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AFTER POLOKWANE

SACP and Cosatu review the 'irruption of democracy within the ANC' and assess prospects after the historic ANC 52nd National Conference



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EDITORIAL NOTES

We told you so!

The 'triumph of the neo-liberal consensus' and of the 1996 Class Project was a disaster waiting to happen. And it has ...

Since at least 1996, the SACP has been warning of the dangers and delusions of the strategic programme led by cde Thabo Mbeki, first as deputy president (and effective “prime minister”) in the Mandela years, and then as president of our country and of the ANC. However, regardless of comrade Mbeki’s personal strengths and weaknesses, we have never understood these dangers and delusions to be merely personal in character.

In the first place, cde Mbeki was supported by an inner circle of ANC and state colleagues who enthusiastically embraced the strategic agenda, and who actively contributed to it, lending themselves to its aggressive defence – very often at the expense of the SACP and Cosatu. But, in the second place, and more importantly, this deeply flawed strategic agenda was never Mbeki’s alone. It was an agenda nurtured and supported by the big corporations, by US and UK-based think-tanks, and by IMF and World Bank funded consultants of all kinds.

The South African media were not innocent bystanders in this process either. While the tune might now have changed, let’s remember that less than a decade ago, newspapers like the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Sunday Times* were happily heaping

praise on the “wisdom” of the Mbeki team’s strategic policies.

In March 2000, for instance, the *Mail & Guardian’s* political correspondent (and soon thereafter editor), Howard Barrell told readers that since the “triumph of the neo-liberal consensus” (“capitalist, pro-market” with an emphasis on “prevailing Western orthodoxies”, as he put it) the only rational choice is to recognise that you “must...play by the markets’ rules”. In Barrell’s view this perspective was understood by some of the ANC’s “top leadership and a few bright minds in its middle reaches” – i.e. the Mbeki team. By contrast, he told his readers, the SACP has “difficulty with words and their meanings”, and the bulk of “the ANC, too, has a problem in this area.”

At much the same time, the *Sunday Times* political correspondent, Ray Hartley, wrote admiringly of the Mbeki team’s strategy, which, he said, had been “to assemble a team of high-powered technocrats to crunch numbers and construct an intricate policy matrix that has enabled SA to weather the storms on the global capital markets” (*Sunday Times*, April 23, 2000). Hartley derided “the belief that meetings of Cosatu, the SACP and the ANC stand any chance of arriving at appropriate technical decisions about the

economy". He said such a view "is at best painfully naïve, at worst evidence of a cynical belief in the virtues of political compromise". (Note how consultation and political debate are portrayed as "cynicism", while back-room technocratic manoeuvring is lauded!)

These interventions quite blatantly were encouraging the technocratic aloofness, the behind-the-scenes elite arrangements, the quiet diplomacy, the undemocratic, even authoritarian "we-know-best" style that these very same newspapers are now bewailing in Mbeki. They knew the personal-ity they were dealing with then...and they fostered it.

The economic "specialists" who still strut about our TV screens were equally complicit. There is now a general consensus that inequality in our society has deepened and that this is our most serious vulnerability. But just a few years ago, our economic "specialists" were laughing heartily at growing inequality. Consider the following article in the *Business Report* on a meeting of the Swiss-South African Chamber of Commerce, addressed by economist Mike Schussler. According to the report, Schussler told his audience that:

"South African labour costs had fallen in real terms by 6 percent in the last 10 years – something it had taken the flexible Dutch labour market 35 years to achieve.' He went on to say that if one analysed the GDP, the share that went to labour had fallen below the share that went to profits for the first time in 21 years. 'I'm not sure how politically sustainable that is', Schussler said to general laughter." (*Business Report*, December 5, 2002)

With this smug laughter still ringing in his ears, with the not-so-distant praising of his technocratic style splashed over the pages of the *Mail & Guardian* and *Sunday*

Times, cde Mbeki must be wondering what on earth he has now done to deserve such aggressive media hostility. Because, make no mistake, the wheel has turned dramatically. Even the *Financial Mail*, mouth-piece of big capital, can now run an Editor's Note, titled "Depart, I say" and brimming with cold fury:

"One sometimes gets the feeling that any comment, no matter how harsh or stinging, about the man who occasionally moonlights as our president, is regarded as a compliment. The best thing, perhaps, would be to ignore him. He could then wither on the vine." (*Financial Mail*, April 18, 2008).

Given the SACP's experience of aggressive contempt and sustained abuse from the presidential inner-circle throughout most of the Mbeki years, it might be presumed that we are now basking in the almost universal condemnation of cde Mbeki. Not quite. Over-personalising the root of our current problems, and still more, over-personalising the solutions to them runs the grave danger of missing the real, underlying issues.

Post-Polokwane

Most of the current *African Communist* is devoted to SACP and Cosatu discussion papers and individual contributions seeking to analyse and debate what happened at the ANC's 52nd National Conference at Polokwane in December 2007. All of these contributions agree generally that the democratic ousting of an incumbent ANC president and the policy resolutions adopted at the Conference open up important space to advance a coherent, left-aligned strategic agenda within the ANC, the Alliance, and government.

However, whether Polokwane will prove to be a decisive rupture in this direction is

not a foregone reality. It is an outcome that has to be contested for. And a central part of that contest is, as the SACP has been insisting for many years, an analysis of what is going wrong, and why.

If we do this, then we will find that (without discounting individual responsibilities and culpabilities) we will be dealing with systemic realities and with embedded class interests.

The electricity crisis

Take the present electricity generation crisis. What underpins it? The opposition parties basically personalise their “analysis”. This or that minister should be fired, they argue. Well, maybe...but let’s be honest, in the first place there is selectivity in which ministers (or former ministers) are listed as “culpable”, both from the opposition parties, and from within the ANC (perhaps because those involved in energy policy in the late 1990s and early 2000s include leading personalities on both sides of the Polokwane divide). But, when it comes to the opposition parties, this excessive personalising serves to obscure two issues. One, they have very little to offer by way of concrete measures that need to be undertaken to address the crisis. And two, excessive personalising of culpability conveniently diverts attention from their own complicity in supporting the very strategic perspectives that are at the root of our present electricity generation crisis.

Let’s remind ourselves of some recent history.

In 1998 the Department of Minerals and Energy published the White Paper on Energy. The White Paper contains many positive recommendations on the need to roll out electrification to poor households and rural communities; on the need to address the incoherence of electricity distribution

(then in the hands of more than 400 authorities); on environmental sustainability; on pursuing much greater energy efficiency; on renewable and other alternatives; and on the possibilities of energy pricing to industry to be “as cost-reflective as possible...to this end prices will include quantifiable externalities”. Many of these critical measures, including driving energy efficiency, the use of renewables, and quantifying externalities for pricing of electricity have been all but neglected. The only possible explanation is that powerful vested class interests in the mining and smelting sectors in particular have been able to block dynamic interventions on these fronts – no doubt, with the complicity of senior politicians and state and parastatal managers.

The 1998 White Paper also accurately warned, as many current commentators have reminded us, that “growth in electricity demand” would “exceed generation capacity by approximately the year 2007”. It went on to say that “long capacity-expansion lead times require strategies to be in place in the mid-term, in order to meet the needs of a growing economy”.

We all know that these warnings went blissfully unheeded by the Mbeki cabinet. But why?

The underlying reasons are plain to see if we read on in the 1998 White Paper itself. Because, trumping the positive (but subsequently largely neglected) recommendations noted above, that would have begun to introduce serious transformation of the energy sector, we have a naïve and tragic belief that somehow the invisible hand of the global capitalist market would solve everything. And so, the almost explicit message was: we don’t need major state-led infrastructure investment to meet our energy requirements. All we need to do is

throw ourselves onto the bosom of a supposedly benign globalisation process by way of liberalising, privatising, and de-regulating. As the White Paper puts it, we must “work towards an investor-friendly climate in the energy sector” (p.21).

Consider, for instance, section 5.1 of the White Paper (“Context, objectives and priorities for energy policy”):

“Significant shifts have occurred in energy policies internationally in the post-oil crisis era, and South Africa has the opportunity to learn from best practices from abroad. Perhaps the most significant international shift in consciousness is a realisation that commercial energy sources will not become scarce in the short or even medium term. The ‘limits to growth’ school of thought has receded. Energy security is now being achieved, not through self-sufficiency, but through greater diversification and flexibility of supply, including increased cross-border energy trade. One of the implications of this trend is that national, uneconomic energy industries are no longer protected” etc etc. (White Paper on Energy, p.20)

What genius advised the DME in 1998 that we were now living in “a post-oil crisis era”? Already there was a considerable specialist literature on the looming threat of oil production peaking, and within a few years the SACP (without any specialist capacity in this sector) was popularising in SA the challenge of peak oil. What genius persuaded our cabinet to believe that “commercial energy sources will not become scarce in the short or even medium term”? It is true that the second US-led invasion of Iraq had not yet occurred, but it didn’t require too much understanding of global politics to comprehend that a major global power struggle was long underway to secure control over energy resources.

What genius threw the objective of securing as much national energy “self-sufficiency” as possible out of the window less than a decade before George Bush Jnr launched a globally ruinous bio-fuels programme to diminish the US’s external dependency on fuel?

