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**CONTESTED DOMAINS:
NATIONAL IDENTITY
AND CONFLICT
IN RUSSIA
AND SOUTH AFRICA**

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BRADLOW LECTURE

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PARALLELS

Speaking at a recent conference on conflict management in multicultural societies¹, F. Van Zyl Slabbert mentioned intolerant ideologies as one of the sources of conflict in South Africa. There is little new about this idea, and many scholars concur with it. Russian political scientists, for example, list "conflicts of ideological doctrines" as one of the three principal types of conflict.²

Of greater interest, however, was Slabbert's classification of South African ideologies. He spoke of 'exclusive intolerant ideologies' (eg., those of the Conservative Party and Inkatha), 'inclusive intolerant ideologies', such as that of the ANC, and a 'messy, syncretistic, tolerant national ideology', which, he believed, is spontaneously evolving in South Africa and which directed his hope for a better future. Van Zyl Slabbert referred to the former Soviet theory of nationhood, and the Soviet experience in dealing with the nationalities question, as 'inclusive intolerant', and thought that it is exactly this experience that defines the ANC doctrine.³ Even if it were so, the ANC would certainly not be the only South African political organisation with a value claim to the Soviet theoretical legacy.

"...Until Leninist principles about national groups are accepted...there will be no peace in South Africa". Any number of South African politicians could have said this. Surprisingly enough the quotation is from Rowley Arenstein, adviser to Chief Gatsha Buthelezi and a renowned Durban Marxist, who is said to be equally respected both by Inkatha and the ANC leadership.

Rowley Arenstein thinks that to prevent violence in South Africa "you have to go back to Stalin's work on the national and colonial questions where he writes that a nation is a historically constituted stable community of language, country, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in the community of culture. Stalin - and you have to remember that Lenin worked with him on the matter - said that if any of those elements is missing, then there's no nation. But what that means is that the Zulus are a nation, and so are the Xhosas. So are the Afrikaners and the Tswanas and the English-speaking whites."

He goes on to say that "South Africa is, like the Soviet Union, a multinational state. People like Joe Slovo and the ideologues of the ANC who talk of 'forming one nation' are really dangerous...If you try to override these differences and pretend they don't exist you just get terrible violence. You have to respect what is."⁴

This long quotation does not imply acceptance of Arenstein's idea that Inkatha subscribes to "Leninist principles" against the South African Marxists both inside and outside the ANC. Rather, it presents a case of two conflicting parties referring presumably to one and the same ideological domain in search of proof of the validity of their respective concepts, which they deem to be basically different from one another. This is not uncommon, but comes as somewhat of a surprise in the particular South African context.

One does not need to look far to find substantiations for conflicting views in the Soviet theory of nationhood (as ethnicity is termed by the Russians). Little wonder: the theory has undergone profound changes over the period of its existence, and since its inception has lacked internal coherence. Practice, too, diverged from theory. No wonder that in drawing comparisons between the nationalities question in Russia and South Africa a Russian South Africanist distinctly fails to outline the similarities, as well as the differences between the two systems.⁵

THE RUSSIAN CONTEXT

It is a well known fact that Lenin never advanced a definition of nationhood. He used the word "nation" loosely to mean almost anything. He did, however, formulate several principles crucial for the Bolshevik interpretation of this phenomenon. Three of these were of central importance.

1. *The right of nations to self-determination and secession.* Formulated originally by Marx, this principle became part of the 1903 Programme of the Russian Social Democrats. In 1913 it was modified by a rider to the effect that the right to secession did not imply the desirability of this act. The Bolshevik party asserted its right to decide on every case of secession individually according to the specific circumstances.⁶

The slogan of *national self-determination* was a convenient tool to fight tsarism. However, since their seizure of power, the Bolsheviks never adhered to it themselves. Compelled to recognize the independence of Finland and Poland they were nevertheless determined to keep other parts of the former Russian Empire. The facts prove this. To quote just one example, in April 1918 Stalin wrote to V.P. Zatonsky, head of the Soviet administration of the independent Ukraine: "You have been toying with your government and your republic far too long. Enough is enough, it's time to stop".⁷

