



African Communist

3rd and 4th Quarter 2020

Issue Number 203

**PUT
PEOPLE
BEFORE
PROFITS**



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EDITORIAL NOTES

People before profits! This is the key message of the general secretary's political report to the final Central Committee meeting of 2020. As we look forward to 2021, the centenary year of the SACP, we need to remember that people before profits has been a guiding theme of Party activism across one hundred years. It has a burning relevance now more than ever.

As the political report notes, the world and our country are living through a perilous period characterised by a fourfold crisis – first, the Covid-19 crisis, the worst global pandemic since the so-called Spanish Flu of 1918; second, the gravest global economic depression since the Great Depression of the 1930s; third, the crisis of social reproduction which, in our country, is manifested in diverse social pathologies like extraordinary levels of interpersonal violence, especially gender-based violence; and fourth, above all, a looming ecological collapse which threatens to make human civilisation unsustainable on this singular blue planet we share.

None of these inter-locking crises is external to capitalism with its voracious, runaway profit accumulation that swallows all before it, regardless of human needs, regardless of natural

limits. At the very beginning of modern capitalism, in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, Marx and Engels brilliantly noted: “bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.”

The Covid-19 pandemic is not an external shock, not a “black swan” event outside of rabid capitalist accumulation. It is a pandemic that was predictable and predicted by scientists, warning of the ceaseless, profit-driven clearing out of untouched natural environment, releasing hitherto unknown pathogens into human society for which we have no natural immunity. But if the causes of the pandemic can be traced to this ceaseless and reckless destruction of our natural environment, then the rapid spread and the huge unevenness in our response also tell us much about the destructive nature of capitalism.

Accelerated globalisation since the 1980s, as capitalism has pursued low-wage markets in the East and South, has created complex “value chains” through which vast quantities of surplus is vacuumed up by the imperialist metropolises. But these so-called value chains, have also forged global vectors up and down which the pandemic

has spread rapidly. Brutal structural adjustment programmes, desertification, land and water expropriation by multinationals, regional wars in the global South have also contributed to unprecedented waves of migrancy, more than a million people on the move, desperate economic refugees creating other clusters and vectors of extreme vulnerability.

But if the causes and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic can be directly linked to the global profit accumulation agenda of capitalism, the wide unevenness of different national and local responses to the pandemic is equally instructive. The United States, the richest capitalist economy on earth, but with a negligible public healthcare system has, to date, had by far the highest number of Covid-19 related deaths and positive cases. Market-based, for-profit health-care systems have proved to be totally inadequate to the challenge. The contrast between the US performance and the incredible achievements of the left-governed Kerala state in India, for instance, with its emphasis on local based, primary health-care and popular mobilisation, is dramatically illustrative. But even in capitalist states, like South Korea where there is at least a strong culture of disciplining capital in the national interest, important containment of the pandemic has been achieved. The worst example, however, of

for-profit undermining of desperate social need is likely to be in the area of vaccine development and roll-out. Major battles lie ahead to ensure access to and affordability of vaccines for all the world's peoples.

Here in South Africa, the deeply embarrassing corruption surrounding personal protection equipment (PPE) procurement is another side of the story. It demonstrates just how corrosive a capitalist culture of putting profits before people can be, of promoting rugged individualistic "entrepreneurship" over solidarity. It is not just the fact that hundreds of these fraudulent procurements appear to have occurred in a matter of weeks, but equally scandalous is the seeming indifference, the self-evident sense of entitlement with which the perpetrator-beneficiaries appear to have jumped on the band-wagon. Rightfully, popular outrage at this behaviour in the midst of a deadly pandemic quickly exposed and (hopefully) brought an end to it. (By the way, lest we think that this was just a South African or BEE phenomenon, PPE scandals have also erupted in the UK.)

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly deepened the South African and global capitalist economic crisis. But it is important to remember that before the pandemic struck, South Africa and several other economies were already

in recession. The major capitalist economies were experiencing feeble growth of one-percent and less. In fact, the global capitalist economy had never effectively recovered from the Great Recession of 2008. As with all capitalist economic crises, the brunt of suffering is borne by the working class and middle strata, with mass lay-offs, home repossessions, further casualisation of work and much more.

Yet in the midst of deepening economic hardships for the majority, the mega-rich have become wealthier. In the imperial metropolises, quantitative easing by central banks has pumped easy money into the economy, but this has not been invested in much needed infrastructure or in job-creating productive and service sectors. Instead, there have been huge waves of share buy-backs as individual corporations seek to artificially inflate their share values. Floated aloft on a speculative bubble disconnected from the productive economy, a minority of oligopolists have now amassed even greater virtual fortunes. Major stock exchanges are breaking records as money pours into the casino economy. How long this gravity-defying bubble will last is uncertain. All the indicators are that this runaway financialisation is now at more excessive levels than in 2017 on the eve of the financial collapse of the Great Recession.

Interacting with and compounded by

the health and economic crises is the deepening crisis of social reproduction under capitalism. Here in South Africa, as elsewhere, hard lockdowns dramatically exposed the often-hidden dependence of the whole system on marginalised, un- and under-paid, under-resourced work, often performed by women, especially women from oppressed communities. In South Africa's level five hard lockdown certain categories of work were, correctly, designated as essential like policing and health-care. But essential to this essential work, for nurses to be able to go to work, for police-women to report for duty, were others categories of forgotten work – domestic workers, the work of carers in thousands of now closed informal township creches.

A key-site of social reproduction in capitalist society has, theoretically, been the household with a single male wage-earner supposedly supporting a nuclear family. In South Africa, a century and more of enforced male migrancy from rural labour reserves and later from peri-urban dormitory townships has long shattered much of the viability of the household. Absentee fathers, female-headed (and at times child-headed) households and massive unemployment, including male unemployment, on top of huge housing shortages have compounded the multi-layered crisis of social reproduction and toxic masculinities. And yet, the

household is especially critical where public service resources are limited or privatised and available only to the better off.

Over a quarter of century into post-apartheid schooling, there is a widening gap between private and fee-based public schools on the one hand, and no-fee township and rural schools on the other. This gap has been deepened during Covid-19 lockdowns where fee-based schools have the resources and a student body generally with home facilities to pursue distance learning while the majority of schools and their students fall ever further back. In the course of 2020, the Department of Basic Education has reported that some 15 percent of pupils, presumably from the poorest areas, have simply dropped out of the system. This is yet another dimension of our deepening social reproduction crisis.

On top of all of this, and most serious of all, is the looming environmental collapse of the earth's natural systems upon which human life is dependent – ocean acidification, global warming, rising sea-levels, de-forestation and desertification, extinction of species critical to the natural reproduction of our eco-systems and our food resources, increasing occurrence of extreme weather events and raging wild-fires. In much of the scientific literature our era is designated as the “Anthropocene” –

the geological age during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. But as increasing numbers of scientists, researchers and eco-socialists insist, the term Anthropocene (Anthropos = humanity) mistakenly implies that human beings collectively, not a particular social system, not capitalism, are responsible for the ecological crisis. Capitalism uniquely as a mode of production is premised on ever expanding accumulation, it recognises no boundaries – but our planet is finite. That is why it is more appropriate to designate our era as Capitalocene and that is why the definitive battle of our times is to replace growth-dependent capitalism with a socially sustainable socialist system.

The call to put people before profits is not a mere slogan. Across so many dimensions it is the critical imperative of our times. But how, practically, do we put people first? As the political report insists, this can only be done with the people, by the people, through the mobilisation of popular agency in trade unions, in local organisations, in cooperatives and street committees.

The challenge going into 2021 is to unite the thousands of acts of solidarity and struggle we have witnessed daily in the midst of the crises – of communities organising food gardens and soup kitchens; of local organisations fighting

against the poisoning of their water-sources by mining houses, and the pollution of the air they breathe by chemical plants; of health-care workers day in and day out selflessly working in the front-lines under extremely difficult conditions; of shack-dwellers resisting evictions in the midst of lock-downs; of trade unionists, fighting back against retrenchments; of public sector workers, the teachers and nurses we so desperately need, having to struggle against a mindless austerity imposed by Treasury that envisages the gutting of public sector work; of media workers and researchers continuing to expose corruption among both politicians and corporations.

All of these working class and popular energies are a huge asset. The task of progressive formations is to help forge unity in struggle, unity between the work-place and the community; unity between the employed and the unemployed; the formal and the informal; between manual and

intellectual workers. In all of this, the critical questions that the Political Report poses are: How do we ensure that our Alliance, our Party, the progressive trade union movement, are up to these challenges? The reconfiguration of the Alliance should not be a narrow struggle over who has greater influence, still less simply over who controls deployments. Reconfiguration must be centrally about the ability to provide effective and unified organisation, mobilisation and leadership in the multiple struggles against the capitalist crises. And how do we transform the state so that it resources and supports, rather than too often suppressing and harassing, these numerous struggles?

In the early 20th century, Rosa Luxemburg taught us that it is either socialism or barbarism. That is more true than ever before. ■

SACP December 2020 Central Committee Political Report

PUT PEOPLE BEFORE PROFITS – MAKE 2021 A YEAR OF MASS ACTIVISM

INTRODUCTION

The SACP has for many decades set itself the task of being a socialist vanguard - not by mere declaration, and not through entryism that leaves the slog work of organisation to others, but by being both an independent organisation and an active force within a broader national liberation movement.

The Party's contribution to struggle has been at its most effective when a relatively mobilised, organised and campaigning national-popular movement is present and the organisational, ideological, and resource capacities of the Party are attuned to this reality.

Are these factors present in today's reality? Indeed, at the same time going forward, the SACP is increasingly going to be faced with new realities and challenges that we have not encountered before. Already there are vastly different challenges facing us post 1994 that we have had to take into account in building a SACP rooted in current realities,

primarily guided by our programmatic slogan, "Socialism is the Future, Build it Now!"

The current domestic and global situation is characterised by a fourfold crisis of capitalism – a pandemic health crisis, economic crisis, social reproduction crisis and climate change crisis. The second surge of covid19 is upon us. The economic recovery remains contested and inadequate to the size of the economic challenges and inequality.

The NDR is immediately threatened from two fronts – the neo-liberal austerity agenda and primitive accumulation through looting and state capture networks, and the motive forces are not hegemonic, organisationally or ideologically strong. The current state of the motive forces of our revolution raises questions as to our ability to re-assert the strategy of the NDR as a hegemonic programme. And this is where the SACP is currently required to play its vanguard role

We need to be asking ourselves:

When is our watershed moment? What will the convergence of subjective weaknesses in the movement and the objective conditions of the economic crisis over the next 18 months bring? What are likely results? How do we influence this?

As we reflect in this Political Report on these issues, we will conclude that we need to revive our slogan “Put people before Profits” as we embark on joint mass activism with Cosatu and the trade union movement. The huge need and urgency for SACP/Cosatu led mass mobilisation in the movement and beyond must reconfigure the Alliance through shifting the balance of forces in the liberation movement and also lay a firm basis for a left progressive front! There is an important space opening up for decisive left mass intervention and leadership on issues affecting workers and poor of our country. The urgency, nature and shape of this mass campaigning, or reclaiming the activism of the NDR, must occupy centre stage in this Central Committee meeting!

In fact, our 2021 programme of action, our centenary programme, must focus on this - build on the pillars of the Red October campaign, and the struggle to place People before Profits!! This will talk to a number of immediate challenges we face, whether it's the attack by the Labour Appeal Court on collective bargaining, the

second surge of covid19, the path to economic reconstruction and recovery, the hunger and poverty of the working class, the Engen Refinery explosion and pollution in Wentworth and elsewhere, the acquisition and roll out of a Covid19 vaccine, and many other challenges facing the workers and poor! This is an important anti-capitalist slogan that can anchor a lot of our work.

We have and continue to argue that the NDR requires a progressive national movement/organisation to lead it. It is clear that we are facing either a possible massive reconfiguration of our movement or a further descent into fragmentation. Our strategic and tactical approach must ensure that it is the massive reconfiguration that prevails, and we are clear that this can only be done through mass activism and, where possible, under covid19 mass action. As the SACP we cannot have our cake and eat it, we have to be deliberately active in ANC structures in our own right as members, and guided by the Party's perspectives, if we are to attain reconfiguration of our Alliance!

The combined negative impact of the more than 25 years of neoliberalism, Aids Denialism and state capture/corruption in our post 1994 era, has in many respects dampened the faith and hope of our people in the path of the NDR! This sits on top of the relative demobilisation of the people through

the disbanding of the mass democratic movement, which has reduced the people's sense of agency. Therefore, one of the immediate tasks of the revolution is to reignite the hope and faith of our people in the correctness of the NDR. This can only be done through the masses' own actions and activism, by beginning to feel that they are the masters of their own destiny. It is incumbent on this Central Committee to be innovative and shape our concept and practice of mass activism under the conditions of 2020 and 2021. This is not a time in which marches of 20 000 women can or should be organised. It is perhaps a time in which action need to be locally based, and well covered in social media agit-prop. Cde Mzala taught us that revolution is achieved through the agency of the people of the working class and its allies themselves, not by those fighting on behalf of the people. This is so applicable now! Let's make 2021 the year of mass activism by the workers and the poor, leading to a broader front of left/progressive forces.

Fourfold Crisis of Capitalism

Covid19 Pandemic

The Party has welcomed the newly announced tightening of restrictions and it is imperative that Party Provinces, Districts and Branches contribute to the adherence to these restrictions, particularly in the four provinces that

are leading the second wave, the Eastern Cape, Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Inter-provincial travel that is part of our festive season practice may result in this pattern changing drastically in January of next year.

For the first time in this pandemic, most of the new infections are among young people particularly those in the age group of 15 to 19 years and the YCLSA and the PYA should lead in the attitudinal step change necessary to protect the lives of young people, and through them of all of us.

As of 14 December 2020, the covid19 trend shifted from 31 new cases on 18 March, to a peak of 13 104 new cases on 23 July, dropping to 722 on 15 September, and increasing to 5163 new cases on 14 December 2020. It is predicted that within weeks we will be back at the July peak. In fact on 16 December the infection rate more than doubled and increased by a whopping 8000 cases. The total number of cases is now more than 900 000, with total deaths of 23,451 people and 763,000 have recovered. Our recovery rate is nearly two and a half times better than the global recovery when calculated per million people, reflecting the sustained good management of the health care of those who are infected. But our deaths are double the global figure per 1 million, reflecting the extent of co-morbidities and the low level of our people's immune systems.

The impact of contagious disease pandemic such as covid19 falls disproportionately on the working class and poor, on those who suffer the burden of the gross inequality. Even the impact of restrictions has a different impact on the working class. A family of ten in a 3 roomed RDP house invites some friends and they socialise where? – normally in the public park or the beach – not anymore. The bourgeoisie sets up their party right on the rolling lawns of their mansions, contains the number to the 250 for outside gatherings and the party happens! The working class uses public transport, the bourgeoisie drives their cars – compounded by distance travelled given the class and racial spatial design of our cities and towns! We must, as we engage with restrictions, consider carefully how they can be complied with by the working class.

It is clear from recent unscientific statements by the Chief Justice that a major public education campaign, starting immediately, to explain the vaccine and to encourage vaccination will be critical. The readiness of South Africans to hold onto unscientific, idealist, and backward explanations is a threat not just to the management of the covid19 pandemic. It is a threat to our ability to cohere the people of this country around a materialist analysis and a science-based future.

There are four dimensions that the Party must focus on – firstly, we must

contribute to the public education campaign about the nature of the virus, the importance of washing hands, wearing masks and keep social distance; secondly, our analysis must focus on the impact of the management of this pandemic on the working class and rural poor and ensure that this impact is mitigated; thirdly, we must continue to articulate the importance of prioritising lives of people over the creation of wealth, without obviously being reckless with our county's economic future; and fourthly, we must engage on the procurement of the vaccine and the plan for the immunisation to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected, including frontline health workers, those with comorbidities, and that the working class is not marginalised by the wealthy in the access to the vaccine. Already research shows that the US dollar billionaires have increased their profits by One trillion dollars! The big digital companies have also amassed billions of dollars in profits just this year alone.

Economic Crisis and Recovery

Economic recovery and economic growth and development are bedevilled by the twin enemies of the austerity/neoliberal agenda and sustained primitive accumulation through looting. The SACP posture is that our fight has to be on both of these two fronts. This posture that we are both against

austerity/neo-liberalism and corruption/parasitic networks is resonating well with a range of left forces that we are engaging with, and we have resolved to put more emphasis on the alternative to these two trajectories as articulated in our document, “Going to the Roots” and in our Bua Komanisi 13(1) and 13(2).

Austerity based economic policy, the neo-liberal offensive, is going full steam ahead. The budget cuts in the social services sector to fund SAA is designed to provoke outrage that spurs on the privatisation agenda as the alternative to fiscal funding of SOEs. The agenda is: Support neoliberal policy or we cut social services. The Alliance never said find the money from SAA in other government departments. It is not true that Ministers agreed on the cuts in their budgets. The budgeting process is not a negotiated process, it is a Treasury imposed process. Unless there is action, the neo-liberal posture of the national treasury will take us into deep crisis. While we must demand action against the Minister of Finance for the manner in which the election manifesto is undermined, we need to recognise that the institution of National Treasury has been built over the years by the IMF and World Bank. It may be a tactical discussion that is required about how we deal with this, but we cannot allow the Minister of Finance to continue like this and not be reigned in.

The recent and current developments

at the SABC over the past month are a reflection of this neo-liberal agenda. The Chair of Board has been part of the state capture networks, but at the same time is very keen to retrench, and what is emerging is a strange opportunist linkage between the neoliberal posture and the fight back campaign.

The Minister of Finance continues to say, with no foundation, that the public service wage bill is the biggest single enemy. The Party will not be silent on this. We recognise that this is going to lead to huge conflict inside the Movement as factions position themselves on this matter in their own opportunistic interests. The Party posture has been that government cannot renege on an agreement, and that this year’s increase must be paid. The Labour Appeal Court has this week dealt a decisive blow to the bargaining council. The trade union movement, fully supported by the Party, has a major task ahead to cohere and defend the entire collective bargaining system, not just in the public sector, but across the entire economy. The challenge of negotiations, in both the public and the private sectors, in a period of economic hardship is now compounded by the very institution of collective bargaining being undermined. Negotiations going forward have to engage the hard question of how to sustain the current level of employment in the current economic and financial situation, given the massive

unemployment that forces such hardship on the working class and the lower middle strata. How do we maintain current employment while also reducing unemployment? The solidarity compact that South Africa needs is going to be very hard to craft and Cosatu has a critical role to play in providing leadership in this. Capital is taking advantage of the current government posture to hit hard on the workers. The government posture that compromise is needed to save the economy is not getting support from capital. The programme to create jobs needs to be driven by government and the non-funding or under-funding of the Presidential Employment Stimulus is of particular concern.

The destruction caused by state capture goes far beyond what we fully realise. The damage to the institutions of the public sector is profound. The loss of capacity from the state over the years is significant. There has been enormous destruction of black professional and managerial talent, either through active participation in corruption or through victimisation by those opposed to, to trying to fight, corruption. The current exposure of what has been taking place is impacting on the ability to recruit and retain capable and ethical skills in the public sector. As an example, in the process of trying to finalise the NSFAS Board, which we determined must have an actuary on it, three actuaries refused

to serve on any SOE Board. Progressive professionals, with the technical skills we so need, are running away from serving in the state.

The digital industrial revolution, compounded by covid19, and the new forms of accumulation are changing the future of work, the nature of the workplace, and we are seeing a growing informal economy. The working class in the formal workplace is shrinking and the informal economy is growing. The significance of mobilising and organising in the informal economy in the covid19 recovery period cannot be over emphasised. The developments in relation to policy on social and solidarity economy and public employment programmes must be championed as building blocks of a non-capitalist option. The Presidential Employment Stimulus programme can lay a firm basis if approached from a developmental and bottom-up perspective.

Social reproduction crisis

The pandemic has shone an intense spotlight on the social impact of inequality and capitalist exploitation on the lives of the working class and rural poor. Frederick Engels, born 250 years ago on 27 November 1770, analysed the conditions of the English working class – not too different in many respects from today’s South African working-class conditions. The lives of working-

class families and communities in South Africa today reflect the impact of 30 years of neo-liberal undermining of the NDR, manifest in hunger, disease, violence and GBV, inadequate accommodation, unclean and unhygienic environments, and lack of access to safe and affordable water and power. Our Red October Campaign is focusing on the manifestations of this crisis of social reproduction and we are deepening our analysis and developing our policy position on these issues in a forthcoming *Bua Komanisi* 13(3) on social reproduction.

The alienation of the working class from the means of production results in little capacity for self-reliance, in families being dependent on wages for social reproduction, for being able to feed, clothe, care for and accommodate the family. It is this alienation that our approach to the social reproduction crisis must break, and in that we lay the foundations of socialism. While we campaign and organise for access to land, whether backyard or small plots or full-size farms, and the growing of food, we must also campaign for the sustaining of the Special Disaster Relief Grant until the Universal Basic Income Grant (UBIG) is funded and implemented. The ideological and financial battles about UBIG will be intense – on the one hand the neoliberal agenda will argue there is no money for it, on the

other hand the fight-back campaign will opportunistically argue that it must be implemented. The UBIG struggle will not be one on the ideological or fiscal terrain – it will see the light of day when mass activism on a clear set of demands for the extension of the SDRG and the implementation of the UBIG is felt in the halls of Government, in the corridors of Parliament, in the seats of power. This is a fundamental element of our Red October Campaign against hunger and for health.

