the existing system new ideas and notions of education as a phenomenon are being generated. Students are no longer satisfied with saying NO! They are saying

loudly and clearly what it is that they want. And what they want is not simply a 'better' apartheid education or even the phantom of an 'equal' education which liberals are trying to insinuate into their analysis. Students and progressive educationists are clearly demanding a democratic system of education in a democratic, free and united

South Africa. Almost every single student pamphlet, speech or manifesto stresses these points among other short-term demands:

- democratically elected students' representative councils.
- democratic and humane teaching methods including the abolition of corporal punishment and sexual harassment.
- free education including free books and free transport to school.
- properly qualified teachers.

Students have become much clearer about the need to distinguish between what they call long-term demands (those which can only be realised in a post-apartheid society) and short-term demands, which can be brought about even in the present set-up. Hence calls for the abolition of corporal punishment and sexual harassment are seen as being realisable today. Others, such as the demand for free education, SRCs, etc., are only partially realisable today since they tend to subvert the structures on which apartheid education is based.

Today, however, many a young student has begun to understand in a concrete manner that it is only through changing the social system as such that fundamental changes in the educational system will be brought about. Students see, for example, the direct linkages between higher rents in the townships, low wages in the factories and the inferior quality of their education. They see how the detention of a popular teacher for his/her 'political', i.e., community activities, represents a direct inroad into their



schooling. As in 1976 and 1980, students in different parts of the country are demonstrating once again that our children refuse to swallow the poison of inferior tribalised schooling to become the passive workforce of neo-apartheid South Africa.

Careful and detailed attention to strategy and tactics has become inescapable if our students are not to become unnecessary victims of the cycle I described earlier. Unless there are very good reasons to suggest it, students have to abandon the naive beliefs on which the tactic of indefinite boycotts is based. While this is often a popular slogan, it constitutes a self-inflicted wound on the student body in a situation where there is no chance of toppling or changing the government. Entire platoons of students are wasted as in a badly conceived battle. The weapon of the boycott needs to be carefully studied and deployed. Like any other weapon, it cannot be used recklessly without lethal consequences.

The uneven political development in different regions of South Africa at different times is another decisive constraint on mass action. Because of particular economic or social problems in a given region or community, a heightened militancy may obtain which is absent in other regions or communities. One area may have more solid organization or better leadership tradition than another. All this, and more, means that a homogeneous response cannot be expected from all students. The false expectation of such a uniform response can lead to disastrous tactics including intimidation and misdirected violence against potential supporters and allies. Some attested instances of wanton thuggery in recent events have given many of us cause for concern.

Political sectarianism has become a scourge in the student movement as in the rest of the liberation movement in South Africa. Apart from the cruder manifestations of this sectarianism such as physical assaults by one student

group on another, we have today the less obvious phenomenon of historical falsification perpetrated by slick practitioners of the craft in journals for students such as *SASPU National*. Of course, any editorial group is entitled to do as it pleases but the rubbish which passes as the 'history of the student movement' in journals such as *SASPU National* is no different in principle from the kind of garbage that is dished out in National Party texts. For reasons that they know best, the authors of these tracts commit the same kind of intellectual rape on the minds of uninformed young students who have little or no access to alternative sources of information. As the examples of the late unlamented Hitler and Stalin show so vividly, this kind of practice must boomerang on the perpetrators eventually. Besides becoming the captives and victims of their own propaganda, unable to penetrate to any semblance of the social and historical reality, they are eventually dismissed in bewilderment and disgust by their disillusioned followers once the truth is exposed, and reviled and dethroned (deNazification, deStalinisation campaigns) by their sycophantic core of activists who forthwith seek new 'heroes' to raise high.

Without quoting any concrete instances here (and there are many, believe me), let me say that the sole effect, if not the intention, of this kind of 'historiography', which mirrors the 'politics' of these circles, is to open up and to deepen the divisions which exist inevitably in the liberation movement. These sectarian divisions make it difficult to plan joint action on a national scale. It happens, however, to be one of the constraints on mass action which can be eliminated by means of mature leadership and a willingness to create a principled basis for unity in the student movement without glossing over real and important differences that keep different groupings and tendencies in separate organizations.