But these passages from the DME’s 1998 White Paper were not just a passing fad. In August 2000 the Ministry of Public Enterprises published its Accelerated Agenda Towards the Restructuring of State Owned Enterprises. Policy Framework. Under the “Energy Sector” the DPE document repeats verbatim large sections of the earlier DME white paper, including most of the passage quoted above. Following the DME White Paper, the Public Enterprises policy paper tells us that internationally:

“Greater emphasis is being placed on commercialisation, incorporation and, in some cases, privatisation. Energy markets are being restructured to encourage greater competition, even in the grid-based electricity and natural gas industries, which have traditionally been regarded as natural monopolies.” (p.125)

And where exactly was this “greater competition” in grid-based electricity being pioneered? California. And what company was leading this process? Enron. In 1996 California began loosening control over its energy market to increase competition. In 1998 a spot market for energy began operating in California. In May 2000 there were huge increases in energy prices in the state. In June 2000 the first serious black-out occurred. In August, just as our Department of Public Enterprises was publishing its policy document, the San Diego Gas and Electricity Company filed a complaint alleging for-profit manipulation of the market. In January 2001 blackouts impacted on several hundreds of thousands of Californians.

ian customers and the state governor was compelled to declare a state of emergency. In the coming months millions more Californians were affected by black-outs.

While all of this was happening, the South African Department of Public Enterprises was telling us that “international best practice” dictated that commercialisation and privatisation of electricity generation was the way to go. They were vociferously supported by the rest of cabinet, by the DA, by the media, and by all the learned economists who assume that we have now forgotten what it was they were saying back then.

This is what lies at the root of our present electricity generation crisis. It was the illusion that the capitalist market would provide for all our needs. It was the illusion that all the state needed to do was to create an investor-friendly environment. But it was also more than just these illusions. These illusions happened to suit the class interests of established monopoly capital that did not want to see our new democratic state develop its own capacity to set key strategic targets. And it suited the class interests of an ANC-connected, aspirant bourgeoisie who saw in the privatisation of Eskom the route to plundering public re-

sources for the purposes of their own personal primitive accumulation.

As it happens, there was little private sector interest in entering the electricity generation market in South Africa (our prices were simply too low). But it was not for want of trying that Eskom escaped wholesale privatisation. In the process, years in which building-up generation capacity could have been undertaken were squandered.

The SACP (and Cosatu) can proudly say that we resisted this disastrous strategic programme. We were ridiculed at the time. Some leading personalities in the Mbeki camp even made the menacing suggestion that the anti-privatisation general strikes in 2001 and 2002 were “insurrectionary” in nature and designed to “overthrow the democratic state”. In fact, they were attempts to defend the democratic state and the strategic assets vested in public utilities like Eskom against an agenda of privatisation and of plundering.

As we move forward from Polokwane, it is important that we remember all of this. Polokwane will not live up to its possibilities if it results in a change of personnel, but little by way of changing our overall strategic policy thrust. ★

THE POLITICAL REPORT OF THE SACP SECRETARIAT
TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN FEBRUARY 2008

The Post-Polokwane conjuncture: We need revolutionary changes, not just changes!

“In our country, more than in any other part of the oppressed world, it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole. It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not even represent a shadow of liberation” (ANC Morogoro, “Strategy and Tactics”)

While we routinely describe events as “historical”, it is highly probable that, in decades to come, the ANC’s December 2007 Polokwane Conference will indeed be understood to have been “historical”, a significant watershed moment in the history of our national liberation movement. Almost uniquely for a post-independence national liberation movement, an incumbent president and his electoral slate were defeated democratically within the organisation, notwithstanding all of the advantages and considerable resources enjoyed by an incumbent.

There were, of course, many diverse currents and agendas at play in Polokwane.

Essentially, however, it represented the irruption of popular democracy within the ANC, the re-claiming of democratic space within the organisation by thousands of branch delegates, and the rejection of a top-down, bureaucratic capture of the organisation. It is true that we should not discount the degree to which delegates’ votes were themselves the result of considerable provincial (and other) level factional bargaining and trading, and top-down instructions. But this cannot detract from the fact that the genie of inner-party democracy was unleashed. The elation felt by delegates was often related less to the victory of this or that list and more to a sense of a recovery of popular/delegate power. The democratic dislodging of an incumbent president was the symbolic enactment of this broader reality. “Those whom we have elected this time”, many said, “must know that we can do the same to them in five or ten years’ time.”

There are many positive signs that this inner-party democratic momentum from Polokwane will be carried forward. The January 8th statement of the ANC NEC calls for a year of mass mobilisation to build a caring society. There are welcome signs that the new ANC leadership has every intention of working in a far more collective manner, that dynamic contact

and consultation with structures is a priority, and that overcoming the factionalism of the run-up to Polokwane, based on a principled strategic approach and on a shared programme of action, is a major priority. This democratic opening is also tangible in many other locations, including the ANC's parliamentary caucus.

However, the Polokwane Spring is not guaranteed to last forever. The potential clearly inherent in this moment might be stifled by a variety of objective and subjective factors. The eventual impact and significance of Polokwane are themselves, therefore, the subject of an ongoing struggle.

Why did the ANC need a Polokwane?

Polokwane and the 1996 class project

By its own admission (see the Organisational Reports to the 2005 ANC NGC and to the 2007 ANC National Conference) the ANC has been beset by many serious problems including pervasive internal tensions and dysfunctionality. Over the last several years the SACP has analysed these problems as being essentially a manifestation of the ascendancy and then deepening crisis of the "1996 class project".

We have said that the defining features of the 1996 class project are:

- A strategic agenda based on the flawed belief that the NDR will be driven through the stabilisation and return to growth of the capitalist economy – regardless of the systemic features of that growth. This growth, it is assumed, will then provide the resources for the state to ameliorate the "plight of the poor" through a variety of redistributive measures.
- The socio-economic programmes of the 1996 class project are, as a result, a hybrid – consisting of a dominant neo-

liberalism and a relatively extensive but subordinate and often paternalistic social welfarism.

- In class terms the 1996 project represents an alliance between established big capital (both national and transnational) and an emerging capitalist stratum. It is an alliance actively mediated by leading cadres within the state and is characteristically consecrated through a wide range of narrow BEE deals, and other forms of primary accumulation of capital by this until recently capital-less (but aspirant) bourgeois stratum.
- Demobilising the working class and popular movement. As a necessary condition for advancing its broader strategic agenda the 1996 class project has attempted in an ongoing way to demobilise the popular movement. This has included an attempt to re-shape the ANC, "renewing" it as a narrow electoral machine and lobbying network. Alliance partners have been marginalised, the state apparatus often purged of communist and left influences, and sectoral and local movements have been cold-shouldered.
- At the same time, the weakening of the key motive forces of the NDR has been further advanced through unleashing "liberalised" market forces on workers and the rural and urban poor. Mass retrenchments, casualisation, black listing, farm and housing evictions and cut-offs are among the consequences. This dilution of the key motive forces is further advanced by the state's attempts to reconfigure the working class, and working class communities as atomised/individualised "clients", and "customers" (HDIs) of "delivery". While the bourgeoisie competes over tenders, the working class is pitted against itself,

competing individually for a place in an employment queue or a housing waiting list.

- The 1996 class project has also actively re-configured the state – abolishing the white minority state, while still retaining a deeply entrenched dichotomy that runs through the new state institutions. This dichotomy in state institutions, departments, agencies and policies reflects the hybrid neoliberal/welfarist socio-economic programme of the 1996 class project. As a result we have relatively well-resourced (although not all uniformly effective) state departments, parts of departments, agencies, etc. whose principal mandate is to create an investor-friendly climate, to lower the cost to doing business for business, and so forth – these include the Treasury, the Reserve Bank, at least the T in DTI, Transnet, Foreign Affairs, Acsa, and even the (soon to be dissolved) Scorpions. On the other hand, we have a range of state entities that are typically under-resourced and overwhelmed by the scale of their challenges. These are the “redistributionist” state entities whose major “target market” are the workers and the poor – public health, public education, home affairs, SAPS, correctional services, public transport, land affairs, etc.
- The 1996 class project is also characterised by a degree of programmatic flexibility. While its core strategic programme (capitalist growth and paternalistic redistribution) has remained its defining feature, it would be wrong to imagine that it has remained static since 1996. In particular, it has endeavoured to re-route the call for a developmental state into its own project. The reversal of the major privatisation drive of the last years of the 1990s and early 2000s is cer-

tainly to be welcomed as, in part, the result of active mass struggle. However, while espousing the building of a “strong” state, reversing the down-sizing trends in the public sector, and committing to consolidating the SOEs (those that were not privatised) the 1996 class project has been active in trying to re-route all of this into their own game plan – a mixture of lowering the cost to doing business for business and the milking of SOEs to assist the BEE capitalist stratum in its primary accumulation endeavours.

- Ideologically – the 1996 class project exhibits all the core features of reformism, perceptively unpacked by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, for instance, in their own epoch. Given its specific South African location and also its location within the ANC, this reformism has two further general features:

- it is essentially a bourgeois nationalist ideology (the BEE capitalist stratum being the principal articulator and beneficiary of the ideology). In this respect it differs from the aristocracy of labour class features of the European reformism that Lenin and Luxemburg critiqued. In the case of European social democratic reformism of the 1910s, the leading ideologues identified with (and therefore tailed behind) the imperialist/colonial ambitions of their respective bourgeoisies in the name of patriotism. In the case of SA, our current black bourgeois nationalism proclaims its own narrow class interests to be identical with those of the black majority (“black economic empowerment”) and expects the working class and rural and urban poor to tail behind it (again, in

the name of patriotism).