Environmental and Climate Change crisis

The impact of global warming caused largely by Green House Gases, the worst being CO₂ emissions, is visible in South African extreme weather patterns over the past 5 years. Way before covid19, there was a deep crisis in South Africa's rural areas caused by the extreme weather events. The drought in the Free State, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape and even parts of KZN, as we also see in countries in the west of Southern African, has been more intense than previously, negatively impacting on food production, on job losses, on the economies of rural towns. In the eastern part of the country the impact has seen way more intense floods than in the past, which have destroyed houses, washed away and killed people, destroyed food production. If we move a little north

in the east of the Southern African region, we find in 2019 a frequency and intensity of cyclones that put previous winds and storms in the shade. The Inter-governmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has identified 5 key drivers of the change in nature: the conversion of ever more land with forests, wetlands, and grasslands into agriculture, mining, infrastructure and urban expansion; the over exploitation of animals and plants – notable the over-fishing of the sea and the logging of forests; climate change with the impacts on all other ecosystems growing every more significant; the pollution of air, water and soil by industry, mining, industrial agriculture, sewage, plastic and consumer wastes; and the mass transport of invasive species of plants and animals into local habitats. It is therefore around these drivers that we should be focusing our attention.

The issues of sustainable energy security, of the green economy and a just transition from fossil fuel-based economy must be embedded in our economy recovery programme. The readiness for management of natural disasters moving out of a period of ongoing drought to one with the potential for floods, and waterborne disease, becomes an important objective. The positive impact of the economic closure during covid19 lockdowns on the health

of the environment and of wildlife must be a wakeup call to us all.

The explosion at the Engen Refinery in Wentworth, the Transnet crude oil spill into the Umbilo River, and the fuel tanker accident that claimed 12 lives, all taking place in KZN in the past 3 months, have brought to the fore the impact of the fuel industry on air pollution, environmental damage, and the impact on people and animals. The Wentworth community daily endures foul-smelling air, is regularly exposed to toxic gases, causing asthma, coughing, chest pain, choking, bronchitis, symptoms such as skin irritations, nausea and headaches. It appears that cancer, congenital disabilities and neurological damage are possible long-term impacts of this pollution. The Medical Research Council has pointed out that the area has the highest concentration of leukemia and asthma, and there are other scientific reports on pollution about that area.

South Africa has 5 large oil refineries, which convert crude oil, coal, or natural gases into fuel (including petrol, diesel, paraffin, kerosene). There is Caltex in Tableview, Cape Town; Engen in Wentworth, Durban; NATREF in Sasolburg; and the Shell and BP SAPREF refineries in Prospecton, Durban. It is not the bourgeoisie that surrounds these refineries and is put at risk by their location let alone by the lack of emission control. Groundwork,

an NGO based in Pietermaritzburg, has been working with the “refinery communities” (the South Durban community, Tableview community, and the Sasolburg community) over an extended period of time. It is high time the SACP takes up the issue of air quality and pollution related illness in earnest. Enough is enough on this matter, and we must draw a red line. This must be our launch campaign to tackle environmental issues head on as is required of us by the South African Road to Socialism. Let this be initiated by Moses Mabhida Province but this must be a national campaign.

The pollution of these refineries is but one aspect of the Co2 and greenhouse gas emissions problem caused by dependence on the fossil fuel industry and the lack of implementation of a just transition strategy. The Just Transition to clean energy and the immediate reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the reduction of global warming and the control of climate change links very directly to our Red October campaign. The Just Transition must be of concern to the Party. Climate change and environmental degradation is an area of work that the Alliance has not paid sufficient attention to, and which globally is a critical left platform. The Party must consider how we join forces with organisations already well established in the environmental justice

terrain of struggle in order to strengthen the protection of working-class communities, to strive for a cleaner environment and greener economy in South Africa and hence to secure a sustainable future.

International Balance of Forces

Overview

In reflecting on the contemporary world and the world correlation of class forces, SACP assessments in the recent past have remained correct. Our political program, the South African Road to Socialism (SARS), said “global capitalism is beginning to approach absolute limits that are physical, biological, human and economic”. The global capitalist crisis that started in 2007 remains part of our objective reality, now exacerbated by the global covid19 pandemic.

The covid19 pandemic only exposed further the inadequacy of bourgeois ruling class strategies and that our mainly profit driven healthcare systems in countries are woefully lacking in social containment of runaway pandemics.

We have correctly asserted that this devastating structural downturn has to be tackled from its root cause. Marx and Engels underlined that, unless we locate the resolution of the current crisis in production and its reproduction, it is not possible to overcome the

inherent contradictions of the capitalist system between the social character of production and the private nature of appropriation of its products.

Key features of the world situation today

The IMF in its June Global Economic Outlook projects a negative 4.9% growth in 2020, meaning world economies will contract. Growth has been revised by 2% points downwards from the April 2020 figures. The South African economy would have contracted by a whopping 8% this year. Although in 2021 a 5% overall growth is projected, we must be aware that this 5% does not even get us back to the level at the beginning of 2020. Even if we achieve this rate, our country will fall far short of overcoming pre-Covid crisis growth levels and overcome the recession. The US economy contracted 8% this year and will grow moderately at 4.5% in 2021. This is in the light of its 3 trillion dollar deficit and a weak industrial output. Income inequality will rise, further slowing demand and will likely worsen unemployment. Weak demand will plummet Global trade by 11.9% this year.

Clearly it is the richest billionaires of the world who have profited handsomely during covid19. American billionaires have increased their wealth a whopping one fifth or \$1 trillion, whilst millions of people across the world have had to

shoulder the burden of job losses and poverty with many foreclosures likely to deepen their misery.

The Economist estimates there are around 350,000 to 1.3 million viruses carried by birds and animals with potential human transmission due to ecological destruction of their habitats by oil and energy multinationals.

As we marked the 75th anniversary of the victory of the Patriotic war against Nazi-fascism, we are also concerned about the false anti-communist historical narrative which equates communism to fascism, which although emanating predominantly in western European countries, remain v deeply rooted amongst major sections of right-wing forces in South Africa. This narrative is bandied about by certain intellectual forces who vulgarise Marxism with the aim to negate it, including the reactionary right-wing forces that physically ensure the destruction of symbols of communist achievements, notably the vandalised Marx Memorial statue in the Highgate cemetery and pulling down Lenin statues in countries like Ukraine, Poland and others.

Let's not forget that in Poland, Janus Walus is revered for his role in assassinating the SACP's late General Secretary Comrade Chris Hani by the Polish right-wing.

There are several notable developments in various regions in the world which

calls for serious ongoing analysis.

A closer look on the role of the US in the World

Although with varying influence, the current US attitudes towards Russia and China do not point to any significant change in American foreign policy towards the two countries. The persisting NATO encirclement of Russian territory is developing into a new cold war. It is the same with China against which the American administration has instituted a range of hostile trade measures. It is evident that to counter its hegemonic decline, the United States is likely to use its political and military force to defend its economic interests.

The border disputes between China and India along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), have been watered down by diplomatic initiatives. A full escalation is unlikely if these are maintained. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) described the situation in June as “serious”, after the death of many soldiers, and has encouraged a peaceful resolution of the conflict. There is a merit for strengthening relations with Indian communist parties.

The potential US targeting of 80 Iraqi sites from a list drawn by the US which it links to Iran-backed forces will simply deepen already existing sectarian tensions in the Middle East. Whether it carries out these plans remains to be

seen. On the other hand, the resignation of Palestine from the Arab League following the bloc’s failure to condemn the UAE and Bahrain agreements to normalise relations with Israel has deepened the contradictions in the region. Palestine correctly considers this a betrayal which will strengthen the occupation. The deals were condemned by Libya, Iran, and Turkey amongst others with the backing of many Western European regimes and those in the region such as Oman.

Overall American attitudes towards Latin American countries remains vividly aggressive in pursuance of the obsolete Monroe Doctrine that Latin America is its backyard. It retains its policy of illegal sanctions, blockades and regime change.

The US has stepped up its interventions in the region, with emboldened actions in Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Venezuela but is also facing a fierce challenge with a resulting diminution of its power in this region to control these countries and clearly a sign of its declining power overall.

Latin America

Developments in this region need to be carefully studied, with increasingly complex developments taking place.

The Venezuelan December 6 parliamentary elections were touted as very important by various class

and political forces, especially for the Bolivarian project.

Though parts of the violent right-wing opposition of United States (US) that installed 'president' Juan Guaido boycotted the elections at the instruction of the State Department, some took part and won a few seats in the new parliament. The US, the European Union (EU) and the Lima Group had already declared the elections as fraudulent and didn't send observers, or any form of monitoring to Venezuela, though broad section of groups and parliamentarians and others went to Venezuela. The ANC and the SACP were part of a sizeable African delegation invited by the elections commission, the CNE (National Electoral Council).

The PSUV (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) alliance that included a range of left-wing forces retook control of the national assembly winning 189 of the 277-seat assembly after garnering 68% of the vote. The right-wing which had controlled the assembly for the last 5 years, won only 28% of the vote losing control of the legislative body. The newly founded Popular Revolutionary Alternative which was headed by the Communist Party of Venezuela won around 3% and returned 1 deputy.

The elections were however also marked by a high abstention rate. With Hugo Chavez winning the presidency back in 1989, Venezuelans have placed

a high premium on presidential elections - which are highly contested with high voter turnout.

These elections were key for a number of reasons. Since 2015, when the opposition gained control of the national assembly, there has been a stand-off between the Venezuelan state and the national assembly over a number of issues. Ever since Hugo Chavez's victory in 1998 presidential elections, electoral contests in Venezuela have been highly polarised between pro-Chavez (Chavistas) - the pro-poor Bolivarian Revolution and the traditional right-wing pro-imperialists parties on the other hand. The pro-imperialist forces have in the recent period fractured on the issue of the illegal and unilateral US sanctions against Venezuela, which has wreaked havoc on the overall conditions of the general population.

The Communist Party of Venezuela and other smaller parties which have supported Chavismo, broke ranks and contested separately from the PSUV coalition on the grounds that PSUV has moved away from the Chavez's Bolivarian Project and is dabbling with neoliberalism. As a direct result of the sanctions, the conditions of the majority of the poor have declined, with the economy contracting considerably and unable to meet the needs of the majority. Most Venezuelans though look favourably towards Chavez and his

program of rapid poverty reduction and expansion of grassroots democracy.

These splits according to those who have paid close attention to the developments in Latin America and Venezuela in particular, suggest this is a reconfiguration of the Venezuelan political landscape against the backdrop of the deep sanctions-induced economic crisis. They also point to lack of a defined, consolidated and active majority around a viable path out of the country's crisis. The single-commodity economy of Venezuela has suffered considerably with the drop in oil prices and the illegal unilateral sanctions supported by both the US and the EU biting deep and creating the brutal conditions affecting the entire population.

These elections must be seen and understood in the context of regaining of ground of the 'pink tide' which has seen Bolivia's MAS regain power after the US-supported right-wing parliamentary coup that ousted Evo Morales and the Chilean population voting in their majority to rewrite the constitution which was enacted by the Pinochet dictatorship and was still in force.

All of this also takes place in the context of very serious subjective weaknesses in many progressive ruling parties as they seek to tackle widespread allegations of widespread corruption and maladministration.

Since taking control of the national

assembly the right-wing opposition in Venezuela also felt they were close to toppling the government. Their combined violent protests, economic warfare, attempted assassinations, calls for a military coup, paramilitary incursions and support for economic sanctions and foreign intervention proved futile.

The right wing further sought international support and was successful to the extent that the US, Australia, the EU and some countries in the region refused to recognise the presidential elections which had elected Maduro. Some moderate forces in the opposition have been in dialogue with the Maduro government and opted to work within the system and formed the core of those who participated in the December 6 parliamentary elections.

Venezuela is hoping for a reassessed relationship with the new Biden administration but is well aware that even when Obama was having a rapprochement with Cuba, he at the same time signed the executive order declaring Venezuela to be a 'threat to US interests' thus paving the way for the illegal unilateral sanctions.

The Bolivian election which put the MAS back in power, albeit without Morales at its head, require the Party to pay closer attention to the developments in Bolivia, and in particular to study how the progressive movement is mobilising

the native community on a progressive and not narrow tribal basis.

The Party has expressed our strong support of the nomination for the Nobel peace prize of the Cuban Henry Reeve medical brigade for its unparalleled internationalism. “Doctors, not bombs” is a fitting tribute of socialist inspired values espoused by Cuba, in stark contradiction with the US imperialist aggressors. We have equally taken a strong stand on the use by SANDF of interferon to protect the lives of soldiers deployed in the covid19 pandemic.

The African Continent - Defying the Silencing of the Guns

What is most evident in regional politics today is the necessity for sufficient attention to conflicts in Southern Africa. These include stepping up our organisational work on Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, DRC, Cameroon, Sudan and others. We remain deeply worried about Mozambique, and the extent to which it is by and large private mercenary armies who are accorded a prominent role in the conflict, at the marginalisation of SADC and the AU or neighbouring South Africa. The crisis in Zimbabwe, a political, economic and social crisis, must remain of major concern to the SACP and the Alliance, and the rejection of the South African peace broker initiatives must be closely understood. The changed nature of ZANU-PF, the form of class formation and primitive accumulation

in Zimbabwe, have led to the abandoning of the political programme of the liberation movement. The SACP approach should base itself on solidarity with the Zimbabwean people.

In the final analysis, liberation movements have to consider the unintended consequence that years of corruption and marginalisation could have potentially created a wider social base for counterrevolution to recruit amongst the unemployed, uneducated masses of our youth in these countries, similar to ISIS religious fundamentalists in Syria and in Libya. The SACP convened ALNEF should continue with a consistent class analysis of Africa. The priority international task is for the alliance to jointly ensure a wider ideological debate relating to the bureaucratic decay of liberation movements in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and other countries as well as the fundamental task of revitalisation of the natural democratic revolution specifically and the African revolution in general.

The coup in Mali ought to receive some attention. The establishment of a transitional government is a positive sign for peace, but the underlying cause of instability is not inseparable from decades of imperialist underdevelopment, stoking of tensions and external interference.

The conflict between Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front has

serious security implications not only for Ethiopia but also for the stability in the Horn of Africa sub region. Historically the Tigray people had hegemony in the Ethiopian army and government, a strategic vantage point for amassing wealth, but the change in leadership with the current Prime Minister coming from the Oromo tribe has resulted in some of the previous access no longer benefitting the Tigrates. The conflict is now also leading to a humanitarian crisis in the northern region of Tigray. We note that President Ramaphosa has assigned three special envoys to help bring peace. The SACP must support efforts of peace building and efforts to deal with the tribal divide.

The renewed violent confrontation in Saharawi is a reflection of Morocco's provocation and arrogance after her readmission to the AU. The joint action by Nehawu and the Party on this matter must be sustained and our profile in the media on this question must be elevated.

The SACP has recently co-hosted a conference on the demand of Somaliland to be an independent state. This demand is rooted in their history under colonialism of being a state separate from Somalia. Somalia, a former Italian colony, is a failed state, while Somaliland's stability and economic growth has been maintained for more than two decades now. The people of Somaliland expressed their

desire in the 2001 referendum to revert to independent status, in line with the African Constitutive Act which speaks about colonial borders as the demarcation to be used for countries. The SACP must continue to support their call for separation and to encourage South Africans to help build and do business with the country.

Integrating Internationalism into Our Centenary Programme

Even though the Coronavirus does not discriminate, on the whole we can say that the globe-trotting elites were agents of its transmission and eventually the working class and rural poor bore the worst brunt of community infections across the world.

It will be important that going to the New Year, we improve our relations with progressive formations in the continent especially communist or socialist parties; former liberation movements, progressive trade unions and a series of existing organisations which may have some progressive (real or potential) role in their countries. It means that beyond the normal platforms such as ALNEF, International Communist and Workers Parties meetings, World Peace and many others, there must be a focus on bilateral relations through meetings and webinars taking advantage of the available virtual platforms.

The Centenary Programme must have

a dedicated stream of international work including to clearly assess the role of the Parties in other countries in the 100 years of existence, and to resuscitate joint work or co-operation between the SACP and other parties.

US Elections and Left Perspective on the Biden Administration

We note that the electoral defeat of Trump opens the door to a new period of struggle in the USA, and the left forces that have thrown their weight behind Biden to get Trump out, face complex and yet good opportunities. On the one hand, they have supported a Democrat whose reactionary posture on Israel is an example of his global imperialist posture. It is not yet clear what Biden's posture will be in relation to China, recognised recently as the biggest economy in the world. Trump, although beaten, got many votes and the Republicans may still have a hold on the Senate. In addition, he has over his term in office and in his election campaign, created legitimacy for white supremacy, for populist mobilising of people on the basis of racism, narrow nationalism, or xenophobia, for authoritarian security services action and posture. That genie is not so easy to put back in the bottle.

On the other hand, the condition of the American working class, and the mobilisation of the middle class through the election campaign, and in social

movements provides for opportunities. The CPUSA (Communist Party of the USA) has concluded "that an even stronger, more expansive and united mobilisation from the grassroots up must demand the new administration overturn the policies and respond to the social and economic needs that propelled millions of people to vote." This is possible given the alliances with "Black Lives Matter" and "The Poor People's Campaign", and the extent of mass mobilisation that has taken place against the Trump regime. The mobilisation of the black and Latino youth has been extensive.

The struggles of 2020 and the election campaign have resulted in an increase in people joining the Communist Party USA – in 2020 1,900 people joined online. The Party has placed their newspaper *The People's World* at the centre of their work, and its readership has exploded to 3 million. In addition, the YCL sprang to life in New York and other places.

The Rise of Populism and Fascism in SA and across the world

Populism and fascism are rising on the back of the stress caused by the fourfold crisis across the globe, and here at home. Reflecting on Julius Malema's Fuhrer-like behaviour in Senekal, we should note that if the ANC led alliance ends up looking like the Weimar Republic with a weak response to the deepening

crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality, in part through persuasion that the biggest challenge facing us is a debt and fiscal crisis, forces like the EFF will likely be a significant beneficiary, we could play directly into the rise of populism and fascism.

Let us remind ourselves that those that don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it - whether as tragedy or farce. After the Bundestag rejected fiscal consolidation, Chancellor Friedrich Bruining imposed by decree three bouts of fiscal consolidation. Unemployment jumped to almost 30%. Communists built support in reaction to the Bruining administration's austerity, but in the end big capital threw its weight behind the Nazis as a bulwark against Communists. So, promising a better life, Hitler swept to power immediately. He brought on board as governor of Reichsbank (German Reserve Bank), Dr Horace Hljammar Schacht. Immediately, the Auto Bahns and related public infrastructure were financed using their reserve bank. Germany changed from then on. Japan had to send its bright young men to understudy governor Schacht. Japan copied all the bank law of Germany. The miracle we saw in Japan, was, in fact, Hitler's economic scheme. All of East Asia used a similar German blueprint. Using both the reserve bank and public banks like the Sparkassen and Landesbanken, Germany has

never been matched. But the story is: Hitler came to power not because of the imposed reparations that caused the hyperinflation, which happened 10 years before. It was because of the three bouts of decreed fiscal consolidations that caused so much suffering among Germans. We may be facing the same soon.

With unmitigated pain and crisis facing not just working class families, but many of the middle strata as well, with austerity responses that will deepen and not relieve the pressure on the people, and with the looting of resources that should be used to change the quality of life of South Africans, we face the risk of angry, hopeless and desperate people who will respond to the seductive voices of populists and fascists.

The lessons of world history and the laws of science indicate that there can never be a vacuum and it is for us as the Communist Party, along with Cosatu and the left forces to be present in the struggles of working-class families and communities, to be at the factory, shop and workplaces of all workers to ensure that the political programme that the working class is mobilised to support is that of the NDR and building socialism, and not that of populism and fascism.

State of the Motive Forces of Our Revolution

Threats to the NDR – austerity and looting and organisational weakness

As indicated, our posture is that the NDR is under threat from within and from two directions – the parasitic networks and the austerity forces, and these are also impacting across Alliance organisations. But there are also organisational weakness that cannot be laid at the door of factions, or alien ideological platforms. It is imperative for the Alliance collectively and individually to analyse our state.

As we have indicated, we face either a massive reconfiguration of our movement or a further descent into fragmentation. We cannot allow this reconfiguration to occur on the terms of the RET forces, and must be able to clearly articulate a principled approach to reconfiguration of the Alliance as mapped out in late 2019.

The state of the ANC

The ANC is faced with a fallout from the recent activities of the Hawks, SIU and NPA that have been met by a strengthened fight-back campaign. The ANC vacillation about implementation of their own Conference Resolutions, namely that comrades who are charged with corruption or serious offences must step aside or be stepped aside, is a reflection of deep divisions. We must also be aware of the opportunist use by the Fight Back Campaign of anti-neoliberal rhetoric that aims to

undermine the President and the anti-corruption programme.