## **Alternative perspectives and initiatives**

Because of the cul-de-sac into which the rulers have steered education in South Africa, more and more alternative perspectives and initiatives are being generated. Let me state clearly that by 'alternative' I mean those educational projects that are conceived of as part and parcel of the general struggle for national liberation and class emancipation in South Africa. I do not simply mean any non-state or 'non-formal' educational project, nor do I mean any such project undertaken by a community or student organization or perhaps by a trade union. It is a known fact that some of the most conventional, status quo-entrenching educational operations are very often run precisely by community groups, student groups and conservative trade unions.

By way of concluding this paper, I should like to refer briefly to two of the most significant alternative initiatives now gathering momentum in South Africa. These are the Education Charter Campaign and the Education Co-ordinating Council of South Africa (ECCSA).

The Education Charter Campaign (ECC) was first conceived in 1982 when 'Azaso and Cosas decided to spearhead a campaign which would collect together the education demands of all South Africa's people'. (*SASPU Focus*, Vol. 3, No. 2, November 1984, p. 18). It is intended, according to Azaso President, Simphiwe Mgoduso, that 'the Education Charter must steer the campaigns and struggles that lie ahead and be the guiding document in all our struggles around education issues' (*ibid.*). It is intended to approach and involve as many organizations as possible in the making of the Education Charter. This process itself, so it is hoped, will help to ensure the democratic content of the Charter. Committees are to be set up in all parts of the country to co-ordinate the campaign which should culminate in a national conference in 1985 where the Education Charter will be adopted. The Charter is self-

consciously linked to the Freedom Charter by the campaign committee. According to the organizers as quoted in *SASPU Focus* November, 1984:

The ECC is trying to explore the education demands set out in the Freedom Charter and to give them greater content. 'The doors of learning and culture shall be open to all' that is still our demand. Now the question we must ask is what specific demands in the long and short-term will help us to force those doors open.

This linkage to the Freedom Charter and, more significantly, the failure of the organizers to invite relevant educational organizations to the preliminary discussions could turn a potentially powerful mobilising instrument against the movement. That is, if those people who are critical of the Freedom Charter and who find the sectarian midwifery of the Education Charter repugnant do not transcend their initial distaste. I consider it vital that they do so. For, whatever the criticisms of the Freedom Charter that individuals or organizations might have, there cannot be any serious person who disagrees with the demand that 'the doors of learning and culture shall be open to all'. This is the essential point of departure of the ECC and it is vital for the success of such a campaign that *all* the oppressed and exploited people (or as many of them as possible) participate freely in this campaign. Only then will an Education Charter be a unifying and not a divisive document, only then will such a campaign turn out to be a milestone on the road to liberation. We who are gathered here today can only hope that the leadership of this campaign as well as its critics will adopt a mature attitude that transcends the obvious but by no means insurmountable obstacles to united action in this very important undertaking.

Owing to the recurrent crisis in the formal schooling of black children, independent educational organizations

began to consider ways and means of intervening in a constructive but large-scale manner in the educational sphere. In fact, the expulsion of hundreds of students from Fort Hare University in 1982 forced a number of those organizations that sponsored students (bursars) at the university to come together in a consultative conference to consider what they should do in view of the imminent loss of thousands of rands implied, for the umpteenth time, by the expulsion of so many students. A series of meetings during 1982 eventuated in the founding of the Education Co-ordinating Council of South Africa (ECCSA) in August 1982 and the public launching of the organization on 9–10 September 1983.

The preamble to the constitution of ECCSA reads, in part, as follows:

A growing number of non-state organizations are now operating in the sphere of education outside formal schools and even on the periphery of the schools.

Because of the expertise, equipment and funds concentrated in these organizations, they are potential sources of both cultural and political power. In order to wield such power for the benefit of the oppressed majority of our people it is essential that these organizations cease to operate in isolation from one another. To put it differently, these organizations can only exert their potential influence if they can reach broad agreement on educational and cultural strategies consistent with the emancipation of the oppressed people ...

In view of the inevitability of radical socio-economic and political change in South Africa, it is essential that a nucleus of people and other resources be created; people who have gained administrative and creative experience of a new kind of education in the soil of South Africa itself. Such an educational infrastructure as the one envisaged would provide a possible base from

which a new educational system could be planned and initially executed.

