



# Bua Komanisi!

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# CHAPTER 1

## The Gang of 3 and Co. The Shikota Splitters Another attempt to undermine the consolidation of popular power

### 1.1 Introduction

At one level, the ANC break-away, led by Mbhazima Shilowa, Mosiuoa Lekota and Mluleki George, is an opportunist split by a group of Polokwane losers unhappy with the outcome of the ANC's 52<sup>nd</sup> national conference. The disgruntled supporters of the 1996 class project have left and, we might be inclined to say, good riddance!

There is much truth in this line of thinking. But we cannot leave our analysis at this level of generality or simplicity. If we are to develop a clear understanding of the split, and an effective strategic response, then we need to begin by noting several complicating factors:

- So far, it is a relatively small minority of the so-called "Polokwane 40% minority" that has actually moved out of the ANC. Are others simply biding their time? Should we be encouraging the maximum number of comrades to remain within the ANC? And, since the answer should surely be "yes", on what basis? At any price? Or on the grounds of a principled strategic programme of action?
- While there are certainly strong organic links between the "1996 class project" and the Shikotas, how much coherence is there among them? Do they actually have a shared strategic perspective? Or is the glue that holds them together disgruntlement and a sense that the shelf-life of their respective ANC political careers was fast expiring?

- What actually do we mean by the "1996 class project"? Is it necessarily a tight conspiracy, in which a group of current and/or former ANC cadres regularly sits down and plots how to advance a particular capitalist agenda in SA? Or is it a political tendency (or even intersecting but diverse tendencies and personal interests) whose effect is to strengthen the domination of monopoly capital in our country - regardless of the proclaimed or, perhaps, even the real intentions of those involved?
- It has been correctly noted that most of the leading personalities in the Shikota split have close links to business. There is certainly no harm in pointing this out, and repeating it. But the obvious response to this line of argument is that the post-Polokwane ANC leadership itself has many wealthy business-people in its leadership ranks –and perhaps more than ever before. If we are to make sense of our claim that Polokwane has seen a progressive shift in the ANC, then we need to develop a clear understanding of what precisely this progressive shift consists in, and what we mean by a multi-class national democratic struggle.
- We need to acknowledge that the leadership core of the Shikota grouping has emerged from the ANC, the SACP, COSATU and even from Robben Island and the UDF. If we are

to accuse them of opportunism (and we surely should), then how do we explain to ourselves why such tendencies have developed within our ranks? Are there lessons we need to learn? Are there weaknesses in our organizations that we need to correct?

- And, finally, while we are considering matters self-critically, we also need to ask whether some of our own acts of commission or omission in the recent period have confused our mass base and provided space and opportunity to the splitters.

### **1.2 The Shikotas and the 1996 class project – another chapter in the attempt to patch together a “moderate” elite pact and weaken popular power**

At its most fundamental, the new ANC break-away splinter group is indeed a symptom of the crisis and partial rolling back of a capitalist class agenda within the ANC – what we have called the “1996 class project”. It is also an attempt to regroup and reconfigure this agenda. The elaboration of the once dominant and still influential 1996 class project has gone through a series of key moments. We have dealt with many of these at length in other discussion documents of the SACP. However, if we are to understand the Shikotas better, then it will be helpful to look at one aspect of the 1996 class project that we have not previously considered closely.

In the early 1990s and in the critical negotiations period, the first clear signs of what was to become the 1996 class project began to emerge. A grouping around cde Thabo Mbeki sought to drive the negotiations process into an elite pact in which a “quiet diplomacy” deal would be struck with the apartheid regime, and in which the mass base of the ANC and its alliance partners would be largely irrelevant spectators.

In seeking to drive an elite pact outcome, the Mbeki group was strongly influenced by the “transitions to democracy” paradigm of Washington-based think-tanks and their local disciples – including Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert and Alistair Sparks. (Note how the same commentators have now enthusiastically popped up in broad support of the Shikotas). Essentially the paradigm was one that held that transitions out of authoritarian rule to “stable democracies” required elite pacting between the moderates within the incumbent regime and moderates from the opposition. The key to success was, it was said, keeping mass constituencies out of the picture. The moderate incumbents would need to marginalize their right-wing, while the moderates in the opposition movement would need to marginalize “leftists” and “populists”.

A key feature of the “transitions to democracy” paradigm was the belief that “democracy” needed to be understood in a very limited way – what some critics have described as “low intensity democracy”. Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert, writing in the early 1990s, said that democracy should be understood narrowly as a set of formal rules (regular elections, rule of law, separation of powers, and electoral “contingency” – meaning no party should be secure of electoral victory for any length of time). (Note, again, how these are the favoured – in fact almost the only - themes of the Shikotas and of the liberal commentators who are singing their praises).

While multi-party elections, the rule of law and the separation of powers are all very important matters, limiting democracy to this kind of low intensity (rules of the game) arrangement is a far cry from the substantial democracy envisaged, for instance, in the Freedom Charter or, indeed, in our Constitution and Bill of Rights.

In his book, *The Quest for Democracy, South Africa in Transition* (1992), Slabbert gave the game away as to why the liberals were so

anxious to limit our new democratic dispensation:

*“One of the most daunting challenges facing [a future government] is to protect the new political space created by negotiations from being used to contest the historical imbalances that precipitated negotiation in the first place...”*

What on earth is the point of having a “democracy” if you can’t use it to address historical imbalances?!!. But this was not a momentary lapse on the part of Slabbert. Our liberals wanted (and want) to proclaim that the liberation struggle is over, democracy has arrived – even while the “historical imbalances” (i.e. systemic, racialised inequality, poverty and general underdevelopment) remain! In a lecture he delivered in the same year to the SA Institute of International Affairs (entitled “The Burden of Democracy”) he told his audience that we should not “burden democracy” with “popular aspirations”. This represents the modern foundations of use of the label ‘populism’ to attack those seeking thorough-going transformation to benefit the workers and the poor of our country.

True to this paradigm, during the early 1990s, the Mbeki grouping constantly sought to arrange matters through backroom deals with key personalities in the apartheid regime. Popular mobilization in support of the ANC’s major negotiation demands was seen as a dangerous “rocking of the boat”. When the apartheid regime unleashed a low intensity conflict strategy on our communities (posing as “black on black” violence), the Mbeki grouping opposed the formation of self defence units. “Don’t provoke the right-wing”, they argued. These extremely problematic positions taken by the Mbeki group in the negotiations process led to their partial displacement by the ANC in favour of a more principled Ramaphosa-led negotiations team.

However, after the 1994 elections, the Mbeki group successfully outmanoeuvred its rivals by establishing itself centrally within key governmental positions. This outmanoeuvring was partly a testament to the determination (some would say cunning) with which the group operated, but it was also the consequence of very significant backing from monopoly capital in SA. It was backing that enabled the grouping to resource itself and to build a factional base within the ANC using patronage. The RDP was displaced by GEAR, and from 1996, this project acquired a dominance (that was nonetheless always contested and challenged) within the ANC and the state.