2. *The prevalence or dominance of class, class values and interests over those of nation.* The nationalities question both before, and after, the

1917 revolution was seen as subordinate to the task of building socialism and having been conveniently associated with capitalism, the perception was that *once socialism was achieved, it would cease to exist*. In this context the idea of the right of nations to self-determination left some Bolsheviks with an uneasy feeling, for it could be interpreted as the right of different classes within a nation to participate in formulating its political future. Lenin's 1903 interpretation of the slogan shows it only too clearly: "We...care about the right for self-determination not of peoples and nations, but of the proletariat of every nation".⁸

Faced with the realities of ruling a multinational state after the 1917 revolution, Lenin changed his approach. At the VIIIth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1919 he stood up to defend "self-determination of nations" against his associates, first of all N.I. Bukharin and G. Pyatakov, who offered to substitute this formula for exactly the one Lenin himself had defended in 1903: "self-determination of the *working classes of every nationality*".⁹ It did not mean, however, that he totally rejected their ideas. In fact, only two years earlier, in 1917, Lenin had subscribed to another interpretation of self-determination which seemed to support what Bukharin and Pyatakov had in mind in 1919. It was Stalin's version of the slogan which he formulated at the Third Congress of the Soviets: "The principle of the right of nations to self-determination must be the means of struggle for achieving socialism and should be subordinate to socialism".¹⁰

3. *The progressive nature of ethnic integration or, as Lenin put it: assimilation.* The Bolsheviks were convinced, and Lenin often emphasized it, that assimilation was complementary to the interests of labour, since capital, creating the myth of ethnicity, was in reality united against the workers.

Lenin quite clearly formulated his assimilationist sympathies in 1913: "Not only does the proletariat refuse to defend the national development of every nation, but, on the contrary, it warns the masses against these illusions,...it welcomes every kind of assimilation of nations, with the only exception of forced assimilation, or assimilation based on unilateral privileges".¹¹

It was for this reason that, in spite of his insistence on the right of nations to self-determination, that Lenin remained a strong anti-federalist from the beginning of his political career throughout the pre-revolutionary period. For example, in 1903 he wrote: "It is not the business of the proletariat to preach federalism and national autonomy... immediately leading to the demand to form an autonomous class state."¹²

Lenin carried his adherence to the idea of the "centralized big state... inseparably linked with socialism" throughout his life.¹³ His vision of the structure of this state, however, changed marginally over the years. For example, in 1919 he was defending federation "of the states of the Soviet-type" as "one of the transitional forms on the way to full unity".¹⁴

Even then Lenin staunchly defended the principle of a centralized party structure for the whole territory of the former Russian empire, i.e. in the newly born independent states. He also saw federation as a form of union - again, as a centralized state. "We shall not tolerate the Austrian abomination here", he wrote. "We shall not have that. No go!... Amongst the workers we shall not permit the 'Austrian spirit' here".¹⁵ By the 'Austrian spirit' he meant the slogan of ethno-cultural autonomy, advanced by Austro-Hungarian social democrats.

In terms of Slabbert's classification, Lenin's theory of the nation was decidedly intolerant. There is little to suggest, however, that it was "inclusive". It can rather be designated as conditional on ideology and class and thus ideologically exclusive.

It was not Lenin, but Stalin who was responsible for the Soviet Marxist definition of 'nation'. He formulated it in 1913 in his article "Marxism and the Nationality Question". According to Stalin, a nation "is an historically formed stable community of people which comes into existence on the basis of common language, common territory, common economic life and psychological character which manifests itself in the common culture". "It is clear", wrote Stalin, "that a nation, as every other historic phenomenon, is subject to the laws of change, and has its own history, its beginning and its end".¹⁶

Lenin has never expressed any doubts concerning the validity of this definition, but in fact Stalin's message was somewhat different from his own. Stalin largely borrowed his definition from the same Austro-Hungarian Marxists of whom both he and Lenin were so critical, and against whom this particular article was aimed. He stressed cultural as against the class characteristics of a nation. The 'Nation' was perceived as a stable, albeit developing organism. Assimilation was not entirely left out, but was seen as a very distant target rather than an unfolding process.