If the preamble demonstrates complete clarity regarding, and commitment to, an alternative education system, the aims and objectives of ECCSA capture concisely the practical concrete tasks implied by that conception. These are stated as follows:

- (a) Generating and proliferating education strategies and practices relevant to a changing South Africa.
- (b) Co-ordinating policies and practices concerning the granting of bursaries, scholarships, loans and other forms of financial assistance to Black students.
- (c) Co-ordinating the establishment of resource centres, reading rooms, libraries and related community education structures and resources.
- (d) Rationalising the training of personnel.
- (e) Co-ordinating responses to major events in and arising from the educational sphere. The recent examples of the De Lange Commission and the Fort Hare expulsions are cases in point.
- (f) Serving as a national advice and information centre of all local community and worker education projects as well as for students, parents and teachers.

The basic idea of ECCSA is clearly to bring together every independent community and worker project that has an educational dimension. It is premised on the belief that such a pooling of resources will give rise to qualitative changes in the conception and execution of educational strategies and policies at all levels. The oppressed will get a sense of the cultural and political power that is latent in the thousands of little organizations that are 'doing their own thing' in every nook and cranny of the country. Once this happens, it is inevitable that government policy in the sphere of formal schooling will be influenced in one

direction or another.

Allow me to conclude by stressing that ECCSA's activities are deliberately and passionately conceived of as part and parcel of the process of nation-building which goes hand-in-hand with the struggle for national liberation. In my speech at the first ECCSA conference in which I spoke on the subject of *Education in South Africa, Limits and Possibilities of Interim Action*, I maintained that the advantages of co-ordination can only be realised

if there is some broad ideological agreement that can make the hundreds of community, worker and educational organizations cohere. I believe that this ideological cement can be nothing other than the process of building the nation, i.e., the struggle for an Azanian/South African nation in which oppression and exploitation shall have been eliminated. It is only when organizations and individuals have come to realise or to accept that this is the eventual goal of their efforts, be they small or large in scale, that they will be able to find one another and to tolerate the peculiarities and idiosyncracies that all of us have ... However, it is vital that we accept that our differences are not antagonistic ones; that a necessary part of the struggle for national liberation is precisely the ideological conflict among different groups and tendencies with different visions of the future. Through democratic debate and through mobilization of the masses of the people, these differences will be ironed out and our historical practice will confirm or refute our theories, our visions and our dreams.

## AFTER THE AUGUST ELECTIONS

*(Workshop paper prepared for the National Forum summit held at the Kismet Cinema, Athlone, Cape Town, on 16 December 1984.)*

### **What was the purpose of the August elections?**

BEFORE WE CAN ASSESS our successes and failures in regard to the New Deal elections, we need to remind ourselves why these elections were held. Stated as simply as possible, we can say that the elections were calculated to give legitimacy and credibility to those Coloured and Indian collaborators who – in the unfortunate phrase of David Curry – had decided to ‘go inside’. Judged from that point of view, these elections were a complete farce, a crushing defeat for the collaborators and their masters, a brilliant victory for the oppressed and exploited people of Azania. A few figures illustrate the position accurately: under twenty percent of those who were allowed to vote went to the polls. In some constituencies votes were given more easily in persons than in percentages! No single party can boast of having the support of more than about five percent of the eligible voters. None of these parties, therefore, is even remotely representative of the people they claim to speak for. Allan Hendrickse’s Labour Party, Amichand Rajbansi’s People’s Party and all the other little parties have no legitimacy. They do not represent any significant number of the oppressed and exploited people.

But this was not the only purpose of these elections. If we could dispose of the matter thus easily, we would have to conclude that the government of South Africa took a stupid gamble. There is no doubt that they expected a large-scale boycott of the elections even though the extent of the



boycott shocked them and represented a political setback for them. We should not forget, however, that the elections were undertaken as part of the larger plan of co-opting the black middle class in order to give medium-term stability to the South African state.

In this regard, the National Party government has to carry out two mutually reinforcing tasks at one and the same time. On the one hand, they have to convince middle-class blacks that it is worth their while to 'go inside'; on the other hand, they have to get middle-class and working-class whites to accept the idea of 'sharing power'. This government strategy has been defined rather nicely as 'trying to find the secret of sharing power without losing control'. The entire purpose of this strategy is to stabilise the capitalist system of white supremacy in South Africa after the destabilising shocks of the period 1974–1980. Since we have discussed the ruling-class strategy so often and at such length in our conferences and meetings, I shall only draw your attention to a few aspects which are important for our purpose.