– it is a revisionist reformism in the strict sense that it recites over and over the language of the ANC-led liberation movement while actively perverting (ie revising) the content of this language. (One of the more obvious examples of this revisionism is the way in which the concept of “revolutionary motive forces” has been gutted and re-branded as a list of “interest groups”, or as “those who stand to benefit from change”). Even the concept and main content of a “National Democratic Society (NDS)” instead of “Revolution” is essentially revisionist.

Apart from these specific contemporary and national features, this reformism exhibits all of the core ideological features of reformism in general, including:

- An evolutionary (not revolutionary) understanding of history – history is basically on auto-pilot (the market?), evolving inexorably towards its pre-ordained goals: an “African renaissance”, the “NDS”, etc. History is a “modernising” process, what comes later is by definition better than what preceded it. “Today is better than yesterday and”, as if this were predestined, “tomorrow will be better than today.”

Which is to say, the 1996 class project tends to understand history as a relatively smooth process, requiring, at most an occasional technical adjustment. In other words, the position has great difficulty in understanding (or is in active denial about) the thoroughly uneven, contradictory, conflictual (ie dialectical) nature of society and of historical processes. Everything is presented as a “win-win” situation. All problems can be solved by way of “quiet diplomacy”, backroom deals, elite pacting, “bet-

ter communication”, or by way of another Hefer commission.

Which is another way of saying that it discounts the need for revolutionary motive forces, for a real mass-based struggle. Revolutionary working class struggle, for instance, is declared both “impossible” (“the balance of forces will not permit it”) and, in any case, “unnecessary” (“the revolution” after all, “is on track”);

- The evolutionary, un-dialectical frame of mind of the 1996 class project results in a series of mechanical separations, Chinese walls, the disarticulation of elements that are part of a single (if often contradictory) process. The most obvious of these mechanical separations is the notion of a so-called “first” and a separate “second” economy. Related to this is the way in which development is separated (ideologically) from the systemic reproduction of under-development (the word “under-development” is used by the 1996 class project, but what they mean is really undeveloped, ie “backward”).

These disarticulations are also in evidence in institutional and policy making paradigms – an “economic” cluster and a “social” cluster; and Presidential Working Groups that work in silos and more as sounding boards than serious consultative forums. We see the same mechanical thinking in the robustly stageist thinking that is actively propagated by the 1996 class project, separating the NDR and socialism (this is the “bourgeois” stage of the revolution”). We also see the convenient disarticulation of the corruption challenges we face from the underlying policies that are fostering them. So we have the moralising disapproval of corruption, but complete silence about the “entrepreneurial”, compradoral, parasitic behaviour that is actively encouraged.

Taken together with all of the other general features noted above, we can see that there is a coherent internal logic about the 1996 class project. Its strategic agenda (capitalist growth plus redistribution); its socio-economic programme (neo-liberalism plus paternalistic welfarism); its class character; its active demobilisation of the revolutionary motive forces; the architecture of the state it has shaped and dominated; and its ideological packaging are not accidental they are fundamentally inter-connected.

The political centre of the 1996 class project

Many of the elements of what we are calling the “1996 class project” have been around within our movement, in one form or another, for many decades. Under Mandela’s early state presidency we were still involved in a relatively heterogeneous reality of competing ideological perspectives within the NLM and within society at large – characteristic of any immediate post-transitional moment. It was President Mbeki, still a state deputy president, who was to drive the “Thermidor” (the bourgeois stabilisation) of our 1994 democratic breakthrough.

It has been President Mbeki’s singular achievement to have welded the different elements of the 1996 project noted above into a relatively coherent strategic programme of action. And, indeed, it is President Mbeki and a close inner circle who succeeded in achieving an at least temporary (although never unchallenged) “Thermidorean” hegemony for the project within both the ANC and the state – symbolised by the mid-1996 introduction of GEAR.

To achieve this hegemony Mbeki set about building a presidential political centre focused within the state Presidency and

its technical apparatus – the main features of which we have described relatively extensively in our 2006 CC Discussion Document, and whose mutually reinforcing socio-economic, state, political party and ideological programmatic interventions we have noted above.

Crises of the project – objective and subjective

Despite its relatively coherent internal logic, the strategic agenda of the 1996 class project was premised on illusory grounds. It has now run into a series of predicted and predictable objective and subjective crises. The naïve belief in a benign international community and globalising world has been rocked by many realities, from a grossly unfair trade regime that the developed North is not prepared to change fundamentally to the imperial occupation of Iraq. The hope that a restoration of capitalist growth and profitability would be the engine for reconstruction and development has collided with the reality that this growth actively reproduces systemic underdevelopment – excessive export dependence and capital and luxury goods import dependence, a narrow national market, deepening inequality, a polarised labour market, a neglect of skills development, obdurate unemployment at crisis levels close to 40%, and energy intensive and energy wasteful policies. The well-intentioned socio-economic redistribution programme finds itself battling to stay afloat as housing backlogs simply increase, or unemployment, the HIV-Aids pandemic and the crisis in Zimbabwe put added strain on our sketchy social security net. Change without transformation results in the continuous, and sometimes expanded, reproduction of the crises of underdevelopment.

But there are also subjective contradictions and strains within this “1996 class project”. Its equation of market-friendly technocratic delivery with development has led to the fostering of a particular leading cadre within the ANC and state – state managers and an overlapping new black capitalist stratum. However, this emerging black capitalist stratum is not the pioneering and productive (often patriotic) bourgeoisie of early capitalism – typically skilled artisans, engineers and inventors. Arriving late on the scene, this black capitalist stratum, by and large, is not organically linked into production, but is thriving on BEE Codes-driven acquisition of shares. It is parasitic on the state and has a compradorist relation with established white capital (typically the financial sector and the big mining houses). Far from being able to provide an inspiring transformational leadership to our country, it spends most of its time in factional battles competing for slices of action in arms procurement packages, or privatisation proceeds, or other state tenders.

Depoliticising the political terrain

Faced with deepening contradictions of this kind, the “1996 class project” has responded in a number of familiar ways. At the heart of these responses is a depoliticisation of the political terrain. There is often a predictable, stepped progression of responses:

Step One – deny. “The problem doesn’t exist”. “The HI virus has never been isolated in laboratory conditions”. “There is no crisis in Zimbabwe”. “There are no political differences between us”.

Step Two – well, yes, there might be a small problem, but it’s all under control. “Please do not adjust your sets, normal services will be resumed as soon

as possible ... The Zimbabwean government and opposition have agreed on all issues, all that remains are some procedural matters ... The situation is at a sensitive point and we cannot discuss it publicly – but trust me on this ... The policies are all fine, it is merely a question of implementation.”

Step Three – yes, there is a problem, but the problem is not the problem but the conspiracy that lies behind it. Blame the media. Blame the pharmaceutical companies. Blame a racist old-guard. Blame British imperialism. Blame opposition parties. (We do not have to harbour illusions that any of these entities are innocent bystanders, but the Zimbabwean tragedy, for instance, cannot be explained away by British intrigue, however intriguing the MI5 may or may not be.)

Step Four – “some among us” - the conspiracy doesn’t just come from the outside. It comes from within our own ranks. The snake must be rooted out. Critical questions are really a smoke-screen for another agenda. But even all this is still driven by selective acceptance/rejection of existence of conspiracies (“There is no conspiracy against Zuma, but there are conspiracies on other matters”).

All of these responses narrow the space for robust but democratic debate and discussion – whether within the ANC, or in alliance, or in parliament. Transformational (or, if you like, revolutionary) struggle is reduced to palace politics, “quiet diplomacy”, behind the scenes manoeuvres. The politics of broad social forces and the issues that concern them (unemployment, poverty, inequality) get side-lined in favour of the politics of politicians, wheeling and dealing,

floor-crossing, deal brokering. Broader issues are ruled out of order, constitutional opponents are labelled the “enemy”, and politics is militarised or juridicised. Faced with a political challenge, you appoint a Hefer Commission or a Ginwala Commission or instead of facing the political issues “We must allow the law to take its course”.

Polokwane (and the preceding July 2005 ANC National General Council, and June 2007 National Policy Conference) can be understood as a wave of rejection by a significant majority of ANC rank-and-file members and delegates of this de-politicisation of the space of popular transformational/revolutionary politics. Weakened by the very contradictions within the ANC that it inevitably unleashed, and further weakened by the objective failure of its larger agenda and the growing incoherence of its ideological position, it was the 1996 class project’s presidential political centre that was essentially challenged and partially displaced by the Polokwane conference. The key strategic agenda emerging from Polokwane is to consolidate an alternative political centre anchored in the ANC.

Polokwane: A rupture?

Clearly, something potentially decisive occurred at Polokwane. But was it an historical rupture? It is obvious that the Mbeki “political centre” of the 1996 class project has lost its hegemony within the ANC and its broader movement. A spell has been broken. But the actual nature of the rupture and its implications remain a contested reality.

