

# 'Jo the Cow' comes home



EARLY in April, it was reported that Jordan Ngubane, ex ANC and Liberal Party member, had returned to South Africa from exile and joined Inkatha as editor of its newspaper, The Nation. His return to South Africa was apparently negotiated by Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, who told the press that it had taken almost 3 years to persuade Ngubane to return home, where he had previously been declared a prohibited immigrant.

"He is going to be very valuable in the days ahead now that we are beginning to see the beginning of real talks in this country" said Buthelezi.

"It is wonderful to have him back. He will be a concrete demonstration of a link between the founding fathers of the African Liberation movements and our own efforts in Inkatha."

The return to South Africa of Ngubane is indeed an event of some interest, and

needs to be contextualised in terms of his history of involvement in South African political movements.

Born in 1917, he initially established his reputation as a journalist on Ilanga lase Natal, often writing under the pseudonym 'Jo the Cow', and subsequently working on the Bantu World and Inkundla ya Bantu.

Influential in the founding of the ANC Youth League together with Anton Lembede and AP Mda, he co-authored the Congress Youth League Manifesto of 1944.

Fiercely anti-communist, Ngubane strongly resisted what he saw as a communist influence on the ANC, and Luthuli's willingness to accommodate the left wing of the ANC led to a bitter conflict between the two men.

Increasingly Ngubane moved away from the ANC, and in the mid 1950s joined the Liberal Party, eventually being elected national vice chairman. In April 1959 he attended the inaugural convention of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and thereafter was believed to be a supporter of the PAC, rather than the ANC.

Arrested in 1961, he was charged under the Unlawful Organisations Act, but acquitted. During 1963, Ngubane fled to Swaziland, moving to the United States in 1969.

Ngubane's career is an interesting one, spanning the formation of the ANC Youth League, the Africanist conflict in the ANC over the role of whites and communists in the liberation struggle, the formation of the Liberal Party and the PAC, exile, and now his return to South

Africa, and involvement in Inkatha activity.

Generally perceived as an Africanist, and fiercely anti-communist, Ngubane's membership and active involvement in the Liberal Party is interesting. There are, of course, certain similarities between the Africanist position, and that of liberalism - especially the tendency to ignore or dismiss the question of class divisions in capitalist society, coupled with a thorough-going anti-communism. It is perhaps these factors which led Ngubane to seek a home in the Liberal Party, and subsequently associate himself with PAC, rather than ANC policies.

Ngubane's latest book, "Conflict of Minds" bears certain similarities to one tendency in the black consciousness position: he perceives conflict in South Africa as between the Afrikaner 'collective mind' and the African collectivity, with he sees as uniform, cohesive and part of a collective consciousness. It is these elements of black consciousness ideology which Ngubane embraces which make his association with Inkatha so interesting, given the conflict between Inkatha and the organised elements of the black consciousness position.

No doubt, Inkatha supporters will argue that Ngubane's membership of Inkatha shows that black consciousness as an ideology is compatible with Inkatha. That may or may not be the case. It can however not be claimed, as the Star newspaper of April 7th does, that Ngubane is a "Senior ANC Man", nor has he been so for several decades.