Stalin's definition of 'nation' was certainly exclusive, but in contrast to Lenin, on ethnic rather than ideological grounds. It was unashamedly intolerant as well. In his article Stalin stressed that all four characteristics were necessary for a "community of people" to be a nation. This approach turned out to be very useful for the author later on, when he had the opportunity to decide the fate of nations. Contrary to Arenstein's claim, Stalin's definition rules out both

the Afrikaners and the South African British as nations since neither have their own territory. The Zulus, the Xhosas and other South African peoples have little hope of being granted the title of nations in terms of Stalin's definition too, albeit for a different reason.

It was not quite clear at first how Stalin's definition correlates with the Marxist theory of social formations. In his article "Marxism and the Questions of Linguistics" published in 1951, Stalin outlined hierarchy of languages (tribal languages - languages of nationalities - national languages) in connection with social formations.¹⁷ After that it was not difficult for Soviet academics to define the main historical paradigms of a nation: *tribe*, corresponding to pre-class stages of development of human society; *nationality*¹⁸ which appears during the ages of slavery and feudalism; and *nation* which corresponds to the capitalist mode of production.¹⁹ Thus, until the Zulus or Xhosas, as a group, reached the capitalist stage of development they, as well as any other people, could at best claim to be nationalities, not nations.

After Stalin, during the 1960s and 1970s the Soviet doctrine of nationhood did not become more inclusive in terms of either ethnicity or ideology. Instead it became bifurcated. Contrary to pre-revolutionary Russian Marxist thinking, it was now considered that nations do not "die" instantly under socialism. They rather transform themselves into "socialist nations". The various cultural traditions of socialist nations, "national (i.e. ethnic) in form, socialist in essence" flourish with the assistance of the state.

At the same time, Lenin's prophecy was not entirely forgotten. Marxist theory held that Soviet nations would eventually merge. Accordingly, assimilation processes in Soviet society were considered a positive phenomenon. A "new type of super-national (i.e. super-ethnic) community - the Soviet people" was said to have come into existence. However, integration could only occur through the "full development" of every nation.

Clearly, this was an attempt to overcome inconsistencies of theory, and, having espoused Lenin's and Stalin's approaches, to develop them into a coherent theoretical whole. It did not work, not surprisingly. In 1989, speaking about the Soviet policy in the conflict-ridden Nagorny Karabakh region, A. Volsky, the then head of the region, compared it to one of Pavlov's biological experiments. The comparison seems to be valid for the Soviet nationality policy as a whole. Pavlov trained a dog to bark when the red light was switched on, and to wag its tail silently when the green light was on. The dog was given meat when it performed correctly. One day Pavlov switched on both lights simultaneously. The dog squealed, jumped about and literally went quite mad.²⁰

The attempts to foster both national integration within the framework of the "new super-national community - the Soviet people" and national (ethnic) cultures and emotions simultaneously, could only bring about no less an undesirable outcome. Not that the founders of the Russian socialist state did not see the contradiction. They just thought that under socialism, nations (ethnicities) would disappear anyway, however diverse their cultural traditions, because there would be no social ground for their continued existence. What happened in reality was that the "small" problems at the grass-roots level were neglected, integrationist tendencies did develop (in some cases culminating in 'russification'), while at the same time ethnic nationalisms were thriving in all spheres of life throughout the country both at the official and unofficial level.

I quote just one example to illustrate the situation of modifications of the theory of nation. Yu. V. Bromlei, official head of the Soviet School of Ethnography, introduced a new term "ethnos" to define the notion of a nation. He suggested a distinction between the "broad" and the "narrow" meaning of the term. He defined ethnos in the "broad" sense as "something in common between the tribe, the nationality (narodnost) and the nation", and suggested calling it "ethno-social organism".²¹

Ethnos in the "narrow" sense was termed "ethnics". Bromlei's definition of the term is long and awkward, and yet it is worth quoting. "Ethnos per se (or ethnos in the narrow sense of the word) may be defined as a stable intergenerational community of people, historically formed on a definite territory and possessing not only common features, but also a relatively stable specific culture (including the language) and psychology, as well as the consciousness of their unity and distinction from other similar groups (self-consciousness), fixed in their self-name (ethno-name)".²²