### **1.3 “The ANC will split by 2000” (Mbeki in 1995)**

We have elaborated in some detail in other SACP documents the features and deepening crisis of the 1996 class project over the subsequent decade. We will not repeat any of this in detail here. What is, however, noteworthy, when considering today’s Shikota split, is that already in the mid-1990s the Mbeki grouping was predicting if not planning an ANC split.

Since they are accomplished practitioners of “quiet diplomacy”, and skeptics about the merits of popular consultation, it is not always easy to peer into the thinking of some of these comrades. However, in April 1995, cde Mbeki, then deputy president of the country and ANC, granted an interview to *The Star* newspaper on the occasion of the first anniversary of our new democracy. In the course of the interview he was asked the predictable bundle of questions – How long would the ANC tripartite alliance last? Was it not an anachronism from a bygone era of liberation struggle? Interestingly, Mbeki did not answer the question on the Alliance directly. Instead, he said that the ANC itself was a hybrid organization of several different ideological currents. The journalist then followed up with the next obvious question: How long will the unity of the ANC last “now that apartheid is dead”? Mbeki responded

that, as our democracy “normalized”, he expected the ANC to break up into its different ideological component parts. He thought that a time-frame of around five years for such a break-up and “normalization” was realistic.

Whether the ANC deputy president of the time should have expressed such a dramatic view without ever discussing it within formal structures of the ANC is one issue. However, what interests us here is the extremely revealing nature of his comments. In mid-1995 Mbeki seemingly believed that SA was about to become a “normal” (i.e. presumably a “western” “liberal” democracy). In other words, the struggle was basically over, the national democratic revolution was already accomplished. We now had our “Freedom Charter” society. Hence, there was no need for a mass-based, campaigning ANC, and hence (by implication) there was even less need for an alliance with a communist party and a radical trade union federation.

Guided in part by these perspectives, from the late-1990s, the Mbeki grouping launched an intensive assault against the SACP and COSATU, labeling us ultra-leftists serving the interests of the counter-revolution. Malleable SACP (and COSATU) leaders were won over through the patronage of high office, while there were attempts to intimidate and goad others into leading an SACP walk-out from the Alliance. At the same time, there was a concerted effort to re-fashion the ANC into a moderate and “modern” center-left formation, a “social democratic” (but really a social liberal) party for the “new age” – Blair’s “third way” was an approximate model.

If Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert’s dream of a “normal” (i.e. low intensity) democracy, in which the moderates on both sides found each other and marginalized the “populist extremists”, did not materialize fully - it was not for want of trying by the Mbeki grouping.

However, this agenda failed for two basic reasons – the one subjective, the other

objective. While it exerted dominance (often through patronage and bullying) within the ANC and government for nearly a decade, this class project was never able to consolidate a secure popular hegemony amongst the ANC mass base. Notwithstanding the Shikotas’ hypocritical claims now to represent the values of a drastically edited Freedom Charter (in which they cite one phrase – equality before the law – and ignore the rest of the Charter), it is clear that many in the Mbeki grouping felt that the Freedom Charter was an “outdated” document. One or two of them actually cautiously said as much. But they knew that these views would have no subjective resonance in our mass base, so they tended to keep these opinions and their general strategy carefully disguised.

However, the more substantial reason for the failure of the agenda within the ANC had to do with the impact of reality itself. The idea that the NDR was basically over, and that all of our major problems were now either resolved or amenable to a top-down, technocratic correction, simply flew in the face of the lived reality of the ANC’s mass base. Denialism about unemployment rates, or HIV/AIDS, or about persisting poverty and deepening racialised inequality, or about crime in townships wore increasingly thin.

It is against this general background that we say that the Shikota splinter break-away is a symptom of the crisis and progressive rolling back of the 1996 class project. Instead of the left breaking away, leaving a “moderate” social liberal grouping in control of the ANC, it is some of the personalities associated with the Mbeki project who are breaking away. They have lost hope, at least for the moment, of exerting the hegemonic influence upon the ANC of which they once dreamt. They are now exploring the route of coalitions with fellow liberals – a recycling of the 1996 class project’s elite pact agenda.

At the heart of the Shikota strategy, deeply inter-linked with the economic objectives of

the 1996 class project and the rolling back of popular power, is that of weakening if not undermining the capacity of the ANC to lead the struggle to address the national question in favour of the overwhelming majority of our people. In a way we can capture the imperatives of addressing the national question as involving three essential 'unities'.

The first 'unity' is the imperative of uniting the African people, which is the fundamental and original mission of the ANC. In fact one of the single most significant achievements of the ANC over the last 96 years has been that of uniting the African people, against the background of a history of anti-colonial struggles fought in isolation by different tribal groupings prior to 1910 and the massive colonial/apartheid offensive to divide the African people along tribal lines. It was on the basis of this unity of the African people that became the major weapon in the final defeat of the apartheid regime.

The second 'unity' is that of the black people as a whole, whose success is of course premised on the foundations of African unity. The third 'unity' is that of a united, non-racial South African nation, in all its diversity, representing the vibrancy and realities of a nevertheless single South African nation. This unity cannot be attained unless it is founded on the unity of the African people in particular and blacks in general; in other words intensifying the struggle to deepen and advance a radical national democratic revolution, with the working class, especially its African majority, at the head of this struggle.

Objectively it is only the African National Congress, uniting the majority of the African and black people, and progressive white democrats, that is best capable of leading this ongoing struggle to address the national question in our country. Therefore an attempt to divide and weaken the ANC at this juncture is a direct attack on the national democratic revolution itself. Interestingly, this was the

entire strategy of the apartheid regime – to weaken, divide and defeat the ANC.

Indeed leadership of this struggle by the ANC is not an entitlement but is something that the ANC has earned through struggle and will continue to have to earn by leading the mass of the people of our country in the ongoing national democratic revolution. The ANC may have its own subjective weaknesses, many of whom are today a direct product of the very activities and attempts by the 1996 class project, including the Gang of 3, to try and demobilize the ANC and turn it into a social liberal party! But no serious revolutionary would turn his/her back on these problem, leave the ANC and then seek to destroy it, thus undermining its capacity to lead the national democratic revolution.

All what the Gang of 3 essentially stand for is the partial deracialisation of South African society, primarily to give space for the emergence of black sections of the bourgeoisie, with no interest to address the class, national and gender interests of the majority. This is why the kind of BEE that the 1996 class project has been pursuing is narrow and largely for the benefit of a small elite. However, for the Gang of 3, the (elite) partial deracialisation they are pursuing is also of a special type in that it is thoroughly compradorial, as it is highly dependent on sponsorship and nurture by the white domestic bourgeoisie and sections of global capital.

What the Shikota splitters have therefore taken with them from the 1996 class project is a complete inability or unwillingness to grasp the imperative of an ongoing multi-class (but worker and poor biased) national democratic revolution. For them, the democratic revolution is basically over. All that is now required is to uphold our "democratic values" – and play by the "rules of the game". All of them confuse the NDR simply with the de-racialisation of capitalism. They are unable or unwilling to articulate a programmatic perspective that begins to

address the radical, systemic transformation of our persisting colonial growth path that daily continues to reproduce racialised poverty and inequality. Desperate to defend their own newly gained class privileges, they want us to believe that we are all living in a Sweden of the South.