The dominant contradiction, which immediately rallied together different class forces within the ANC- liberation movement, in the post-2005 conjuncture has been centralisation of power by the state

presidency, and a marginalising rather than a uniting style – key pillars but not the only pillars of the 1996 class project. Indeed it is rejection of this “political centre” and its style which acted as a magnet to pull together different class and other forces within the movement.

However the SACP will have to undertake a very sober analysis of the threats and possibilities provided by this new, unfolding post-Polokwane conjuncture in order to play its vanguard role.

Possible scenarios: Post-Polokwane prospects and possibilities

For purposes of facilitating debate and analyses at this CC, it is important to start by analysing what one would regard as possible threats or negative scenarios post-Polokwane. It is important to do this so that Polokwane is properly understood as an ‘internal democratic breakthrough’ whose potential still has to be further struggled for.

Depending on which class forces are able to build effective organisation, mobilise unifying programmes of action, and present a coherent ideological understanding of our challenges, the movement may begin to take a serious left-turn and/or lay important conditions for such a shift. Or it might stagnate, or even taken a further rightwards shift.

By offering possible post-Polokwane scenarios we are not engaging in speculative reasoning to foster either demoralisation or self-serving triumphalism. Rather it is to contribute towards our understanding of the current conditions and to sharpen our strategy and tactics as encapsulated in our ‘South African Road to Socialism’. But also much more importantly is to undertake such analysis in order make sure that the mistakes of the 1996 Class Project are prop-

erly understood so that we never allow such practices to ever take hold again in our movement.

Possibility 1: A negative trajectory/scenario

In this pessimistic scenario we posit a situation where a (new) grouping of narrow BEE-type class forces (those who feel aggrieved at being by-passed by the Mbeki political centre in terms of procurements, tenders and privatisation deals, and others who simply cross the floor to the new camp) becomes dominant within the ANC. They use the ANC as a temporary “strategic political centre” in order to consolidate their own factional dominance, and to use this dominance to secure control of the state apparatus at the 2009 elections. Once in state power, they marginalise left/ working class forces that had played a key role in assuring them a Polokwane victory, or they buy off representatives of progressive forces with positions in government and they try to placate their mass base with unsustainable populist economic measures. The democratic space opened up by Polokwane is closed once more, and the ANC strategic political centre is marginalised again by a new political centre concentrated in the state.

In this instance, there would be no fundamental change, there would just be new faces. Indeed, given the objective crisis of the 1996 class project, and given the serious divisions and factionalising of key parts of the state apparatus as a result of this crisis, more of the same could prove to be even worse. The objective conditions for a “new” 1996 class project have deteriorated.

What are the immediate signs of such a potential scenario, and what are the underlying factors that might facilitate it?

1. The revitalisation of the ANC as a

campaigning mass movement is critical to re-building the capacity of the key NDR motive forces and taking forward a left post-Polokwane agenda. However, the damage already done to the ANC may prove to be extremely difficult to undo.

2. Related to the above concern, and in an immediate way, the left presence in the run-up to provincial ANC conferences is considerably weaker than in the run-up to Polokwane. The impact of the left is actually very weak in ANC provincial structures and processes, a function of the extent to which the 1996 class project has marginalised the left in many provinces within the ANC. This could result in several outcomes, one of which is that the non-left in the new ANC national leadership and a recycled non-left leadership in ANC provinces find each other, and consolidate a non-left hegemony – once more marginalising the left.

3. Just as the revitalisation of the ANC is critical, so too is the forging of a strong democratic developmental state. But the 1996 class project has weakened key sectors of the state and its factional battles as its own crisis has deepened has seen the very danger factional politicisation of key parts of the state including sensitive areas like intelligence, prosecutions and even (now) the military. Can this dangerous slide be reversed? Will elements of the new ANC leadership carry the factional abuse of state structures further?

4. More specifically, in regard to the same basic point, some sections of the narrow BEE-type are calling for the complete scrapping (and not relocation within the state) of the functions of, for instance, the Scorpions. In a related way,

there is the danger that a new “anti-corruption” discourse and the re-opening of inquiries into the arms deal could simply be used either to settle factional scores or, worse still, be used as a counter-strike capacity (“you move on us, and we will move on you”), once more paralysing the ANC and the state in regard to effective anti-corruption measures.

5. Above all, there is the very real power of capital (which has got stronger not weaker relative to popular forces in the course of post-1996 period) to use a mixture of carrots and sticks (threats of disinvestment, loss of investment ratings, etc) to pile on pressure on the new leadership. Already we have seen tendencies within the new leadership to assure global capital and local monopoly capital that conditions for accumulation will not change. These tendencies are not necessarily consistent (for instance the ANC President has also made several diverging statements, including the good point in his ANC 52nd Presidential closing speech in which he said that the NDR will set the terms and conditions for foreign investment). However, contrary tendencies (eg calling for a flexible labour market) are a sign of the real threats posed by the power of capital.

6. Related to the above point is an intense (and relatively successful) media/ideological post-Polokwane campaign to present the economic policy choices confronting us as either – “more of the same”, or “unsustainable left populism”. For a classical performance of this theme see the most recent duet by Khehla Shubane (the voice of narrow BEE) “versus” RW Johnson (the voice of established monopoly capital) (*Business Day*, February 27, 2008). In this reg-

ular “Face Off” column these two arch representatives of the key class alliance at the heart of the 1996 class project go through the motions of sparring with each other, the better to affirm an underlying class consensus:

“Dear Bill, The demands of the hard left are impossible to satisfy; they think the business cycle amounts to nothing more than a bourgeois fable and profits are exploitation. According to the left, businesses must finance social needs before rewarding shareholders for risk taken. Many of them are livid that the corporate tax rate has been reduced by one percentage point...etc etc.

“Dear Khehla, I agree there’s little point in worrying about the sub-rational left. And of course one must always expect the trade unions to attack almost any budget: they would like a lot more jobs and higher wages and more inflexible labour laws and lots of other incompatible things...”

7. The possible emergence of a powerful new coalition of rural elites, with traditional leaders becoming more dominant, with the rural masses being reduced to nothing more than recipients of social grants and ‘favours’ from the elite.

8. The danger of the SACP and the organised working class becoming complacent in the light of displacing the hegemony of the 1996 class project’s political centre, thus surrendering independence and being ‘swallowed’ by the broad movement. Alternatively, the left might fail to effectively claim and hegemonise its Polokwane victory, continuing instead in a pre-Polokwane mode – on the defensive and fighting a thousand factional battles and localised Polokwanes, failing, in short, to present a left programmatic perspective as a *unifying* strategic agenda.

Possibility 2: Optimistic position

- The emergence of a more coherent alliance, pursuing a joint programme of action, while retaining the independence of each of the alliance formations. Prospects for this are created by the very firm Polokwane commitment to build a campaigning ANC.

- In economic terms to develop a progressive alliance policy platform, based on the perspectives of a mass driven developmental state, in which private capital is subordinated to the logic and imperatives of breaking the CST accumulation path

- A radical redefinition and reshaping of black economic empowerment to focus on productive investment, production of affordable consumer goods, and the creation of 'independent' (black and white) sections of the bourgeoisie with a commitment to domestic investments for job creation and promoting domestic demand.

- This scenario will eliminate conditions that gave rise to the 1996 class project's patronage, colonial class structure etc. The centre of power will not only be the ANC, but a reconfigured alliance with the working class firmly at the centre of driving the national democratic revolution through mass mobilisation (eg street committees, people's land committees, community police forums, local education committees etc).

- What are the immediate signs / conditions for the optimistic scenario upon which we can build a radical national democratic programme?

1. In his congress closing speech, the ANC President strongly indicated that FDI will come under the terms and conditions of the NDR. This means World Bank and IMF – the agents of

global capital, including rating agencies – won't dictate terms on SA. The ANC President also called upon the delegates to call the new leadership to account if it doesn't do what the delegates have asked it to do.

2. ANC resolutions on the developmental state and the existence of the government industrial strategy, albeit still fraught with many weaknesses.

3. Recognition for the need of a campaigning ANC

4. The outcome of the ANC leadership itself has opened up a democratic space for the left. The ANC has agreed on the Cosatu proposal on the convening of the Alliance summit – which is an important platform to define the Alliance agenda for the next 10 years. What should the Summit achieve? – (a) alliance protocol / institutionalisation of the Alliance decision making process, (b) develop an NDR minimum programme in relation to the state and the economy.

Again a critical question is how do we ensure that post-Polokwane is characterised by the key features of this potential positive trajectory?

Immediate tasks and challenges of the SACP and the working class

Early indications from the senior leadership of the ANC point to confidence in the SACP and preparedness for the SACP to play an important role in the unfolding scenario. This is an attitude we need to build upon, as part of playing our vanguard role in our broader movement. For instance the President of the ANC has already indicated that he would like to engage the SACP on its perspectives around the movement's engagement with the African continent.

We need to ground our tasks in the cur-

rent period on the programme outlined in ‘South African Road to Socialism’ as adopted at our 12th Congress; that of building working class hegemony in all key sites of power. This will require an ongoing elaboration of our tactics and the programmatic content of ‘SARS’ in line with the changing political and class terrains. In essence we do not just need changes, but revolutionary changes, underpinned by the power of the people, guided by the revolutionary character and programme of the ANC and its allies.