Bromlei's definition was based on the idea of the primordial nature of ethnicity. It smacked of colonial social anthropology that had fallen out of fashion everywhere else in the world several decades earlier. It was very close to the apartheid interpretation of the notion. In fact, A. Kuper, editor of the journal "Current Anthropology" had good reason to state, in 1987, "It is a strange irony that the ethnos theory born by the late German romanticism, remains intact only in the anthropology departments of Moscow and Pretoria now".²³

Bromlei was juggling with theories. He elevated the social aspect of the notion of a nation ("ethnos in the broad sense") to the highest possible level of abstraction and left it there without further attention. The ethnicity component, however, was discussed at length and in detail.

In practical terms this 'double-standard' or 'double-identity' approach to the definition of nation brought about devastating results. To give just one example, a driver from Ukraine wrote a letter complaining to the CPSU newspaper "Pravda". He was refused membership in the party because, filling in the forms, he put "Ukrainian" as his nationality, and "Russian" as his mother tongue. The situation was by no means uncommon for the Soviet Ukraine, and yet, the local party bosses did not accept the documents. They said that a person capable of betraying his mother tongue could betray his motherland as well.²⁴

Perestroika has not changed the pattern, but rather reinforced it. The inclusive, all-embracing state identity fell completely into oblivion. Ethnic identities were now fostered openly and flourished unchecked. Lev Gumilev, possibly the greatest contemporary Russian authority on the theory of nationhood, claims that it was he who first offered the term "ethnos" for nation. His definition of "ethnos" is even more anthropological and metaphysical than that of Bromlei. Gumilev thinks that this term implies "a system of social and natural entities with some particular elements intrinsic to them. Ethnos is not just a community of people with some similar features", he writes, "it is a system of personalities with different tastes and abilities, the products of their activities, traditions, the accommodating geographical environment, as well as the definitive tendencies, dominating the development of the system".²⁵

Gumilev's theory is very popular among Russian intellectuals. Banned under the previous regime it constituted an important part of their underground reading. Even now, when all the formally banned or restricted books have ceased to be a novelty in Russia, Gumilev's highly theoretical works are in great demand.

The reason is simple. Many Soviet citizens, who considered the regime oppressive and illegitimate, saw its main opponent in nationalism, or rather 'nationness' or a sense of national identity (ethnicity), and not in democracy. Many more of them perceived the regime not exactly as illegitimate, but rather as faceless and distasteful, exactly because it lacked a distinct national character. Nationalist opposition in the Soviet Union had neither the time (it was suppressed until the late 1980s) nor skill to create its own theory of nationhood or at least to define the term.

Political articulation of the concept usually remains at the level of slogans. "The time has come to state openly: We are the Russians! We are the great Russian people! We shall not accept the fact that...if the present tendencies persist in twenty five years our nation may become smaller by half, and in fifty years will disappear as a great nation. Long live the Russian national renaissance! The great nation or the death of the great nation!...And

let the images of the great people of our Russian land...inspire us in our struggle in this great struggle for the achievement of the Russian vital interests...".²⁶ The style of this document is typical, although less aggressive and intolerant than many others.

Nationalist concepts were created by both official and opposition academics. Even Bromlei's concept with its evident stress on the primordial nature of ethnicity was, strictly speaking, a step away from Marxist dogma, and, as a critic put it, an act of courage.²⁷ Offering a decidedly more biological concept, Gumilev went much further than that and suffered for it. Both, however, were developing the logic of Stalin's and definition of nationhood. Both interpretations were no less 'exclusive' than the original concept.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEBATE

In South Africa the position of liberal intellectuals was largely the opposite, but for exactly the same reason. For more than a decade South African academics both inside and outside the country were doing their best to prove that ethnicity, at least as far as South Africa goes, was "invented", "created", "imagined", recent and superfluous.²⁸ Of course, they were led along this path by virtue of their academic vision of the issue, but, as was the case with many Russian academics, this vision was itself strongly coloured or influenced by the desire to offer a credible alternative to the officially promoted concept, which in both cases had devastating results.