Preparations for the NGC must be taken seriously as this will be a critical platform for both the Fight Back Campaign and Neo-liberal Austerity Drive, and space must be created for the renewal of organisation, recommitment to NDR as we know and understand it, and to revolutionary morality. But policy and battle of ideas is not won in the boardroom or conference halls. In this context it is imperative for the Party and Cosatu, the left axis in the Alliance, to engage on both these political matters as well as on trade union issues. Our preparation for the NGC should help the ANC to assess implementation of its own resolutions, and those areas in which government and National Treasury undermine ANC policy. The working class role in relation to the ANC policy perspectives must be strongly asserted. We cannot allow the working class to ignore its role within the ANC.

Mass mobilisation to defend the working class and the NDR and active and concrete implementation of the Red October HH+W campaign is very important. How the left axis positions itself at this time is critical. The space of going to the ground cannot be left to the ‘RET’ fight-back forces. The neo-liberal agenda, supported and driven by the Minister of Finance, does not see the ground as relevant in its strategy, but

sees mainstream bourgeois media as its principal platform. It will be for the left axis of the Alliance and the broad left front to ensure that the NGC discourse and debate is taken to the ground.

Left influence on the ANC and on government is waning and this is deeply seen in the treatment of the people and our organisations on the ground. The inconsistent postures within the Alliance makes our revolution vulnerable, and the alliance ineffective.

This is allowing groupings such as the Cadres Assembly grouping to do position themselves outside and parallel to the constitutional structures of the ANC, something we must be cautious of. These same people, the Cadre Assembly grouping, defended the 1996 Class Project, then when they were rejected by the Class Project became the New Tendency and benefitted from Guptas. It is significant that this grouping has tentacles in the NEC, and key drivers of it have also been very clearly and public aligned to the “Hands Off the SG” campaign. The xenophobic and threatening militaristic language of the MKMVA continues to require careful analysis. Our Constitution provides for very strong controls over the Defence Force, but the attacks on the current leadership of the Defence Force, the attacks in relation to their use of Cuban Interferon, and the mobilising of ex-security officers in this type of factional

manner should be carefully monitored.

Party work to strengthen the ANC must be coordinated by the Party Building Commission. We are possibly facing the emergence of a multiplicity of factions in the ANC. It is clear that the centre is not holding. These factions are both interest groups and have ideological differences.

State of trade union organisation of the working class

The major achievement of the united action across federations on 8 October must be welcomed, but we are concerned that this has not resulted in ongoing joint action, with Saftu indicating that they will return to the streets, but without ensuring that the unity of organised workers is sustained. This process is a critical component of enabling the class to act as a class instead of as organisational groupings within a class. The balance within the trade union movement in relation to levels of unionisation in the public service, public sector (SOEs) and the private sector must receive attention.

Within the public service unions, the issue of union and member conduct towards their obligations as servants of the people needs to be addressed. The trashing of public health facilities in the midst of the absolutely legitimate struggle for fulltime employment for community health workers cannot be condoned. The closing of a frontline

office, with queues of citizens outside, while the union holds a meeting cannot be correct. Workers leaving work before closing time, and thereby denying working class people who have spent money they do not have and time that is valuable to travel to the office for whatever public service they need is unacceptable and must be taken up by our red unions committed to the class.

The scope that capital has had in the private sector to ignore compliance with covid19 regulations, to retrench and not pay workers their UIF TERS money, is a reflection of the weakness of unions in the private sector.

The impact of union investment companies on revolutionary trade unionism must be analysed by the Party. It is of note that the Registrar of unions in Department of Labour has identified serious concerns with the functioning of the investment arms of some unions, and that the BBBEE Council has raised the issue of investment arms of the unions possibly being vehicles for fronting.

The recent bilateral with Cosatu has re-energised Party-Cosatu relations, with a commitment to re-activate the Political-ideological Commission, to set up a team to develop a joint programme and prioritising economic reconstruction and recovery, and to push for an Alliance Summit to be held in January 2021. The commitment of the CEC to make 2021 the Year of the

Local provides a platform for significant rebuilding of the affiliates and of Cosatu, strengthened and buttressed by our own district focus on both the workplace and communities.

State of the youth formations and extent of organisation of the youth of SA

All of the societal challenges emanating from the fourfold crisis of capitalism have particular impact on the youth, demographically predominant in South Africa, now in the immediate sense and obviously for their future. The left axis in the youth movement has been seriously undermined by the access to position, power and money and a crass-materialist greed that undermines any solidarity consciousness amongst the youth.

As we consider how to deepen our work amongst the youth, and particularly the intellectual and working class youth, we must review and act on our resolutions to start Party branches, with academics, administrators, workers and students, in institutions of higher learning.

We must consolidate our ideological work with the student organisations, both Cosas and Sasco. But we must also deepen our relationship with the Cosatu Young Workers Forum, the young workers structures of trade union affiliates, and with the ANC Women's League Younga-Younga, who have

shone in relation to action on the ground but can be strengthened and better guided ideologically.

State of women as a motive force for the NDR

The women's movement must become a priority for strengthening in 2021, with the PWMSA (Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa) conference due to be held during the course of the year. Party Districts must be active in re-energising the regional structures of the PWMSA before the conference and ensuring that a programme of action is developed in each region that focuses on the immediate issues that impact on working class women.

The PWMSA must not just be a national level lobby group, intervening in policy and equity processes only, but must be steered on the basis of a bottom-up programme of action with very concrete demands.

The Party has made nominations to the Board of the GBV Council. We must be ready to ensure that the Council is effective, and that the struggle for its funding is not a women-only fight as it is a critical part of the struggle against neo-liberal undermining of progressive policy and strategy.

We must through the launching and driving of our White Ribbon Campaign with the Joe Slovo Foundation and Cosatu sustain the momentum on

the struggle against GBV. Let 2021 see active training of Party cadres on how to run primary GBV prevention programmes in our communities, places of learning and workplaces.

The factional and equity at all costs approach of the Women's League has not built and strengthened the working-class women's contribution as part of the motive forces of the NDR, and a significant step change is required.

The linkages between the Red October Campaign and the burden of social reproduction that women disproportionately bear must see a District based and Communist driven broad front of organised women being brought together to deepen the concrete interventions.

Self-Reflection on SACP – building a cadre-based Party with its Districts rooted in the community and local workplaces

The influence of the Party may be diminishing at a number of levels and we must reflect on how close we are as Party leadership to our own membership. We have seen since both the 14th Congress and SNC that we need to attend to this. Our organising work must be based on taking programmes down to the District level to ensure a cadre-based Party is built and its Districts are rooted in the community and local workplaces

We have taken steps to enhance

accountability within the Party in this time of heightened focus on corruption. We are also finding distorted allegations and innuendos emerging in factionalist ways. We must hold ourselves to the highest moral and ethical standards. The Party has engaged our deployees to public office and requested them to sign a pledge to stop corruption and ensure good governance. This will be complemented by the establishment of the Revolutionary Morality Committee in early 2021.

How do the people and the working class see the ANC?

Brief reflection on the recent by-elections across the country indicates that the ANC has overall retained its seats, but a deeper analysis of the voter turn-out and the numbers of votes cast for the ANC is required before we feel complacent. We do not yet understand how the number of votes may have changed and how this may be used to forecast the 2021 LGE outcomes.

Our approach to the 2021 Local Government Elections

Our approach to the 2021 Local Government Elections, in line with our Congress resolution, is closely linked to the reconfiguration of the Alliance. Current disregard for the reconfiguration of the Alliance is of real concern to the Party and has been seen in the disregard

of the alliance input in the Economic Reconstruction Plan of the ANC; the lack of follow through from the Alliance Provincial Secretaries Forum in June, and the ANC unilaterally and in defiance of the Alliance-approved document on Reconfiguration of the Alliance, issuing Guidelines for Selection of Local Government Candidates to the provinces.

The “Guidelines on Selection” document was presented to the last Alliance Secretariat, a month or more after it was sent to the ANC provincial structures. We have identified some significant improvements, but also major concerns. Firstly, our standpoint is that the ANC approach to electoral processes must fully embrace the reconfiguration of the Alliance and reducing Alliance partners to the equivalent of the Leagues is not in keeping with our agreed approach to Reconfiguration of the Alliance. The step of removing the role of ANC Provincial Secretaries is an important step towards prevention of manipulation of list processes; and the establishment of the Internal Electoral Committee, decided on in the 54th Conference, is to be supported. However, the inclusion of the Alliance in these processes and structures must be reviewed and enhanced to be consistent with the “Alliance Reconfiguration” document.

Cosatu, as seen in their CEC statement, has expressed deep concern on the lack

of progress in the reconfiguration of the Alliance, and with the implementation of Alliance resolutions, particularly those impacting on the workers. The CEC reaffirmed their Congress resolution to support the ANC in the 2019 elections, and that if there is no reconfiguration of the Alliance, they will support the SACP going forward.

A critical question for us and for Cosatu to consider in relation to this is whether the class is ready to take the step they are proposing. It must be recognised that contesting elections, even if not to become the governing party but to win a platform for a Communist/Left voice in the legislature, does not come dished up on a silver platter. The disarray of the working class and its organisations, the capacity of the Party to lead and to have resources, the strength and coherence of the emerging broad front must all be weighed up in this discussion. Our strategic and programmatic approach must be our point of departure - that of building working class influence and hegemony on the ground!

TOWARDS OUR 2021 CENTENARY PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The 2021 programme of action is the centenary programme. There will be no distance between the Centenary programme, the crowd funding and financial sustainability campaign, the political education programme, trade

union work, the HHH+W campaign, the campaign to stop corruption and to prevent imposition of austerity and neo-liberal policies, or even in our election work. In all of our work in 2021 the links between our history, key contemporary Party organisational issues, and key political tasks must be integrated.

2021 must focus on building our own organisational capacity.

The “South African Road to Socialism” says correctly that we seek to build working class hegemony in all sites of power. We are not able to do this nor to build effective SACP presence in the areas where the working class is organised, unless we have developed ourselves as a cadre-based and sustainably resourced Party.

If we reflect briefly on where the working class is organised – in a Marxist understanding, the most important place is the workplace, but that workplace is no longer the English factory of Marx – it is factories and mines, it is an extensive retail sector, it is working from home, it is the informal economy, it is the public service and the public sector. We must consider the level of organisation and trade unions in all of these workplaces. We cannot build working class hegemony if we do not have a Party presence in workplaces.

But the working class is also organised into various areas of social reproduction - stokvels, burial societies, cooperatives,

SGBs, CPFs - where is the organised Party presence here? How do we build hegemony where we are not leading in the sites where working class is organised? There are significant sections of working class and middle class in the churches and religious institutions looking for hope and direction - where is progressive organisation in these spheres?

Our Red October campaign is critical for strengthening presence of the Party in all sites of power and must be sustained throughout 2021. Our goal in 2021 is to seriously turn around our strength in all these areas where the working class is located.

Ongoing policy formulation and updating of SARS

We have said that the Red October Campaign must have two legs – the first is concrete campaigns and interventions on the ground, and the second is the deepening of Party policy perspectives on food security, on human settlements, on health and access to affordable and clean water. The SACP's Socio-economic Transformation Commission with the support of the Gender Coordinating Commission, must be seized with how to deepen the policy work in this regard.

It is our intention to update SARS in the form of Bua Komanisi Working papers. The work of completing our

Bua Komanisi Working Papers and the development of policy positions on the HHH+W and the policy review by each Commission must build on the resolutions of the Special National Congress and lead us towards our discussion documents for the 15th Congress in 2022.

The 15th Congress will face the enormous task of reflecting on the strategic options in the face of the outcome of the contestation of the ANC and the Alliance by the Parasitic Fight Back Campaign and Neo-liberal Austerity Forces; the outcome of the 2021 local Government Elections, and the changing post-covid19 global and domestic environment.

The Central Committee will in the 18 months between now and the 15th Congress need to evaluate the relevance of SARS and the concrete revolutionary strategy that flows from it in the conjuncture of this time. While the understanding that the NDR remains the most direct route to socialism remains unchallenged, the organisational format of the leadership and execution of the NDR is in flux.

Our 2021 Centenary Programme of Action must pay particular attention to revolutionary trade union organisation.

We must put our Trade Union and Mass Formations Commission on a new footing and enable it to be more active and proactive. The current composition of the Commission consists

largely of former unionists, who are currently massively loaded with other responsibilities. We need to develop a team of comrades specifically deployed to work in that Commission, allocated to work with a particular union, who engage directly with trade unions on the ground. We must be able to reverse the trend which seems to be towards losing organised labour as a critical part of the left axis. We need to engage and fully understand who is in the trade unions of today - who are the shop stewards of today? They are mainly young people who don't come from the same struggle background and this is beginning to have impact on the trade union movement, particularly with political education declining. We are also concerned with seeing the EFF opportunistically joining workers in their struggles, as seen at the SABC recently. The visibility of the Party banner in all industrial action must be improved. Some of senior comrades with union backgrounds need to give more time. We need a focused Jack Simons Party School political education stream on trade union issues and empowering trade union cadres.

Going down to the ground

Of concern is that our very rich and astute analysis of the different tendencies, the balance of forces and the policy alternatives is not translating into influence on the ground - in the ANC, in trade unions, in the youth and women's movements, in the sectoral

organisations. We need to address how to take the policy posture and our analysis down to the working class, and to mobilise also the middle strata in alliance with the working class. This requires us to shift gear in relation to our communication strategy as the SACP, and to ensure that our priority in 2021 is translating our complex and correct analysis into accessible analysis and concrete campaigns and demands of the working class and its allies.

How can we build working class hegemony when we do not have Party influence in key sites where the working class is organised? So, organisational work and mass-directed communication assumes an even more important profile in the 2021 Centenary Programme of Action with a strong focus on organisational work and sectoral work. A battle of ideas that engages opinion and policy makers and does not mobilise the working class behind the position of the Party and the left axis, cannot be won. Our powerbase on the ground is critical to balance the resources of capital and those that hold the levers of the state and are not promoting working class interests in the manner that they use these levers of state.

Left popular fronts at all levels

The building a left popular front is also critical to establishing of working-class hegemony. The Centenary 2021 programme of action must continue to

build on the partnerships we have built in the stop corruption campaign, in the policy work that we have embarked on, in the engagement on Party history that is envisaged with UJ and with a collective of academics wanting to run a series of webinars on Party history, in the political education programmes that reach outside of Party members, and in the Red October campaign.

All of the above, and our 2021 Centenary theme to be active in the present to build the socialist future requires the capacity in the Party which honestly at the moment, we don't have. There is a real risk that we can become irrelevant if we do not build organisational capacity, and this requires attention to the immediate and long-term financial sustainability of the Party. The launch of the SACP crowd funding initiative this December, the launch of the Endowment Fund in January, the positive response from deployees to support the Party in the current crisis, the work of our investment arm must all shape a new approach to funding of the Communist Party appropriate to the working-class hegemony that we seek to build.

CONCLUSION

The theme for our Centenary Year is so relevant to the conjuncture we are in: Learning from the Past, Active in the Present, Building the Future,

Building Socialism Now. In order for it to contribute to the rescue of the NDR, which we reassert remains the most direct route to socialism, this theme must be anchored in cadre-based Party work in Districts rooted in our communities, in our workplaces, and in strengthening working class organisation in all its forms at that level.

Let's make 2021 the Year of Mass Activism by the workers and the poor, under the overarching slogan of "Put people before Profits" leading to reconfigured organisational relationships and a broader front of left/progressive forces, and the capacity to assert hegemony in the face of both austerity and corruption, and the undermining of working class interests.

The Red October Campaign dimensions of hunger, health, human settlements and water, the campaign against interpersonal violence and Gender-Based Violence in particular, the campaign for a universal basic income grant, the campaign against retrenchments, the campaign for development of the informal social and solidarity economy must all be located in mass activism and innovative mass action in our Districts and in Cosatu locals.

**Put People before Profits – Make
2021 A Year of Mass Activism!**

WHAT ON EARTH DO WE MEAN BY A FEMINIST ORGANISATION?

Reflections on feminist theory and practice

Jenny Schreiner

South Africa continues to see an outpouring of deep pain and outrage at the grossest manifestations of the violence of a society based on inequality and exclusion across race, class and gender. The dehumanising plague of gender-based violence, ranging from sexual harassment, to domestic violence, to rape, to femicide, and knowing no age limits, has mobilised women and gender activists in South Africa across all social divisions – race, class, sexual orientation, religion, culture. The massive mobilisation has also brought to the fore the variety and strength of feminist voices in South Africa, as well as the complexities of front politics and the role of left socialist politics in such broad social mobilisation.

The expressions of pain and anger have at times shaped the nature of our political demands and have at times kept the discourse at the level of manifestations, with the risk that attention is not focused on the systemic causes of violence in general, and of gender-based violence in particular. As a Party that seeks to play a vanguard role for the working class, SACP activists

have the challenging responsibility to focus activism and the discourse on the lived experiences, and immediate required actions, as well as the causes and hence long term and sustainable solutions of the plague of gender-based violence. All of this requires a clarion call for inclusive mobilisation around a minimum programme, and at the same time promotion of the struggle for a social justice driven society.

Inseparably Connected – A Woman's Single Lived Experience

Our South African liberation struggle and the theoretical framework of our revolution globally have an ongoing and rich discourse about the relationship between the woman question, the national question and the class question; between women's struggles, struggles for national liberation and struggles for the elimination of exploitation and oppression of people by other people; a rich debate about race, class and gender in our struggle for socio-economic emancipation.

In some instances, this relationship

has been interrogated from the perspective of the phases of struggle – a mechanistic interpretation that the dominance of the national question over the primary economic class relations and over patriarchy means that stage 1 is national liberation; stage 2 is socio-economic emancipation or socialist struggle; and stage 3 is the struggle for equality of women. By the end of this article, one hopes that the fallacy of this stagist approach should be clear.

This debate is also sometimes crafted as the relationship between nationalist struggle, feminist struggle and class struggle – without recognising that there are a range of nationalisms, a range of feminisms, and a range of approaches to class struggle. For example, there are variants of a narrow/exclusivist feminism which tend to be relatively class and race blind – certainly far from any feminism that the left holds dear. Across the world and here at home, feminism, anti-racism, and socialism/Marxism all have historical (and contemporary) reductionist tendencies (for example: women vs. men, or black vs white, or workerism/economism). Again, I hope that by the end of this article, the limitations of reductionist approaches to the struggle against patriarchy will be clearer.

Our struggle for a society based on social justice, that addresses social needs of all people, requires an understanding

of the inseparable inter-twined nature, or “intersectionality” to use a woke-phrase, of class, race, and gender, both in understanding, and in the necessary resolution of their intersecting oppressions and exploitations. Progressive socialists and Marxists should advance (and historically have advanced) the simultaneous mobilisation and organisation across all three intersecting dimensions – obviously bearing in mind particular historical and local realities and specific conjunctures. Perhaps the most blunt way of expressing what this theorising is trying to say is that every woman in South Africa has a lived experience that is shaped by the integrated impact of capitalism, racism and patriarchy – our lived experiences as South African women are significantly diverse.

Some have recently argued that the ANC should resolve to become a feminist organisation. It is ironic that in 2019 there is still motivation for resolutions on being a feminist organisation. It is a debate that was heated and rigorous in the 1970s and 1980s. But, since it still has currency, let’s ask the questions: What is feminism? What is the history of feminism? Is there one feminism? Is there one linear history of feminism? Is there a history of many strands of feminist action and theory?

What is Feminism?

There are several approaches to defining feminism. It can be approached as a theory of the political, economic, and social equality of “the sexes”¹; as organized activity in support of women’s rights and interests; as the advocacy of women’s rights on the ground of the equality of the genders; as a belief and aim that women should have the same rights, power and opportunities as men (one could ask which men given the colour, class and urban/rural divides in South Africa); as a doctrine or movement that advocates equal rights for women; as a belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way; or the set of activities intended to achieve this state of equality; and then it is also recognised as a range of political movements, ideologies and social movements that share a common goal to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of genders.

All these approaches have value, but they all beg the question of the ideological and theoretical approach to equality, to rights, to power and the diversity of lived experiences of women and non-binary gendered people. Moreover, in critique of all these approaches, our conceptualisation needs to be further broadened to recognise

that the non-binary gender continuum requires “feminism” to focus on the equality of all people of all genders., and not just the emancipation or liberation of women.

Waves of Feminism

Feminism is not new. It is not a 21st Century innovation or concept. It is useful to understand the periodisation of feminism and the content and struggles that have characterised what is commonly called the Waves of Feminism. Broadly speaking, analysts have characterised four waves of feminism, each with a dominant focus, and each with a range of ideological approaches. Many activists define themselves simply as feminist, an approach which masks the ideological and political content of different feminist movements. At risk of crudifying the contribution of the various strands of feminism to the anti-patriarchal and non-racial liberation struggle, I have lifted up key movements and hopefully not caricatured them. The references provided are not intended to be a comprehensive literature review, but merely to indicate that many of the topical debates today have historical antecedents and to entice interested readers by providing a starting point for further reading.

The First Wave Feminism took place during the 19th and first half of the 20th century, focusing on women’s

suffrage – the right to vote, on women’s property rights, on women’s political candidacy, on access to education, and on employment opportunities for single women. This era also saw massive activism by working women around social needs such as the cost of living and working conditions and the growth of a strong socialist and working women’s movement around peace. It is in this period that the Second Socialist Women’s Conference of 100 women delegates from socialist parties and the labour movement was held in 1910 and adopted the following resolution:

“In agreement with the class-conscious, political and trade union organisations of the proletariat of their respective countries, the Socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women’s Day, whose foremost purpose it must be to aid the attainment of women’s suffrage. This demand must be handled in conjunction with the entire women’s question according to Socialist precepts. The Women’s Day must have an international character and is to be prepared carefully.” (Foner, Philip S. 1984 p108).