There can be no doubt that the elections helped to achieve the government's purpose of accustoming the white electorate to the idea of sharing power with other population registration groups in the limited sense in which they intend the phrase to be understood. Newspaper reports, opinion polls and actual practice demonstrate this clearly.

For overseas consumption, especially, the National Party government wanted to give the impression that the new constitution was born out of a democratic debate in which extreme left and extreme right were given equal rights of participation as long as they did not throw bombs or stones to make particular points. There can be no doubt that until the actual elections the rulers assumed an impressive pose of confidence. Political debate was tolerated to a surprising degree even though always within the suffocating grip of

the threat of censorship, detention and general police harassment. As we all know, this mask of democratic tolerance was dropped on the night of Monday 24 July at Bishop Lavis in Cape Town when a phalanx of policemen was deployed to whip and pursue Cape Action League and other activists and supporters who had come to question the Labour Party's speakers. This party which for so many years had tried to make everyone believe that it was against apartheid and that it as part and parcel of the liberation movement, that night finally exposed itself as a tool of the ruling class and an enemy organization. From that evening until 28 August when the now notorious showdown took place between the police and Azapo/National Forum demonstrators and protestors, we saw a wave of arrests and harassment which has not stopped up to this day.

In brackets, I should perhaps mention that all these clashes between the police state and the people were reported by most local and overseas newspapers and other media as being between UDF supporters and the police. In a number of attested cases, when demonstrators were asked whether they were UDF supporters, they denied this only to read the next morning, (or to see on SABC TV), themselves described as being UDF! The media had helped to create the UDF and were not willing to let go of their own creation. Indeed, there are many photos and much TV footage of non-UDF or even anti-UDF activists demonstrating with placards about Azania and the National Forum, which bear captions or commentaries that describe them (to their eternal embarrassment) as UDF supporters! The wheel turned full circle two weeks ago when the UDF became the runner-up on the Pretoria Press Club's hit parade as the second-most 'impactful' newsmaker of the year!

All that this means is that in future campaigns we have to consider very carefully what attitude to adopt towards the media. We can certainly no longer believe in the

nonsense that the press, radio and television report about what really happens in the world. Indeed, we must more and more begin to accept that the media try to make that happen or appear to happen that suits them and their masters who pay the salaries of reporters, editors, subeditors, photographers, etc. To set out to play to the media is to put our struggle in danger in the deepest sense of the term because it is not the concern of the media to give a true picture of the situation. Their main concern is to earn money for their owners, to market a commodity called 'news' even if they have to fabricate it by turning non-events into events or vice-versa.

### **Ethnic consciousness the nation**

The elections were an element in the grand design of neo-apartheid strategy to divide and trap the black workers by creating and reinforcing a number of ethnic identities. This simply means that black people are to be encouraged to act as though they were 'ethnic groups', in this case 'Coloureds' and 'Indians'. They were to be made to believe that their interests and their destinies were different. They had to be made to accept and follow Coloured and Indian leaders just as the African masses in terms of the bantustan strategy are supposed to follow tribal chiefs as leaders. For this reason, even the elections were held on different days in spite of the inconvenience thereof.

This was (and remains) the reason why we insisted on putting forward the slogan of One Azania, One Nation. This is the answer of the black working class to the divisive ethnic slogans of the ruling class and the conservative middle classes. There are comrades towards the left who believe that this is itself, at worst, a middle-class slogan, at best an unnecessary or a mistaken slogan. I can only repeat what I have said on numerous occasions, that if you do not acknowledge this slogan in theory you do so in practice.

Our critique of ethnically conceived organizations such as the Transvaal Indian Congress, which at the time was said to be malicious, has been validated beyond all doubt. Floating around in South Africa is an astounding pamphlet apparently published in England by the Catholic Institute for International Relations called *South Africa in the 1980s*. It is one of a generation of such documents the sole purpose of which is to propagate the UDF and to denigrate any tendency that disagrees with the UDF. These supposedly well-researched documents feed on one another and simply take over from one another the legends spun by the fecund minds of party hacks. In this document, you can read the following revealing statement among many others:

The ethnically somewhat closed 'Indian' communities in the Transvaal and Natal, strongly influenced by Islam, with a large class of traders and a tradition of creative thought from their intellectuals, were a unique challenge. It was not feasible to mobilise Muslim households with the secular language of modern socialism, nor were attacks on 'racial capitalism' easily assimilated by traders and businessmen. With the exception of a small group of intellectual radicals, 'Indians' were a relatively unpoliticised community potentially vulnerable to government inducements to join a tri-cameral parliament. To respond to these realities a Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) was formed and the corresponding body in Natal (NIC) powerfully put forward the needs of these communities in UDF. For purists the formation of TIC was seen as a lapse into 'ethnic politics' and its role was hotly debated.