Already the very same contradictions of the 1996 class project are showing themselves even at this early stage in the manner in which the Gang of 3 is trying to position itself politically. It is trying to project itself as the 'true' custodian of the ANC traditions and the Freedom Charter, whilst simultaneously trying to refashion itself a modernist party, wooing the young upwardly mobile black middle classes without the historical 'baggage' of the ANC. They are leaving the ANC, yet some opportunistically remain inside, and at the same time want to take the ANC's image and traditions with them. It is like walking facing backwards!

#### **1.4 Post-Polokwane**

In the run-up to the Polokwane conference, many in the leading group around cde Mbeki failed to see the writing on the wall until the very last moment. Notwithstanding the obvious branch-level message emanating from the ANC's 2005 National General Council, notwithstanding the growing alienation of just about every key sector of the movement, notwithstanding thousands of township and worker protest actions, there was denialism once more. Up until the final hours at Polokwane, they were convinced that they were going to "win".

In the immediate aftermath of Polokwane, there was a flurry of shocked factional meetings at which plans were discussed on how to fight-back. Although an actual split was probably not favoured at this point, this re-grouping marked the beginnings of the Shikota project. Without attributing too much coherence to these networks, the original plan was probably to consolidate factional ANC provincial bases by targeting several upcoming provincial conferences. There was

certainly a deliberate refusal, in some quarters, to respond constructively to the generous message from the post-Polokwane ANC national leadership of re-building unity. Presumably some of these factional meetings would have conducted an inventory of what parts of the state and public sector they had influence over. They would have ticked off the SABC, critical parts of the criminal justice system, and, of course, the presidency.

They calculated that divisions and dissensions would grow within the ANC and alliance. They anticipated that the ANC, with its president on trial (was it an accident that the NPA announced its intention to re-charge cde Zuma at this point?), would perform less well in the 2009 elections. They probably would not initially have foreseen the looming global economic crisis (they were typically blindly optimistic about globalisation), but the prospect of harder times for South Africans would have been (and will now certainly be) used in order to blame the "Polokwane populists" for what will be externally imposed hardships impacting upon untransformed vulnerabilities in our own economy. The combined impact of all of this, so they originally reasoned, could lay the basis for an emergency National General Council, called by ANC provinces. In this way, they were convinced, they would reverse the outcomes of Polokwane.

This scenario is possibly still favoured by some comrades who remain within the ANC. However, as the year progressed, not everything was to go according to plan. In particular, Judge Nicholson's September 12 judgment dealt a serious body blow to their calculations. The ANC NEC's recall of President Mbeki was the final straw, at least for some. They felt that they had finally lost their factional influence over the apex of state power, and lacking the will-power to remain on within the ANC and raise their concerns and battle for their perspectives, they jumped ship.

### **1.5 So who are the Shikotas and what do they represent?**

The majority of the leadership circle of the Shikotas is made up of ambitious politicians who felt that their high-flying careers within the ANC had ended or were close to expiry. Apart from disgruntlement with this fact, there is very little coherent that has emerged from the group individually or severally by way of a political perspective. They speak about upholding the “authentic” values of the ANC and Freedom Charter (a Freedom Charter “Lite”, of course); they speak of organizational democracy and political tolerance; they complain about a T-shirt and a song; they raise matters around the current electoral dispensation; they speak about upholding the values of our Constitution; and they attack statements made by the ANCYL president. Some of the criticisms they raise may well be valid, but they are hardly grounds for divorce, let alone launching a party. Smuts Ngonyama goes so far as to say that he doesn’t have a problem with “any of the ANC’s policies”, but he is leaving because he is “unhappy with the youth”. (Clearly it is not easy to find a persuasive political argument to justify opportunism!)

The Shikotas will argue that it is unfair to expect them, at this stage, to articulate a programmatic perspective. But the South African public shouldn’t hold its breath. The inability to articulate a clear programme has much to do with differences among the launching leadership itself. Take the original gang of three - it is impossible not to detect quite distinct personal agendas. One is dreaming of becoming a Barack Obama of the South, with a slick media operation and a “modern” centrist party funded by black yuppies; another is harking back to a mythical 1950s era when elders were respected and men didn’t wear baseball caps in meetings or sing nostalgic songs about the armed struggle; while the third is a regional war-lord whose break from the ANC has a strong ethnic-disgruntlement tinge to it.

But let’s at least consider the few issues that the Shikotas have actually raised, and then ask the obvious question: what are their personal track-records in regard to the matters that they are now raising with such a sense of urgency and passion?

#### **1.5.1 Political tolerance**

We agree that there are concerning signs of political intolerance from many different quarters within our broad movement. Without excusing intolerance in the present, regardless of the quarter from which it emanates, let’s enquire where it all began? And where were the Shikotas then?

The use of graphic animal insults, for instance, that has got the Shikotas and their liberal friends so hot under the collar, is not a recent development. In July 1998, President Mbeki addressed the 10<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the SACP, and accused the Party of “scavenging on the carcass of a savaged ANC”. In 2002, Dumisani Makhaye produced a pamphlet in KZN attacking the SACP and COSATU labeling us “a snake”. The pamphlet called for us to be dealt with appropriately. In case there was any doubt what was intended, the pamphlet (issued in the name of the ANC province) came complete with an illustration of a snake getting its head crushed.

We don’t remember Lekota, Shilowa or George, or for that matter Alistair Sparks, Archbishop Tutu or Barney Pityana, raising the slightest concern at the time. (Although, to be fair, the last three would probably not have been aware of some of this, since, unlike the Shikotas, the SACP didn’t go running to the media to complain about what was an internal alliance matter).

There was a similar silence in the latter half of 2002, when Jabu Moleketi and Josiah Jele nominally authored a lengthy document entitled “*Two strategies of the national liberation movement*”. It, too, picked up on the animal theme, labelling the SACP leadership “*wolves dressed in sheep’s skin*”.

More ominously, the document went on to claim that the SACP leadership was not “averse to such actions as the physical destruction of buildings and other public property, looting, [and] violence against working people”. It spoke of a “left sectarian faction which has placed itself inside the democratic movement, to act as the decisive army of counter-revolution.”

Remember all the recent voices expressing horror at the use of the word “counter-revolutionary”? We have been warned that use of the term has an “incendiary potential” in the South African context. They may be right, but where were they in 2002? And where was Smuts Ngonyama? Well, at least we know where Ngonyama was. He was running around news-rooms distributing this very document!

There are many more examples of brutal language being used against the SACP, COSATU, and comrades in the ANC, that we could cite. We are not cry babies in the SACP, and we have no problem with robust debate. We never allowed ourselves to be intimidated by this kind of nonsense, nor did we walk away from the alliance wailing “this is not the ANC we know”(which was exactly the intended outcome behind much of the goading). But, for the record, we consistently raised with the Mbeki ANC leadership the need to develop what we called “appropriate protocols” for ensuring that inner-Alliance debates remained within the bounds of comradely exchange. These efforts were always rebuffed or simply ignored.