The First Wave Feminism in South Africa saw a significant political divide. There were those women who operated within the racially discriminatory franchise system and mobilised for white women with educational qualifications to get the vote, arguing that the rest of

the women would follow later. This is a classic bourgeois feminist position, operating within and supporting the ideology of the colonial ruling class, in this instance, supporting colonialism of a special type, and promoting the interests of the women of the white, colonial ruling class.

The South African socialist feminists, feminists whose stand was informed by the principles of non-racialism and equality, argued that the struggle for women’s franchise had to be a struggle for the vote for all women irrespective of race, or formal education levels. Lou Haysom has written on the complexity of debates on the women’s suffrage in South Africa in her article “Olive Schreiner and the Women’s Vote” in which she traces how the issue of votes for all women irrespective of colour, educational qualification or wealth divided the suffragette movement in South Africa. (Haysom, Lou 1993).

Charlotte Maxeke, our pathbreaking first black woman graduate in South Africa, having visited England when the suffragette movement was at its height also engaged the Women’s Reform Club in Pretoria an organisation concerned with the voting rights of women. (Maxeke, Charlotte (née Manye) Collection).

The early years of the Soviet Union saw a significant development of Marxist-Leninist practice and analysis on the

woman question and the contribution of Alexander Kollontai must be recorded. (Holt, Alix 1977) There were significant divergences of analysis and practice amongst leading women cadres of the CPSU in the early stages of the Soviet Union.

It is in this period that the first of the key South African documents that have contributed to crafting the approach to the feminist programme of the liberation movement and the nation, namely the 1954 Women's Charter was drafted. The Women's Charter was adopted at the founding Conference of the Federation of South African Women on 17 April 1954, under the chairpersonship of Cde Ida Mtwana, with the Opening Address by Cde Ray Alexander who spoke on the struggles of women in South Africa. The Women's Charter, the founding document of the Federation of South African Women, collated the content of the women's demands under the ambit of the strategic front of the Congress Alliance for the 1955 Congress of the People and hence contributed towards the Freedom Charter. The Women's Charter outlined the approach to the relationship between men and women when it stated, under the heading of: "A Single Society" that: "We women do not form a society separate from the men. There is only one society, and it is made up of both women and men. As women we share the problems and anxieties

of our men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress." The Charter elaborated further on demands for the specific burdens of women to be addressed, a clear recognition that there were and are issues that women experience in a particular manner that must be transformed. (<https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/womens-charter>)

The Second Wave Feminism took place during the 1960s to 1980s, focusing on reducing inequalities between men and women, in the family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities, and official legal inequalities. This resulted in extensive analysis of the family, much from a left psycho-analytical perspective, but with considerable attention to the relationship between the capitalist state and the family. The contributions of Sheila Rowbotham, Juliet Mitchell, Angela Davis, amongst others, to socialist feminist thinking in this period must be acknowledged. Juliet Mitchell (1966) published her pathbreaking article, "Women: The Longest Revolution", an original synthesis of Simone de Beauvoir, Friedrich Engels, Viola Klein, Betty Friedan and other analysts of women's oppression. Sheila Rowbotham (1969) published her influential pamphlet "Women's Liberation and the New Politics" which argued that socialist theory

needed to consider the oppression of women in cultural as well as economic terms. She was heavily involved in the conference *Beyond the Fragments*, which attempted to draw together democratic socialist and socialist feminist currents in Britain. Angela Davis (1975 and 1983) a member of the CPUSA and an activist across many issues, wrote seminal pieces on rape and on women, race and class.

Some of the long-standing rights issues remained on the agenda and the opposition to them remained as profound. In the USA for example, the Equal Rights Amendment, designed to embed the principle of equal rights in the US Constitution, had been unsuccessfully presented to every session of Congress from 1923 (3 years after American women got the vote) and was finally passed under the Nixon administration, but did not receive the necessary state ratifications in the 1970s to amend the Constitution. This was a major campaign led by feminists such as Betty Friedan (Friedan, Betty 1965) and Gloria Steinem, who had also featured in campaigns to get the American youth represented in the World Democratic Federation of Youth, and in campaigning against taxes in opposition to the Vietnam war. Gloria Steinem, (Steinem, Gloria 1969) published an article which brought her to national fame as a feminist leader. This period

saw a strong rise of lesbian feminism, based on a rejection of the normative heterosexuality and the dominant binary gender concept, and the identification issues of men's sexuality and dominance as the major contradiction to be resolved – this is sometimes crudified as “men are the enemy”. (Rich, Adrienne 1980 and 1986)

This wave of feminism saw the United Nations adopting a Decade of Women on 15 December 1975 by the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 31/136. The first UN Conference of Women was held in Mexico in 1975, followed by the Copenhagen Conference and in 1985 the UN Women's Conference held in Nairobi. The Decade focused on the policies and issues that impacted on women, such as pay equity, gendered violence, land holding and other human rights.

During the exile years ANC women held various conferences to evaluate their position in the struggle for South Africa's liberation. The first ANC women's conference on September 10 – 14, 1981 and the second on September 1987 were held in Luanda, Angola, and both considered the position of women in society, their participation in the national liberation struggle, and how the Women's Section could strengthen the ANC in its endeavours. The Malibongwe Conference held in January

1990 in Amsterdam sought to provide a forum for dialogue among South African women of all pro-democracy organisations, along with international solidarity women organisations.

Under the leadership of OR Tambo, the understanding that the ANC needed to be driven by a feminism rooted in the national democratic revolution was explicit. The oft referenced quotation by OR Tambo² from his address to the 1981 Luanda Women's Section Conference adds weight to this approach. However, many feminists who had found their place in the mass women's movement inside the country in the 1980s felt that the Women's Section and the reconstituted Women's League left little space for feminist discourse and hence they remained outside of the Women's League in the 1990s. Over the past 25 years, the ideological coherence of the ANC has been eroded by neo-liberalism, narrow nationalism, tribalism and corruption, and many of these ideological shifts have been seen in the voice and practice of women of the ANC and in particular in the Women's League.

This period also saw many strands within the feminism of the left, of socialist feminism, shaped by the theoretical and political tendencies within the left. Some socialist feminists argued that including women in the economy will emancipate them from

patriarchy and oppression as women, while others engaged in an intense debate about the double day and the impact of unpaid household labour in the oppression of women³, and by extension it was argued that it is primarily the social reproduction system of capitalism that provides the material basis of patriarchy. Some argued that Marxist theory has failed women, and that socialist theory needs to go beyond Marxism to find the socialist feminist path.

At the same time as these feminist debates were taking place in the movements and journals of the developed world, analysts of the under-developed world were exploring analyses of the oppression of women in the South and approaches to the organisation and mobilisation of women. The contributions of Stephanie Urdang, Marilyn Thompson, Arlene Eisen, Gita Sen and Caren Grown are worth mentioning. (Urdang, Stephanie 1979 and 1989; Thomson, Marilyn 1986; Eisen, Arlene 1984; and Sen, Gita and Grown, Caren 1988).

The Third Wave Feminism which has taken place from the 1990s to 2008 has focused on embracing individualism and diversity, and on creating space for women to reach their own goals and be accepted in their diversity. This has gone along with the movements for women to break through glass ceilings, and for

women to take their place as leaders at the top of society.

In South Africa in 1994, The Women's Charter for Effective Equality was the product of the views of women across an extremely broad and hence less strategic/more tactical front of organisations in respect of the proposed content of a Constitution of a democratic South Africa. The intention of this coalition of women's forces was to correct the gender blindness of the content of the negotiations in CODESA. The Charter for Effective Equality adopted in 1994 stated that "We cannot march on one leg or clap with one hand. South Africa is poorer politically, economically, and socially for having prevented more than half of its people from fully contributing to its development."

This wave of feminism also saw the Beijing Platform for Action being drafted by the UN Conference on the Status of Women in 1995, a programme of action that required governments, women's movements and civil society to collaborate for the emancipation of women and the establishment of gender equality.

Afro-feminism is a feminism that specifically addresses the conditions and needs of African women who reside on the African continent, and it has been argued that a more appropriate term is Afro-feminisms given the diversity of feminist approaches found across

the continent. It is similar to a Black feminism found outside of the African continent and can be seen as a response to racism and sexism directed towards women of colour, and it may be driven by a black consciousness. (Taylor, Ula 1998) This strand of feminism has manifest in "Black lives matter" and identifies race as a primary contradiction to be resolved. Afro-feminism has increasingly coincided with identity politics. Cultural feminism based on an essentialist definition of women and men, identifies the difference between men and women as being psychologically determined, and results, according to its critics, in a retreat from political struggle into a lifestyle solution. (Taylor, Verta and Rupp, Leila J. 1993) It attempts to revalidate female attributes of "female nature" or "female essence".

This period also saw the rise of nationalist feminists (Herr, Ranjoo Seodu 2003) or feminist nationalists who saw the liberation of women as directly connected to the resolving of national oppression, to the establishment of non-racial democracy. South Africa has seen nationalist feminists operating historically within the narrow nationalism of Afrikaner nationalism and African nationalism or more recently in the currently emerging narrow nationalism within the ANC and other opposition parties. The demands

here may well relate to the demands for women of a national group or women of a political elite, concerned to ensure that women have equal access to the leadership, executive, legislature and public service positions.

These should be distinguished from the feminist approach that locates itself within the frame of the national democratic revolution (NDR) correctly understood as challenging not just the national oppression but the social roots of oppression and inequality, and hence laying the basis for the building of a socialist society. Feminists within the NDR tradition will be concerned about the extent to which the development and transformation programme is changing the lives of working class and poor women, who in South Africa are predominantly black, as well as tackling the pervasiveness of patriarchy.

The Fourth Wave of Feminism from 2008 to present-day focuses on inclusion and hence brings to the fore a concept of “intersectionality whereby women’s suppression can only fully be understood in a context of the marginalization of other groups and genders - feminism is part of a larger consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, ableism, and sexual orientation (no “ism” to go with that).” (Rampton, Martha 2015) This wave of feminism has a strong focus on combating sexual harassment, assault

and misogyny, and includes a focus on unpaid labour of women, on equal pay for equal work, on equal access to education, and on gender equality within leadership representation. Across the world the focus on the violent side of patriarchy has been put into the limelight, and this has been echoed in South Africa with increasing passion and anger. Nego-feminism (Nnaemeka, Obioma 2004) is a concept used to refer to the negotiation of feminism, focusing on the negotiation of gender relations, in some form of social compact that is shaped through negotiated spaces between men and women. It is perhaps in this context that reflection on the gains and the weaknesses of negotiated quotas for women can be explored. Traditional lesbian feminism of the second wave has developed to embrace a far broader and more complex issue of the exclusion and oppression of the LGBTQI+ community, in a period in which scientific knowledge is improving our knowledge of genetic makeup of human beings, and our sexuality.

Pulling together the strands of feminism in our current conjuncture

So, across and within each Feminist Wave, there have been major political differences amongst feminists themselves. Accepting that there is no single history of feminism within any of these waves, let us move to explore the

trajectory of feminisms in South African of this decade.

It is imperative for us to analyse and understand the political content of strands of feminism that have currency in the broad women's movement, not just in South Africa but globally. The divergent approaches have perhaps been most clearly visible in the outpouring of anger and mobilisation against gender-based violence over the past couple of years. We need to understand why, for example, activists mobilising against gender-based violence can remove women leaders off platforms, can reject the contribution of male gender activists, can operate in a manner that drives wedges between activists all concerned about the plague of gender-based violence. In understanding this, we then face the task as Marxist-Leninist gender activists and feminists to provide leadership and play a vanguard role that enables the maximum mobilisation of social forces to prevent, combat and heal the impact of gender-based violence, to consider the potential of feminist fronts that can unite gender activists and women behind common sets of demands.

Globally and at home, we are faced with neo-liberal politics, a form of capitalist ideology and economic policy, which shapes many of the feminist positions being articulated in the South African political space. Neo-liberal

feminists see the exclusion of women of the ruling elite from the opportunities of economic enterprise and access to the boardrooms of capital as being the key change to be fought for. Over the past decade, we will have heard women ministers, former minister's now in key "development" finance spaces, and women striving to find a place in the economy saying they are not interested in counting jobs for women workers or counting women in small business; saying that they want to see women, and black women in particular, making it in the big companies and in the big money; that women-owned banks will enable women to move into such positions of power and accumulation; that government departments must have dedicated programmes to advance women-owned companies access to incentive scheme resources. This goes with a strong drive to see Black women make it to the top of the capitalist private sector and to positions of political authority, to the top of heights of economic and political power. What change does it bring for the majority of South African women who remain in the informal sector, in vulnerable jobs, in underserved and underdeveloped working-class communities, on overcrowded public transport?

We are also witnessing a rise of feminist articulation within the populist and neo-fascist agendas in South

Africa, with an extreme militancy and aggression in the forms of action and mobilisation around issues. This is perhaps witnessed in some of the Fallist utterances on the challenges facing women students on campuses, and in some of the articulations of the Total Shutdown movement around gender-based violence.

The Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party 2019 manifesto correctly gestures at the reality that capitalism everywhere produces and reproduces class, gendered and racialised oppression, but it mechanically and simply places an equivalence sign between capitalism and various forms of oppression. “Capitalism is wealth for a few and poverty for many.” But feudalism and other forms of class society are also characterised by extremes of wealth and poverty. What is specific about wealth and poverty in capitalism? The SRWP proceeds: “Capitalism is the oppression and suppression of women and children” – but what are the specific (and changing) forms of this gendered and age-ist oppression under capitalism in general, and in different specific capitalist societies? Are all children suppressed under capitalism? “Capitalism is racism, relying on a racially defined organisation of labour”. In differing degrees, the reproduction of racialised inequality and oppression is to be found in all capitalist societies

and not just on the labour market. But how this is articulated within particular capitalist societies and the extraction of surplus needs to be unpacked. Asserting an identity between capitalism and racialised or gendered oppression, and between capitalism and wealth inequality leads to a simplistic assertion that, in the words of the SRWP, through the “abolition of capitalism” these will be “abolished”. As a consequence of this simplistic approach in the SRWP manifesto, while there are commitments to address particular dimensions of women’s oppression, there is little articulation of a feminist policy. Anti-sexism is simply asserted as an outcome of the abolition of capitalism.

The Marxist-Leninist principle for the eradication of all forms of class oppression requires one to be a feminist, to be anti-racist, and anti-homophobic. We stand against any form of discrimination that hurts the majority of the people and the working class in particular, while endorsing an active ‘discrimination’ against the capitalist class, where class force must be exerted if we are to progressively achieve socialism. A Marxist-Leninist feminist approach identifies an inseparable connection between class exploitation, national oppression, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression and marginalisation, while recognising the primacy of class relations in shaping

the social formation. The pages of *The African Communist* over the past 3 decades carry ongoing engagement on this topic. (Horn, Pat 1991 and 2007, Orr, Liesl 2001. SACP 2017, Schreiner 2017 and 2018) Marxist-Leninist feminism is driven by a political programme and organising strategy that aims to build socialism in a form that enables the unleashing of the full potential of all people, and the creation of social, political and economic systems to enhance the quality of life of all people. To this end, the SACP does not have a women's section, but rather aims to embed a gender-equality perspective into the entire SACP Programme and to collaborate with fraternal organisations and women's organisations to promote the struggle against patriarchy and for transformation of gender relations and of gender equality.

The perspective that progressive socialists/Marxists should advance (and have advanced historically) is the simultaneous mobilisation and organisation across all three intersecting dimensions - obviously bearing in mind particular historical and local realities and specific conjunctures.

The various feminist strands lead to and shape organisational forms and broad movements, that are not mutually exclusive of each other, collectively referred to as the women's liberation movement or the feminist movement.

Within this movement, one can find women driven by bourgeois and ruling elite class interests, women driven by the interests of the working class and the urban and rural poor, women committed to anti-racist policies and those who are comfortable with continued racial elitism, those who are committed to inclusion irrespective of sexual orientation and those who are homophobic. The women's movement or the feminist movement as it is often called is essentially a very broad front of individuals and organisations motivated to change gender relations in society. It is this that the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa should aspire to, and that we should be mobilising to re-energise and revamp. The questions are: Change gender relations in what way? and in the overall interests of which women? It is this that fundamentally guides how women of the liberation movement, of the revolutionary trade union movement and the SACP engage with feminists mobilised in the variety of campaigns and organisational forms that we find in current day South Africa. The outcome of these questions is determined in the theatre of struggle and not on the pages of articles.

It is for this reason that many of the leading Marxist-Leninist women leaders have cautioned cadres who operate within the broad women's movement to

strive for ideological vigilance so that they do not unintentionally undermine the interests of the working class as a class, and the urban and rural poor.

So, what on earth do we mean by a Feminist Organisation?

Let's return to the question of whether the ANC, or any other political party or progressive organisation, should resolve or decide to become a feminist organisation. We must ask ourselves if this means that the ANC, or other organisation, must adopt feminist content across all resolutions (gender mainstreaming in policy decisions); or must ensure 50:50 representation in all elections/deployments at all levels of the organisation; or must eradicate sexist and patriarchal behaviour by all of its members, men and women; or all of the above and more. But moreover, in posing this question we must be clear about what feminism we refer to.

Flowing from the earlier discussion about the political content of strands of feminism, it is relevant to reflect on organisational forms of the women's liberation movement, or the feminist movement. It is for example baffling that the ANC Women's League, a women's section of a political party, can describe itself as the "custodian of the women's liberation movement in South Africa" particularly when the Alliance has taken the steps to form a

Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa to take forward the broad coordination and political gender transformation programme of the women's organisations, the Alliance and progressive feminists in South Africa. But we all know that self-declaration, be it as a custodian of women's liberation by the Women's League or the Progressive Women's Movement or as the vanguard of the working class by SACP, is meaningless unless built in practice and in struggle. We win our positions through active struggle around a programme of demands.

The questions that should be posed to our key strategy and policy documents, the Strategy and Tactics of the ANC, the South African Road to Socialism, and to the Constitution of South Africa are: What is the feminist content of these documents? How do they understand the patriarchal contradictions that must be resolved? How does their approach to feminism inform our activism?

As part of the ideological shifts inside the liberation movement, we have also seen the space for progressive national democratic revolutionary feminism and Marxist-Leninist feminism being narrowed. Instead of a strong anti-patriarchal reassertion of the values and ideology of the national democratic revolution, we have seen women organising to defend narrow nationalism, tribal practices, corrupt

behaviour, small-nyana and not so small-nyana skeletons in corporate capture of the state. We have seen the opportunist use of a militant feminist posture to campaign for a woman President but followed closely by a lack of support for other women leadership candidates who were and perhaps still are perceived to be part of another faction.

The task at hand is not to pose the question to ourselves of what kind of a feminist am I or are you - are we “lesbian feminists”, or “nationalist feminists”, or “NDR feminists”, or “socialist feminists”, or “Marxist-Leninist feminists”? Rather the task at hand is to appreciate the positive, the rational kernel, which is present in basically progressive feminist currents, while also building an awareness of their limitations. So, while we should avoid simply uncritically following what is fashionable, we should also be advocating for the role of South African communists (young and old) in comradely engagement with the anti-patriarchal energies that are mobilised and raising a strong chorus of voices in South Africa.

In short, what is the role of the SACP and YCLSA, and other progressive feminists in the midst of the impressive outpouring of mobilised anger and desperation against gender-based violence? We should not adopt a stand-offish theoretical purism. We should

be adding value to the discourse, for example, by making connections between the social dislocation and social alienation of which crisis levels of violence (of all kinds) are surely a symptom AND, for instance, the austerity strictures inherent in Tito Mboweni / National Treasury/OEC’s 2019 discussion paper? Can we do this, of course, without plunging ourselves into a narrow economism - i.e. without neglecting the cultural, moral, and criminal justice issues that currently are dominant within much of the mobilisation?

In conclusion, an organisation that is driven programmatically by the national democratic revolution and the struggle for socialism and is true to its ideological posture and dialectical and historical methodology, must indeed be a feminist organisation committed to the eradication of patriarchal oppression and committed to the empowerment of black working class women both within the organisation and within the society to the point at which gender equality is an established norm and lived reality in society. The SACP has strongly motivated for activists in gender struggles to remain vigilant about “the agenda behind the gender agenda” – calling for vigilance on the actual class, racial, factional interests that are being promoted or undermined by a lot of the very vocal and militant feminisms that

are seen and heard in South Africa in this conjuncture.

It is critical that we correctly conceptualise our theory, as it is from our theory that our politics and activism are shaped. The South African approach to the National Democratic Revolution, correctly conceptualised and as espoused by the liberation movement in the 1970s, is inherently feminist, nationalist and socialist oriented – ours is to wage the struggle to ensure that the future is one of gender equality, non-racialism and social justice in its broadest sense.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 The concept of "the sexes" is historically defined as a binary understanding of only two biologically determined

sexes, male and female. Recent scientific evidence highlights a far more complex explanation of sex based on a greater diversity of chromosomal configurations.

