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IT was not as a mental exercise that the Bolsheviks went to such great pains, in 1913, to state clearly what it was that they meant by the term "nation". They did so because there was an urgent practical need to define clearly the type of community for which Communists would advance the slogan of self-determination.

This required an analysis of the *specific* characteristics which make a community so tightly knit and economically integrated that it is capable of leading a separate political existence.

Stalin's definition, involving common territory, language, culture and economy, as expounded by Potekhin in the article which began this controversy,¹ has been tested in practice through the years, and found to serve its purpose so well that it has been accepted universally by Communists as the starting-point of all discussions on the question.

Stalin declares, "*there is no nation which at one and the same time speaks several languages*".²

I would be the last to suggest that Stalin's words must be treated as gospel, but I certainly *do* suggest that Comrade J. T. Adams should lay *some* sort of theoretical foundation before he in effect declares blithely that this definition is

¹ *Marxism Today*, October, 1958.

² *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Lawrence and Wishart, 2nd Edition, p. 6.

obviously wrong: "Quite clearly a nation exists in South Africa—not Afrikaans not English—but South African, composed of people who use Afrikaans and English languages and cultures."³

Comrade Adams appears to equate the terms "State" and "Nation", as, for example, where he talks of Switzerland, the Soviet Union, India and even the Boer Republics as nations, and seems, from his concluding paragraph, to argue that a single national market (meaning in the context a single state market) is all that is required for nationhood. He may well have something valuable to add to Marxist theory, and I do not question that according to his *own* definition there is a South African nation. But before we can examine Comrade Adams' contribution he must tell us *what his definition is*, and even more important, he must tell us *in what way his definition is better than the one at present used by Marxists*. Until he does so it is futile to continue the discussion because we will be, in effect, arguing in different languages.

John McGrath, like Comrade Adams, takes issue with me for claiming, in Comrade McGrath's paraphrase, that a nation "*must* have a territory and a common economic life which they can call 'their own'."

It seems to me simple logic that a community which, because it *nowhere* has a piece of territory in which it constitutes a majority of the population and which is therefore *physically incapable of seceding from anywhere*, cannot be a nation. This does not add anything to Stalin's definition as Comrade McGrath claims—it is implicit in the "common territory" in that definition.

I agree with most of the things Comrade McGrath says about the white Afrikaners, and endorse that they are vastly different in most respects from the Jews of Tsarist Russia. All I say is that they are not a nation. Incidentally, almost the whole of Comrade McGrath's first description of the Afrikaners, from their "ability to act together in war", right up to their "modern means of communication" applies equally to a large and efficient army of occupation. Such an army would also not be a nation.

Nor is it necessary for Comrade McGrath to devote pages to proving the obvious facts that many nations are widely dispersed and share their territory with others. All such nations have *somewhere, some* territory "of their own", meaning by that a territory where they constitute the majority of the population.

I am fully in agreement with him about the

leading role of the African working class in the national movement and his attempt to make an argument about this is artificial.

Comrade McGrath makes the very emphatic demand for the right of the Afrikaners (meaning white Afrikaners) to secede. To accord them the right to develop into a nation, capable of secession, is not enough, he says. But the whole point is that *you can't secede without a bit of territory to secede with you*. And surely the rights of the Afrikaners are not so much greater than the rights of other South Africans that we can force a non-Afrikaner majority of any part of our country to secede with the Afrikaner, or to move somewhere else—for that is the *only* way that we could at present *guarantee* the white Afrikaner the right to secede.

Comrade McGrath is a clear-thinking man, for whose views I have a great deal of respect, so I can only assume that he was overtired when he thought up the idea that the Afrikaner nationalist policy of driving the Africans into labour reservoir "Bantustans" bears any sort of relationship to self-determination. And I am utterly aghast at his statement that the new Apartheid Bill is a "concrete expression" of a move "from the concept of 'horizontal' apartheid to that of 'vertical' apartheid". The claim by the Nationalists that they are only trying to change the position from the unjust one in which the whites are at the top and the blacks at the bottom in South Africa, to one in which whites and blacks live equally side by side in separate territories has been exposed by the Congresses, by *New Age*, by Comrade McGrath himself, and by almost everyone else outside the Nationalist ranks as a complete fraud. The Bill does not, in fact, change the situation of horizontal apartheid, with whites at the top and blacks at the bottom, in one society, by one iota.

The Afrikaners

It is necessary, however, to add an important qualification to my remarks about the Afrikaner nation. My article and the replies both of Comrade Adams and McGrath considered the Afrikaners in the lily-white image painted by the Afrikaner Nationalists. But if there is in fact an Afrikaner nation, it does *not* consist of the 1½ million Afrikaners who can claim white identity cards, but of about 2½ million people. Once one breaks through the Nationalist smokescreen one sees that *the Afrikaans-speaking Coloureds are part of the same national community as their whiter brothers*—common language, economy, culture and all. Except for the political and social discrimination there is nothing at all to distin-

³ *Marxism Today*, July, 1959.

guish the very substantial proportion of Afrikanerdom which, though technically Coloured, passes for white from that proportion which is too dark, or too proud to pass.

And what is so ironical is that the Coloureds are one of "Afrikanerdom's greatest national assets". With them Afrikanerdom has a territory where it is in the majority, with a few good-sized towns; and it has a much better balanced class structure.

Although the present leaders of white Afrikanerdom would choke at the idea, it is very possible that under conditions of freedom the single white and Coloured Afrikaner nation will be one of the first to consolidate itself, and that its Afrikaner language and culture will blossom as never before.

At the same time it must be noted that the position is by no means static. The political discrimination against the Coloureds is creating something akin to a Coloured national consciousness, separated from that of the white Afrikaner, and comparable with that of the Negro of the U.S. The South African Coloured People's Organisation is thought of as a national organisation like those of its African and Indian allies in the Congress alliance. But an optimistic estimate of the time required for winning freedom would preclude the development of a separate Coloured nation born of "race" oppression.

Comrade McGrath is right when he stresses that the demand for a single, fully democratic, multi-national state is not merely a negative absence of a demand for self-determination but a positive demand.

The African National Congress has, since about 1947, had, as part of its standing policy, the demand for self-determination, and it can properly be said that the oppressed national groups in South Africa have made it clear that the way they wish to determine their own destinies is within

the framework of a united South African state.

But the big question is whether it is realistic for us to think, as Comrade Adams does, that the people's democratic South Africa will be a ready made, single, fused nation; or whether, as I believe, the correct Marxist perspective is to recognise the fact that South Africa is by no means a single nation at present, cannot become a single nation until democracy has been won, and will not, even with a people's democratic government, become a nation overnight.

If the latter view is correct then the words of Stalin, in his report to the Sixteenth Congress of the C.P.S.U. in 1930, are apposite for South Africa.

"It may seem strange that we, who are in favour of the fusion of national cultures in the future into one common culture (both in form and content), with a single, common language, are at the same time, in favour of the *blossoming* of national cultures at the present time, in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But there is nothing strange in this. The national cultures must be permitted to develop and expand and to reveal all their potential qualities, in order to create the conditions necessary for their fusion into a single, common culture with a single, common language. The blossoming of cultures national in form and socialist in content under a proletarian dictatorship in one country, *with the object* of their fusion into a single, common socialist (both in form and content) culture, with a single, common language, when the proletariat is victorious throughout the world and socialism becomes an everyday matter—such is the dialectical nature of the Leninist presentation of the question of national culture."

Under conditions of democracy the national communities which inhabit South Africa will flower into nations, and it is through this brotherhood of equal South African nations, united in a single state, that a South African nation will one day come into being.