

MANAGING NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION

ANC RESPONSE TO SACP DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Below are the notes of the ANC National Working Committee (NWC) for a bilateral meeting with the South African Communist Party (SACP) held in Johannesburg on 19 June 2006. The notes constitute the ANC NWC's response to an SACP Central Committee discussion document published in Bua Komanisi, Vol. 5, Issue No. 1, May 2006.

A RELATIONSHIP THAT HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME

Notes for the NWC bilateral meeting with the South African Communist Party: Part 1

19 June 2006

1. The relationship between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) has stood the test of time. We come to this bilateral with that understanding that we are comrades in arms. Our relationship was forged in the struggle against apartheid, and now, on the terrain of democracy, we share common goals and programmes towards the elimination of poverty and unemployment.
2. Over more than eighty fighting years, the Communist Party has established itself as an honoured and leading force within South Africa's democratic movement. The moral conduct and intellectual pedigree of communist cadres, and the manner in which they conducted themselves within the liberation movement has earned the Party a unique and central role in the ANC.
3. From the ANC's point of view, therefore, we have always valued the fact that to our left on the political spectrum is the SACP, which is friendly to the ANC and is ready to share programmes with the ANC to achieve common objectives.
4. In the course of that history, the SACP has through its input and through the conduct of its members, who are also members of the ANC, helped to shape the ANC itself. The ANC still regards the Party as a great teacher. Through the positions it has taken, the Party has enhanced the ANC's ability to lead the struggle of our people for freedom.
5. Having learned so much from the Party, the ANC has come to expect a great deal from the SACP. At the core of these expectations is the belief that the Party's cadres have consistently upheld the highest levels of revolutionary morality. The high moral and intellectual standards that communist cadres established for themselves are well illustrated in the following quotation from the Central Committee's internal memo to Communist Cadres in MK, dated 1967:

"It is the duty of Communists in Umkhonto we Sizwe to be an example of devotion and loyalty to the military command of Umkhonto we Sizwe and the political leadership of the African National Congress. "It is the duty of Communists to set an example of hard work and zeal in the performance of their duties in the army and always to be the first to volunteer for the most difficult tasks.

"Communists must constantly raise the level of their political consciousness through study of the latest developments in South Africa and abroad. Such knowledge must be shared with all freedom fighters in a spirit of humility.

On no account must Communists give the impression of 'knowing everything'. Communists must always be willing to learn from others as well as teach them.

"Communists wherever they are represent the high ideals of Communism and the liberation of all mankind from the bonds of oppression. Therefore it is the duty of Communists strenuously to oppose all direct or indirect manifestations of racialism, tribalism or narrow nationalism. Communists will always defend the unity of the revolutionary forces both communists and non-communists and espouse the progressive nationalism of the African National Congress as enshrined in the Freedom Charter. Any person who puts forward tribalist, racialist or other ideas that produce confusion or division is not a Communist.

"In the course of the struggle the best elements, that is, those that are most far-sighted, resolute and determined in the fight for liberation and social progress are always drawn to the Communist Party. Communists do not consider that leadership consists in competing for positions in the national movement, still less by engaging in intrigues. But by reason of their devotion to duty and work and also by their political understanding of the needs of the movement they gain the confidence of the nation. This process applies in the South African Revolution.

"Revolutionary struggle is not an invitation to a picnic. All Communists must therefore make it part of their duty to instill the spirit of sacrifice wherever they are; to inspire the freedom fighters in the periods of difficulty; to constantly emphasise that the victory of the revolution is inevitable. Communists must vigorously combat any inferiority complex or spirit of despair or cynicism among freedom fighters.

"Our party is a party of the oppressed worker and poor peasant. Our members must always set an example of devotion to the people and respect for their interests and traditions. In our political work and personal conduct we must always seek to win the masses by persuasion and example. There is no duty nobler than the fight for the liberation of the masses. This noble fight must not be sullied by arrogance and immoral behaviour such as theft of property; molesting of women or drunkenness which would lower the prestige of the movement and also endanger its security.