### **1.5.2 Organisational democracy**

The Shikotas typically cite “the growing lack of organizational democracy” within the ANC as a prime reason for leaving. Again, we can ask: but when did the trends towards undermining organizational democracy begin? As COSATU has asked in its excellent intervention (‘SA National Convention’. *Questions for our born-again democrats*, October 2008): In which ANC

conference, NGC, NEC, or branch meeting, was GEAR ever discussed before being declared “non-negotiable”?

And can Lekota and Ngonyama please explain to ANC members and the nation their personal roles in side-stepping the democratic structures of the movement (notably the ANC’s NEC, and the ANC parliamentary caucus) in forcing through a factionalist SABC board list?

Very central to many of the debates and resolutions taken at the Polokwane Conference was precisely the question of ensuring organizational mandating and answerability of deployed cadres. Yet, it is this very Polokwane conference that our “born again” democrats find unacceptable. In reality, it is the democratic outcome of this conference that they do not want to accept.

### **1.5.3 Changing our electoral dispensation**

The Shikotas (warmly supported by their liberal praise-singers) in a desperate search to have some kind of political platform that will distinguish them, have raised two matters in regard to our electoral system –

- the need to change the proportional representation system; and
- the clamour for a directly elected president.

Let’s consider each in turn.

#### **1.5.3.1 The proportional representation system**

In the first place, we should remember that the PR system was a concession by the ANC back in 1993. We recognized that, if there were to be genuinely non-racial constituencies, minority parties would be severely under-represented in Parliament. However, COSATU has for some time been campaigning for a move towards a more mixed PR/constituency system in our national and provincial legislatures. (We have, of

course, long since moved to such a mixed system in local government).

There is support in the SACP for a mixed system at the national and provincial levels, and there is no opposition in principle from within the ANC as well. Presumably no-one, including the Shikotas, seriously imagines that such a change is possible before next year's elections. So, let's continue the debate around this matter, and develop an electoral model that best ensures the deepening of our democracy by finding the right balance between broad representivity and more effective accountability of public representatives. In this regard, there is clearly absolutely no reason for a divorce still less the launch of a new party.

However, while we are on the topic of the PR system, we might want to ask Lekota a few pertinent questions. Does he agree that what brought the PR system into most disrepute was the ignominious floor-crossing arrangement that we have now abolished following a Polokwane conference resolution?. While the Constitutional Court did not find floor-crossing unconstitutional under certain restrictive conditions (window periods, and a necessary quota of crossers), manifestly, floor-crossing offended the whole spirit of our constitutionally-entrenched PR system in which voters cast their ballots for party lists and not individuals. We hope that the "born again" Lekota will tell the public how it was he who, over many years and in the face of principled opposition, led the campaign within the ANC NEC to accept floor-crossing in the first place.

#### **1.5.3.2 What about moving to a directly elected presidential system?**

This opportunistic call, emanating from at least some of the Shikotas and warmly endorsed by many opposition parties and liberal commentators, goes to the very heart of the matter.

Over many decades of bitter struggle, millions of ordinary South Africans have

learnt one very important lesson and it is deeply ingrained in their outlook and culture. The rich have money, global mobility and access to boundless resources – therein lies their power. The working class, the rural and urban poor, and the great sea of vulnerable third world "middle strata" (struggling petty entrepreneurs, indebted clerks, lower and middle-ranking public and private sector professionals) have one principal source of strength – they are the vast majority. And therein lies their POTENTIAL power.

But the unity of the majority, of these popular forces, is not a given, and, therefore, they are often relatively powerless. Popular unity has to be constantly strived for through mobilization, organization, a clear strategic programme, political education, cultural work, through the building of traditions of solidarity ("an injury to one is an injury to all", "each one, teach one"), through fostering working class and popular leadership and capacity, through branch and shop-floor participatory democracy, through the struggle against patriarchy within our organization, through entrenching an organizational culture of collective leadership, of mandated delegation, and of the right of recall.

In many societies the popular forces are divided in a thousand ways – politically, ethnically, regionally, along gender lines, or on religious grounds. It is the singular achievement of the ANC and the alliance it leads that, in the face of great odds, over many decades, it succeeded in transforming disparate popular forces into a powerful and coherent majority capable of defeating one of the world's most stubborn, highly resourced, and imperialist-backed colonial regimes. But the defeat of colonialism of a special type and especially of the systemic underdevelopment reproduced by its particular capitalist accumulation path is very far from completed. Transformation – the NDR – is not a one-day event but a profound decades-long process. To carry forward the momentum of transformation from the 1994 democratic breakthrough, we need popular mobilization

and a democratic state reinforced by a relatively coherent and stable majority. We need a strategically coherent, mass-based political movement, which in the South African context can mean only one thing - the ANC and the broader alliance it leads.

This is why those (like the Van Zyl Slabberts and the Zilles), who fear substantial democratic transformation, work tirelessly to fragment the national liberation movement. This is why, turning truth on its head, they constantly argue that a stable popular majority is “bad for democracy”. And this is why in some of these “liberal” quarters, the idea of a directly elected president is espoused. They want a president unencumbered by a party political mandate, by a collective leadership, free of a mobilized and vigilant mass-base, of branch delegates who have the capacity to unseat incumbents. Instead they want a beauty contest, a presidential system in which grass-roots democratic organization (the one hope for real political leverage for ordinary South Africans) is weakened. The more you “liberate” a president from a mass-based party organization, the more you increase the likelihood that big money will hold sway. This is what they want. And, as in many other historical situations, when elite pacts fail to provide “stability” for the exploiters and oppressors, they invariably look for a “Bonapartist” solution, a single personality who will give the appearance of standing above conflicts the better to be able to advance the agenda of big capital.

But isn't this kind of presidentialism what we have just come through (regardless of what our present constitution might say)? Haven't we had a president who “liberated” himself from his own organization by defying it on, for instance, HIV/AIDS, GEAR, or the composition of the SABC board? Long before Polokwane, didn't we have, in effect, “two centers of power”? Have we not had a nominal ruling party, on the one hand, and a presidency surrounded by an Investment Council, a Black Business Council, and the

like? And aren't these the fundamental reasons for the recall of President Mbeki? Was it not absolutely important to affirm that, within our Constitution, a president is elected by a majority in Parliament and therefore is a deployee of that majority? Far from being “unconstitutional”, the recall of President Mbeki was a re-affirmation of our Constitution.

It is no accident that, with a post-Polokwane ANC strongly affirming the principles of collective leadership, of branch-level democracy, and of democratic party mandating of deployees, some of the Shikotas, who were at the heart of fostering a de facto and tendentially unconstitutional presidentialism, are now trying to change the constitution to weaken the importance of party politics by other means. Naturally, they are doing this in the name of “defending the constitution”!