We have argued that the core progressive feature of Polokwane is that it represented the irruption of popular democracy within the ANC and a rejection of top-down, bureaucratic leadership and of the factional capture of the organisation. However, this democratic irruption, the “Polokwane Spring”, will represent change without transformation and merely initiate another cycle of factional capture and corporate incursions into the ANC and state apparatus *unless the left advances a coherent, principled and unifying analysis and practical programme* within the ANC, the alliance and broader society.

This must include:

- Resisting the tendency to prolong the pre-Polokwane inner-ANC struggles ad infinitum as **factional** struggles without political content – It is obvious that, in the first place, there are elements in the media that seek to do precisely this (see the *City Press*’s highly distorted story on the January 2008 NEC lekgotla) – not always necessarily out of any malice, but because the dumbing down of political commentary has meant that much of the media doesn’t understand how to deal with politics in any other way. But, at the same time, it must be admitted that there are groupings within our

movement that are hell-bent on continuing factional battles (either to settle scores in a thousand localised Polokwanes, or to mount a “fight back” campaign). We are not saying that an ongoing political struggle against the reformism of the “1996 class project” is not necessary – it is absolutely essential. But the “1996 class project” is to be found, in one version or another, on both sides of the Polokwane divide. We can also anticipate many opportunistic “floor-crossings” within the ANC.

- Which is to say the only safeguard against the danger of perpetuating factional division is to politicise differences and debates, and by politicise we mean essentially constantly posing revolutionary and class questions –

- What is the national democratic transformational content of opening up an ANC study of the arms deal package? Or is it just motivated to dig up “counter-strike” dirt of a factional kind?

- What is the class content of the Polokwane Scorpions resolution? How do we ensure that the overall transformation of the criminal justice system enhances popular democratic power, addresses the concerns of the working class and poor, and weakens bourgeois class rule?

- In supporting, as we do, the rule of law, how do we ensure a working class hegemonic content, character and defence of the rule of law?

- The current, immediate post-Polokwane period is characterised by an important fluidity, the opening up of democratic space. We must make maximum use of this opportunity and ensure that what is done in the next 14 months sets in motion dynamics that help to keep

this democratic space open. How, for instance, do we ensure that the more dynamic democratic momentum currently in evidence from ANC head-quarters or in the ANC parliamentary caucus is sustained beyond the 2009 elections? The danger is that after 2009, if and when, the key leadership currently spearheading the democratisation wave from within Luthuli House or Parliament finds itself in the Executive, will the same democratic space remain open? In this regard, there are a number of obvious moves that must be implemented before the end of the current Parliamentary term:

- Passing the Money Bills legislation (it is for instance hypocritical for Minister of Finance to urge parliament to effectively exercise its oversight over the executive while opposing the passing of this legislation)
- Prohibiting future floor-crossing
- Consolidating the reconfiguration of the Alliance
- Consolidating the ANC's strategic policy capacity based on popular mobilisation campaigns.
- Turning crises into transformational opportunities – The Polokwane moment coincides both with a major global economic downturn that has both cyclical and structural features, and a slow-down and a series of structural problems in the South African economy. In many “developed” electoral systems, the centre-left frequently inherits both a cyclical economic down-turn and systemic socio-economic problems provoked by the asset-stripping, tax-cutting, down-sizing policies and/or military adventures of the previously incumbent centre-right. In the South African case, given the electoral predom-

inance (and current unassailability) of the ANC, *some features of this cyclical political/electoral tendency* are being played out *within* the ANC itself, rather than between different parliamentary electoral formations. Given the greater influence (but not dominance) of the left within the post-Polokwane ANC, there is a danger that we can end up merely “managing” the problems, and even getting blamed for them, while a centre-right within the ANC bides its time and gets ready to ride the next economic up-turn. Positioning ourselves effectively given these challenges will require

- a commitment to the sober and sustainable use of public resources (and not the macro-economic populism we are accused of wanting to unleash). We need to underline that it is the “1996 class project” and its capitalist allies that have been squandering public resources on white elephants and self-enrichment programmes (arms procurement, Coega, Gautrain, the privatisation of Telkom, Iscor, etc.).
- consolidating the growing commitment from government to focus budgetary spending on key priorities – infrastructure, education and training and health-care. For instance, in relation to education, is it possible for us to make it a priority without separating the national department say into two departments; one for schooling and the other for higher education (including science and technology)? In other words some government departments are simply overburdened given the priorities we have set.
- The SACP will have to, among other things, use some of its campaigns to focus on the revolutionary transfor-

mation of local government. We must just admit that there are simply too many problems in this sphere, and many of our municipalities are riddled with corruption and non-functioning councillors. We cannot postpone this matter any more, and it also requires that we seriously engage the ANC in this regard in order to come up with a detailed programme to attend to problems in local government and embark on a campaign to root corruption. This must be accompanied by building appropriate capacity at this level, as well as extend party political funding and constituency offices networks to this sphere, possibly linked with national and provincial constituency offices. Such an integrated approach can also go a long way in synergising our work between these various spheres of government.

– a complete, democratic, review of energy policy – with particular emphasis on separating Minerals and Energy into separate government departments; on cancelling the planned aluminium smelter at Coega; on re-nationalising SASOL; strengthening Eskom while ensuring that Eskom does not monopolise energy policy decisions, particularly in regard to the development of renewable energy sources; a state-led investment in boosting refining capacity; and activating popular participation and mobilisation in the energy debate.

– In response to the repeated question about economic policy (“change or no change?”) we need

– to point out that we support the economic policy changes that were already under-way before Polokwane (even if they were often denied or camouflaged)

– industrial policy, an end to privatisation (including the new commitment not to sell off municipal land that can be used for housing), a developmental state, etc. In doing this, we must of course ensure that all of these measures have a transformational momentum and are not just rescue packages for business (“lowering the costs to doing business for business” – “business unusual...but FOR business”??)

Above all, the primary challenge for the SACP is to ensure that we help to deepen the organisational strength and capacity of the working class in order to build it as the leading motive force of the national democratic revolution.

Other urgent political issues

The JSCI report on the Special ‘Browse’ Mole Report: At the time of the leaking of the above report, the SACP decided to request the Joint Standing Committee on Intelligence to investigate the veracity of the report. The JSCI has concluded its investigations and has publicly released the report earlier this week.

In short this report is a very disturbing report about the functioning of the Scorpions and also raises some broader issues of political concern. This CC will have to reflect on the report and take relevant decisions.

Some of the things that are deeply disturbing in this report include the following:

- That indeed that report was commissioned by the Directorate of Special Operations (Scorpions), and authorised by its head, Leonard McCarthy
- That the Scorpions have been illegally continued to gather intelligence, and in this case, even political intelligence that is beyond its purview

- That the Scorpions have been having contacts with foreign and private agencies and services
- Many senior Scorpions investigators have no security clearance, including the compiler of that report Ivor Powell

However of even more serious concern is what is clearly a political agenda to pursue certain political leaders, including those that the very same Scorpions have been investigating for crimes other than their political role. It is for instance very clear that the Scorpions have been undertaking a 'dual' investigation on the ANC President, criminal and political, with the intention, as the Browse say, of merging these two. If there was any doubt of the existence of a political conspiracy against some of our political leaders, involving the use of state institutions, the JSCI report finally confirms this!

The JSCI report concludes by calling for action to be taken against McCarthy and all those involved in the Browse Mole.

While re-affirming our approach to such matters, that they must be located within a broader struggle for the transformation of our entire criminal justice system, but the JSCI report deserved specific attention by this Central Committee.

The Alliance: This Central Committee will

get an opportunity to reflect on the question of reconfiguration of the Alliance and its programme of action, especially in the wake of Polokwane. These matters will be raised in a bit more detail in the Organisational Report, especially also in relation to the preparations for our National Policy Conference in the middle of the year.

Apart from the matters raised above, there are also other specific issues that the SACP has placed before the Alliance Secretariat that will require discussion at the Summit: the matter of the representivity of the SABC Board; and the 2009 elections and the elections manifesto.

Zimbabwe: The SACP has continued its interactions with the key political forces in Zimbabwe. The elections in Zimbabwe are taking place next month, and Mugabe unilaterally set the date without some of the substantive issues being finalised. For instance there has been a concern from the opposition parties that elections should have been held only after the adoption of a new constitution, which has now been agreed to.

Requests from many of the political and civil society forces are that we need to find ways and means of effectively monitoring these elections. We have to urgently engage the ANC in this regard. ★

POLITICAL REPORT

Positioning Cosatu in the aftermath of Polokwane

This is an edited version of the Cosatu secretariat's political report to the Central Executive Committee on 25-27 February 2008

The African National Congress 52nd National Conference held in Polokwane ushered in a new situation and its outcomes will be debated for years to come.

The strategic task facing the CEC is to reflect on the meaning of Polokwane and to define Cosatu's political strategy to navigate this exciting yet complex political terrain. The aim of this paper is to stimulate debate by identifying strategic questions facing Cosatu. Therefore it does not pretend to conclusively and exhaustively canvass all the issues. By definition, a political report is not gospel and the CEC must engage with all the issues raised particularly those that deal with Cosatu's stance going forward. It therefore does not give all the answers but poses questions for reflection. Ultimately the CEC has the responsibility to guide Cosatu and issue an unequivocal position to steer Cosatu and its members going forward.