"Communists fight for the unity of the revolutionary forces and liberation movements of Southern Africa and throughout our continent. We are internationalist and it is the duty of Communists always to spread knowledge and act in solidarity with the struggles of people in other parts of the world against imperialism for freedom and independence, for peace and socialism. The value and meaning of international solidarity must be constantly placed before the eyes of the freedom fighters and the masses of the people."

6. The role that communist cadres defined for themselves in mass organisations of the liberation movement was clear and distinct. But adherence to these high ideals within the SACP did not come about automatically. The Party consistently recruited its members from the most committed, hard working, selfless and ethically distinguished cadres of the ANC, the union movement and other mass formations.
7. The ANC is a mass-based, multi-class organisation, in which the Party has won itself a place of honour. As a consequence the SACP is able to engage with the ANC as a platform in which it can continue to educate, politicise and conscientise the working class and other social forces located within the ANC. The Party of the working class saw the ANC as the formation within which it could reach out to the broadest constellation of social forces.
8. Therefore, the main responsibility for defining the relationship between the ANC and the SACP lies with the Party. It is not the ANC, but the SACP, that must take the lead in defining the nature of our relationship
9. Aside from its high ethical and moral standards, the Party also distinguished itself through the character and mode of its intellectual input into the broader liberation movement. The character of this input could be defined as a sharpness that attracts rather than invective that repels. Eschewing the tendency towards mouthing revolutionary sounding slogans, the Party was able to lead through the sheer cogency of its argument. Arguments were won, not by closing space for debate, but by demonstrating a superior logic.

10. This is the second great expectation that we have of the Party: that is its capacity to define each epoch and phase of struggle in a way which focuses the energy of all the forces of change in a manner that unites our people.
11. The key defining feature of the SACP's intellectual contribution has been its ability to define, at each stage of our revolution, the character of the epoch we found ourselves in and the tasks arising from this characterisation. It was this capacity for intellectual leadership, and the expectation that arises from this capacity, to which ANC President Thabo Mbeki made reference to at the SACP's special national congress in 2005 when he said,

"As in the past, we are faced with common challenges.

"For that reason, we are very interested in what [the SACP] will discuss and decide. What you discuss and decide will determine what happens in this country and influence what the ANC, the Alliance thinks and does...

"In the 1962 Party programme, [the SACP] raised the issue of Colonialism of a Special Type (CST). That characterisation of our country, and therefore a determination of the nature of the struggle we have to fight ... came from the Party. It became the property of the movement as a whole. We all saw the challenges we had to confront and the outcome of the struggle.

"It is important that the Party should recall things like that, to say what contribution will it now make to help us to solve the challenges of addressing the legacy of CST. The Party should again say, in the same way as we were able to provide a very focal point, a reference point to understanding the nature of society and the kind of struggle we have to fight, perhaps the Party is challenged once again to ask this question and therefore what our responses should be...

"I am mentioning this because the SACP has a task to help us define the period in which we are. Where are we in the process of the NDR? And therefore what are the tasks that we must carry out?"

12. The expectation that we have of the SACP's potential for intellectual contributions to our own understanding of the common tasks we face arises in the first instance from the knowledge that cadres of the SACP were consistently trained in the tools of analysis and ideological clarity that underpins Marxism-Leninism. We have seen that communist cadres are those who believe in a specific ideology, a particular class analysis, and that those within its ranks are systematically trained in the science of analysing society. That is what has always distinguished the Party cadres in our ranks.
13. Having learned so much from the Party, the ANC regards the SACP as a great teacher in the school of revolutionary struggle. If the ANC is now a professor of struggle, a gold medallist of national liberation olympiad, it is only because the Party has been such a good trainer. It is in this context that, if the Party has any subjective weaknesses today, it is the responsibility of the student that has now graduated to share what we have learned and so improve the quality of the teacher.
14. This is the frame of mind which obtains in the ANC. Whatever pockets of concern there are, we can always make time and address them in order to strengthen the alliance. The relationship is so important that nothing should be allowed to undermine it.
15. This relationship, we believe, is much more important than all the issues that may arise as bones of contention or areas of difference from time to time. We are sure that where such issues arise, we are able to put in place mechanisms that overcome them, so that we build on our strengths as a united movement. We therefore come to this meeting imbued by the lessons of this shared past, and determined that we should continue to cement and strengthen this bond by never ever treating any point of concern or difference as trivial. This means that we must place whatever is of concern on the table so that we are able to deal with it candidly as allies.