We must expose the opportunism and the hypocrisy of the Shikota agenda, and we must expose what forces stand most to gain from it. But we must also fearlessly cast a self-critical look at ourselves. The Shikotas and their liberal backers will seek to exploit any weaknesses in our own positions, statements, and conduct.

#### **1.5.3.4 The rule of law**

Both before and after Polokwane, we have been absolutely correct to defend cde Zuma, and to mobilize against what has clearly been a factional abuse of our organizations and of key parts of the criminal justice system by the Mbeki inner-circle in their attempt to marginalize cde Zuma.

However, in pursuing what has been a correct and necessary defensive action, we have sometimes failed to make an adequate programmatic connection between the defence of cde Zuma against abuse, on the one hand, and the broader, principled task of carrying forward the radical transformation of the criminal justice system in its entirety on the other. Both the Freedom Charter and our

hard-won, democratic Constitution and Bill of Rights make it an imperative to ensure that all South Africans should enjoy safety and security. But relative safety and security is patently not a reality for South Africans today, especially for women, children, and the working class and the poor in general. The failure to consistently make this connection (or when we have made the connection, the failure of the media to reflect this) has meant that statements, slogans and speeches in defence of cde Zuma have sometimes (but not always) given the impression that the defence of cde Zuma stands above (rather than being guided by) the values of our Constitution.

The same might be said to apply to the correct concern raised at the ANC Polokwane Conference in regard to the role of the DSO/Scorpions. Clearly there had been serious abuses within the former unit, and there were institutional flaws. These we have now sought to correct through legislation. However, post-Polokwane we allowed the issue of the Scorpions to be presented as too much of a stand-alone matter, and it is somewhat belatedly that we have tried more consistently to address the deep-seated problems across the entire criminal justice system.

In a similar vein, from the side of the left, the “rule of law” has sometimes been dismissed as a “bourgeois” or “liberal” concept. This is a mistake. We need to provide a consistent and coherent national democratic (and socialist) vision of the rule-governed society we are struggling for on the basis of what we have already won. We need to expose the hypocrisy of various liberal versions of the “rule of law” (not least those emanating from the Shikotas) rather than sound uncertain ourselves about the value of a rule-governed and law-abiding society within, of course, a democratic and liberated country. The socialist SA for which the SACP is struggling will not be a society in which the rule of law will be abolished (or abolished for some)—on the contrary, socialism will begin to create the

conditions in which the Constitutional requirement that ALL shall be equal before the law will finally have a substantial MATERIAL basis.

### **1.6 Flirting with the markets? Or advancing a multi-class revolutionary transformation programme?**

It is already clear that the Shikotas will target the middle classes, seeking to portray the present ANC and alliance leaderships as “uneducated”, “populist”, “reckless” “violent” and “rude”. Without a substantive political programme of their own, the Shikotas will focus on personalities and on matters of style. In this, they will be strongly backed by many in the media, who in any case tend to confuse serious political analysis with ephemeral gossip and patronizing jokes about comrades’ English grammar or their matric results.

As the leadership of the ANC and its alliance partners have made abundantly clear in the recent period, it is not in our interests to provide free ammunition to the Shikotas with wild demagogic rhetoric, or juvenile insults, or the breaking up of meetings. But we also need to be extremely vigilant, because beneath the cover of the Shikotas’ opportunistic attacks on so-called “populism” and “recklessness”, there are other more serious class forces lurking. And these latter have real power and resources behind them, and they might even have an impact on the ANC itself and on its policies, rolling back the achievements of Polokwane and our Alliance summits.

For instance, in the week before the mid-October Alliance Economic Summit, the former deputy minister of finance, cde Jabu Moleketi, told the London *Financial Times* it would be “suicidal” for South Africa to change economic policies. The newspaper reported: “Any sudden policy shifts by South Africa’s new leaders would be ‘suicidal’ for a country whose economy survives at the mercy of foreign investors, according to one of the architects of the recent years of stability.”

Notice the slippage in this sentence. On the one hand, we are told our economy has achieved “years of stability”. On the other, we are told it “survives at the mercy of foreign investors”. What kind of stability is that?

### 1.7 If you are left wing...shut up!

Another “architect of stability”, the leading GEAR economist, Iraj Abedian, told a University of Pretoria conference: *“Politicians are playing a very silly game at the moment. They seem to be totally oblivious to the realities of capital markets...If you are left wing you should be quiet, and not make too much noise.”* Here again we encounter the hypocrisy of our (neo)liberal commentators. They will (quite correctly) criticize unruly comrades who prevent a COPE meeting from proceeding. “All shall enjoy freedom of speech”, they will proclaim piously, but then add, “...unless, of course, you are left wing.”

Interviewed by the *Business Day* after his university input, Abedian is reported saying that: *“President Kgalema Motlanthe and African National Congress leader Jacob Zuma have said repeatedly that policy will not be altered radically after the general election next year. But other politicians, such as ANC secretary general Gwede Mantashe, have indicated change is in the pipeline. ‘They must talk with one voice. To play to the gallery is not what we want in today’s markets.’”* (*Business Day*, November 14)

Again notice the hypocrisy in these sentences. Cde Mantashe is supposedly “talking to the gallery” because he is raising the concerns of workers and poor. Instead, he should be talking to the “markets” – as if the markets were some neutral reality above any sectional or class interests, and therefore not themselves “a gallery”.

In the same report, former Anglo American executive Clem Sunter is also jumping on the

same band-wagon: *“It is time for brave leadership – if you have populist economic policies you will see a short term surge but a long-term collapse.”* Not to be outdone, Rand Merchant Bank chief economist, Rudolf Gouws *“gave a warning to politicians...whose statements might damage SA at a time when it desperately needed to fund its yawning current account gap. Gouws advised politicians to stop making statements about a ‘swing to the left. It doesn’t encourage anyone to fund the current account deficit.”* (*Business Day*, November 17)

Clearly, there is an intimidatory class offensive directed against the policy outcomes of the ANC Polokwane conference. These economic “gurus” are riding on the coat-tails of the Shikotas, using their allegations of “populism”, but giving them their own class spin. We have been here before. Between 1994 and 1996, monopoly capital and its allies fought a largely successful battle against the RDP – which was portrayed as “populist”, “unsustainable”, “playing to the gallery of popular hopes and aspirations”. In the mid-1990s, they used the collapse of the old soviet bloc and the apparent buoyancy of the global capitalist system, to argue that there were no alternatives. Now, ironically, they are using the deep crisis of the very capitalist system they extolled, to argue that it is “impossible” to even speak about change because the “climate is not right”.

Fifteen years ago economic change was “unthinkable”. Now it is “unmentionable”.

Of course, in seeking to advance these arguments, our economic and scenario-planning gurus are gravely distorting the positions of our movement. We are not unaware of the power of the markets, and the need to proceed prudently. It is precisely the lack of prudence over the past 14 years that concerns us. This lack of prudence includes, notably, the failure to use the good years of a global commodities boom to drive forward a determined developmental and industrial

policy programme. The boom is now petering out and we have wasted the opportunity by squandering the fiscal proceeds from our exports on wasteful white elephant and vanity projects – the arms package, the Gautrain, Coega, Dube Tradeport, the pebble bed modular reactor, etc. We have failed to address the systemic vulnerabilities in our economy, especially our excessive reliance on capital and luxury goods imports.