Polokwane has opened up new opportunities, yet it is still early to conclusively define the shape of the new terrain. It represented the rejection of a particular mode of managing the movement yet the new vision is still taking shape. The coalition that made Polokwane possible still has to elaborate its vision beyond the rebellion against the old regime. We are in a fluid pe-

riod made more difficult by the existence of 'two-centres of power'. What happens between now and 2009 remains uncertain and the post-2009 election scenario is still in some distant future.

What is however clear is that the working class must defend the gains made in Polokwane and repel the rightwing backlash that seek to drive a wedge between the leadership in Luthuli House and the Union Building.

The road to Polokwane – historical background

Cosatu's political preparation for the ANC 52nd Conference can be traced back to the September Commission tabled at the 1997 Congress. The September Commission Report was the first major reflection by Cosatu of the challenges posed by the transition from apartheid and the process of economic restructuring. The main argument of the September Commission was the importance of putting redistribution back on the national agenda after Gear was imposed on the country. The Report also sought to define the role of Cosatu in the post apartheid period and argued that Cosatu continues on the trajectory of revolutionary or transformative trade unionism.

Cosatu's Eight National Congress in 2003

adopted the 2015 Plan following the conclusion that the working class was being sidelined and capital had reaped substantial benefits from democracy. Key strategies of the 2015 Plan are the decision to 'swell the ranks of the ANC' with working class cadres aimed at changing the direction of the ANC towards a consistent working class agenda. It is the 9th Congress in 2006 that plunged Cosatu into new terrain by adopting the resolution that Cosatu should identify its preferred candidate on the ANC NEC. Additionally, the Congress called for an Alliance Electoral Pact to defining a new approach to the Alliance coupled with the resolution to take stock in June 2008 whether there has been any measurable shift to the left. The implied implication of this particular call was that Cosatu support for the ANC depends on the measurable shift to the left.

An extended Central Executive Committee was convened to discuss the political discussion papers prepared for the ANC Conference. The 4th Central Committee deliberated on the meaning of the 9th Congress resolutions in respect of the list of preferred candidates as well as the Pact. The decision to identify a list of preferred candidates served as a momentum as it happened in conjunction with the grouping within the ANC that was disillusioned about the general direction of the movement. Many attribute the eventual triumph in Polokwane to be the result amongst others of the bold step and yet not usual step to debate and announce preferred leaders of another organisation in a Cosatu constitutional meeting. We argued that the situation was abnormal and that the working class could no longer sit idle whilst the organisation they have built over decades was facing a danger of being high jacked by what is loosely known as

the 1996 class project that is forming a new alliance with capital. Our intervention was a rescue operation and a class intervention.

Obviously there was a backlash. The rightwing in the ANC was absolutely incensed by what they regarded as extra ordinary arrogance and interference by Cosatu. The SACP on its part did not back our decision to name preferred candidates openly. They nevertheless published a letter to the delegates calling for either a change of attitude or change of leadership in Polokwane.

All these interventions firmly placed Cosatu into a particular camp in opposition to a camp. We were suddenly firmly part of an organised faction in the ANC fighting against another organised faction. In the process we got tainted by whatever criticism against what become known as a 'Zuma camp'. We could no longer play a neutral role to unify the two camps that existed – we were in one of those two camps. The environment allowed little space for neutrality. You had to be one of us or against us! You had to be working for change in the ANC or defending the status quo!

This put pressure on our own internal unity and cohesion. A few comrades irrespective of their union's position on the matter are loyal to particular personalities and are broadly sympathetic to the political direction pursued by the other camp in the ANC. This small group has not been comfortable with the general direction Cosatu has taken and had on many occasions expressed discomfort with the role Cosatu played in the post 2004 period. It was not surprising that at least the 'other camp' to the NEC nominated two of Cosatu leaders.

This did not necessarily destroy altogether our cohesion.

Strategic considerations informing Cosatu's approach to Polokwane

What were some of the key strategic questions that informed the federation's posture? First, the imposition of Gear in 1996 signalled a shift towards a conservative stabilisation project largely supported by capital and right wing opposition parties. The political centre shifted towards the centre left and this became the dominant discourse in our society. It was a discourse that favoured cautious approach to questions of economic management that privileged markets over the state.

Second, was the political ethos that was linked to this economic conservatism. The constitution promised a radical democratic political culture but this was limited by the overwhelming influence of capital and the closure of democratic participation on the economy.

Third, this political culture spilled into the ANC and the alliance. The ANC and the Alliance were largely sidelined in shaping the economic future of this country, as decision-making was concentrated in the Executive. Even in the executive, the Treasury loomed large and had the final word on developmental question, which were subordinate to deficit reduction. In this political climate the alliance functioned more as a crisis manager than a driver of the transformation process. The last ten years since 1996, have been characterised by major conflict in the alliance on a number of issues, including the very nature of the alliance.

Fourth, driving the political thinking of the federation is the palace politics that have characterised the alliance in the recent past. Political intrigue has taken the place of genuine engagement around strategic issues facing the movement and our society. In this climate there were

charges of state institutions being used to settle internal party disputes, especially through the selective use of the corruption stick.

The working class was not a passive observer of this unfolding tragedy. In the post 96 period the working class remobilised and mounted several campaigns on jobs, poverty all targeted at neo-liberal economic liberalisation. The working class also challenged the bosses at the factory level to challenge restructuring and to better their working conditions. Working class communities also resisted the 'commodification' of water, electricity and other basic services. Political upheaval in the country led by variously by the trade union movement or social movements in part account for the outcomes of the NGC in 2005, the Policy Conference in 2007 and the National Conference in Polokwane. It is important to remember this fact, that it is mass struggles not shenanigans among the leadership that tilted the balance of forces

Cosatu's preparation for Polokwane

Cosatu took some flak from across the political spectrum for announcing its list of preferred candidates. We must unequivocally defend the decision of the Congress on this question as correct under the political climate it was adopted. Ultimately, history will judge whether this was a decisive or divisive move by Cosatu but we must be steadfast in defending that decision.

The CEC must however discuss whether this resolution now applies to the ANC Provinces, regions and branches. The North West Province has already come out in the open with its preferred list of candidates for the ANC PEC in that province. The Mpumalanga PEC wanted to publish its own preferred list but was stopped by the Cosatu Deputy General Secretary. Only

the CEC can provide a proper interpretation of this resolution in the aftermath of the 52nd Conference.

The list of names adopted by the Central Committee of Cosatu was in tandem with the list of the forces campaigning for a comrade Jacob Zuma-led NEC. Cosatu had to work with these forces to ensure the decisive victory of the Zuma led list in the leadership contest.

Undoubtedly, this is not a homogenous group as it brought together comrades with different class and other interests. This group was unified by the desire to bring change in the ANC leadership and internal political environment even though there is no unifying vision of what this means. Cosatu and the working class must assert its agenda and continue to work with all forces for change around a progressive platform.

At the Congress, Cosatu lobbied for a number of its leaders to be included on the list. In principle, the most of the names were welcomed, but dues to technicalities they could not make it on the final list. It also became embarrassingly obvious that we did not study the Election Rules, which implies that our level of activism in the ANC leaves a lot to be desired as individuals and as a collective.

This to some extent exposed the extent to which we have allowed the decision of swelling the ranks of the ANC to unfold on its own without any tight monitoring by the centre. This also raised a question on the extent to which Cosatu cadres links their trade unionism with political activism where they reside, and this also brought to fore the weaknesses in Cosatu's internal processes of identifying leaders. This particular weakness continues to manifest itself particularly in the unity and cohesion of the federation. Put crudely, we may ask

a question where did Cosatu leaders receive their 'baptism of fire' and how did this relate to their conduct inside the federation and how they perceived challenges facing the movement as a whole?

There is no doubt that the ANC was deeply divided towards the 52nd Conference. Results for the leadership illustrate the extent of such divisions as groups voted for their own slate with few 'cross-overs'. The message of unity in this context is very important to heal the cracks that were reflected in Polokwane. It is also correct, that there should be no vindictiveness as this will only serve to further divide the ANC.

Divisions in the ANC spilled over into Cosatu for the better part of 2007. We saw the emergence of media leaks contradicting official positions of Cosatu. The division further manifested in Cosatu leaders appearing on different lists at the conference. However, the CEC mandated NOBs to identify Cosatu leaders to be released and other comrades were on the list in their capacity as ANC activist. This reflects different political alignments within Cosatu and the question is whether we are facing ideological rifts in Cosatu? This has to be confronted and put in its proper context, and there should be clarity on the political dimensions of these divisions.

The meaning of Polokwane – Assessing the outcomes of the conference

We plotted several scenarios and we evaluate the outcome of Polokwane against these scenarios. Notwithstanding the victory of the collective under the leadership of Cde JZ, it is still early to arrive at definitive conclusions as the political situation is still in a flux, suggesting that we are in no particular scenario. A few general indicators are worth elaborating and discussing

– we cite these developments to reject the idea of a ‘business as usual’ conference.