16. Finding ways of ensuring that we identify and overcome the challenges we face may require us to agree on how regularly we should be engaged in bi-lateral discussions of the kind we are holding today. It is probably the case that the provision for dual membership is not enough to ensure a common approach to our shared challenges. The question we must pose therefore is, what else needs to be improved upon?
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MANAGING NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION

DOES THE ALLIANCE SHARE COMMON OBJECTIVES?

Notes for the NWC bilateral meeting with the South African Communist Party, 19 June 2006

I. BACKGROUND

1. The ANC, the SACP and COSATU are to convene in their highest constitutional structures within the coming 18 months. The current period is therefore an ideal opportunity for these Alliance partners to reflect on strategic questions facing forces of the left in our country and further afield. However, these being elective congresses, it is necessary to manage the discourse in such a way that they are not influenced by subjective selfish interests.
2. This strategic review forms part of domestic and global engagement around the left agenda: primarily, how to attain a better quality of life, especially for the poor. This is the premise from which all the Alliance partners should move, respecting each other's integrity.
3. In our country, a critical element of this conversation is about the speed of social change and its impact on various classes and strata. More broadly, it is about the perennial challenge of the National Democratic Revolution: the relationship between the class and national questions. Continuing engagement on these issues, based on more than a decade of experience in government, will help inform the strategic and tactical postures of the Alliance partners in the Second Decade of Freedom and beyond.

II. CHARACTER OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

4. What is the ANC's approach to the National Democratic Revolution (NDR)? In the post-1994 period the Alliance partners have jointly and severally interrogated this issue on numerous occasions. It is quite understandable that both COSATU and the SACP have paid keen interest in the ANC's approach to the NDR, given that: the ANC is the leader of the Alliance and the ruling party; and most members of the SACP and COSATU are either members or supporters of the ANC.

Concept of the NDR

5. In its Strategy and Tactics document, the ANC defines the NDR as a process of liberation of Africans in particular and blacks in general from the yoke of apartheid colonialism. This entails the creation of a democratic state and the overhaul of apartheid social relations. The NDR is meant to resolve the historical national grievance and at the same time improve the material conditions of especially those previously marginalised.

6. Historically, the ANC developed to appreciate the central importance of property relations in the context of Colonialism of a Special Type. The SACP played a critical role in this evolution of the ANC's outlook. In the recent period, the Alliance summed up this question aptly in a Discussion Document for their 1998 Summit, The State, Property Relations and Social Transformation. In brief, the understanding is that:

6.1 access to state power should be utilised to de-racialise patterns of ownership and control of wealth; reconfigure the distribution of national resources in favour of the poor; and utilise the government budget, the economic power of State Owned Enterprises and capital in the hands of the working people to change the structure of the economy

6.2 proceeding from the understanding that most capital in our society is in private hands, the democratic movement should seek to mobilise private capital to expand investment especially in productive and job-creating activity; and in broad terms relate to private capital in a dynamic of unity and struggle, incentive and compulsion, in pursuit of the collective national interest: the 2003 Growth and Development Summit is one expression of this endeavour.

Evolution of socio-economic policy post-1994

7. In summing up the experience of the First Decade of Freedom in its 2004 Election Manifesto, the ANC, in consultation with the Alliance partners, came to the conclusion that major advances had been made in terms of consolidating democracy, providing basic social services particularly to the poor, restructuring and reorienting the state machinery, starting to improve safety and security of citizens, and locating South Africa among progressive forces in Africa and globally.

8. The conclusion was also reached that a legal framework had been created to fundamentally improve the rights of workers, women, youth and other sectors of society. However, with regard to the economy, concern was expressed that the rate of investment and economic growth had not been optimal; and while some 2-million net new jobs had been created the rate of unemployment had increased.

9. Noting that macroeconomic stability had largely been achieved, that new opportunities had emerged further to expand fiscal expenditure, and that micro-economic interventions needed to be intensified, the ANC set out a programme more intensely to create jobs and fight poverty. This is the main focus of the Second Decade of Freedom, and currently it is more concretely reflected in the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for SA (AsgiSA).