This is not to say that either concept was right or wrong, but rather that to a very large degree it was shaped by given or existing political circumstances. As Steve Biko put it: "...People are shaped by the system even in their consideration of approaches against the system...".²⁹

Concepts of nationhood developed by the South African opposition were also to a very large extent motivated by the desire to counterbalance with "right" or correct concepts the officially promulgated "wrong" ones. It is in opposition to the apartheid concept of deeply entrenched primordial ethnicity and separate development that the majority of the opposition movements assert that there is already a South African nation in being or at least on the threshold of existence.

Neville Alexander, an authority on this issue on both counts, as an academic and as a politician, wrote more on South African nationhood than anybody else. His definition runs: "The nation...consists of all the people who are prepared to throw off the yoke of capitalist exploitation and racist oppression. It involves a determined and uncompromising struggle against all

attempts to divide the population on the basis of language, religion, tribe or caste. It is based on the realization that the colour-caste consciousness of the oppressed is a vanishing thing which is replaced *pari passu* by a growth in workers' consciousness and working-class unity. It proposes the solution of the national question by means of the application of consistent democracy in every sphere, by the legal equality of all the languages".³⁰

Neville Alexander is responsible for the ideology of the National Forum and Workers Organization of South Africa. His theoretical writing is popular among Black Consciousness and Africanists organizations. His definition of the nation however, would be acceptable to a wider range of opposition organizations. In fact, it is characteristic of a very wide spectrum of South African opposition thinking on the subject, not only because it asserts the existence of one united South African non-ethnic nation, but also because it defines this nation as conditional on class and struggle. Alexander's definition is grounded on ideology and that makes it ideologically exclusive.

A coherent and authentic ANC concept of the nation does not exist. There are many concepts, scattered in different writings. Essentially, these range between the positions expressed by the two main spokesmen of the organization on the issue. Pallo Jordan's definition essentially mirrors that of Alexander's: "the nation is not defined by skin colour or racial designation; its parameters are set by individual acts of voluntary adherence, which adherence requires the submergence of other loyalties to this larger unit; they are defined by a commitment to the country, its people and its future. Since committed racists could never accept such an arrangement, they too voluntarily exclude themselves".³¹

The late Mzala largely thought in terms of two nations in South Africa, black and white. However, he also mentioned "African, Indian, Coloured, Afrikaner and English nationalities". The two nations are defined in political and social terms. The logic behind nationalities is not clear. The element of struggle was crucial for Mzala's definition. He wrote: "The ANC...aimed at amalgamating various ethnic groups into a nation by creating a political inter-relationship among them, giving them a single political language against oppression, educating the new person in the spirit of respect for members of another ethnic group so that they could jointly strive for self-determination".³²

Both Jordan's and Mzala's concepts are exclusive. Jordan's nation is conditional on ideology. Mzala's is defined by ideology, class and even colour, albeit in a social setting.

Joe Slovo, the main authority on the concept of nation in the South African Communist Party, thinks that "despite the existence of cultural and

racial diversity, South Africa is not a multi-national country. It is a nation in the making; a process which is increasingly being advanced in struggle and one which can only be finally completed after the racial tyranny is defeated. The concept of one united nation, embracing all our ethnic communities, remains the virtually undisputed liberation objective".³³

Slovo's nation is not overtly exclusive, but it is nonetheless defined by ideology and class. "In the South African case", asserts Slovo, "it is certainly the emerging proletariat which has become the key class force for nation-building. As the most politically conscious and advanced social force in our revolution, our black working class is, at the same time, the most internationalist and the most committed to national cohesion".³⁴

The PAC, AZAPO and Black Consciousness thinking on the issue can be broadly described in terms of a Black African nation. The 1959 Manifesto states: "The African people of South Africa recognize themselves as part of one African nation, stretching from Cape to Cairo, Madagascar to Morocco... The African people will not tolerate the existence of the other national groups within the confines of one nation. For the healthy growth and development of the African nation, it is imperative that all individuals must owe their first, and only, loyalty to the African nation, and not to their ethnic or national groups. The African people regard the influence of material conditions in the development of a nation as being of greater significance than mere ethnic origin. Within the social environment of the African nation there will be room for all individuals who identify themselves materially, intellectually and spiritually with the African nation".³⁵