As a result, we have a serious current account vulnerability, and THIS is the core problem (not what left-wing politicians have said) that has led Fitch Ratings Agency, and Standard and Poor to threaten a downgrade in our investment rating. When the SACP calls for continuity and change in economic policy, we are not calling for unsustainable populist spending. We are not calling for wild macro-economic experiments, in fact we are calling for discipline and prudence. We are calling for systemic changes in our productive economy to create jobs, to free small and medium enterprise from the grip of monopoly collusion, to ensure food security and energy sovereignty – in short, to transform the unsustainable colonial growth path in which we remain trapped.

However, notwithstanding these perfectly reasonable national democratic and multi-class perspectives, we cannot be complacent. The combined impact on the

ANC of the Abedians and co., of an electoral challenge (however marginal) from the Shikota splitters, and of many different tendencies remaining within the ANC can result in a cautious “balancing act” that rolls back the transformational vision of the Polokwane resolutions.

The best answer to the Shikotas is not a personalized sparring match narrowly focused on elections, but a visionary strategic programme of national democratic transformation capable of uniting the broadest range of progressive forces within our country. Our programme needs to focus on the key priorities of our society – job creation, rural development, the transformation of the education and health sectors, and dealing decisively with the intolerable crime situation through a radical transformation of the criminal justice system. These are our priorities. Our programme to achieve these priorities must be an ongoing national democratic struggle led by the ANC and its alliance, and at the heart of the ND in the current phase must be a state-led industrial policy programme. If we do not advance these strategic perspectives with determination, the 1996 class project will regroup both inside and outside of the ANC. Meeting this threat is the key political challenge of the present conjuncture.

## **COMMUNIST CADRES TO THE FRONT!**

**LET US ADVANCE, DEEPEN AND DEFEND THE NATIONAL  
DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION!**

# CHAPTER 2

## **‘The good boys and girls, the boss-class instruments’: The 2008 dissidents in their historical context**

***“And now the wedge-drivers who had been working behind closed doors against the whole liberation movement and its policies have come out into the open. They are part of the impure load which every revolution carries and when that load is thrown aside the journey to victory is always a swifter one.” (‘The Enemy Hidden Under the Same Colour’)***

### **2.1 Introduction**

The above is an extract from a statement released by the SACP and published in *The African Communist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 1976, in the wake of the expulsion of the Gang of Eight from the ANC. But this statement remains as relevant as ever today, especially in the wake of the dissidents that have just left the ANC to form a new, oppositionist, political party. This statement is a powerful reminder that in our journey towards the victory of the national democratic revolution there will always be an ‘impure load’ within our ranks that may now and again have to be ‘thrown aside’, and when that happens ‘the journey to victory is always a swifter one’.

The SACP has correctly characterized the activities of the 2008 dissidents as the continuation of the aims and objectives of the 1996 class project by other means. It is however important that not all of those who were in the past associated with this project want to leave the ANC. We welcome the fact that these comrades are committed to subject themselves to the discipline of the ANC as well as to the Polokwane resolutions and mandate.

The SACP has also correctly stated that members and cadres of our movement must not be distracted by the emergence of this new grouping, but to focus on the key challenges facing our revolution, including preparing for an ANC overwhelming electoral victory in 2009.

However, it is important that we expose this grouping for what it really is and also locate it historically as part of a trend of similar factions and groupings in the history of our liberation movement. We need to point out that they now want to pose as champions for rights that they actively undermined and trampled upon whilst they were in leadership positions in the ANC.

### **2.2A spoilt and compradorial class elite**

The 2008 dissidents are a coalition of class elites who benefited immensely through the leadership positions they held in the ANC, and in the case of some, in the SACP and COSATU as well. The core of these was part of the 1996 class project that became dominant in both our movement and the state. They forged a different and new tripartite alliance between themselves occupying key government positions, sections of the domestic and global capitalist classes, and sections of the emergent black capitalist class.

Many in this grouping effectively used their positions in the ANC and the state to accumulate wealth, dispense patronage and created a hierarchy of ‘personalized followings’ at various levels and components of our movement.

Indeed not all of the black sections of the capitalist class have accumulated their wealth through these means, nor were they active participants in the consolidation of the 1996 class project in the state and the ANC.

But for the dissidents, the loss of leadership positions, especially in the ANC NEC, and some in the SACP and COSATU structures, means loss of access to the state institutions thus depriving them of the major means of private accumulation and capacity to dispense patronage.

This grouping had also actively sought to demobilize the ANC, turn it into a narrow electoralist political party, and mobilize our people only as 'voters' during election periods, so that they, as 'leaders', continue to access state power and amass economic resources.

Whilst the current context of this regressive dissidence is now different, given the fact that the ANC is now a ruling party, it is however important to understand this grouping for what it is, by also examining its historical precedents, in order to deal with it swiftly and effectively.

### **2.3 Anti-communism and anti-worker sentiment**

One thread that runs through all the groupings that have broken away or engaged in factionalist activity in our liberation movement is their anti-communism and anti-worker attitude, often expressing itself in exactly the same way as that of the apartheid regime and white monopoly capital. Like their predecessors, the 2008 dissidents have turned their anti-communist volume even louder, precisely at time when there is a concerted, but desperate, campaign by bourgeois media to try and project the ANC as having been 'captured' by communists and COSATU.

#### **2.3.1 The Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) in the 1920s**

The ICU was founded by Clements Kadalie in 1919 and was by the early 1920s the biggest African trade union (if not mass) movement in South Africa at the time, with an estimated membership of over 100 000. At its National Council on 16 December (!) 1926, Kadalie

launched a scathing attack on the Communist Party of South Africa and a resolution was passed that "no officer of the ICU shall be a member of the Communist Party". Kadalie accused the communists of interfering with the internal affairs of the ICU, though communists were members and in many instances duly and democratically elected leaders of the ICU.

In response to these developments, the then Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), in December 1926, had amongst other things this to say about the anti-communist actions of the ICU:

"At this critical moment, when the Government of Hertzog, Roos and Co is planning new slave laws for the native masses of South Africa, traitors and dupes of the Bosses are trying to break up the only effective organization you have which is capable of putting up a real fight against oppression and slavery – the ICU.

"Messrs Kadalie, Champion and Co., proceeded to destroy the fighting energy of the ICU by expelling... JA La Guma, EJ Khaile and J Gomas... These three comrades were expelled for no other reason than because they were active members of the Communist Party.

"The Communist Party has persistently fought for a united front of all workers and oppressed against the common enemy, the capitalists

"The Communist Party was and is the staunchest friend of the ICU

"Comrades! You are told that one cannot serve two masters. Your expelled officials have never served two masters, but only one – the downtrodden workers of Africa

"Who are the people who serve two masters? Kadalie, Champion and the other 'good boys' who seek to split your ranks in the midst of the enemy attack!