The term sex refers to biological status, and the term gender refers to the social construct of human sexual identity. The appropriate terminology in relation to current understandings of feminism is the concept of gender which is a social construct.

- 2 “The mobilisation of women is the task, not only of women alone, or of men alone, but of all of us, men and women alike, comrades in struggle. The mobilisation of the people into active resistance and struggle for liberation demands the energies of women no less than of men. A system based on the exploitation of man-by-man can in no way avoid the exploitation of women by the male members of society. There is therefore no way in which women in general can liberate themselves without fighting to the end the exploitation of man by man, both as a concept and as a social system”. (Cde OR Tambo at the conclusion of the Conference of the Women’s Section of the ANC in Luanda in 1981)
- 3 There was a major engagement between a range of authors in the pages of the *New Left Review* and other socialist academic journals entitled the *Domestic Labour Debate* in the late 70s and early 80s.

Women's emancipation and gender equality - some issues for the 21st century*

Fundi Nzimande

Not enough done

The struggle for women's emancipation and gender equality in South Africa is a long one. This has been made difficult by history, tradition, culture, the economic structure, and the backlash to the struggle for gender equality.

The position of women in South African society is undermined despite attempts to introduce policies to promote equality between men and women. This also does not mean that all women in South African society have the same experience of gender oppression. Policies and legislation are geared towards promoting gender equality, but their implementation is more challenging. Leadership is still a male preserve. In the home front, women are still relegated to servitude.

Traditional culture and religion promote women's subservience with notions of how a good woman should behave. There are constant contradictions between what the majority of South Africans say they believe and what they do. At best

progressive ideas remain an ideal on paper.

Background

The question of woman's emancipation and gender equality has been full of ebbs and flows internationally and nationally, as will be shown below.

In Communist, USSR women had more freedom in terms of access to health care, education and access to employment including in traditional men's roles and working in the rapidly industrialising Soviet Union during Stalin's time. They also had the right to divorce (from Lenin's era), without the bureaucratic rigmarole which follows divorce in Western countries till today. In addition, women could have two men contributing to a child's upbringing in the days when there were no DNA tests to establish paternity. Stalin believed that the rapid industrialisation of the Soviet Union required stable families and rapid reproduction of the workforce. In the Soviet Union, therefore, massive gains

for women and progress towards gender equality were introduced for “the greater good”. This is an area that needs further discussion in the SACP and other Alliance structures. How important is complete women emancipation and gender equality in the context of “issues of national importance”?

Political parties by their very nature are institutions that can yield immense amounts of power. Those in power can have access to the control, management, distribution and disbursement of state resources. Thus, there are sometimes grounds for fierce contestation, not least related to the gender question and women emancipation. In fact, in recent years these contests have resulted in political assassinations across the country.

An issue that emerges quite clearly from most writers on this topic, is that there is a need to be clear on the kind of theory one espouses and develops, the better to be clear on the kind of strategy and tactics that one will adhere to. Most notable is Reed (1970) who argues that, “A false theoretical position easily leads to a false strategy in the struggle for women’s liberation” and by deduction it may lead to a false

strategy for gender equality.

Origins of woman oppression

Reed (ibid) presents an interesting historical account of the origins of woman oppression as well as oppression more broadly. Reed develops her thesis much later than Engels who argues that women were held in high regard, to the extent that the right to inheritance was based on the maternal line whereas men left their possessions with their maternal relatives.

Reed gives a persuasive account of how the change in women’s status coincided with the demise of the matriarchal community. Matriarchal communities declined at about the same time as the beginnings of new types of societal organisation. These new types of societal organisation had classes, patriarchal families, private property and power located in the state. At the same time, new modes of production were developing marking a shift from hunter-gatherer communities to a mode of production based on crop cultivation, stock raising and craft-making. The simpler division of labour between the sexes was replaced by a more complex one and as a result, a larger surplus product

was generated. The destruction of the matriarchal community went together with the destruction of what Reed refers to as “the communal brotherhood of men”.

The hierarchy that usurped the surplus wealth entrenched gender inequality as well as the subjugation of the majority of the working men. So was the “communal sisterhood of women” destroyed. In the matriarchal society the functions of fatherhood and motherhood were communal, but in the new societies these roles became those of individual families. “Women, then, have been condemned to their oppressed status by the same social forces and relations which have brought about the oppression of, “one class by another, one race by another, and one nation by another”.

Engels in his “Origins of the family, Private Property and the State” explains that the very term family comes from the Roman word “familia”. This word referred to the total number of slaves belonging to one man from one “famulus”. To clearly indicate all the connotations attached to this term he uses Marx’s words: “The modern family contains in germ not only slavery (servitus),

but also serfdom, since from the beginning it is related to agricultural services”. Monogamy, therefore, Engels said presented “..the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property” (Engels).

Engels further reveals the innate contradictions in monogamous marriage as masking antagonism between men and women. In this thesis, whilst this development appears to signify progress, it is actually a step backward which produces the development and prosperity of some at the expense and frustration of others. Engels does not present these as smoothly as this paper suggests. Monogamous relationships have evolved to a stage where we look at them as the culmination of individual sex-love within marriage. This, however, is not the preserve of monogamous marriage; but it finds expression also in what other texts refer to a “adulterous relationships”. Individual sex-love and adultery are included, and adultery is also part of a rebellion that indicates the underlying tensions and contradictions of the institution.

In the South Africa of the 21st century, monogamy rests side-by-side with mistresses, cuckolded husbands, grass widowhood, children outside the marital bond and polygamy. In South Africa, similar to most of the world, the family is the smallest unit of capitalism signified by inequality between the man and the woman, the parent/s and the children. Thus, the evolution to capitalism has also been the evolution to inequality which rests comfortably on the side of patriarchy.

Post 94 period to the 21st century

The period from 1994 and immediately after was euphoric in South Africa. Expectations were astronomical in relation to the transformation South Africa was going to have. Those who had been in the liberation struggle had big expectations - free healthcare, free education, a people's economy, complete gender equality, etc.

The ANC Women's League introduced the concept of the gender quota early-on in the negotiations¹ process. The quota that was adopted by the ANC Conference in 1991 was for 33% women representation

in all structures and in Parliament. This was a revolutionary concept as it increased the numbers and the prominence of women political leaders. Subsequent ANC resolutions on the gender quota have stood at 50:50. This is a major victory for gender activists, however, a brief scan of all these institutions indicates that the women's lot has not improved as expected.

In 1996, when GEAR was introduced, all apartheid era inequalities were in place. About 51% of black² South Africans were illiterate³ and true to patriarchal form, more than fifty percent of this figure was made up of women. Race-based inequalities in education, health, infrastructure etc. were very glaring. When complications with cholera arose, women who did not succumb to the disease had to provide care to the sick. These are just a few examples of the inequalities, that impacted more severely on women and that were exacerbated by GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution).

The introduction of discussions in relation to some national gender machinery gave an impetus to the

¹ Negotiations for a democratic South Africa that took place between 1990 and 1993

² Black here means African, "Coloured" and Indian

³ Samson, van Niekerk & Bovula 1999, "Poverty-eradicating Job Creation"

hopes of equality between the sexes. The setting up of structures such as the Commission for Gender Equality and the Office on the Status of Women created expectations.

The Office on the Status of Women located in the Presidency produced, “South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality” and a comprehensive CEDAW Report. Apart from these two reports and some meetings, there is little recorded evidence that this office dealt with either women’s emancipation or gender equality⁴.

The Commission for Gender Equality has been much more visible. It has produced a number of reports. These include, but are not limited to: 6 Annual Reports; 45 publications and 31 statements⁵. Commissioners have been in the news dealing with gender and community issues. The impact of the work of the CGE was measured in the 20-year report.

⁴ This has reasons and the establishment of the Women’s Ministry was meant to address those reasons

⁵ In 2010, this was the case. To date a much wider plethora of publications and media statements have come out of the CGE, including numerous monitoring, investigative and research reports.

***This can give us a clue as to why women’s predominance in the population has decreased from 51,9% in 1994 to 50,7% in 2020.**

The Department of Health has built many clinics and hospitals to improve access to primary health for PDIs especially in the rural areas. Whilst this has been done, NALEDI research indicates that these facilities are not properly resourced terms of personnel or medication or equipment. The HIV and AIDS statistics indicate that women aged 15 to 24, at more than 50% of the total number of the people living with HIV and AIDS in that age cohort, are particularly vulnerable to the disease.

Women are disproportionately affected by HIV in South Africa: of the 7 500 000 adults living with HIV, 4 700 000 (62.67%) are women. New HIV infections among young women aged 15–24 years were more than double those among young men: 69 000 new infections among young women, compared to 25 000 among young men (UNAids 2018)*.

The Department of Safety and Security has consistently reported improvements in the rates of violent crimes, but the levels of GBV and femicide in society and in the workplace including some workplace deaths have increased.

This paints a very grim picture in relation to the challenges of making women's emancipation and gender equality a reality.*

The Department of Education has reported an improvement in the removal of barriers to girls' access to education. We have also reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence as a barrier to girls' effective education as reported in the Human Rights Watch Report in 2002 and other reports. There are also reports of higher than ever numbers for women's access to higher education; but what conditions are in place in those institutions to ensure that women are safe and can access or participate in higher education without any humiliation or violence?

What is the role of gender focal persons within the Departments to address these issues? We cannot have a democracy which Lenin describes as a "... democracy of pompous phrases, solemn words, exuberant promises and the high-sounding slogans of freedom and equality. But, in fact, it screens the non-freedom and inferiority of women, the non-freedom and inferiority of the toilers and exploited."

Proposed pillars of SACP Programme on woman's emancipation and gender equality

- *Theory and Practice*

The SACP Special National Congress in 2005 and other congresses have emerged with resolutions on fighting patriarchy and ensuring emancipation for women. The South African economy is still a capitalist, male and exclusionary economy with overtones of colonialism. Alexandra Kollantai, Lenin and Zetkin all agreed that, "women can only become truly free and equal in a world that has been transformed and based on new social and economic principles." The Party must continue to refine its theory on women's emancipation and gender equality and integrate a conception on the reproductive aspects of 21st century society, noting the varying impact that it has on women.

South African gender theory seeks to eradicate the intricate pattern of intertwined racial, class and gender oppression and the eradication of capitalism in favour of socialism. A critical document like "SACP response to the National Treasury

paper released in August 2019” is completely devoid of any gender analysis and indicates the propensity of the Party to forget women; however, it is hoped that in 2020 the Party’s organising and strategy on gender and social transformation will address this lapse.

- ***Governance and access to social services - health, education, safety and security, energy, water and sanitation,***

The Party must critically look at the issue of access to public services. This includes guarding against any creeping privatisation or corporatisation of these services. The impact of this is untold on poor families and women.

This means that the SACP must ensure that people who are given the responsibility of governance and administration have a working class and gender consciousness. Their task is to ensure that these services are protected for the benefit of the working class, women and other marginalised groups. In addition, they must ensure that these are provided as affordably as possible. This must impact on outsourcing/ privatisation and corporatisation of public services which tends to make

services even more expensive and difficult to access for working class families and women.

- ***Economy, structure, leadership must benefit all***

The SACP has developed numerous texts on the economy. The macro-economic framework used in the country is far from addressing the needs of the majority. The tools such as the monetary policy and fiscal policy only benefit big corporations. Even SMMEs are struggling as a result of the framework. In the context of the global economic and health crisis, more creative measures need to be used. To what extent are working class women informing these discussions?

The Party must pay attention to the leadership of the institutions that impact on our economy and our economic growth path including the DFIs. The Party does need to monitor and engage with these organisations in order to correct the problems that are emerging presently. Economic policies, programmes and structures should be working in tandem to enhance a productive, green job-creating, poverty-eradicating economy and that removes inequalities between

groups of people including the needs of gender, youth and the disabled.

- ***Gender Equality***

Capitalism as a system and ideology thrives on inequalities, creating margins between groups of people. This is worsened by the unique colonialist nature of capitalism that is found in South Africa. There are communities in South Africa who pride themselves on philistine practices that exacerbate the position of women. The Party has a task of educating Party members, capitalists, political leaders, traditional leaders, working class women and men, church leaders etc on the importance and the benefits of genuine equality which includes gender equality.

- ***Youth***

The youth in South Africa is economically vulnerable, Cosatu reported that over 70% of young women were unemployed in “Towards 2015”. The HSRC reports that young women between 20 and 25 are six times more likely to contract HIV. These two factors are related. If young women are the most vulnerable to unemployment, it makes them more unlikely to

assert their rights in their personal relationships including the right to safe sex.

Any job creating measure that does not consider the precarious position of young women in South Africa is taking us to a bleak future. Young women also do not have a voice in many organisations including organisations created for women. Young women and children are under threat of human trafficking. Human trafficking in children and women and GBV are an ever-present scare that must be addressed. The Party also needs to educate its members and our society about these dangers and how they impact on young women. The Party and all its structures need to come out strongly on the rights of young women in the context of these factors.

- ***Recruitment, Mobilisation and Organisation of women***

Considering that most of the work that the Party does stands to benefit working class women and their children, the Party needs to focus on recruitment of women membership as well. In line with what Lenin said in 1919, this recruitment campaign cannot be a campaign of expediency, but it must be a campaign aimed

at building a mass communist movement that has the capacity to overthrow capitalism. This must be made clear and not deduced. The Party of the 21st century needs to be mass-based, and it cannot be truly so if women are not present in their numbers. The hegemony of the working class in society can only be established when the Party has replicated its membership, including women, and built the quality of that cadreship.

- ***Ongoing Cadreship Education***

In the interest of building working class hegemony and reversing the impact of the ideological superstructure of society, there is a need for ongoing cadre development. It must also be able to engage various formations on the theory and practice of the Party. In addition, any Party cadre should adopt self-development and collective development. The benefits of ongoing education are that the cadreship of the Party would also not be easily dismissed, disarmed, confused, miseducated or co-opted.

- ***International Programme***

The Party needs to develop its

cadreship on all aspects of socialism including the aspect of gender equality within socialism. It needs to develop relationships with relevant international socialist organisations to share its vision for women's emancipation and gender equality and to learn from these organisations the various strategies and tactics for sustainable women's emancipation and gender equality. The history of women's organisation and gender struggles has shown that the victories of women and gender activities were vulnerable to backlashes, there is a need therefore to continue learning about genuine and sustainable equality between all people, men and women.

Need for discussion on these issues

This was intended as a discussion paper for the Party. It is merely skirting on the issues and has had to be highly compressed for this publication. It is hoped the work of the GST will ensure consistent integration of the gender question in all Party thought and action.

***Fundi Nzimande is the author of
Leading like a Woman***

Capital Accumulation, Social Reproduction and Social Protection After the Covid 19 Pandemic

Langa Zita

Introduction

The South African Communist Party has in recent public pronouncements argued that the country should not go back to the society we had before the Covid 19 pandemic. Whilst we would love to go back to a life without the pandemic, we certainly would not want to associate ourselves with every aspect of the socio-economic life before it.

Before the pandemic, the country was downgraded by the rating agencies and there were serious problems with state owned enterprises. Unemployment was about 35% in terms of its broad definition. We were the most unequal society on the planet. Certain men in our society were routinely oppressing and killing women and abusing children. We had high levels of poverty with an economy unable to register significant levels of growth. Our energy regime is neither clean nor socially controlled.

The crisis of capitalist reproduction

In a nutshell we exhibited all the fault-lines of an economy of an underdeveloped country. What causes underdevelopment? Underdevelopment

in the main is a function of the form of integration of an economy into the global economic system. Those societies that were integrated through the form of colonialism have found their socio-economic system subject to an external logic and not that of the people of the country, but that of the needs of the global capitalist system. Apartheid colonialism did not end this subjection, instead it gave a racial dimension to it. In other words, the existence of internal colonialism or a colonialism of a special type did not change the location of the South African socio-economic formation from its role as the supplier of primary mineral products to the global economy. Instead, in the context of the existence of the colonising white minority bloc, it created the best conditions for this historic bloc and its imperialist allies to optimally take advantage of an abundant cheap black labour.

The current crisis of the South African economy is grounded in the inability of the South African socio-economic formation to reproduce itself in the

absence of cheap black labour, labour which now has democratic and worker rights. Today you do not have legislation that confined most black people to the homelands and partially exempted capital from the complete costs of the reproduction of labour. What you have is a combative working class with rights, an exponentially grown Black middle class and a sea of unemployed within a social system that is unable to integrate them as sellers of labour power. It would be wrong to see this problem as something internal to the South African social formation only. The social formation is an effect of its location in the global capitalist system. South Africa's 25 years of democracy demonstrates the inability to address this reality. This reality will remain as it is, as long as we do not address the conditions of our integration into the world system.

The Post-Apartheid Path of Development

What then has been the policy path of the post-apartheid state? The Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) marked a shift from the Constitutional Guidelines (CG) that the ANC had adopted in the late 80s. The CG was the last document of the ANC that was consistent with the historical national democratic conceptual framework allocating as it

did a prominent if shared role for the state in the political economy of a post-apartheid society.

True to its origins from the trade union movement, the RDP brought a conceptual framework that sought to reconcile popular and working-class aspirations with a particular form of capitalist organisation, a 'regime of accumulation'. It is a debate for another day as to where this new frame of understanding ultimately led, save to say that it presented the capitalist framework as the ultimate framework from whence the demands of the popular classes would have to be canvassed and ultimately won. This would be the case even if the slogan 'growth through redistribution' appeared to be and indeed was progressive.

It would not be difficult from this stand point to see transformation as a matter of macro- and micro- economics. The lasting contribution of the RDP was its contribution to what would be a 'social democratic moment' of the movement. I would like to argue that the delivery of basic needs, i.e. free housing for the poor, free education at primary, secondary and (more recently) tertiary level, the child-support and old age grants, free and publicly provided health care are a legacy of the RDP. They also coincide quite well with policy perspectives contained within the ANC's Ready to Govern policy document.

Notwithstanding many challenges we have met, debates and differences, this historic attempt at inclusion is the most serious accomplishment of the ANC and its allies after 25 years of democratic rule. It is the defining contribution of the presidencies of Mandela and Mbeki. It is something we should proclaim, claim and defend.

The failure to develop a post periphery path of development

Despite these major achievements, we however have not been able to craft a path that transcends our location in the periphery of the global economic system, which reproduces the ills that afflict our society. In some ways one can define our challenge as that of the coexistence of an ascendant social wage and the imperatives of a sustainable and transformed regime of capital accumulation. In other words, we have a promising social wage regime with a capital accumulation regime that is uncompetitive, which if unaddressed will stunt and impel the fortunes of the South African revolution. What explains this difficulty?

There may well be other reasons, but I think the most critical factor that limited the capacity of the ANC to develop a post periphery strategy was the fall of East European socialism and the rise and dominance of neoliberalism. The consensus of the global elites and

their representatives was to ban the state from the economy, and to punish and bully those that thought otherwise.

This was not made easy by the rise of digitisation and the micro-electronic revolution. I do not want to look at the implication of micro-electronics and its recomposition of the labour process. I merely want to look at its relationship with finance and its technical enabling of the financialization of the world economy. This created the space for the rise of financial instruments that led money to chase money without the mediation of production, facilitating the profiteering through finance at odds with the production of material goods. The neoliberal ethos championed by the most powerful fractions of global capital (finance) proscribed the space for manoeuvrability by the democratic state, limiting in the process the prospect of the rise of a post peripheral economic strategy.

Some theoretical questions

Part of the challenges we had was the conflation of conceptual categories whose sum effect has been to subject the entire social formation to a logic that was not in the interest of most classes and the reconstituted historic bloc of the new nation, i.e. all South Africans across class and racial lines. Our post-apartheid path of development has had many positive dimensions,

but immanently will not address the economic interest of all classes and peoples of our country. Other than the interest of finance capital, the other dominant sections of business have not been positioned in a way that enables them to compete globally, particularly with regards to manufactured goods. Therefore, the economic strategy we have adopted only addresses the inequities and inequalities within the South African socio-economic formation. This is what Black Economic Empowerment does. It however does not address the capabilities of the economic formation to hold its own in the global capitalist world which is the only yardstick for a successful and sustainable developmental state.

This relates to the question of the often but diversely evoked of a developmental state. A developmental state, in the proper sense of the concept, is a state that is involved in the reconstitution of the economic structure of a peripheral economy, enabling it to positively participate in the global economy. It seeks to redefine these relations in such a way that the path of development is defined and optimises the interests of a peripheral society against those of the centre and the dominant players in the global system.

A related question is on the ideological character of a developmental state. Is it progressive or is it capitalist or is it

both? With the exception of Cuba and the Soviet Union, developmental states have been at the service of the building of a capitalist economy. This has been the case whether with the French and German states in the 19th century and the Chinese experiment particularly after Deng. In a perverted and racist sense even the Apartheid state was developmental in its elaboration of state-owned enterprises and its agenda to build Afrikaner capital and in its attempt to solve the poor white problem. However, its limited project was racist, local and not global.

Another conceptual difficulty in our country has been the conflation of the outcomes of a developmental state and the definition of a developmental state. Historically, developmental states have led to the well-being of the majority of citizens where they have been implemented. These outcomes however do not define a developmental state. Well run countries with a well targeted fiscal spend can achieve welfare outcomes. This does not make them developmental states. Developmental states are about the transformation of the structure of a peripheral economy into a developed economy using the instruments in the hands of the state. Such instruments include, in particular, promoting the manufacturing capacity of the local economy, driving the export of manufactured goods, advancing

import substitution, pivoting these activities as the dominant generator of value in the economy.