First, it is only die-hards that can argue nothing has changed in Polokwane, although there are different interpretations of the outcome. The ANC mass base revolted against the status quo and installed a new leadership with the hope that it will lead to the revival of internal democracy. This revolt was against the ‘technocratic-near authoritarian style’ of managing the movement and its subordination to the executive. The revolt was essentially about political accountability and democratisation and rejection of the culture of closed decision-making. By rejecting the third term option, the membership also opposed the idea of indispensable leaders who possess all wisdom and know what’s best for the movement. Still, a sizeable section of the ANC – 40% of delegates – still supported this option and this group is not to be easily dismissed.

Second, a ‘business as usual’ analysis of the resolutions of conference totally misreads the outcome of the conference. The alternative reading, that Polokwane represented an overhaul of policy does not also stand to scrutiny. Contrary to attempts to downplay the policy shifts emanating from these conferences, Polokwane (and the NGC and Policy Conference that preceded it) signalled the need for policy shifts on a number of issues. In some cases, the Polokwane conference consolidated the shifts that were beginning to emerge from within the state, for example around the developmental state; industrial policy; poverty eradication; education; and health care.

In some areas of policy, conference emphatically rejected existing or proposed policies on key questions. The conference call for a comprehensive rural development strategy rejected the limited suggestions

emerging from the state. In this regard conference also resolved that the ANC discard the market-driven approach to land reform and review the willing seller-willing buyer principle.

The Conference resolution on promoting decent employment rejected the labour market liberalisation proposals tabled at the NGC. The decent employment agenda will form the cornerstone of the ANC approach to fighting unemployment and poverty.

Delegates also identified the fact that the current growth path is not addressing unemployment and inequality and called for a more redistributive growth strategy. Not all policy questions were settled at the conference and several were deferred for the further discussions, including with the alliance. The fact that the Conference did not reject the Electoral Pact suggests a key opening for debate within the alliance.

Delegates resolved that free education be expanded for poor children including up to undergraduate level. As a prelude, the ‘no fee’ schools should be increased to 60%. This is the most radical proposal to ever emerge from ANC conferences on education. Conference went a step further to propose that education and health care should be key priorities of the ANC for the coming five years.

Third, the organisational renewal’ resolutions are directed at rejuvenating ANC structures at all levels. The significance of the organisational renewal resolutions is the rejection of proposals tabled in the NGC that sought to invest executive power in the NWC.

Conference called for the abandonment of floor-crossing while retaining the current electoral system. From a Cosatu perspective, this is a half-victory, as conference did not agree on the need to introduce a con-

stituency element in the national and provincial elections.

We should not lose sight of the fact that this conference did not spend inordinate amount of time trying to preach to the perceived ultra-left. This conference was a one marked by a constructive spirit to find answers to challenges facing our society. It may not have adopted resolutions that live up to our expectations but it certainly has opened the political space for new politics and relations to emerge. The challenge is for Cosatu and the working class organisations, including the SACP, to consistently and vigorously give their own interpretations to these resolutions or we run the risk of allowing the prevailing view of 'no policy shift' to gain hegemony even within the ANC.

The new NEC is the most representative of many layers of the ANC even though there is still a gap of social movement representation. Cabinet members and those with business links have dominated the NEC in recent past. This NEC comprises MPs, business people, the executive and others drawn from the women and youth sections of the ANC. Whether it will remain as diverse post 2009 elections is an open question. Cosatu must debate its attitude towards proposals for ex-officio status for Cosatu leaders on the NEC. We can't be happy by the fact that only one serving trade unionist is part of the NEC. We need to have a discussion with the leadership and lobby for more unionists to be co-opted to ensure the balance is improved.

The NWC includes many SACP leaders, which is both positive and concerning. What are the implications for the SACP that senior leaders serve on the NWC? Will the Party be subordinated to the ANC and be constrained to pursue its independent

programme? The blurring of the ANC and the SACP requires strategic reflection in the context of the pursuit of socialist struggle.

The January 8 statement was significant for two reasons. First, in the preparation of the statement, Cosatu's views were solicited, which is unprecedented. Second, the message of the statement is one that focuses on the correct priorities for the movement and our society. There is also political willingness to address the rifts that have emerged within the Alliance.

We did not have the advantage of sitting in a session of the NEC Lekgotla where the ANC NEC was interacting with the government leaders. The Lekgotla itself was so remarkably different from the previous meetings. Unlike being the subject of ridicule and attacks, Cosatu, SACP and SANCO leaders were received with an open comradely spirit. The new spirit that we are in this together underlined the debates in the commission. We made few further advances in the Lekgotla in particular to further improve the economic programme of action.

The pronouncement by President Zuma urging parliamentarian to stop being lapdogs and hold the executive accountable is refreshing. This comes against the backdrop of parliament being subordinated to the executive demonstrated forcefully by the appointment of the SABC Board and the probe on the arms deal.

The President, in his 'State of the Nation' address, argues that it cannot be 'business as usual' in relation to the challenges facing our country, especially the energy crisis. The expectation was that the budget would give concrete meaning to this sense of urgency. While not a complete disaster, the budget fails the test to scale up resource allocation and has squandered some of the resources by through tax

breaks to individuals and companies.

The NPA decided to charge Cde Jacob Zuma and the court case is set for August. The Cosatu Central Committee called for the charges to be withdrawn on the grounds that cde JZ's rights have been infringed, and will not receive a fair trial. The ANC NEC has in the meantime established a commission to review the entire arms deal saga. There is no unanimity within the alliance on how we approach the charges against comrade Zuma, save that all parties agree that he must be given support. At the one extreme is the Cosatu position that the charges be withdrawn, at the other end is the ANC position that the legal process takes its course. The CEC must discuss what should be Cosatu's position in the current context where comrade JZ himself is taking legal steps to protect his rights. In particular what should be the course of action in view of the CC resolution that charges be dropped?

Overall assessment of resolutions of ANC 52nd National Conference

This assessment does not attempt a detailed analysis of the conference resolutions, but rather to assess their overall thrust. While all the resolutions are relevant to Cosatu, the most key strategic areas are identified with an asterisk below:

- Organisational Renewal
- Social Transformation
- Economic Transformation
- Climate Change
- Rural Development, Land Reform and Agrarian Change
- Transformation of State and Governance
- Peace and Stability
- International Relations
- Communications and the Battle of Ideas

Factors to consider in our assessment

It is critically important that we develop a balanced assessment of the resolutions, since an exaggeration of either the positives or the negatives would have serious strategic implications. We need to depart from the understanding that while considerable space exists for contestation the ANC has specific dynamics which mean that, in some respects, their policy positions will not be identical, or may even diverge from, those of Cosatu. This is not in any way to suggest that we need to accept that all problematic policy positions, which the ANC may take, are somehow inevitable, and must simply be accepted. Conversely, it is important to recognise that the broad constituency, experience and strategic tasks of the ANC, may not only result in positions which lag behind those of Cosatu's, but in certain instances, these dynamics may result in policies which are in some respects, in advance of those of Cosatu, for example on the issue of rural development.

In relation to existing government policy and practice the approach adopted at Polokwane certainly does constitute a major shift. However in characterising the nature of the shift, we need to be careful not to go overboard in claiming that in ANC Policy terms, the Polokwane resolutions represent, in all respects, a radical shift. There may be elements where this is true, and other elements where shifts may not have taken place, in areas where they should have.

It may not be useful to undertake a 'biblical' analysis of the resolutions, without considering the context within which they were adopted, or without reading them together with other policy positions and strategy documents of the movement, as well as considering their relationship to

government policies. On the negative side, for example, problematic formulations on social security are softened when we read the resolution with previous documents, as well as the ANC POA for 2008. On the other hand the implications of some progressive formulations on economic policy, which were largely advanced by worker activists, have arguably not been fully understood in the movement, and are partially contradicted by other formulations in the resolutions, and therefore will have to be fought for.

Some of the formulations in the resolutions are deliberately vague, and open to different interpretations, both progressive and conservative. Thus the resolutions themselves will be subject to ongoing contestation. In the past those in government have dominated the spin doctoring of the resolutions. This has been true post-Polokwane, particularly on the issue of economic policy. Progressive forces are therefore challenged to reclaim and assert the intentions of the Polokwane delegates, in the face of this counter-offensive.

An additional complication is that the particular circumstances of Polokwane, and the inevitable emphasis on the leadership issue, meant that to a certain extent the resolutions were rushed. This has resulted in areas of vagueness, inconsistency, and even contradictions, within and between resolutions. In some instances, this means that where there was greater clarity, and progressive advances at the Policy Conference, some of this was lost at Polokwane, not necessarily as a result of debate, but probably because of time (and perhaps some deliberate omission of key issues by technocrats). We see clear examples of this below in the discussion on the economic resolution.

It is important to engage, both within the

context of the ANC, as well as the Alliance, to ensure that the most progressive possible perspective emerges from the resolutions.

Overall assessment

In relation to Government policy positions, the resolutions, taken as a whole, represent both a clear progressive advance, as well as a departure in certain respects.