10. These conclusions were reached after intense debates on economic policy over many years. This was even more so with regard to GEAR - and differences remain on the logic behind its adoption and its impact. However, at each major turn, particularly in the 1997 and 2002 National Conferences of the ANC and at its 2000 and 2005 National General Councils, Alliance partners took part in the discussions on these issues. The resolutions that emerged from these assemblies not only became official policy of the ANC, but also reflected the broad views of the Alliance on the ANC-led trajectory of development.

III. MOTIVE FORCES OF THE NDR

The motive forces and "black capital"

11. Deriving from this understanding of the NDR, the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance have historically defined the motive forces in national terms as being made up of Africans in particular and blacks in general: because of the station they occupied under the apartheid system, and objectively the interest that they had in the victory of the NDR. In class terms these were

identified as: black workers, the rural poor, black middle strata and the black aspirant or real capitalist class.

12. While there have been debates on the place and role of the black capitalist class, there is agreement that the working class forms the core and constitutes the vanguard of the NDR. In its Strategy and Tactics documents, as long ago as at the Morogoro Conference, the ANC has been unequivocal about this concentric circle of motive forces. Historically, this has also been the position of the SACP.

13. There has always been an understanding that the role of the motive forces would differ in accordance with their social position. Basing itself on the experience of other national liberation struggles, and on trends in the early years of our democracy, the ANC in its 1997 Strategy and Tactics document (and in the 2002 update) called for vigilance with regard to the danger of elements within the black capitalist class relying on state patronage and corruption to advance their interests, and some of them getting beholden to white capital.

14. Thus it is agreed that, in promoting the de-racialisation of ownership and control of wealth, the democratic state should put in place measures against bureaucratic capitalism. The state and the ANC itself should play a leadership role in guiding this class - and the rest of capital - to serve the broad interests of social transformation, including investment in productive activity and promotion of the African agenda.

Character of the ANC

15. The ANC is by definition a liberation movement. Its core strategic task is to eliminate the national grievance. In the context of the post-1994 period, it uses various terrains of struggle - mass organisation and mobilisation, state power, the economic centre, ideological struggle and international work - to unite the motive forces in action to achieve this strategic objective.

16. Yet the ANC does recognise that the interests of the motive forces may at times be in conflict. While leaning towards the working class and the poor, the ANC seeks to unite all the motive forces; and it does not pursue the narrow interests of a particular class or stratum. It is the understanding of the ANC that working class leadership means pursuit of the class' own short-, medium- and long-term interests and at the same time defining a common platform for all the forces interested in democratic transformation.

17. The common interests of these classes and strata are defined in the programmes of the ANC, pre-eminent amongst which is the Freedom Charter.

IV. CRITIQUE OF THE SACP DISCUSSION DOCUMENT - NATIONAL AND CLASS STRUGGLE

18. The document released by the SACP Central Committee in May 2006 in Bua Komanisi raises critical questions pertaining to all these issues. The fact that many of its assertions differ from formal positions of the ANC - and in some instances those of the Alliance as a whole - does not make it any less legitimate.

19. It is the task of revolutionaries to examine changes in the balance of forces, develop new approaches to unfolding situations and seek out optimal ways of achieving their objectives. We therefore interrogate the document, firstly, from this perspective and, secondly, with an appreciation that it is a Discussion Document and not formal policy positions of the SACP. Our critique is from two perspectives: its content in terms of conceptual issues and facts, and its tone.

Character of the NDR

20. The methodology to distil the character of a particular revolutionary process is fundamental to determining the strategic and tactical postures of a revolutionary organisation. This exercise helps to identify the contradictions that a particular revolution seeks to resolve and, as a result, the strategic objectives and the motive forces of that undertaking. An inaccurate reading of these factors can place revolutionaries at a tangent to reality and result in tragic mistakes and wasted opportunities.

21. In many respects, this, we are afraid, seems to be the direction which the Discussion Document is goading the SACP to follow. This derives from both a misreading of history and of the current balance of forces.

22. The document posits an outdated proposition that South Africa could have had or should have a "socialist oriented" or "non-capitalist" path to socialism. This contradiction in terms arises from the Party's own historical assertion that SA is primarily an industrialised capitalist society with a large working class. As such, from the strict application of Marxist-Leninism about transitions to socialism, you cannot have a non-capitalist path in a capitalist society. "Socialist orientation" is a variant of the same category.