There is no need to comment on this except to say that it confirms in the clearest possible manner what we have said about the assumptions, analysis and consequences of organizations such as TIC, NIC and others. It destroys any claim in UDF circles that have adopted a non-racial approach. They certainly need to be saved from their over-

zealous friends lest these latter expose more awkward slips than this.

## **The liberal response**

The government's New Deal strategy, which embraces at the same time the Koornhof Acts and the relocation of African people in bantustan concentration camps, threatened to unleash a flood of working-class militancy and action. Since 1980, almost every significant mass action in South Africa has carried the imprint of the black working class. Socialist solutions to the system of racial capitalism were becoming common coinage among the youth and in workers' organizations. This development was and is feared by the petite bourgeoisie and by the liberal bourgeoisie.

Liberals of all colours and shapes thus tried to ensure that the mass movement against the New Deal would not be placed under the leadership of the working class. The instrument that they chose for this purpose is the so-called United Democratic Front, an alliance of organizations which is neither united, nor democratic, nor, as its leadership itself insists, a front. This is not the place to assess the UDF in detail. That can and should be done at another place and time. Suffice it to say that despite the fond allusions of some self-proclaimed leftists in the UDF, the reins of that bandwagon are firmly in the hands of middle-class leaders whose vision and practices do not extend beyond opposition to the superficial symptoms of apartheid. Men have been built up through the newspapers and by other means who can now steer the bandwagon almost in any direction they choose.

One of their destinations is a national convention. They are creating a climate in which people are made to believe that peaceful methods of negotiation and talking between 'real leaders' are going to solve our problems. This is the

way in which the radical militancy of the working class is to be defused. Needless to say, every imperialist agency and symbolical individual from the Nobel Committee to Senator Edward Kennedy and a host of smaller, lesser known names is being inspanned to get the supposed juggernaut to this destination of the national convention. An orchestrated series of moves is being undertaken in which the South African government is a not unwilling participant to try to use the present discontent and radical upsurge of the working masses to find an accommodation that bestows some dignity on the black middle class and theoretical 'freedoms' on the masses but does not change the foundations of racial inequality and class exploitation.

We all know how our critique from the left and our practices in mass-based organizations together with the consistently sceptical attitude adopted by some of the larger trades unions forced the UDF to abandon one opportunist position after another. From initial suggestions in certain circles that the people should 'go inside' to use the tricameral institutions as a platform from which to preach so-called revolution (which idea is a dead horse in the South African context), to calling on white voters to vote NO in the ethnic white referendum, to serious divisions over whether or not to call for and participate in Coloured and Indian referendums, up to the final absurd suggestion about putting up 'boycott candidates' to oppose the collaborationist parties: every opportunist ploy was proposed by prominent UDF leaders so as to deflect the resistance to the New Deal from the only consistently democratic non-racial path of struggle in the circumstances: a mass boycott movement involving all the oppressed and exploited people. They failed on every attempt as militants inside the UDF, partly out of conviction, partly because they were put under pressure by our critique, opposed these moves and forced the UDF leadership to go the way of the rest of us, like it or not, in order to avoid suicidal

splits.

But let us not deceive ourselves. The UDF, because of the hundreds of thousands of rands that back it, has indeed made an impact on the mass movement. Because of the deliberate government policy of harassment of leaders, banning of meetings, detentions, etc., that impact appears to be a radical one in the short term. In fact, of course, the middle-class leadership can at any time use the tradition that has been created to suit its own purposes. Only the organized workers' movement can ensure that this does not happen. Only our consistent critique of middle-class tactics, accompanied by active participation in mass struggles that point the way to alternative strategies, can prevent the present militant mass movement from being deflected into a historical cul-de-sac, or worse, into some unholy compromise between 'Afrikaner' and 'African' nationalism.