What is not in dispute is that, despite the ideological affinities of those who led and established developmental states, successfully implemented developmental states have led to structural change and social inclusion. It is these outcomes that imbue developmental states with their progressive credentials.

This theoretical detour is necessitated by the fact that, except for black sections of capital, dominant capital in South Africa has not come across as supportive of building a developmental state, even if they have not publicly opposed it. Adding to this timidity of dominant capital to the idea of a developmental state is the fact that the liberation movement's definition of the developmental state is not clear. It includes both outcomes and instruments. Secondly, we have down-right refused to build an institutional architecture that elaborates how the state interfaces, supports and cajoles different sectors of capital to achieve the economic efficiencies and outcomes historically associated with successful developmental states.

Reconciling the achievements of the social wage and the imperatives of a developmental state

As we have alluded previously, some of the achievements in social transformation make South Africa a point of reference. Studies have shown that without the Child Support Grant and the Old Age Grant, many families would have been destitute. Our social transformation program is fundamental to the social reproduction of our society. This is what we need to defend, consolidate and refine. Three recent developments point to the fact that the importance of this social foundation is something that is shared by most South Africans. The recent improvements of these grants as a cushion during the pandemic through increasing their value and the R350 grant to the unemployed attests to this. Of course, these measures were time bound and are linked to the period of the pandemic. However, the R350 to the unemployed has seeds of revolutionary reform. This radical potential was taken a step further when the ANC NEC took the decision to look at the possibility of a Basic Income Grant. In its words, having noted:

“The deep impact of inequality and poverty, despite progress made, continues to be reflected in millions of people facing hunger, living in informal settlements, in indigent households and unemployed. We introduced social

measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic such as food relief, increasing grants and the special Covid-19 grant.

Although these measures made a difference, given the devastating economic impact expected as the pandemic unfolds, we must look at additional measures to broaden the social safety net, and provide for the dignity of all South Africans. The NEC therefore tasked the Social Transformation Committee and the Economic Transformation Committee to urgently meet to look at the feasibility and detailed modalities of a Basic Income Grant, including the costing and financing of this measure, and to report to the Officials and NWC.” (African National Congress, National Executive Committee Statement held on the 27 to 27 June, 2020)

If implemented this would be a development of historical proportions. It would fundamentally change the lives of millions affected not only by the Covid 19 pandemic, but by vulnerabilities and risks of living under a capitalist civilisation. It is tempting to be drawn to how much that this should be which is of course important. What is critical at this stage is that the measure must be effected. It should however have some relationship to the cost of the reproduction of a working class person. It would have to be augmented and strengthened over time, incrementally. To consolidate it and to build on it we

will have to confront and deal with our development path of the past 25 years.

Before outlining the measures, we may have to take in addressing this development path it is important to further reflect on the implications of a Basic Income Grant as a social protection measure. Firstly, it correctly responds to the challenges of job creation in the periphery. Not only is the failure to create jobs a result of our structural location in the global system, it is also due to the joblessness arising out of automation itself a response to the crisis Fordism that has been with the world since the 1973 oil crisis. Secondly, it correctly addresses this challenge through some form of income security in the light of the fact that the availability of jobs i.e. job security is no longer synonymous with the existence of capitalism both in the North and in the South. Thirdly it gives progressive policy makers the social space to attend to the structural defects of the economy with the limited comfort that there is not a single citizen in the Republic who goes to sleep hungry. This allows policy makers to focus on the job at hand, which is to build a dynamic, modern and efficient economy. It plays a similar role that land and agrarian reform played in the developmental states of Japan, South Korea and China at the earlier moments of their developmental states i.e. protecting the vulnerable.

Despite this relative social cushion, income security in a peripheral society does not guarantee passage to a developmental state and to structural change. In fact, it is quite possible that it could lead to a debt trap if the structural features of the economy are not addressed and the economy remains in its peripheral form. It is therefore important that as we take steps to consolidate the social protection plan, we take the necessary steps to put our economy on a higher and more dynamic level.

Consolidating economic competence to reinforce social protection

Any plan that must transform the structure of our economy must have the following five pillars. The first one is trust between the state and the private sector. It is impossible to plan any strategy for an economic rebirth if animosity is the only relationship between the state and capital. We must, more than before, emphasise that we share a common agenda to build the economy to pursue capital accumulation.

The second pillar is the buy-in of organised workers. This project of capital accumulation must not and should not be on the basis of the super exploitation of workers. That would be a maintenance of the peripheral and apartheid model. Workers' right to

organise and the right to strike must be sacrosanct as we explore this alternative path of economic development.

Thirdly, this initiative should enable the voice of entrepreneurs to come through. It therefore should not address business in general, but should particularly attend to the specific challenges of business in a particular sector. Whilst we should maintain tripartite structures such as NEDLAC, this plan issues from a different geography. It moves away from national entities and even provincial ones. It looks at each sector and builds not just a sectoral plan but sectoral and sub-sectoral public institutions with the willingness and commitment to support each sector not only to thrive in South Africa but to penetrate international markets and be internationally competitive.

Fourthly, in attending to these sectors and subsectors it works with them with the intention of addressing three fundamental issues. The first one is access to the market. The public institutions that works with a sector must know far more than the entrepreneurs in the sector the conditions of both the domestic and global demand dimensions of the sector. They must make this market intelligence available to all the entrepreneurs who are organized participants in that sector.

The second issue for the sectoral bodies to address is access to innovation.

As we argued earlier, attending to the structural issue of our subordination in the global political economy means changing the character and terms of our participation in it. Critical here is the necessity to move away from being merely a supplier of raw primary products into the world economy. To compete with companies of the North with their big research budgets we have to find a way to be at the cutting edge of research and innovation. The only way our entrepreneurs can do that is if the public sector steps in to make this innovation available. It would mean that researchers working with these sectoral bodies attend global industry expos and are able to know what is selling and make this information available to players in the sector.

The third task for the sectoral institutions to address is access to finance. One of the challenges of business, particularly businesses of historically disadvantaged, individuals is access to finance. The democratic state may have to move away from the current system of providing general funding, and rather link funding to sectors. There must be funding (credit) for the auto sector, for the clothing industry, for the plastic industry etc. This funding should be made available by the state. This focus on sectors could also be the basis for engaging the private banking sector to create a similar and corresponding

framework in their allocation of credit.

The public provision of market intelligence, access to innovation and finance would in some way be some form of socialisation of the market. Entrepreneurs would still be individual owners of capital and they would still be driven by self-interest but the social realm, society itself in the form of these public sectoral bodies, would be internalised in the operations of these companies. The public would be an integral part of their ecosystem. This is some form of the socialisation of the market.

It is our view that an economy undergirded by such an institutional matrix has a better chance of participating in the global economy, in a way that undoes peripheralization. It would be able to ensure that South Africa has a fighting chance to be a South Korea in the next two to three decades. If this is the correct path, monetary and fiscal policy must be subordinated to this framework.

Conclusion

We argued at the beginning of this paper that our country's crisis is not only internally generated. The present crisis of social reproduction is a function of the mode of capital accumulation, the way of creating wealth. This mode of creating wealth has to do with the way the capitalist economy came into being

in our country and how it has been shaped by South Africa's location in the global division of labour. The global system that we are part of reduces us to a mere exporter of primary goods. It peripheralizes us. The peripheral condition is the reason the economy is stagnant and cannot create sufficient jobs for the working class. The social wage we have built in the past 25 years has done most to protect some of the most vulnerable. It must be kept, protected and defended. Bringing in a Basic Income Grant will strengthen this social wage; it will serve as a significant protection for all the excluded and the vulnerable. It simultaneously creates the social space for the progressive government to focus on building the developmental state with the necessary and adequate institutions to defeat our peripheral condition, to secure more revenues to expand the social wage and create a people's economy and an alternative and better society and civilisation.

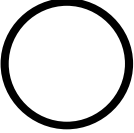
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Ecosocialism is the future: Build it Now!

Janet Cherry

 One hundred years ago, the Communist Party of South Africa was formed, in the aftermath of the devastation of World War I. As the newly formed Soviet Union fought its own civil war to defend the gains of the Russian Revolution, it seemed apparent to communists around the world that socialism was in the immediate future. But it was not to be; the struggle for socialism stuttered through the rest of the twentieth century.

Sixty years after the October Revolution, Ruth First took up the position of director of research at the Centre for African Studies at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique.

At that time, in 1977, Mozambique was one of the most important experiments in constructing a socialist society in Africa. Ruth First was assassinated in 1982, and the experiment was crushed in the decades to follow, by the apartheid regime-sponsored civil war, the collapse of Soviet support at the end of the 1980s, (and the global dominance of neoliberalism. Mozambique today is fighting new wars against both Islamic insurgents and corporate extractivism. Yet, from the smouldering ashes of the socialist experiment destroyed by

devastation of civil war, there arises yet a wisp of smoke.

This article explores how the lessons of other experiments with socialism can be drawn on to explore a new model of socialism in the Southern African context. This model, known as ecosocialism, is not only made possible by the current conjuncture of climate crisis and pandemic, but is necessary. Even better, it is able to provide both the vision and the strategy for the creation of a more just and sustainable human society.

Going beyond first level responses to the pandemic

It has often been noted during the months of lockdown in response to the COVID pandemic that women suffer disproportionately from the crisis: women are victims of even higher levels of domestic violence; women are the nurses and care workers exposed to the virus; women are responsible for providing food to hungry families. Women are often the first line of responders; taking responsibility for growing or distributing food, for organising to secure the health and wellbeing of the household and the community. When it comes to grassroots

action – the CANS, the neighbourhood committees, the street committees of the 1980s – women were, and are, at the forefront of such initiatives. While women may be empowered at such moments by taking these actions, they are essentially responsive to a crisis situation. Can this grassroots power be converted into something more lasting, that goes beyond charity or the relief of hunger from day to day?

Going beyond defensive struggles against capital and extractivism

In the context of climate change, drought and widespread hunger, the imperative of transforming our societies and restructuring our economies is more urgent than ever. At the same time, the devastation of the COVID 19 pandemic creates spaces for us to organise in a different way.

The challenges in Southern Africa in the context of climate change are not really new: the priorities and the struggles in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, as in South Africa, are for food sovereignty, water, and land. Many local struggles (think here of Xolobeni in the Eastern Cape; of Lamu in Kenya) are essentially defensive struggles to prevent land grabs or destruction by extractive capital. Such struggles are important and when coordinated – as argued by Naomi Klein (*This Changes Everything*: Capitalism versus the

Climate and by WoMin and other ecofeminist groups around the world) – can potentially pose a serious challenge to extractive capitalism. However, it is argued here that we need to go beyond the pushback against extractives, and such localised defensive struggles. We need to construct the alternative to extractive capitalism.

How do we do this?

We need to reclaim the traditions of people's power, including the practices of participatory and direct democracy, and to reinvent the old strategies and apply them to our new contexts. In neighbourhoods, in townships, this means local organisation around local needs. But it means more than making demands (either politely, through the IDP process, or less politely, through protest at the councillor's office). It means going beyond demanding that our municipalities 'deliver something' to us, to us taking back 'the commons.' If you are a communist, you may prefer the language of taking control over the means of production; if you are not a communist, the language of asset-based community development will do as well. What it really involves is ordinary people ('the community' or 'the working class') making productive use of local resources.

In order to do this, we need to reclaim the old labour traditions of

workers' control, radical and direct democracy, and explore the theories and examples that are useful to understand this. Sian Byrne has written of this tradition in our own labour movement, and while it is inspiring in some ways, it is notable that in South Africa there are very few examples of worker-controlled cooperatives or enterprises. We can explore examples from elsewhere, especially those that have proven sustainable such as Mondragon in Spain. We can learn from other socialist experiments, some of which failed, as in Mozambique, and others which have survived, as in Kerala; and from the new experiments in Rojava, Chiapas, and Cochabamba.

The example of Kerala State in India is a particularly positive one. In the midst of the struggles against reactionary populism and destructive and extractive capitalism in India, Kerala has provided us with an exemplary model of how we should respond to the pandemic. Since the 1970s, when Kerala had its first communist government, it has been seen as a model for redistributive development which meets basic needs. The model is essentially one of decentralisation to local government and maximum participation in decision-making by local residents. Drawing on their long traditions of village-level participatory democracy combined with state support for health care and

education, they have managed to cope far better than far wealthier societies, and even to care for the tens of thousands of migrant workers who have come into the poor rural province during the pandemic.

While Kerala is a state of 35 million people, so comparable in population to South Africa and our neighbours, it is still primarily a rural society; it is also a state within a federal system where the country as a whole is firmly embedded in the global capitalist system. This leads to another discussion about relative autonomy and delinking from global capitalism – but this is for another day. For the purpose of this discussion, the relationship between local government and communities is pertinent.

What can we learn from this model?

The model of decentralised and democratic local control over resources within the context of a nation-state such as India provides important strategic lesson for South Africa. What we are advocating in South Africa is premised on localised control over resources, in particular to meet basic needs. This means energy (through renewables) and food (through control over land and water), as well as the circular economy model which involves the re-use and recycling of waste to energy and useful products.

What is radical about it? It may be

questioned whether this model is not simply advocating small-scale NGO, charity or government-dependent projects like food gardens. This is a valid challenge as, to date, we have not seen any potential for radical economic transformation coming from such projects in our context. The argument here – which is drawing on the essentials of Marxist theory – is that the changing forces of production enable us to use the new technology to change the social relations of production, through decentralised and socialised control over the means of production. In particular, decentralised production of energy, food and some manufactured goods are possible, as well as a completely decentralised financial system.

While the focus of the debate in South Africa thus far has been on state-owned enterprises, which are highly centralised (and inefficient and/or corrupt), there have been very few attempts at social ownership, decentralised to working class neighbourhoods, townships and villages. And this is possible, at least in the control and provision of the essentials of food and energy production, through the new technologies of renewable energy as well as the old tried and tested methods of food production using permaculture or agroecology principles, low input, low fossil fuel and few carbon emissions involved. Decentralised and customised production of certain

manufactured goods is also possible with 3-D printing. And going one step further, with a circular economy model, all inputs come back into the system and are reused in production. It has often been argued that human society (both capitalist and socialist) has mined enough raw materials (iron in particular) to meet the needs of industrial production in the foreseeable future. Fossil fuels are on the way out, as we know. Very limited extraction is necessary at this stage to keep economies going.

Climate change forces us to localise our economies, to move decisively away from export-led development models and dependence on global markets, and to move back to models based on import substitution and national self-sufficiency. This does not imply self-sufficiency in everything, nor that South Africa would not trade with other countries; in other words, it would not involve a ‘delink’ from global capital as Mozambique did in the 1970s. However, energy and food at minimum can be radically decentralised into social ownership.

What about the State?

What role will the state play in this model? The old communists always challenge me on this one. The model above is wrongly interpreted by some as an argument for complete privatisation in a highly competitive,

market-based economy, with minimal role for the state – a neoliberal solution, in other words. However, an ecosocialist model is premised on a high level of state regulation, together with the socialisation of the means of production. This is the opposite of privatisation – but it does not mean central state ownership; rather, it entails decentralised social or community ownership of productive resources. The model we are currently piloting is based on neighbourhood cooperatives, but this is not the necessary form that socialised production takes; cooperatives are not inherently democratic nor are they inherently socialist; and as Ruth First noted, when arguing for cooperative villages in Mozambique, ‘In many countries cooperatives have become instruments of central state control over production and marketing without concomitant benefits to producer, or instruments for richer peasants to direct and control public resources for their own private ends’ (First 1983, 194; cited in Williams 2014, 7).

The toolbox of Marxism enables us to focus on the fundamentals of how society and economy are organised. Marx argued that technology is ultimately a liberating force; who, after all, wants to be a mine worker or work on a production line for most of your life? The changing forces of production (technology) enables the empowerment of the exploited and oppressed. But only

if – and it is a big if – this class controls the means of production.

Can we change the social relations of production within the current capitalist mode of production? Can this be done in a partial way, within the existing system? Will the state allow us to engage in socialist experiments? A crude determinist Marxist-Leninism will insist on the capturing of state power, as the state is understood to be the instrument of class rule – the ‘executive committee of the bourgeoisie’, in Marx’s terms. Yet one of the many things that we can we learn from Ruth First is to not be dogmatic in our reading of Marx; to always read the local context, to carefully describe and understand what is actually going on, and fit our strategy to the current context.

Lucien van der Walt has recently explored this issue in depth and come up with a useful typology of what he terms ‘modes of politics at a distance from the state’. These ‘modes of politics’ include ‘outside and against the state’ (the mode of politics premised in anarchist philosophy, which does not see any possibility of radical transformation coming from the state), and ‘outside and despite the state’ which emphasises a strategy of ‘experimental communism’ and ‘prefigurative action’ which is autonomous of the state and ‘leaves the state alone’.

For South Africa, and for the ecosocialist project outlined above,

there is a third mode outlined by Helliker – that of ‘outside but with’ the State. This mode is compatible with the Kerala model and allows some local autonomy while allowing the state to provide support in certain respects. In this model, the private sector continues to exist in parallel with the socialised sector, and the state regulates both, in a true ‘mixed economy’.

As Trevor Manuel challenged me some years ago, it is time to stop organising against the state, and time to organise with the state. Yet the results of this ‘working with the state’ over the past twenty-five years in South Africa have not yielded any elements of democratic socialism. We cannot wait for the state to implement ecosocialism, but at the same time need to acknowledge that tiny autonomous experiments are not going to yield the kind of radical transformation of the economy that is necessary. The most effective strategy would be that of ‘outside but with’ the State; but if the state cannot assist in this project, then at least it should ‘leave us alone’ to pursue the path of ‘outside and despite’ the state.

The underlying understanding is that the development of the forces of production allows for the transformation of social relations of production. The transition from carbon capitalism allows a transition to a fundamentally different society.

Ecosocialism and the transition from carbon capitalism

This transition has far-reaching (and positive) implications for our agenda for building an egalitarian, democratic, socialist society. The technology upon which production is based is changing – in other words, the forces of production are changing radically. The technology allows for decentralised production of energy, food and many of the goods and services which meet basic needs of human society. Decentralised, localised forms of production have, in turn, far-reaching implications for the social relations of production. The means of production can be locally owned and controlled. The monopolisation and centralisation of capital that Marx thought inevitable, can be reversed in the 21st century. Not only production of goods but provision of services, especially banking, communication, information – can be democratised and decentralised.

The climate crisis, which threatens the livelihoods and lives of millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa, is potentially a liberating force in this context. The argument is that decentralised energy production allows for local control over the means of production and this in turn allows for radical changes in the social relations of production. New localised

economies which are premised on food sovereignty, energy sovereignty, and reuse of local resources in a circular economy principle, have the potential to fundamentally alter the existing capitalist mode of production. While in the global North, overconsumption and overdependence on fossil fuel means a much more difficult transition to low-carbon economies while retaining a high quality of life, the global South has the potential for a different kind of transition.

What is (and is not) the strategy?

It is not charity, nor is it premised on the altruism of the wealthy or the taxation of the middle class. It is not premised on dependency on the central state. It is not waiting for big corporates to change their behaviour nor is it dependent on corporate social investment. It does not involve 'the people' or the private sector doing the job of government.

Instead, it involves 'the people' taking control over the production of essential goods and services – first food, water and energy; then markets and finance; then housing, clothing and furniture. Decentralised, localised, socialised. It is inclusive: it lives happily alongside representative democracy; it is not concerned with elections, it is not a political party trying to win support; it is not trying to be hegemonic. It is democratic; it is premised on tolerance

and equality. There is no 'tyranny of participation'; it is not necessary for everybody to do everything. The old socialist slogan, 'From each according to her ability, to each according to her contribution' can come into play in practice.

Joe Slovo acknowledged back in 1989 that we had failed to link democracy and socialism. While we have democracy, we have not even begun to experiment with democratic socialism. Now is the time to do so.

What is 'Ecosocialism'?

A comrade asked me this question the other day, and I responded, 'it is sustainable use of resources to meet human needs'. This is not capitalism, which cannot do either of these things. It is socialism which is premised on what has been outlined above. It enables the meeting of human needs in a just and democratic society, addressing the challenges of climate change, poverty and inequality. It ensures not only our survival and the survival of other living things, but the realisation of our creative potential in a society of abundance.

We speak often of the 'transition to socialism' and in the context of climate change, to the 'transition to a zero-carbon economy'. For such a transition – which I have argued is one transition, an ecosocialist transition – we need a strategy. The members of the Centre for African Studies in Maputo stated

in 1982 that its research was intended to respond to Frelimo's 'strategy of socialist transition' (Centre of African Studies 1982, 37; cited in Williams, 2014, 7). However, as Gavin Williams argues, although "it was predicated on the consistent development of Frelimo's political and economic 'line' in the direction of socialist transformation. This proved not to be the case." From the ashes of the past, the assassination of Ruth First and the death of the socialist experiment in Mozambique through the devastation of civil war, arises the wisp of smoke that reminds us of the potential for democratic socialism in Africa.

From the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic, comes the necessity and the possibility of reorganising our economies along a more just and sustainable model. The 21st century is the time for ecosocialism. Ecosocialism is the future – build it now!