23. This error is a consequence of a subjectivism that informs most of the treatise: great revolutionary things could have happened had it not been for cadres who betrayed the revolution! But what does the NDR seek to achieve? The ANC clarifies this in its Strategy and Tactics document:

"...the task of the National Democratic Revolution is to eliminate the basic causes of the national grievance wherever and in whatever forms they manifest themselves. Indeed, as we succeed in doing so, new social dynamics will play themselves out, redefining the challenges of the moment as well as the political permutations that are consonant with these new challenges".

24. In other words, the NDR is called such, with national and democratic tasks, because it seeks to deal with the political and socio-economic manifestations of apartheid colonialism. This includes addressing the issue of property relations - in a manner, as indicated above, elaborated in The State, Property Relations and Social Transformation (refer paragraph 6). As this succeeds, new challenges will emerge, and the ANC would then have to define its place and role in the new milieu.

25. For socialists, the pace at which the new permutations would congeal and how "rapid" or "uninterrupted" a transition to socialism should be, depends on subjective factors (to which the document seems to pay undue attention) and, most critically, objective conditions. The document fails to analyse in any significant way the domestic and global balance of forces at the point of the democratic breakthrough in 1994 and how this balance has changed ever since. Only in discussing other issues is there an oblique and very limited reference to this issue: "...in the context of the current global reality, capital is highly mobile, and this mobility gives it great leverage" (p30).

26. Interestingly, the document rubbishes prospects for an African Renaissance because this project fails to appreciate the "persisting (strengthened) role of imperialism after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the global reproduction of combined development and underdevelopment...This pillar of the [Renaissance] project has also seriously underestimated the frailty of 'transitions to democracy' (often little more than elite pacts)...". Yet, according to the authors, this very same NDR project should have adopted a rapid and uninterrupted transition to socialism in South Africa!

Character of the ANC

27. The ahistoricism, subjectivism and voluntarism that inform the Discussion Document come out in bold relief in its interpretation of the ANC's approach to the relationship between the NDR and socialism. The authors set out looking for a needle in a haystack - to find a declaration of socialist objectives on the part of the ANC. First, it is the oblique references to socialism in the Morogoro Strategy and Tactics document; and then it is a 1970s Commission made up of ANC leaders, which produced the Green Book. But where, in any of its formal documents and Conference resolutions, did the ANC declare that its objective was socialism?

28. In its submission to the ANC/SACP bilateral meeting in March 2001, the ANC clarifies these issues as follows:

"In practice, the immediacy of the national grievance means that the working class exercises its struggle for social emancipation, in this phase, within the context of the national struggle.

"It is against this background that the ANC Morogoro Conference asserted that the working class is the dynamic link between national liberation and socialism. This assertion reflected both the acceptance on the part of the ANC of the legitimacy and logic of the struggle for socialism and, consequently, the extent to which progressive nationalism had permeated the ranks of the ANC.

"Does it therefore mean that the ANC had adopted or could and should adopt socialism as its ultimate objective? The answer is, no! The ANC was and remains the embodiment of the collective of organised forces that seek to resolve the national contradictions within South African society, at the same time as it tackles relevant socio-economic relations...

"It is in the objective interest of the socialist movement, and the SACP as the vanguard of this movement, that this should be the case. In the first instance, it seeks to unite all the real and potential motive forces for a national democratic revolution - and not to isolate itself in a cocoon of socialist purity. Secondly, recognising the immediacy of the national question, it views the NDR as the shortest route to socialism, in a continuum of struggle."

29. It may as well be that the majority of ANC leaders (including those who sat on the Green Book Commission), members and supporters viewed and still view socialism as their ultimate preference. It may as well be that during specific moments of history the SACP had or has influence over the majority of leaders of the ANC. But this did not and does not change the character of the ANC as a national liberation movement.

Lost in subjectivism: "the rupture"

30. In essence, it is on these two wobbly pillars - an erroneous reading of the character of the NDR and of the ANC - that the document rests. As such, the rest of the document is an exercise in felling straw-men. Its interpretation of post-1990 intra-Alliance developments is premised on wrong assumptions.