The romantic ideal of an 'Africanist nation' has not undergone any major change over the years. In the 1989 PAC policy document emphasis on "African nationhood" was eased in favour of "African nationalism"³⁶, but the concept is still intact. The definition seems inclusive - suffice to identify yourself with the African nation. The 1972 document repeats the invitation in even more liberal terms: "...everybody who owes his loyalty to Africa, who is prepared to accept the democratic rule of an African majority, being regarded as an African".³⁷

Yet, there are doubts. A PAC pamphlet clearly distinguishes between the "indigenous African nationals" and "immigrant European foreign nationals".³⁸ The PAC states that the distinction is in terms of class, not colour. On what grounds, then, does it "recognize the so-called Coloureds as Africans?"³⁹ In reality the PAC's concept is exclusive, and, in spite of all attempts to assure the reader that it is exclusive only in terms of ideology and class, even the official documents of this party leave little doubt that it is also exclusive in terms of ideology and race.

The Black Consciousness definition of "Black", based on class and ideology is very well known: "Black people are those who are by law or tradition economically, socially and politically discriminated against in South Africa and who identify themselves as a unit in the struggle for Azania".⁴⁰ However, AZAPO sees it in terms of colour as well. The Constitution of this organization states that "membership shall be open to Blacks only"⁴¹, and another document explains the reasons for that: "the Whites who want to contribute to the struggle are very few, and the risk of infiltration is always greater with them, than with the Blacks".⁴² Little is left of the class approach here.

All South African opposition concepts of the nation seem to be exclusive, albeit on different grounds. *Exclusive concepts can hardly be tolerant: it is only the degree of intolerance that varies.* The most important factor defining this degree of intolerance, however, is not the ideology of this or that organization, but rather the perceived political situation in the country.

Inkatha's concept of nationhood can hardly be called oppositional, since in some respects it is consonant to that of the governing party. Buthelezi's nation is certainly inclusive in terms of class and is not entirely exclusive even in terms of ethnicity. "I see no contradiction between my cultural concept of 'nationality' on the one hand, and my concept of a multi-ethnic South African nation", stated Buthelezi in 1976.⁴³ Furthermore, "One cannot be a Black person without being a Zulu Black person. One cannot be a South African without being a Zulu South African...", he repeated in 1986.⁴⁴

What he offers, is a "three-step ladder-type" nation, the subject of which possesses several identities. At the lowest level there are different "ethnic groups". Judging by how often Buthelezi speaks of the "Zulu nation", these groups may also be called "nations". Further up there is an "African" or a "Black" nation. Buthelezi often refers to a "White group", "White unity" and "White nationalism"⁴⁵ in spite of the fact that "Whites are also multi-ethnic".⁴⁶ Whatever happens at the lower levels, at the highest level all groups arrive to become members of "a multi-ethnic South African nation".⁴⁷

Inkatha's multi-identity concept of nationhood has never been its monopoly. Suffice it to quote the Freedom Charter, which on the one hand begins with the words "We, the people of South Africa", and on the other hand states: "All national groups shall have equal rights...All people shall have equal rights to use their own languages and to develop their own folk culture and customs; All national groups shall be protected by law...".⁴⁸ Buthelezi insists that Inkatha's vision of the nation goes back to that of the ANC Youth League. In fact it is much closer to the present position of the ANC alliance on the issue.