“Do not allow ‘good boys’ and other boss-class instruments to get control of the ICU”

Later, an open letter by the expelled (communist) members, published in the then Communist Party’s newspaper, *The South African Worker*, our comrades said then:

“As recent events clearly prove there is a conspiracy afoot against your welfare. *Large amounts* (!) have been spent upon the *conventions* (!) of the (ICU) National Council, and yet nothing has been done to give you the lead to better your conditions, economically and politically (emphases added). Actually the reverse is the case

“By our removal the reactionaries have deluded themselves into the belief that the channels whereby the correct interpretation of the will of the masses could have been expressed are blocked; but they have reckoned without your determination that the last word shall be with the rank and file”

Although the circumstances somehow different, but how strikingly similar is the posture of Kadalie to that of today’s conventioners, the inheritors’ of Kadalie’s anti-communist conventions of the 1920s, including the fact that large amounts of money were spent on these conventions in order to frustrate the revolutionary character of the trade union movement? Like the ‘good boys’ and ‘boss-class instruments’ of the 1920s ICU, this grouping is embarking on attempts to divide and weaken COSATU, using renegade former leaders of COSATU!

The ICU quickly declined after this and by the early 1930s it had completely disappeared. One can only imagine what would have happened if the Polokwane outcome was different and today’s conventioners were still inside our movement, including in the trade union movement?

### **2.3.2 The PAC in 1959**

The leaders of the PAC, led by Robert Sobukwe, broke away from the ANC after successively having failed to be elected into

ANC’s leadership positions in order to trying and redirect the ANC away from its evolving non-racial positions. The PAC also broke away because of the role of non-Africans in the Congress Alliance, and most significantly its hatred for communists. Its hatred for communists has recently been repeated by its sole MP and former PAC President.

The PAC also tried to build a right-wing anti-South African Congress of Trade Union (SACTU) union movement to counter SACTU activities, especially during the underground days. A key figure in these attempts was one of the leading PAC founders, Nelson Nana Mahomo, who was secretly working with the CIA sponsored African-American Labour Centre (AALC) established in 1964. The AALC focused on building reactionary and alternative trade unions, as part of an offensive to separate African trade unions from progressive liberation and independence movements. Though Mahomo was subsequently expelled by the PAC, he was in 1982 formally employed to head the AALC’s programme to ‘support’ black trade unions in South Africa, ostensibly to undermine the fledgling FOSATU unions then.

Reminding us about the history of the PAC, a document produced by the ANC Department of Information and Publicity in July 1998 (*‘The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania A viable alternative or a flat spare-tyre?’*) poignantly captured the character of this organization:

“When much of the key leadership of the ANC in the Transvaal was detained in 1956 and charged in the lengthy (1956-1961) Treason Trial, the Leballo grouping saw their chance to challenge for provincial leadership positions.

“The group actively and publicly opposed the ANC and Congress Alliance 1958 national stay-at-home, called in protest against the whites-only elections. For this act of treachery they won the warm approval of the

white media, they were praised as being "the most responsible native leaders."

"The PAC's mission in life is to be a rival to the ANC, an alternative, a spare-tyre. But mere rivalry is never going to be the basis for building an effective organisation around a strategic perspective and a dynamic programme of action. Wanting to be somehow different from the ANC is not the basis for developing and nurturing an effective leadership cadre. The spare-tyre mentality results in a politics of opportunism and in leadership bankruptcy".

Just like the current grouping failed to (re) capture the ANC in Polokwane, the PAC decided to splinter from the ANC, and claim to be the true custodians of the 'ANC of 1912'. The current grouping is similarly being given glowing accolades from the same white owned media as true democrats who will deliver South Africa from what they refer to as the 'grip of the ANC's one Party dominance'.

Indeed the PAC has since witnessed multiple splits and is now practically a dead organization, an illustration of what happens when organizations are founded on opportunism to fight for positions, than acting on a principled programme.

### **2.3.3 The Gang of 8 of the 1970s**

Yet another reactionary grouping tried to capture or split the ANC in the 1970s on the platform of, amongst others, the role of communists in the broader liberation movement. This group came to be known as the Gang of 8, because of the prominence of 8 of its leaders leading this offensive. The Gang of 8 was subsequently expelled from the ANC in 1975.

Reflecting on this experience in 1976, the SACP Central Committee, in a statement titled 'The Enemy Hidden Under the Same Colour', had this to say about this group:

"The issues on which they have chosen to attack the liberation movement are as old as the struggle itself. The slander that the ANC is run by the Communist Party is not something new; it has always been spread by the racists and those who act as their agents. And it has always been designed to weaken the people's struggle. As early as the 1920's, liberals like Ballinger helped destroy the ICU by raising the banner of anti-Communism, and spreading scare stories about 'Communist take-overs'. In the late 1950s, the breakaway PAC group also used the white liberal parrot-cry that the 'the Communist were running the ANC' in an attempt to destroy it".

For example in one of its statements, the Gang of 8, spewed the same anti-communist bile that we see re-emerging with the 2008 conventioners: "The SACP relies entirely on using the ANC as its front organization", so they said in the early 1970s. This Group also ended up attacking the outcomes of the Morogoro conference and yet was a part of that same conference at which their narrow nationalist positions were defeated. Sounds familiar!

Of particular significance was the Gang of 8's attack on the integrity of the ANC leadership. In one of their attacks they said "Criticism of official ANC policy and practice has come to be regarded within the leadership circles as nothing less than treason". Of course what the Gang of 8 actually meant by this was that since they were not dominant in that ANC leadership, they therefore could not accept its legitimacy and decisions! The Gang of 8 was launching this offensive at the time when the apartheid regime was tightening repression against our people especially in the wake of the 1973 workers' strikes, and increasingly labeling the ANC as a front for the communists.

The 2008 conventioners are similarly intensifying their attacks on the SACP at a time when there is intensified capitalist media attacks on the ANC post-Polokwane as an

organization 'controlled by the SACP and COSATU'. Indeed these false claims are part of attempts to delegitimize the Polokwane outcomes and the leadership elected there.

Indeed, in his closing remarks to the Morogoro Conference, the then President of the ANC, Cde Oliver Tambo, had warned about the dangers of such elements within our movement:

“(Delegates must) wage a relentless war against disrupters and defend the ANC against provocateurs and enemy agents. Defend the revolution against enemy propaganda, whatever form it takes. Be vigilant comrades. The enemy is vigilant. Beware of the wedge-driver, the man who creeps from ear to ear, carrying a bag full of wedges, driving them in between you and the next man, between a group and another, a man who goes round creating splits and divisions. Beware of the wedge-driver, comrades. Watch his poisonous tongue”.

### **2.3.4 Inkatha yeNkululeko YeSizwe**

Another organization which was formed with the consent of the ANC, albeit under different conditions, was the Inkatha yeNkululeko YeSizwe, now refashioned as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).