30.1 A 1990 "significant rupture ... in these common strategic and tactical perspectives (p7)" is imagined, these perspectives being that the ANC was pursuing socialism but succumbed to the allure of "reformist-revisionism", while the SACP leadership (or those who remained in the Party) appreciate the dialectical interconnection between the NDR and socialism. In other words, the trapeze act here is to co-opt the ANC, formally, as an organisation pursuing socialism; and then condemn it as having betrayed the socialist project, simply because it is not the ANC otherwise imagined by the authors.

30.2 There is also a profound bitterness about the manner in which the SACP managed its resurgence from the underground. A number of its senior cadres left the Party, and some of them currently occupy senior positions in the ANC. Naturally, the SACP needs to continue reviewing this experience; it needs to debate with these otherwise left forces about the best way of advancing a socialist agenda - if they still share this perspective. But this should not be conflated with formal relationships with the ANC.

30.3 Perhaps most importantly, the SACP needs self-critically to pose the question to itself, why it lost and is still losing such senior cadres, rather than just throwing mud at them! It cannot be that a socialist vanguard that experiences such haemorrhaging at the top merely sits in a corner and sulks!

V. CRITIQUE OF SACP DISCUSSION DOCUMENT - NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION

31. According to the Discussion Document, the history of the post-1994 period can be categorised into two phases: before and after 1996. Initially, it is difficult to discern what the significance of 1996 is (as in "the 1996 class project"), until later in the document where it is associated with the adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy. Why this is not explicitly stated is not quite clear. From the array of disjointed critiques levelled against the ANC and government, we select here a few issues for purposes of debate.

Managing capitalist relations

32. Having briefly and begrudgingly acknowledged the complex balance of forces in the transition of the early 1990s, the document does not positively identify the things that could have been done, in the early years of our democracy, to achieve more radical results without disrupting the transition in its totality, and without precipitating the experience that some of our sister-countries on the continent have had.

33. Both COSATU and the SACP have pronounced on these matters, and one can presume consistency in this regard: about the "jobs bloodbath" and this being a consequence of the "capitalist accumulation regime" and specifically GEAR. In this SACP Discussion Document, reference is made to how the capitalist class has been the main beneficiary of social change.

34. As stated above, the review of our experience in the First Decade of Freedom, which laid the basis for the 2004 ANC Election Manifesto, comes to a more balanced conclusion on this matter. Consistent with this approach, in its submission to the ANC/SACP bilateral in 2001, the ANC makes the following assertions:

34.1 The mandate and programme of government are premised on the Reconstruction and Development Programme. This programme argued for sustainable macro-economic balances which GEAR sought to achieve. The ANC's view is that GEAR, for all its other weaknesses, achieved this objective. As a result, since 1999, we have had dramatic improvements in public expenditure; with massive increases in social and economic expenditure.

34.2 While the motive forces strive to change elements of the capitalist system in the interest of the NDR, they have to manage the capitalist system in line with the main elements of its own logic:

"For instance, they have to manage such issues as stabilising a sharply depreciating currency, preventing and smoothing out volatility in the financial markets, and dealing with complex matters of world commodity markets...[I]t also means, in the immediate sense, engaging with the conjuncture as is, to ensure increased rates of investment by private capital and a growing

economy that creates jobs...This requires a keen sense of the balance of forces, a nimble foot in negotiating tactical detours, creative boldness in communicating ...to the broad membership and the public at large, including the markets themselves!" (ANC Submission to ANC/SACP bilateral, March 2001)

Bonapartism and personalities

35. The SACP Discussion Document warns against "over-working" the concept of Bonapartism, and yet it does precisely this. The wriggling to make interpretation of this concept fit an a priori analysis aside, it reduces the concept essentially to an analysis of the first two Presidents of our democracy.

36. As a result, the document misses interrogating a very objective challenge of our transition. This is about the role of the ANC, the vanguard of the NDR, in managing a delicate balance of forces, and more broadly, contradictions among a disparate array of motive forces, some of whose narrow interests are in fact contradictory, if not plain antagonistic. Is the ANC called upon, from time to time, to rise above narrow class interests? This is a matter that requires further reflection in the Alliance.