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Like a bad smell that won't go away, racism refuses to abate: Defending non-racialism

Dr Mandla Radebe

This year as we celebrate 26 years of our democratic breakthrough, South Africa remains a country that is defined by race. Our country, as Morné Oosthuizen points out, still displays stark and persistent racial inequalities when it comes to resource flows between the state and individuals, and between individuals and households. ‘Variations by race in access to jobs, the degree of reliance on social grants, and the share of income deriving from asset ownership, among other factors, influence the economic lifecycle of individuals.’¹ This contemporary manifestation of race in our society enables us to situate more precisely the importance of non-racialism in our revolution. But it is important to begin by providing a concise working definition on race. The concept of race is based on the idea that as humans we can be categorised into distinct groups based on inherited physical and behavioral differences. Of course, this belief of the existence of biogenetically distinct races was debunked centuries ago.² Scholars such as Miles (1988) perceive race as a human construct, an ideology with regulatory power within society.³ Thus, in essence

race is an ideological effect, a mask that hides real economic relationships.⁴

In our context, racialised inequalities were shaped by Colonialism of a Special Type (CST) and its many legacies that continue to besiege of our society. The post-apartheid neoliberal capitalist experimentations have exacerbated structural inequality and poverty. There is no doubt that our thoroughgoing transformational agenda should seek to normalise our society by addressing the deep-seated developmental challenges. But this should not be a diversion from the objectives of the national democratic revolution (NDR) to build a non-racial and inclusive democracy. Equally, as we advance objectives of the NDR, we shouldn't obfuscate the reality of our racialised inequalities.

In appreciating this dialectic, and as part of the Joe Slovo commemoration, now in its 25th year, the South African Communist Party (SACP) in Gauteng province organised a memorial lecture in his honour under the theme ‘Defending non-racialism’. This is indeed a befitting theme to honour the life and times of this revolutionary martyr of our struggle. Slovo was a larger than life character who played

a major role in the liberation of the oppressed people of South Africa. Apart from holding numerous positions in the African National Congress (ANC)-headed movement (at the time of his death he was the National Chairperson of the SACP), Slovo symbolised the non-racial character of our revolution. He was one of the many compatriots of European descent (referred to as whites) who dedicated their lives towards constructing a non-racial democratic society. This is demonstrated by their commitments and readiness to pay the ultimate price by inter alia serving in the people's liberation army, uMkhonto weSizwe (The Spear of the Nation) with distinction.

It was befitting that a memorial lecture in his honour should be held under a such theme to defend non-racialism at a time where our revolution is facing numerous challenges not least related to the fundamental question of race. Symbolically, amongst the speakers at the lecture were comrades Jessie Duarte (ANC's Deputy Secretary-General) and Pravin Gordhan (Minister of Public Enterprises) who have had to deal with the subject themselves. Also, the lecture coincided with the ANC-organised celebration of another Party stalwart and paragon of non-racialism, Professor Ben Turok. This event provided another revolutionary platform to re-assert the discourse of non-racialism in the movement.

Why the discourse of non-racialism ought to be elevated in the current juncture of our revolution? This is the question at the centre of this paper. It begins by providing a cursory glance at this question by locating it within the movement. The recent re-emergence of the discourse is highlighted, while also attempting to trace the history and importance of non-racialism in the movement. Lastly, it concludes by highlighting the pitfalls of abandoning our historical position on non-racialism.

The re-emergence of racism in South Africa

Like a bad smell that won't go away, racism refuses to abate. Towards the end 2019, Jessie Duarte caused a stir when she characterised the ANC as 'tribalistic and racist' for what she perceived as the marginalisation of 'members and voters who are not black Africans'⁵. She argued that: 'We have almost become tribalists in the way we present ourselves. We are racist in the ANC because we marginalise people who are not black African people; keep them out of the ANC at all costs. ... put one or two there as tokens so that we can say mara ja, you know, there is uJessie apha (here) representing.' She went on to posit: 'We won't accept the fact that non-racialism is a core value of the ANC. We don't want to accept that, we even go as far as creating myths. I don't like the term

coloured people, I never refer to myself as a coloured, ever in my life and I never will.'

On the other hand, Gordhan has had to endure both subtle and overt forms of racism mainly from the populist neo-fascist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). Julius Malema's EFF has employed overt racism in order to isolate Gordhan by inter alia calling him racist as a camouflage for their own racism. In 2019, EFF MP Nazier Paulsen was kicked out of the National Assembly for refusing to withdraw his statement that Gordhan appoints senior staff at state-owned enterprises based on race.⁶ In their endeavour to ramp up their racism, EFF has resorted to refer to Gordhan by his second name Jamnadas. Lia Snijman correctly posits that this is an act of racism and 'an attempt to label him as an outsider, a 'foreigner' in a country known for its xenophobia.'⁷ Obviously, Malema and his gaggle of followers will deny the racism charges when confronted. Recently, Malema argued that: 'Pravin Gordhan's name is Jamnadas. No-one can tell us otherwise. Whether the enemy likes it or not, the enemy cannot blame us. They must blame the mother and father of Jamnadas for naming him. It's like calling me Sello. That is the name I was born with... Down with Jamnadas, down!' His former spokesperson weighed in on twitter defending his

boss by saying 'When we called Zuma "ubaba ka Duduzane" people never saw any problem. They laughed & joined us. Today, we call Gordhan with his middle name, Jamnadas, they say it's racist against Indian people! HOW? FACT is: to them Gordhan is special & must be untouchable!'⁸

Gordhan has not been the only one to be subjected to such racist vitriol. Former ANC NEC member Derek Hanekom was another victim of such abuses leading to former President Jacob Zuma's son Edward issuing a letter of apology for his 'unpleasing remarks'.⁹ Not long ago our provincial secretary in Gauteng, Jacob Mamabolo, had to intervene when a senior member of the ANC in Gauteng Province said something to the effect that white people must understand who is the boss in this country. However, this does not suggest that racism in the ANC and the country is driven by blacks against non-African people. Far from it. In fact, the ANC-headed movement is a microcosm of a country where the African majority still endure racism on daily basis. Daily our media is awash with stories of racism such as the ones against convicted racists Vicki Momberg and Adam Catzavelos. Therefore, it is no surprise that according to the South African Human Rights Commission, racism and infringements of socio-economic rights were the most reported human

rights violations in South Africa for the 2016/2017 year.¹⁰

The non-racial character of the movement

The history of the ANC is synonymous with the struggle against racism. Essentially, racism is a hubris on one's race or ethnicity superiority while seeing other groups of humans as inferior. Interrogated from a broader Marxist perspective, racism and its manifestations reflect power relations in society 'often expressed in terms of territory or access to resources'.¹¹ Taylor (2011) advances that capitalism is dependent on racism as both a source of profiteering, but 'more importantly as a means to divide and rule.'¹² The oppression of the majority in South Africa during colonialism and apartheid was fundamentally premised on race. It is on this basis that at the heart of our revolution has been the protracted struggle for non-racialism.

Raymond Suttner (2012) postulates non-racialism as distinguishable from multi-racialism in that it entails organisation without any reference to race. In other words, black and white people can be part of the same organisation without emphasising race. While on the other hand 'multi-racialism accepted distinct, racially organised communities within a broad overall unity of allied organisations,

sharing an aspiration towards a unified society.'¹³ Even within the ANC non-racialism was not easily attained until the 1969 Morogoro Conference opened the doors to coloureds, Indians and whites comrades. It was not until the 1985 Kabwe Conference that comrades like Joe Slovo could be elected to any position in the ANC. Only then could we say the ANC eventually came of age to become a truly non-racial organisation even though its primary political ally, the SACP, had long embraced non-racialism.

This reality illustrates that building a non-racial society is an ongoing struggle. However, if we are to build a non-racial society we ought to appreciate what Albie Sachs said in 1988, 'Non-racialism doesn't mean that it is a society of 'non'-something. It means you are eliminating all the apartheid barriers, in terms of access to government, in terms of freedom to move, and then you feel that this is your country. But it doesn't describe the quality and personality of the country and people. That is not a non-something – that is a something, and that is a South African personality that is being constructed.'¹⁴ This view correctly captures the need to reverse the CST features that bedevil our contemporary society characterised by racialised poverty with inequality ranking among the highest in the world.¹⁵ However, it remains highly

debatable whether the current economic trajectory can completely obliterate racialised inequalities. Nevertheless, our world record breaking inequality must be confronted to reduce lack of access to natural resources, a two-tiered educational system, a dual health system and other socioeconomic elements, largely experienced by the black working class.¹⁶

When author Julie Frederikse posed a question on class and race to the late Nobleman Jabulani ‘Mzala’ Nxumalo as part of her book ‘The Unbreakable Thread: Non-racialism in South Africa’ in 1985, he ventured an opinion that should continue to guide. He posited that the SACP avoids ranking these concepts in any order of importance but ‘Rather we see their relationship as being expressed in the reality of the black workers’ position – exploited as a class, oppressed as a race.’ He went on to argue that ‘Where our party makes a distinction in regard to this relationship is to assert that, because South Africa’s mode of production is essentially capitalist, institutionalized racism serves the interests of class exploitation and not the other way around.’¹⁷ Indeed, it remains important for us not to lose sight of the content of our revolution of building an inclusive non-racial society by inter alia confronting class exploitation imbued in the current production processes.

While Comrade Mzala appreciated the distinct roles of the ANC and SACP in advancing the NDR, he reminds us of our common programme which remains relevant in the current epoch, ‘... the ANC and SACP agree that the political programme, at this stage of the revolution, is the establishment of a non-racial democracy that is anti-monopoly.’¹⁸ Of course, another critical aspect when dealing with any form of discrimination beyond the race and class question is the gender dimension which is important in our context. In South Africa, women still suffered from triple oppression (race, class and gender).

Avoid the pitfalls of narrow Pan-Africanist nationalism. Build and defend non-racialism

It has become patently clear that non-racialism is a cornerstone of our revolution and we should not fall into the pitfalls of narrow nationalism as we conduct it. Our movement’s current dangerous flirtation with Pan-Africanist ideology can only lead our revolution to a cul de sac as demonstrated by the demise of narrow nationalistic organisations such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). On numerous occasions the PAC characterised the SACP as ‘quacks’, part of the basis of its breakaway from the ANC. In 1989, its Secretary for Economic Affairs, Mfanasekhaya Pearce Gqobo, repeated these sentiments when

quoting the PAC's founding president Mangaliso Sobukwe as saying, 'South Africa was unfortunate in her choice of Christians and communists. They were all quacks. They are all settlers, at heart and mind. They continue to resist the propagation of or the practical implementation of the idea of working on the basis of one African Nationhood, whereby all that pay their only allegiance to Africa and accept the democratic rule of an African majority shall be regarded as Africans.'¹⁹

This 'who's the boss' narrow-Africanist outlook is no different from the racism we have briefly described above. Its infiltration in the movement has led to the alienation of the movement's historical constituency. It is common these days to hear some places referred to as minority areas and others as strongholds. This lexicon depicts the kind of ideology that is finding expression in our ranks that is devoid of our historical perspective on non-racialism. Indeed, when revolutionary consciousness leaves a movement it is unlikely to make a grand announcement. Paulo Freire (1968) warns us on critical consciousness of the importance of an in-depth understanding of the world by allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions.²⁰

Therefore, the SACP must be at the forefront of reversing this growing ideological deficit and

gap. Fundamentally, this cannot be reversed by elevating celebrity and 'influencer' type of 'revolutionaries' into high positions in the state. To the contrary, this requires a hard slog which entails building a strong, active and campaigning voting district branches on the ground. These branches should be unapologetic in advancing their work guided by the Party's principles and Marxist-Leninist ideology. Thus, these branches must be connected to the communities where they are located. Fundamentally, they must be part of popular struggles on the access to water and sanitation, education, health and many other pertinent struggles. This is how a left popular front can be consolidated on the ground to strengthen the second and more radical phase of the NDR. Any shortcuts and continued deviation from the movement's historical non-racial character can only spell doom and gloom.

End notes

- 1 See Oosthuizen (2019) MUST HAVE FULL TITLE
- 2 See <https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human>
- 3 See Miles, R. (1988). Racism, Marxism and British politics. *Economy and Society*, 17, 428-460.
- 4 See Miles, R. (1984). Marxism versus the “sociology of race relation”? *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 7, 217-237. Cited in Solomos, J. and Back, L. (1995). Marxism, racism and ethnicity. *American Behavioral Scientist* Jan 1995 v38 n3 p407(14)
- 5 See Loyiso Sidimba at <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/the-anc-is-racist-and-tribalistic-says-gatvol-jessie-duarte-37806623>
- 6 See <https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/eff-mp-shown-the-door-after-saying-gordhans-appointments-are-based-on-race-20191119>
- 7 <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-23-pravin-jamnadas-gordhan-a-case-study-when-your-name-is-weaponised-by-haters-on-twitter/>
- 8 See <https://www.thesouthafrican.com/news/eff-eskom-march-julius-malema-what-does-jamnandas-mean-why-is-it-racist/>
- 9 <https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/797-human-rights-commission-unmoved-by-edward-zuma-apology>
- 10 <https://mg.co.za/article/2018-12-10-racism-tops-sa-human-rights-violations/>
- 11 <https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/what-can-marxist-approach-tell-us-about-racism>
- 12 <https://socialistworker.org/2011/01/04/race-class-and-marxism>
- 13 See Suttner (2012, p25)
- 14 Albie Sachs, interviewed in 1985
- 15 See Frye, Farred and Nojekwa (2011)
- 16 See Triegaardt 2006; see also Edigheji 2007b
- 17 See http://www.saha.org.za/nonracialism/the_movement_is_very_big_now.htm
- 18 See http://www.saha.org.za/nonracialism/the_movement_is_very_big_now.htm
- 19 See http://www.saha.org.za/nonracialism/the_movement_is_very_big_now.htm
- 20 Paulo Freire: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973).

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SACP Free State Province input and discussion document towards a local government summit

Local government under apartheid

The period preceding the democratic and developmental local government epoch was underpinned by the following spatial and economic transformational challenges:

Historically legislated, state-sponsored dispossession and economic deprivation based on race and class differentiation

Segregated settlement patterns, which were functionally inefficient and costly;

The poor and working class were relegated into far flung, underdeveloped urban peripheries and the rural hinterlands with minimal support for livelihood. Capital exploited their labour for a pittance, paying meagre wages and imposing unfair taxation measures;

Extreme concentrations of taxable economic resources in formerly white areas, necessitating redistribution between and within local areas;

Huge backlogs in service infrastructure in historically underdeveloped areas, requiring municipal expenditure far in excess of the available revenue;

Great spatial separations and disparities

between towns and townships and urban sprawl, which increased service provision and transportation costs enormously;

Entrenched modes of decision-making, administration and delivery inherited from municipalities geared for the implementation of urban and rural apartheid;

Inability to leverage private sector resources for development due to defective relations between capital and municipalities and low credit ratings of many municipalities;

Substantial variations in capacity, with some municipalities having little or no pre-existing institutional foundations to build on; and

Poor relations between municipalities and the local communities they serve.

By 1994, when South Africa attained political independence, there were over 1300 different local authorities. After December 2000, this was reduced to 284 wall-to-wall municipalities and after 2016 the number was further reduced to 257.

Democratic, developmental local government

The South African Constitution provides for three spheres of government, namely national, provincial and local, which are interdependent with exclusive powers to govern and make laws in their respective jurisdictions. The local sphere consists of 257 municipalities, comprised of eight metropolitan (category A), 44 district (category C) and 205 local (category B) municipalities.

The primary mandate of local government

Municipalities derive their primary mandate from the Constitution and various pieces of legislation and policies of government. Section 151 of the Constitution establishes a local sphere of government, elevating the status of local government from statutory bodies to a full sphere of government in its own right. Constitutional recognition of local democracy was an important innovation to deepen democracy in South Africa.

A developmental local government is one that is committed to working with citizens and community groups to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. Its core mandate is summarised in Section 152 (1) of the Constitution as:

Provide democratic and accountable government for local communities;

Ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner;

Promote social and economic development;

Promote a safe and healthy environment; and

Encourage involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of Local Government.

Minimum expectations from a developmental municipality

Sound political leadership that provides a vision for the local area

Constantly builds its capacity, including a deepened understanding of local dynamics, anticipating changes and learning from past practices;

Is accountable and transparent. Increased accountability ensures that the actions of the Council reflect the aspirations of the community, increases the legitimacy of the Council and deepens local democracy;

Builds partnerships and coalitions with communities, business, labour and other public agencies and encourages the development of a vibrant civil society;

Represents a diversity of interests, including perceived marginalised groups; and

Demonstrates value for money. Local political leadership is responsible for ensuring that local taxes are optimally,

efficiently and effectively managed by the local administration for enhanced performance and service quality.

Sustainable service delivery:

All citizens have access to good, quality services, including suitability for purpose, timeliness, convenience, safety, continuity, responsiveness to service-users and professionalism, regardless of delivery mechanism, and Municipalities must ensure affordability through setting tariffs and determining appropriate service levels and cross-subsidisation.

Structural impediments to effective delivery of municipal mandate

Overregulation due to:

Overabundance of laws regulating the functioning and processes of local government:-

15 local government specific legislation,
14 regulations (MFMA has a staggering 10 regulations), and
36 Notices

Limited attempts to differentiate between municipalities;

Excessive legislative compliance obligations eg a medium to small municipality pays in excess of R5 million to GRAP requirements;

Excessive legislative reporting requirements, with approximately

75 legislative reports with monthly, quarterly and annual deadlines; and

Local government is bombarded with requests for information from different spheres of government and organs of state, including duplications.

A direct consequence of these unrealistic, impractical and incoherent legislative obligations, placed on local government, is that it imposes huge financial and administrative burdens on municipalities, resulting in the misdirection of funds that could be used for human resources or service deliveries.

A further consequence is that the legal framework requires highly skilled personnel for the implementation of particular processes, with municipalities opting to outsource such processes, leading to exorbitant consulting costs. Of particular concern is that a commonly agreed policy agenda is increasingly being changed. The adhoc and often unilateral practices often result in deviations from the original policy intent.

If it is assumed that the plethora of new pieces of legislation and notices are trying to fix problems, it would be useful to at least identify and agree on the nature of the problems that need to be addressed. This would ensure that the correct, constructive instruments are applied.

State of municipalities in the Free State

After 20 years of experimenting with establishing democratic and accountable local government (municipal governance) systems in South Africa; and as we wind down its 5th term of administration, it is important to assess the municipalities in our Province. This will enable the determination of interventions and priorities that will inform the course of action towards, during and after the forth-coming 2021 local government elections.

State of democratic accountable local governance

On 3 August 2016, South Africa once again held successful, credible municipal elections. This demonstrates that systems and structures for democratic transitions, particularly local democracy through the election of local representatives, are well entrenched.

There are 23 municipalities in the Free State province comprised as follows:

- 1 x (A) Metropolitan Municipality (Mangaung Metro)
- 4 x (C) District Municipalities (Thabo Mofutsanyane, Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa and Xhariep)
- 18 x (B) Local municipalities (MAP, Nketoane, Dihlabeng, Mantsopa, Setsoto; Mestimaholo, Mafube,

Ngwathe, Moqhaka, Phumelela; Matjhabeng, Masilonyane, Nala, Tokologo, Letsemeng; Kopanong; Tswelopele and Mohokare)

Sixty percent of the elected councilors were new entrants into the system. While the ongoing infusion of new energy into local governance structures is good; a 60% turnover is high and implies a huge loss of the institutional memory required for the advancement of the national democratic revolution and a better quality of life for all.

The Free State performed better than the national average in terms of electing female public representatives into local government. Most of the big municipalities in the province are led by female Executive Mayors (Mangaung, Dihlabeng, Ngwathe, Moqhaka, Setsoto and, Mestimaholo and 3 out of 4 DMs are also led by female Executive Mayors including Thabo Mofutsanyane, Fezile Dabi and Xhariep).

Another area of good progress is that all municipalities in the province have established oversight structures. All 23 municipalities have reported that they had established Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs) and Audit Committees mechanisms by June 2018.

While acknowledging the successful democratic transitions, entrenching of local democracy and the local government leadership in women

empowerment, it is concerning to note some challenges within the local governance system. By the end of June 2017 (within 1 year) at least 3 of 23 municipalities had been placed under s139 intervention by the Free State Executive Council and an additional fourth municipality in 2020, varyingly for failing to execute constitutional obligations including ensuring sound governance and prudent financial management.

Despite the establishment of oversight structures, governance and controls seem to be faltering. When using AG outcomes as a proxy to assess state of governance in municipalities, the picture is bleak. Most municipalities failed to convince the AG that their Annual Financial Statements as submitted in 2019, represented a healthy state of affairs. (Where laws are complied with, political oversight is functioning well and basic management disciplines are functioning optimally). Only three municipalities were able to achieve unqualified opinion with matters of emphasis. We thank the leadership of Xhariep, Lejweputswa and Moqhaka for bearing the flag of hope in this regard.

When the new term started there were only 3 municipalities with disclaimers of audit opinion by the AG and none with adverse opinions. This had improved from 9 municipalities at the beginning of the term. At least 1 had a clean audit.

However, the subsequent cycles of 2016/2017; 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 AG outcomes reflect an overall regression across all 23 municipalities with even more disclaimers and one adverse opinion.