The latest ANC documents stress the necessity to develop African languages and promise protection to the local cultures in even stronger terms than before.⁴⁹ Speaking at a recent conference on nation-building, Pallo Jordan argued in favour of what he called a typical 20th century nation, exemplified by the United States. "No one can claim that Americans have a culture that is distinctly American. It is held together by shared values, while its ethnic identities are strong".⁵⁰ In recent interviews with the author, two members of the ANC executive, Wally Serote and Mohammed Valli, stressed the cultural diversity of South African society, in spite of strong integrationist tendencies which exist in it.⁵¹ In his interview, Joe Slovo largely referred to the integrationist tendencies, stating at the same time that integration does not, and should not, mean disappearance of any local language or culture.⁵²

The major difference between the ANC and Inkatha concepts of nation is rather one of degree rather than kind. While Inkatha insists that "the identity of an individual within a particular cultural milieu is essential to his identity as a South African"⁵³, many in the ANC still seem to be hoping to weld South Africans into one cultural milieu, albeit in a very distant future. Inkatha stresses the unique, the ANC stresses the common. The ANC emphasises the upper levels of nationhood, Inkatha the lowest one.

This is only part of the problem, however. There is yet another difference which may be an even more important ground for conflict. Buthelezi's nation at its lower level seems to be exclusive in political and ideological terms, although he has never stated that openly. When he speaks about the "high ideals of the Zulu people"⁵⁴, he evidently means that all the Zulus have the same ideals. When he says: "not only the IFP, Zulus in general are very angry"⁵⁵, he actually states that all the Zulus have the same political emotions. Thus, Buthelezi's upper level of the nation is ethnically heterogeneous and inclusive, but its lower level is both ethnically and politically homogeneous and exclusive. This is exactly what makes it difficult for the ANC to accept it.

THE FUTURE

With all these conceptual differences there is still evidence to support Van Zyl Slabbert's idea of a messy, syncretic and supposedly tolerant, multi-identity national ideology starting to appear, albeit cautiously, in the political arena. His optimism about it, however, seems a little premature. To have several ethnic identities plus a national one is a common thing for a South African. Is it conceivable for a state, however, to foster all these identities simultaneously, especially when it comes to the questions of practical policy?

Neville Alexander speaks about "harmonizing" the Nguni and Sotho languages⁵⁶, and KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture does everything in its power to promote the Zulu language.⁵⁷ The ANC states it is going to develop all the South African languages simultaneously, and ends up with English as the language of communication. It is here that Pavlov's dog starts squealing and going mad. The task of fostering several identities simultaneously at the state level is not impossible and may well be the only viable option for South Africa. It is just much more difficult to implement in practical terms than wishful thinking tends to depict it.

Some lessons may be drawn from the Russian experience for South Africa. For instance: would the multi-identity option work more easily in this country if South Africans backed off from their intense attempts to create a "national ideology", however messy, and try to think in terms of allegiance to the country which all of them appear to love? Would the multi-identity option work if power at any level is perceived as illegitimate by any significant group of the society? Structures, both state and administrative, are crucial for the mode of functioning and development of this society, and the debate about them is more than justified. Yet, would the most wonderful structure work, if there is no appropriate psychological and political climate for it in the society. These are the questions which any Russian observer of the South African situation will ask him or herself.

Every single ethnic identity in a multi-identity society needs constant review. However perfect, no legislation, single act, system or structure can possibly protect these identities by themselves. The old Soviet belief that once socialism is achieved the ethnicity problem will disappear, seems to re-emerge in South Africa under a different guise. Many in this country seem to believe that once democracy is achieved and civil rights are protected, ethnicity would cease to be a problem.⁵⁸ Their faith is touching, if naive. There is no golden formula for the resolution of ethnic problems to be found either in the past or capable of projection into the future. This national ideal, as well as many others, cannot be achieved by these means but only by the pillars of peace and democracy.

Sara Gertrude Millin once said: "There is no 'there-there'". Nor is there is any consoling 'there-there' for national ideals, including the problem of ethnicity itself.

ENDNOTES

1. "Conflict Management in Multi-cultural Societies". Conference organized by HSRC, Johannesburg, 26-28 August, 1992.
2. Two other types are: "conflicts of uncontrollable emotions" and "conflicts of political institutions".
3. "Conflict Management in Multi-cultural Societies", HSRC Conference, 26-28 August 1992.
4. *Sunday Star Review*, January 6, 1991, p.9.
5. V. Tikhomirov, *States in Transition: Russia and South Africa*. International Freedom Foundation, Bryanston, 1992, p.4-17.
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