37. By reducing an analysis of this otherwise objective challenge to personalities the document ends up attributing to Presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki approaches that otherwise reflect the collective, if experimental, attempt on the part of the ANC to manage this challenge. Generously, one can conclude that this wrong approach is responsible for: misguided references to so-called centralisation of power in the state Presidency (when COSATU has called for a stronger Presidency to ensure implementation of AsgiSA), a misreading of the ANC constitution about the roles of the President and the Secretary-General and, to some extent, a presumed orchestrated marginalisation of Parliament.

38. Further, in what seems an attempt at psycho-analysis of Nelson Mandela, the document descends into colonial anthropology of the worst kind. His "Bonapartism", we are told, "also owes something to his sometimes arcane, quasi-feudal, pre-capitalist corporatist values...(p20)". The less said about such insults the better!

Ahistoricism and conceit

39. Both in content and style, the Discussion Document reflects many distortions of historical facts. It refers, literally, to rumours - for instance on the debates which took place when the Party in 1962 publicly emerged from its "dissolution" after its banning in 1950 (p9). It also resorts to subjective interpretations of the debates that took place when the SACP re-established itself as a legal organisation in 1990.

40. In its subjectivism, the document stylistically tends cogently to explain the difficulties the SACP faced during many moments in its history and the choices it decided to make. Yet, when it comes to interpreting actions of the ANC leadership, conspiracy theories are brought into play. For instance, the decision to become a mass party is explained away (p12); while ANC leaders' input into debates on the character of the SACP is aimed "...ostensibly to 'imprison' the SACP and the left to 'outmoded' alliance traditions and methods as an attempt to 'liquidate' it (p8)".

41. Interestingly, references in the document to pre-1990 Alliance dynamics, and parts of post-1996 developments are referred to as if the current leadership of the SACP were and are objective distant observers of the march of history. Yet when it comes to decisions that the authors agree with, they become proud actors: "we" instead of the third person is employed. Thus you have: in the early 1990s, "if we had abandoned the Party" (p13); "if we were to run a tight,

vanguard party (p12), etc. Even with regard to the ANC 1997 Strategy and tactics document, you have, repeated: "we" assert that..." (p23).

42. Besides the possibility of conceitedness, this patently subjective treatment of history does pose another question about the character of the authors of the Discussion Document, which we assume are its most senior leadership: for how long have they been in SACP ranks!

Black capital, the Second Economy and Gender

43. We have, in earlier parts of this critique referred to the ANC's understanding of the role of the black capitalist class in the NDR. In this regard, as reflected in the Strategy and Tactics document, the ANC is not unaware of the dangers of bureaucratic capitalism and compradorism. Both have the effect of corrupting the socio-political system.

44. What is of interest in the SACP Discussion Document is the reference to VI Lenin on the petty bourgeoisie in the context of the 1917 Socialist Revolution: he sees them, we are told, "as a potential seed-bed and mass base for a bonapartist capitalist restoration. Obviously our post-1994 situation is different" (p26). While recognising this difference (although not fully acknowledging that Lenin was talking about a Socialist Revolution in motion), the Discussion Document still suggests that in South Africa's NDR today we should subordinate "these strata to the popular mandate of the national democratic state and the broader hegemony of the working class" (p26)!

45. Much that is positive and useful is said about the Second Economy and the challenge of providing basic services such as water.

45.1 However, without much elaboration, a suggestion is made that marginalisation of these communities from the economic mainstream is "potentially a revolutionary asset" (p27). Is this to suggest that we should abandon the struggle to bridge the gap and to encourage sustainable livelihoods (for e.g. leave the minibus taxi industry as it is as a revolutionary base!)?

45.2 Measuring household usage of water, through water-meters, is discouraged because it atomises working class communities: no reference is made to the fact that, in actual practice, many households do not use much more than the free basic water provided, and that this campaign is encouraging saving of this resource!

46. It is not so much the detail of these two instances that is at issue. Rather it is the romanticism in the approach to a disorganised and survivalist small business sector and the suggestion that no efforts should be made to lift marginalised people into the mainstream. Further, it is the romanticism that suggests limitless resources to provide, for instance, free basic water and not even measure its usage.