### **What did the National Forum achieve?**

Tell no lies, claim no easy victories. Let these famous words be our guide in assessing ourselves. The triumphalist style of some UDF circles has shown us just how dangerous it is to crow from the rooftops when you have done no work on the ground. The shame-faced abandonment of the much-vaunted million-signature campaign and, more recently, the fiasco of a bus boycott in Cape Town, called by the UDF against the explicit advice of workers' and other people's organizations, were, among many other instances, a crushing demonstration of this ancient wisdom.

We who adhere to the National Forum have to face the truth squarely if we want to go forward. Our accomplishments can be listed briefly because there are not many of them even though they are of an extremely important kind.

We have brought about a certain measure of unity among a large number of organizations of the oppressed

and exploited people. At the first National Forum in June 1983, we managed to get a number of diverse political tendencies to adopt a firm boycott stand based on a careful and common analysis of the New Deal strategy'. The subsequent practical political organization and mobilisation by which these organizations tried to implement the Forum's decisions showed that it was possible to concert our efforts after consultations on a democratic and equal basis.

Together with other organizations, we demonstrated to the entire country and to the world that the oppressed and exploited people of Azania are essentially united in spite of the divide-and-rule policies of the ruling class. The organizations that adhere to the position of the National Forum, can take much of the credit for torpedoing the August elections even if their efforts were largely ignored in the media. This knowledge, I believe, is one of our greatest strengths. We should not hesitate to make it known and to build on it.

We have created many new organizations in town and country. Our house-to-house and day-to-day organization (always with a bare minimum of funds) has raised the political consciousness of the oppressed people and today there are groups and organizations in the most unlikely places.

We have helped to create a strong and sophisticated core of activists who have been steeled in struggle through clashes with the machinery of state. These young (and older) people represent an invaluable layer from which the leadership of the future will come as well as the guarantee that the struggle shall continue.

Above all, we have the Manifesto of the Azanian People. This statement of principles and demands that came out of the first National Forum is already known among all serious activists in South Africa. It has given rise to one of the most creative debates in the public history of our



country and has forced people to look again at older political programmes. It is a document that sets us clearly on the road to a socialist Azania. It is also a document that has to be completed in detail and implemented in practice. The Azanian Manifesto has provided us with a political outline to which we have to give theoretical and practical content. This, in fact, will be one of the major tasks of the liberation movement in the next few years.

On the debit side, we have to face a number of unpleasant facts. We have not reached the point where we can say that the differences that keep us in separate organizations have disappeared. We are not in a position to form a national movement in spite of our acceptance of the Azanian Manifesto. There remain many differences of principles, strategy, tactics' and style. These differences often give rise to suspicion and rumour-mongering in spite of the hope that joint action will make people trust one another more.

We have hardly begun to organize in the countryside and in some of the cities we have only a nominal presence. This organizational weakness has to be overcome if we are to be able to speak with some semblance of representativeness.

We have not managed to get the people's organizations in the UDF and many of the trade unions to co-operate systematically with us. Even though there are friendly relations and contacts between us and some of these organizations they have not led to more than occasional joint actions. Some of these, such as the Joint Rally held in Cape Town in August, were undoubtedly of great significance but they have not been followed up. We have constantly to affirm our commitment to the maximum unity of the oppressed and exploited under the leadership of the working class and should leave no stone unturned to give effect to this goal as long as we do not betray our principles.

We have not managed to increase our material resources

significantly. In a modern society such as ours we cannot do without organizers, offices, motor cars, etc. This is an area to which every one of the organizations that hold the National Forum position has to give urgent attention.

I believe that if we are willing to give serious attention to all these questions and if we use this workshop to examine ourselves seriously, we can only emerge strengthened. Allow me to end off talk by saying that in 1985 the main political tasks that will face us will be to struggle against the local authorities which are supposed to implement the New Deal. Community councils, management committees, town councils and whatever other fancy names which grace the disgraceful collaboration of people who have sold out, have to be destroyed. They must be shown to be unworkable and unrepresentative' This, together with the ongoing task of fighting against bantustan authorities against resettlement and against the economic policies of the government and of the bosses which exploit the working people, will confront us with a political challenge second to none that we have faced before.

A luta continua!

For a socialist workers' republic of Azania!