The IFP, founded in 1975, was quickly captured by an anti-ANC elite, an alliance made up of some of the most backward elements with the ranks of KZN traditional leaders, the bureaucrats occupying senior positions in the KwaZulu bantustan and business beneficiaries from the KwaZulu Territorial Authority, a forerunner to the KwaZulu bantustan. It exploited Zulu culture and traditions to the full, and sought to build a movement whose primary goal, in collaboration with the apartheid regime, was to destroy the national liberation movement.

At the heart of the IFP's offensive was a rabid anti-communism, literally and unashamedly reflecting similar accusations by the apartheid

regime that 'the ANC was a communist front'. The IFP perhaps went furthest than many of its predecessor splinters from the ANC, by fully collaborating with the apartheid regime in unleashing one of the worst violent counter-revolutionary warfare against the liberation movement. This culminated in its attempts to try and derail the 1994 elections, by collaborating with the most fascist right-wing in South Africa to try and violently derail our transition to democracy.

In 1986, hardly a year after the formation of COSATU, the IFP, funded by the apartheid regime through Adriaan Vlok's departmental funds, established a right-wing labour federation, The United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), as a direct counter to COSATU. Similarly the 2008 splinter from the ANC is also planning to establish a labour federation directly aimed at weakening and undermining COSATU. This is interestingly being done by people who had in the past claimed to subscribe to the idea of one single labour federation for South Africa, but in their desperation to undermine worker and alliance unity they have thrown those principles out of the window!

The IFP has continued its anti-communist rhetoric, even blaming the SACP for the dissolution of the Scorpions, as one of its MPs, J van der Merwe recently claimed in a parliamentary debate on the dissolution of the Scorpions on 23 October 2008:

“It is also clear after Polokwane who now really governs South Africa - the South African Communist Party... The silent Polokwane Communist Coup is taking South Africa in a new and ominous direction”.

### **2.3.5 The United Democratic Movement**

After his expulsion from the ANC, Bantu Holomisa, together with former National Party member, Roelf Meyer, formed the United Democratic Movement (UDM). Of course it is a known fact that the UDM is a small organization on the fringes of South African

politics, whose only claim to fame is that its leader has become a permanent commentator on the ANC and the alliance it leads, rather than focusing on the work of the UDM. Like the other splinters, its concern is also with the communists, as Holomisa claims in a speech in October 2008:

“South Africa doesn't deserve a one-party state, and we certainly don't deserve to be governed by ANC puppets controlled by communists who don't even have the guts to participate in elections”

#### **2.4 The 2008 Conventioneers**

The latest splinter from the ANC joins this long list of anti-communist and anti-working class crusaders. It was therefore not an accident that the ANC allies, the SACP and COSATU, during the dominance of this faction in our movement, were marginalized and even provoked to walk out of the Tripartite Alliance. It was a deliberate strategy driven by a core of anti-communist and anti-working class elements that are now pursuing the same objectives, but fortunately now outside the ANC.

The SACP is therefore not surprised that the 2008 splinter group has found common cause with the likes of the DA, IFP, UDM and other opposition parties. One common factor that draws them together is their anti-communist and anti-working class political outlook. This ganging up is further proof that there is more in common between the dissidents and the likes of DA than with the Polokwane resolutions and mandate.

Like Nana Mahomo and UWUSA before, the 2008 dissidents have tasked the discredited Willie Madisha to build a new federation to counter COSATU, and has recently been quoted by the Daily News as having said,

“We are going to have the biggest union in the country. And that is not going to take time. Give us six months and you will see.”

When Holomisa formed the UDM, the ANC, in February 1997, made the following interesting observation:

“When journalists ask Holomisa whether his ‘new party’ will be to the left or right of the ANC, they are met with a blank stare. Holomisa, of course, has no intention of limiting his opportunism to the left or right. He will only say that ‘every Jack and Jill will be welcome’ in the new party”.

This is true of the 2008 dissidents’ rallying cry “All those wanting to defend the constitution are welcome”!

The ANC Document “*The rise and fall of Bantu Holomisa*” makes the following interesting observations, which we paraphrase, about Holomisa which strikes startling similarities with the dissidents:

Holomisa sought to organize the disgruntled trade unionist in the NUM associated with the ‘Five Madoda’, to mobilize and impress students with rhetoric, he sought to abuse the challenges confronting the democratic state at the time and more so tried to “mobilise around a sense of dissent and grievance against the ANC”.

“And, above all, he tries to present himself as the victim of an ANC “run by a cabal bent on conducting a witchhunt”, says the document.

Like all other splinters before, the current splinter claims to be the true representative of the traditions of the ANC and projects itself as more democratic than the ANC. Yet, its leaders have walked out of the ANC principally because they cannot accept the democratic outcomes of the Polokwane Conference!

The dissidents campaign on a ticket of fighting against corruption, superior morality, better democratic values, but the jury is still out as to who the really corrupt and immoral are, and history may answer this question sooner rather than later!

## 2.5 The urgent tasks of South African communists and all SACP structures

In the light of the above, the first task of all communists is to engage all our structures and properly explain the true character of the 2008 dissidents, and also understand them from a holistic and historical perspective. Like all their predecessors they will fail to weaken and defeat the ANC, just like they will fail in their attempts to weaken the SACP.

Nevertheless their failure will not happen on its own. As we have done over the past 87 years of our existence, it is also going to be critical focus our energies on the positive campaigns of the SACP and the Alliance.

Firstly, we need to intensify our Red October Campaign to build street committees and mobilize our people for effective participation in local governance. To this end, we need to ensure that over the next two months Red Forums are convened throughout the length and breadth of our country. The tasks of these Red Forums must be:

- Use these forums as springboards for building street, village and block committees as our basis for fighting crime
- Explain and engage our people on the key policy priorities as agreed to at our Alliance Summit in May this year; *fighting for decent work and sustainable livelihoods, fighting crime, prioritization of health and education, and rural development, including accelerating land and agrarian transformation for food production and security.*

- Explain to the workers and the poor of our country the real agenda and character of the 2008 dissidents

Secondly, we should use these Red Forums as one of our major platforms for the ANC's election campaign, coupled with intensified door-to-door work in all areas where our Party has a presence

Thirdly, we must convene district councils throughout the country, to get our structures ready for the election campaign. In addition these councils must be used to empower all communists to properly understand the 2008 dissidents and be able to go out and engage the workers and the poor of our country.

Fourthly, we need to ensure that SACP provincial and district leaders participate and do indeed address the shop steward councils currently being convened by COSATU throughout the country.

Fifthly, and most important, we expect all cadres of our Party, to defend and protect the unity of the ANC and our alliance. It is for this reason that our Politburo has taken a decision to deal firmly and swiftly with any SACP who may become part of, or assist, the ANC dissidents. Our alliance is only with the ANC and COSATU!

In the process of doing all of the above we need to ensure that all of our 1600 branches convene branch general meetings as part of our mobilisational effort.

In fact what we may be dealing with here is the new face of counter-revolution in South Africa.