47. Without going into the debates that have taken place in the ANC and the rest of the Alliance on gender issues, it is quite disappointing that the Discussion Document does not go into any comprehensive analysis and, less still, into current challenges with regard to gender. In fact, the document confines the gender issue to a section (as if plonked in just for convenience). Is the history of the party's treatment of this matter accurate? What about the relationship between women's emancipation and creation of the objective and subjective conditions for this? Should the gender struggle consciously address, at the same time, socio-economic conditions of the poor and the issue of gender parity in leadership structures?

VI. VI GENERAL QUESTIONS ON CHALLENGES FACING THE SACP

48. Has the SACP sufficiently addressed the issue of the implications of the current global balance of forces, the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe, the trajectory of Chinese development and, more recently, the resurgence of Left movements in Latin America on the theory of socialism and the strategy and tactics of pursuing this objective under current conditions?

49. Is it that the process that was launched by the previous leadership in the late 1980s and early 1990s to interrogate these difficult issues stagnated thereafter? In what way does the slogan, Socialism is the Future, Build it Now help elucidate this complex question?

50. Has the SACP resolved the issue of the balance between being a socialist vanguard party and at the same time a mass party? Is it adequate that the "not necessarily very elegant resolution of the debate at the time" (p12) is now explained away through references to the recent experience in the reformist campaigns around land and the financial sector?

51. How does the SACP deal with opportunistic infiltration of its structures, part of it possibly aimed at destabilising the Alliance as a whole: for instance, it is suggested that in areas of KwaZulu Natal where the ANC cannot launch branches due to threats of violence, the SACP or the Young Communist League (YCL) in recent months has been able to launch branches! There are also indications that donor agencies that are not prepared for "liberal" reasons to fund the ANC are prepared to support campaigns of the YCL.

52. Should the SACP position itself merely as a critic of the ANC, or assist in theorising and practically dealing with the many complex issues that transformation in the current global milieu presents; and publicly communicate its role in such undertakings? This is distinct from SACP cadres and sometimes even collectives presenting, in all kinds of private and practical undertakings, a rational approach to issues; but in the public domain have the SACP position itself as a distant critic?

53. Given the constitutional precepts of the ANC, which include express prohibition of factions within its ranks, how does the Party carry out some of the options posed in the document about supporting some ANC forces against others, without subverting the integrity of the ANC's own structures? How should the ANC respond to such an approach, if it were to be adopted?

54. Is there a strategic rupture between the ANC and the SACP on the approach to the NDR, and as such, should the SACP pursue its own course? Or, if the SACP were to adopt this approach, would it be in pursuit of the NDR or, in the current situation, rapid and uninterrupted advance to a Socialist Revolution?

55. How does the SACP today approach the question of deployment of, and mandates to, its cadres in mass movements - with the ANC being one such mass movement? In this regard, is the "rupture" referred to in the document a reflection of the success of a conspiracy to marginalise the SACP, or of weaknesses in activism, theoretical grounding and persuasive capacity of the cadres so deployed?

56. Given the involvement of SACP cadres at all levels of the ANC and state institutions, what does the suggested marginalisation actually entail -what is the relationship between this notion of marginalisation and the self-interest of individual leaders and members of the SACP, currently not located in structures commanding both resources and prestige?

57. How do we as the Alliance handle public discourse on these complex issues? Can it be argued that it is much better, for societal discourse, that the issues posed in the SACP Discussion Document are aired publicly? Inversely, should the rest of the Alliance respond likewise?

VII. CONCLUSION

58. These reflections of the ANC NWC delegation constitute a contribution to the debate that the SACP has called for. Similarly, we expect the SACP, as always, to play an active role in the unfolding engagement - within the ANC and separately as a partner - in the build-up to the ANC's Policy and National Conferences.

59. That most of the observations are confined to a critique of the SACP Discussion Document does not subtract from the fact that the document raises many positive issues which will help inform the ANC's own internal discussions in the coming period. Rather, we sought to isolate areas of critical engagement to help generate further debate within the Alliance and society at large.

60. We do hope that, in this our input, we have met the SACP General Secretary's injunction that, in this debate, there should be no holy cows.