The AG report points to the following systematic failures:

Compliance with legislation and policies of Council. The AG asserts that in the Free State the political willingness to deal with the consequences of maladministration is non-existent

Declining oversight and assurance levels. Municipalities are unable to keep to the required disciplines of financial management and reporting regimes
Compromised internal control environment. Mismanaged tender systems has opened opportunities for uncontrolled and speculative escalation of corruption, and

Increased unwarranted expenditures. Due to lack of compliance with laws and regulations governing municipal processes of procurement and transactions, un-authorized, wasteful and irregular expenditures have ballooned across all Free State municipalities.

The audit results are in stark contrast to the fact that oversight structures such as audit committees and MPACs have been established and trained in all municipalities in the province. What then is the problem? How can

we strengthen our accountability and implementation of consequences where necessary?

Secondly, if we consider the indicator of interventions as a sign of stability in our municipal governance, one can also conclude that many municipalities are badly governed. Currently, there are 5 municipalities who have been placed by the Free State EXCO under Administration. These include:

Mangaung Metro: placed under s139 (5) (a) and (b) – due to maladministration and gross financial mismanagement and political instability;

MAP- Mafube, Masilonyane and Metsimaholo: placed under s139 (1) (b) - due to perennial financial mismanagement, collapse of governance and lack of service delivery;

Nala, Moqhaka, Kopanong, Matjhabeng: with forensic investigations initiated by MEC of COGTA in terms of s106 of Municipal Systems Act - due to alleged gross financial irregularities, corruption and maladministration;

Masilonyane intervention is a repeat yet the municipality has not improved. This begs the question as to whether these interventions are effective at all?

Almost all FS municipalities adopted unfunded budgets during the current financial year (2019/20). The majority were forced to adjust their budgets by the NT threat in December 2019 to withhold their equitable shares if

they refused to adjust their unfunded budgets. This implies that the current state of governance in our municipalities exhibits institutions that are incapable of self-induced discipline and compliance with the law.

National Treasury published a list of municipalities who are technically insolvent and at risk of s139 interventions as a result of financial management failures and alleged irregularities. The list identifies 18 of 23 municipalities in the FS as at risk. This means that these municipalities are unable to keep revenue at levels above their existing liabilities and expenditure commitments. In other words, these municipalities will most likely fail to pay salaries and obligations to their creditors.

FS Municipalities are faced with uncontrollable growth in their debt. Currently, Eskom is owed a combined debt of nearly R9 billion by FS municipalities. FS has the highest Eskom debt among all the provinces.

One of the major challenges facing municipal governance is the dire lack of consequence management to incentivise a culture of sound financial management and transparent, accountable governance within our municipalities.

State of service delivery

Despite inheriting high levels of backlogs for provision of basic services, Free State Municipalities have

incrementally extended basic services to a growing number of our citizens, the majority of whom did not enjoy such access pre-1994. For example:

Our citizens increasingly continue to enjoy basic access to clean, potable water supplied through our municipalities. StatsSA (2018) reported that 92% of FS Households have access to basic water supply. The same report claims that reliability remained at 68% (meaning incidences of disruptions experienced in last three month leading to June 2018) Provision of basic access to sanitation services by our municipalities are now estimated at over 85%;

StatsSA (2018) states that FS Province enjoys an estimated 91,2% access to electricity connections;

Access to refuse and solid waste collection is at 76%

Housing (% of households living in informal dwellings) only = 12,9%.

This is a relatively better position when compared to other provinces with high levels of informal settlements.

Backlogs remain with regressions in some instances due to:

Poor maintenance of infrastructure;

Aging infrastructure which often causes unplanned and costly service disruptions;

Vandalisms due to recent violent public protests in areas like Moqhaka, Mangaung, MAP, Letsemeng, Kopanong and Matjhabeng;

Lack of adequate funding for municipal infrastructure; and

Poor planning and lack of technical skills in critical engineering departments of municipalities. Many municipalities operate Technical Services and planning departments with Directors who are not engineers or town planners.

Local Economic Development

Economic development and inequality

Municipalities are required to facilitate conducive environments for economic development and growth. When local economies function well, the revenue bases increase and the municipal exposure to additional own revenues increases. Free State municipalities are also affected by the macro economic situation and therefore suffer macro structural economic challenges including but not limited to:

The increased inequality gap between rich and poor households. As a direct consequence the indigent population has grown;

Worsened poverty and unemployment levels. For example, of the 2,9 million Free State residents living in our municipalities, a staggering 1,2 million people are unemployed. The majority of these are young people. This situation is worrisome as it risks insurgence or class rebellion;

Collection levels across all

municipalities are below nationally set benchmarks of 90%. This compromises abilities of municipalities to generate revenue, maintain infrastructure and expand services to people.

Fintech recently published a report highlighting the concentration of personal wealth in different municipalities across the country. No municipalities from the Free State made it to the top 25 wealthy municipalities.

Almost half of the bottom 25 are from FS. Provinces such as Limpopo and Northern Cape are performing better despite often being viewed as rural and underdeveloped, implying a better management of resources towards local economic development.

These data sets must be interrogated further to extrapolate how well the gross capital formation and associated concentrations of wealth translate into the wealth of municipal institutions and by extension improved service delivery. We must continue to agitate that the structure of the economy must close the inequality gap, however we will struggle to improve the lives of all our people across all classes particularly the working class if we cannot capitalise on the existing limited resources to grow the local economies.

Land and spatial transformation

SPLUMA is one of the tools available to municipal councils to facilitate economic development, land use

management and spatial transformation. However, many municipalities in the Free State are struggling to comply with SPLUMA requirements. For example, while most municipalities in the province have established Municipal Planning Tribunals, which are required to facilitate effective land use management and spatial transformation decisions, only 13 seem to be relatively functional.

Safe and healthy environment

According to the National Biodiversity Assessment of 2018 almost half of South Africa's ecosystem types are categorised as threatened, with inland wetlands considered to have the highest proportion of threatened ecosystem types. The assessment also emphasises that wetland and river ecosystem types have the lowest level of protection.

The largest threats to biodiversity and environmental sustainability in South Africa are: habitat loss, land degradation, biological invasions, climate change, and biological resource use. Other pressures on ecosystems include waste generated from mining, agriculture, manufacturing and urban settlements, causing water pollution, air pollution and soil pollution.

The northern boundary of the Free State is formed by the Vaal River with the Orange River forming the southern border. Mining and agriculture are the major contributors to the province's

economy. Various, coal, diamonds and bentonite mining activities occur throughout the province while approximately 120 000 km² of land is used by the agricultural sector for crop production and grazing purposes.

The Free State is considered to be a transitional zone between the dry and hot climate of the western regions and the moist cooler eastern regions of the country. The ecosystems and habitats of the Free State are therefore in most part not considered to be rare or unique (Biodiversity Plan of the Free State Province, 2016). It is however, important to note that both grasslands and wetlands are highly sensitive ecosystems, and are particularly sensitive to extreme changes in temperature, humidity and precipitation.

The Province has 34 different vegetation types. Although the dominant vegetation type of the Free State is grassland, the province is also home to a variety of tree and wildflower species. Protected areas in the province make up only 1% of the province, while degraded areas account for 18% of the land area of the province. Progress has been made in improving the threat status of ecosystems with threatened ecosystems now covering 12% of the natural remaining habitat extent of the province, reduced from 15% estimated in 2011.

Large areas of the Free State vegetation types are threatened and

degraded due to various human actions (e.g. mining, development, agriculture). The Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site (VDWHS) is located within the North-West and Free State Provinces. Two of the vegetation types, the Vredefort Dome Granite and Rand Highveld Grasslands, are listed as threatened terrestrial ecosystems. The Vredefort Dome World Heritage Site (VDWHS) is the oldest, largest, and most deeply eroded meteorite impact structure in the world, providing critical evidence of the earth's geological history. Preservation of the VDWHS is therefore critical to preserving South Africa's heritage and diversity.

Greater effort needs to be made in conservation of biodiversity and expanding the conservation estate in the province. Municipalities have not played an active role in protecting of sensitive and threatened ecosystems, as such, municipalities must be supported by the province to strengthen conservation practices.

The province, due largely to the widespread grassland biome and increasingly high atmospheric temperatures, is prone to wildfires. Provincial role players, including the Provincial Disaster Management Centre, as well as district disaster management centres and local municipalities must integrate climate change forecasting and modelling into and disaster risk planning and response mechanisms.

Involvement of communities in matters of local government

All 23 municipalities in the Province have established ward committees and these structures were all inducted by end of June 2018.

If we consider the indicator of local democracy by assessing state of relations between political leaderships (Council and its structures), communities and municipal administrations, the picture is discouraging despite the existence of ward committees. What then is the problem? How can ward committees be strengthened and resourced to play their role most effectively? How can we refine our policy and implementation mechanisms to enhance the interface between communities and councils?

Two key considerations for assured improvement include establishing cordial relations at the level of institutional leadership be it between Municipal Managers and Mayors, or Mayors and Speakers; and improving labour relations including relations between trade union leaders and the political and administrative leadership of municipalities.

Conclusion

The situation and developments outlined above occur in full view of the political leadership of the Mass Democratic Movement. Many of the challenges unfortunately impact negatively on

the lives of people, particularly the working class and poor families. These are situations that the leadership of the alliance must grapple with and develop clear, unambiguous decisions on how to address them sustainably. This must include alliance mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and take decisions whenever there is deviation from agreed resolutions.

Having monitored the progress and challenges of developmental, democratic local government over the past 20 years since December 2000. We need to evaluate local governance and development over this period to determine the course of action over the next 10 years leading up to 2030 and beyond. This may necessitate a critical review of the White Paper on Local Government, other complementary policies, institutional mechanisms for local governance and the regulatory environment all of which are intended to deliver sustainable development at the local level.

Reflections on November 2019 Moses Mabhida provincial secretariat report, “Defending the Marxist-Leninist character and vanguard role of the SACP”

David Masoa

Communists pride themselves about the legacy left behind by past left writers and leaders globally. We also appreciate that the application of this legacy must not be dogmatic, but be within the developing political economy of each country, and in terms of the concrete material circumstances prevailing.

The political report of the Moses Mabhida PEC raises a number of fundamental questions and observations facing the working class and the party. The report further critically reflects on debates within the party’s Central Committee on the state of our national liberation and the state, economy and international issues. This article will not reflect on all issues raised by the document.

It would be important to first reflect on what one would understand as the party of the working class. In his reflections book, Fidel Castro said this was made up of “persons united around common ideas, who join together to give life to Marxist ideas, that is to carry out the

historic mission of the working-class”. If we have to defend the character of the party, this must be the starting point of every communist party structure. This means the party must be interconnected with the working class at every step of its operations. In doing that, the party would be able to identify on a continuous basis, the needs of the working class, what are its weakness in the way the party engages with the masses, and it must own up to such weaknesses and improve.

The party must seek the shortest route to the dictatorship of the proletariat, which must be informed by tried and tested cadres, who would understand the inter-relationship of the role of leadership, structure and masses in terms of informing the strategy and tactics. This inter-relationship serves as a means to guard against the party being influenced by exploiters or agents who would always be in its ranks who might come out to be pace deciders.

The danger of the agenda being led from that angle could leave the party

only at the national liberation stage. The end result reduces masses to a reactionary mode and unable to grasp the developing world. A Marxist-Leninist party must be able to foresee the coming historical stages, and be capable of preparing the masses even before the completion of national liberation, which would make it possible to achieve tasks aimed at socialism being truly entrenched within the masses. This can be found in the programmes of the party, namely South African Road to Freedom, Path to Power and now The South African Road Socialism. In all these programmes, the party's character always find expression.

The debate in the party is not much about the character, but interpretation and application of the party principle of democratic centralism. This principle as a corner-stone holding the character of the party together, if missed, can lead to our debates not being focused. What work has been done in regard to a new revolutionary generation?

The threatening political and ideological crisis in the party:

Part of the challenges of the party in the Moses Mabhida Secretariat report is correct, especially about political and ideological hemorrhaging. In any revolution, if the question of the cadre is not addressed within the context of who is a cadre, such challenges are bound to prevail. Without mentioning many of a cadre's characteristics linked to

the character of the party as a base, are party cadres subscribing to materialism or a combination of materialism and idealism?

Can party cadres apply both theory and practice within the prescript of a revolution, meaning every action be linked to an objective? If reading Bua Komanisi (volume 9, no 3, June 2015) is anything to go by, while this crisis is critical, it needs to shape and propel the party in the right direction.

Contradictions in our ideological orientation towards strategy and tactics are always taken as fundamental sources of growth, but once they become a crisis, it means really the report is correct in characterizing them. To deal with political and ideological crises, the party cannot talk of going to the roots in terms of economic issues, but the organizational renewal document becomes a key answer to the crisis, not in theory but practice. The question of holding leadership positions cannot be reduced to number of years served in the party. This issue must be linked to the character of the party, which is always informed by its ideological outlook. We need to reduce the number of executive members in each party structure. Leaders elected must be on the basis of their commitment to a historical materialistic outlook.

One critical issue which the Moses Mabhida Secretariat report is flagging, is the crisis when analyzing and

characterizing the liberation movement. The question which must be asked is, to what extent the working-class vanguard party should become a mass-based vanguard party?

As a working class party, ideological correctness is key in a bourgeois environment. Our history tells us that intra-party contradictions have to be resolved ideologically, robustly, with purging being applied as a principle to cleanse the party of un-ideological tendencies. The vanguard role of the party and working class struggles would be compromised if the majority of the leadership of drinks ideologically from same cup as the enemy.

The party leadership must demand not only political development from its leaders, but also responsibility of individual leaders for their actions, and an iron discipline that restrains any passing weaknesses. Leaders of party cannot be pre-occupied in non-revolutionary activities which are known to all, and in gossip and factionalism, which are not revolutionary activities.

It is good that we are running away from bureaucratization of the party but there seems to no clarity on internal control and accountability. Part of the crisis might be the abuse of democratic principles by those who are wrong and patronage, as some members of party do not take leadership as a revolutionary duty, but a favour to the members.

If leaders display heartlessness and treat the abnormal as normal and normal as abnormal, working class struggles would always be compromised. While development must be appreciated, the question of party leaders being unable to interpret and analyse concrete condition, apply our theory to practice and reflect on our challenges, we will have a crisis.

The challenges of the National Democratic Revolution:

Historically, every epoch produce a particular type of cadre. The Moses Mabhida Secretariat report confirms the organizational challenges facing the SACP. Lenin was correct to say “better fewer, but better”. The SACP’s “organizational renewal” document, documents on the organizational structure of Communist Parties, and the methods and contents of their work and the rules of Communist Party the Soviet Union must be seriously workshopped to salvage the struggle and the party. The issue of counter-revolution cannot be new to the party; the question is what are the measures in place to counter it?

The Post 1994 era

When the national liberation leaders in 1994 said “freedom at last”, the party said “aluta continua”. But are party members applying SARS as part of “aluta” as new forms of struggle? Some areas which require party serious decision-

making is on the relationship between the party and the state, financing the party. The selective application of our theory which sometimes gets influenced by populism, counter-revolution and other un-communist tendencies, has to be avoided, which the leadership of the party at Central Committee has dealt with very well.

The Moses Mabhida Secretariat report reflects the disturbing phenomenon of subjective dominance over the objective factors. The party says the National Democratic Revolution is the shortest and most direct route to socialism. This is reflected in the CC political reports of February, June, and September 2019. But members do not appreciate the leadership role of CC. This phenomenon cannot be treated at the level of PEC; the question is for how long must such tendencies be allowed to prevail? The party's self-criticism and criticism have to be complementary.

International Balance of forces

The Going to Roots document of the party answers the key issues of the path of capitalist development in our country. The narrative of privatization advanced by the "1996 class project" is finding expression today due to skewed capitalist development. We are told SOEs (state-owned enterprises) are non-performing and require to be privatised, but how do you privatise a non-performing entity?

Also, the cry to reduce public sector wage bill implies the transition to run the entire public sector with consultants or independent contractors. The party's response to National Treasury and Cde Tito Mboweni is a lesson on how governance policy debates in the party are streamlined to lower structures. If a vacuum exists at the lower structures like now, it means imperialism would have a space to dance in victory, as was shown in the last local government elections in the Johannesburg, Tshwane and Nelson Mandela metros.

Stand-alone tendency

Our alliance with the ANC is not a coincidence but product of struggle. It is unique and is the longest still standing globally. While this must not be taken lightly, also it must also be noted that NDR struggle does not have a GPS nor a thermostat approach. Application of dialectical laws must be the answer to key questions in the NDR. This must be addressed at the level of ordinary people, mainly the working class. Our alliance is not individually based but organizational in nature.

The posture which sometimes prevail as if we are individually aligned is a myth that must be dispelled. This question is not new in the party. The question is how it was raised in the past and how it was resolved, and this must be the guiding posture. The Moses Mabhida Secretariat report is very clear

on the posture the party has to take to deal with this matter. The leadership must also clarify whether the guard was lowered. The party has to say where are we, and how far are we from those we are leading. The Secretariat report reflects on a strategic and tactical approach to this.

Addressing this cannot be reduced to a particular layer of the party to provide answers, but all structures must do so.

Conclusion

Ideological decay, deficiency and confusion leads to bourgeois tendencies like tribalism, which translates easily to federalism, gangsterism politics, and other counter-revolutionary outcomes. Those responsible for this must be dealt with harshly in the communist movement. The Secretariat Report is correct to focus on the need to locate the party close to the working class. The party leadership must display solidarity first with our members. If the leadership of the party is not united and cohesive, that is the recipe for disaster.

If the party leaders cannot use their personal experiences of coming from working class families, then the question is whose experiences are they using? If you look at those who grew up in townships or rural areas, at some stage they used to sleep under the table in the kitchen, eat from same dish as other family members, rely on

one pair of shoes per year, it is this that must influence them. Addressing some of these issues could serve as a base for social cohesion. Communists cannot pretend about issues, we have to be humanitarian and love the working class. Once this fades away in our day to day activities, that it becomes a recipe for disaster.

Cde David Masoa is an SACP District Secretary

Book review -

WOMEN IN SOLITARY: INSIDE THE FEMALE RESISTANCE TO APARTHEID

Reneva Fourie

The book “Women in solitary: Inside the female resistance to apartheid” by Shanthini Naidoo is beautifully crafted. It simply but vividly captures the experiences of seven women detained in the apartheid Pretoria Central Prison from the winter of 1969 to the spring of 1970, as part of a political trial, known as the “Trial of 22”. The women, Cdes Nomzamo Winnie Mandela, Martha Dhlamini, Thokozile Mngoma, Rita Ndzanga, Nondwe Mankahla, Joyce Sikhakhane and Shanthie Naidoo, were part of the 22 accused that faced 21 charges under the Suppression of Communism Act.

The non-fiction, well-researched narration starts by outlining the physiological and psychological effects of trauma, setting the stage for the more explicit horrific consequences of detention and solitary confinement. It then proceeds to demonstrate the tenacity and steadfastness of women anti-apartheid activists by succinctly unpacking the lives of particularly five of the detainees. Naidoo paints a rich, holistic and captivating picture of the trialists. While their activism is

clearly depicted, each story is so well interwoven with their daily experiences, that a full sense of their characters can be appreciated despite the brevity of information.

Naidoo’s writing style makes it easy to imagine Cde Joyce Sikhakhane-Rankin’s sassiness; her confidence as the first black woman journalist; and her resilient determination not to crack under torture. One gets a sense of the family tapestry that has made Cde Shantie Naidoo the deeply committed revolutionary that she is. Born into the struggle, with her parents, grandparents and their forebearers all having been politically active, it was only natural that her career too would be linked to fighting for justice in society and in the workplace. This commitment and bravery resulted in numerous arrests, banning orders and eventually exile.

Forced removals catapulted Cde Rita Ndzanga into the world of resistance, which was further cemented by exposure to trade unionism. Her first detention, along with her husband, which resulted in their three young children being left

behind alone, remains a raw wound. She was fortunate to serve in the first democratic parliament, first at provincial and then at a national level. Cde Nondwe Mankahla grew up in Port Elizabeth at a time when being a member of the ANC was fashionable, and though only 17 years old, she eagerly joined the 1952 Defiance Campaign as an ANC Youth League volunteer. Conscious of the value of the battle of ideas, she found full-time employment at the printing and publishing company that was producing the banned *New Age*, *Fighting Talk* and the *Pondo Revolt* in the 1960s. The book elaborates on how it is that she became part of the Trail of 22 and what happened thereafter. The book also provides invaluable, untold insights on the experiences of Cde Winnie Mandela. Before focusing on Cde Winnie however, it dedicates a chapter to the notorious apartheid interrogator and torturer, Swanepoel.

“Women in solitary: Inside the female resistance to apartheid” jerks the conscience. It reminds us of how easily we have forgotten the price of freedom and of our inadequacies in valuing and celebrating the efforts that have gone into the struggle for a just, united, non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa. The book especially stirs unease about the erasure of the historical contributions of women to our liberation. All those who

wish to have a richer understanding of history, including the wide scope of uses of sexual violence as a weapon of war in apartheid South Africa, and an understanding of the impact of generational trauma today, simply must get a copy.

Cde Reneva Fourie is a member of the Central Committee and currently lives in Damascus, Syria

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