While some may question whether this yardstick is relevant, particularly given the pending 'regime change', it is an important measure in a number of respects: it is well established that government has ignored a number of previous ANC conference resolutions; however one of the clear messages from Polokwane was that this would no longer be tolerated, and clear positions were taken asserting that there is only one centre of power; further, in the run-up to the Policy Conference as well as Polokwane, there were concerted efforts by ANC leaders in government, as well as government technocrats, to ensure that government positions were endorsed by delegates- therefore the rejection of some government positions, however dressed up, should be seen as a deliberate decision by delegates to chart a new course, despite these attempts to direct them otherwise.

This is most clearly seen by comparing the draft policy documents largely influenced, or written from within government, to the radically different final versions adopted at the policy conference and Polokwane resolutions, for example in the area of economic policy, as well as rural development. Nevertheless some elements of the resolutions, particularly those on Social Transformation, remain unduly influenced by problematic elements of government policy, such as the resolution on social security, which reinforces the notion of 'de-

serving and undeserving' poor, and takes an ideological view on the issue of dependency.

Gradual progressive shifts in government policy, particularly post-2003, in relation to the role of the state in the economy, the retreat from privatisation, retreat from market-driven strategies e. g. on industrial policy, a de facto acceptance of the need for comprehensive social security etc. , constitute a partial, albeit contradictory, and at times incoherent shift towards the types of policies demanded by all Alliance partners. Polokwane resolutions attempt to consolidate these progressive shifts in certain areas, and do begin to challenge some areas of government policy, which contradict the logic of this emerging development strategy. This is clear in for example resolutions on rural development, and to a large extent, on economic transformation. Both these resolutions, taken as a whole, while attempting to consolidate certain shifts, go far beyond existing government policy, and promote an entirely different, more progressive, logic.

The 2nd general barometer for assessing Polokwane is to compare the resolutions with previous ANC policies. Previous ANC policies were (with some exceptions) relatively progressive, and certainly far more progressive than post-1995 government policies. The problem was that many of them failed to be implemented. On the big strategic issues, many of the previous formulations had tended to fudge their critique of government policy and Gear, and a coherent perspective demanding a qualitatively different direction, only emerged after the 2005 NGC, when the revolt on leadership and organisational issues, began to be linked to the policy questions.

The 2007 Policy Conference and Polokwane continue this trend. While certain is-

ssues have still been fudged, there is little doubt when reading resolutions, and taking the resolutions as a package, that Polokwane represented a qualitative shift in approach, and instead of a series of disconnected policy positions, elements of a radically different growth path are emerging, as well as a vision of a progressive developmental state. A different strategic posture also began to emerge on the relationship to capital and the working class. It needs to be stressed however, that while this was the dominant trend, certain regressive elements persist in the Polokwane resolutions, as well as a number of ambivalent areas.

Nevertheless, the dominant trend is definitely progressive.

While this advance at the level of policy is no doubt significant, perhaps the most important dimension of Polokwane is the political shift which signals the determination of the new leadership to compel government to advance ANC policies. If previous progressive ANC policies were consigned to the archives, Polokwane now for the first time holds out the possibility that these policies could be translated into government policy and implemented.

Areas of progressive advance

It is useful to identify major areas of progressive advance, or consolidation of existing progressive positions of the movement within an overall progressive framework. In terms of the major crosscutting issues, key areas of advance include:

- Clearer elaboration of the notion of a progressive developmental state, which has a bias towards the working class, and a less neutral relationship to capital (than was previously elaborated) – and a more democratic and less top-down character;

- A shift from the notion of growth as the solution to everything (and an emphasis only on intervention in the '2nd economy'), to an acceptance that the current growth path as a whole has to be fundamentally shifted, to be redistributive, employment creating etc - the resolution calls for 'an effective strategy of redistribution that builds a new and more equitable growth path'
- An important emphasis on inequality has been introduced, where previous documents only focused on poverty and unemployment. The economic transformation resolution now states 'the central and most pressing challenges we face are unemployment, poverty and inequality';
- Related to bullet 1, a partial move away from the emphasis on the market and competitiveness, and greater emphasis on the role of the state in driving the economy, a state-led industrial strategy, an expanded role for state ownership, and a more interventionist approach to use of mineral resources;
- While the original policy document had repeated references to the 'correctness' of government economic policy and its continuity, and denied the need for any shifts, all these references were removed from the final resolutions.

Economic transformation: Key features of the economic transformation resolution which represent an advance include: The emphasis on creation of decent work as a central pillar of economic policy, or as the resolution puts it 'the primary focus of economic policies', and the commitment to tailor all government policies and institutions, including macro-economic policies, to achieve this objective. This commitment was strongly reiterated in the January 8

statement;

- The recognition that decisive action has to be taken to act against current patterns of ownership and production – clause 7 of the resolution calls for action to address the 'monopoly domination of our economy';
- The assertion of the need for coordinated government-wide economic planning to align policies and achieve the objectives set out in the resolution;
- A commitment to building the human capacity of the state, including by 'ensuring adequate numbers of personnel to ensure delivery...'
- Intervention by the state in key sectors of the economy, to transform the structure of the economy, and ensuring that national resources, including land, minerals, and water are exploited to maximise growth, development and employment, and 'not purely for profit maximisation' (1.5 and 1.6)
- Strengthening the role of state-owned enterprises, and ensuring that state entities respond to 'a clearly defined public mandate and act in terms of our overarching industrial policy and economic transformation objectives';
- While emphasising the development of SMMEs, stating that 'we should ensure that fundamental worker rights are protected in small enterprise';
- In addition, formulations on a number of areas which, in part, advance or consolidate existing ANC policies, including: broad based BEE; anti-monopoly and anti-concentration policy; state regulation of natural resources, controlling of input prices and promotion of beneficiation; overcoming spatial patterns of economic marginalisation; policies to absorb the unemployed; expansion of the social wage; and investment in pri-

ority skills and education; and ensuring a sustainable energy mix.

Industrial policy: It is worth quoting the resolution on industrial policy in full, given its importance: '[Transforming the structures of production and ownership, including through] Active and well-resourced industrial and trade policy aimed at creating decent work through expansion of labour absorbing sectors, diversifying our industrial and services base, pursuing an active beneficiation strategy, building sustainable export industries, and expanding production for domestic and regional consumption. In general, industrial policy should lead our overall approach to sector development, whilst trade policy should play a supporting role and be sensitive to employment outcomes.'

This above formulation on industrial policy leading trade policy is complemented by the formulation on trade, although it is slightly weaker: 'Participating in world trade, pursuing strategic partnerships with countries of the south and agitating for a fairer world trade system. In particular, this means ensuring policy space to find new opportunities for employment should not be compromised. The position adopted by South Africa in global trade reform talks must continue to emphasise the need to retain policy space on tariffs and industry protection for developing countries and avoid obligations to significantly liberalise our manufacturing or services sector.'

Macro-economic policy: Clearly the big debate, and contestation at a public level, is as always about the stance on macro-economic policy, with government spin-doctors (inside and outside the ANC) arguing that existing policy is endorsed, and that there is no change. To the extent that

detailed proposals made by ANC provinces in the run up to Polokwane and the Policy Conference on fiscal and monetary policy, are not reflected in the resolution, there was a partial setback. Thus concerns raised about monetary policy, interest rates, inflation targeting, the role of the Reserve Bank, and aspects of fiscal policy, including the budget surplus, are not specifically elaborated in the resolution, which only has a general formulation. It could be argued, and should be argued, however, that the clear intention of the delegates, and the progressive thrust of the resolution on issues such as redistribution, employment etc, supports the viewpoint that delegates want a realignment of macro-economic policy. However the general and extremely brief nature of the formulation on macro economic policy makes it difficult to decisively 'prove' the intention of the delegates.

Polokwane actually calls for: 'Macro-economic policies that support and sustain growth, job creation and poverty eradication on a sustainable basis.' Although brief, this formulation, if unpacked, clearly supports our critique of government monetary and fiscal policies. Do contractionary monetary policies, high interest rates, inflation targeting etc, support growth, employment creation and poverty eradication? Similarly a relatively conservative budget that has a fiscal surpluses etc? The argument by the spin-doctors of the right has been that the use of the word 'sustainable' shows that the intention of the Polokwane delegates was to retain existing 'prudent' macro economic policy. However there is nothing in the resolution, which lends support to this view - the opposite, is true. Again, the question can be asked, whether current conservative fiscal and monetary policies are sustainable if they are choking off growth in the economy through use of high

interest rates in pursuance of the inappropriate inflation target policy; retarding employment; increasing peoples cost of living; deepening inequalities etc? Of course we need to make out a clear case that this is the impact of these policies, and this is something Cosatu has endeavoured to do over time, and there is widespread support for this view. Equally, there are strong arguments on our side that these policies increase the vulnerability of our economy, deepen the trade deficit and balance of payments imbalances, increase financial speculation, undermine investment in infrastructure and service delivery, and therefore are unsustainable.

The point, however, is that because the resolution confines itself to such a brief and general formulation, it makes interpretation of this policy an issue of massive contestation. Nevertheless, the formulation remains broadly progressive, and lays the basis for a more detailed Alliance consensus as to what type of policies would be in line with the spirit of the resolution.

Finally, on progressive aspects of the economic resolution, delegates recognised that economic policy has been the preserve of technocrats, and that the movement needs to reclaim its right to oversee this area, and empower members to debate the policy options. Therefore the resolution proposes mechanisms to take this objective forward, by resolving: 'To enhance the capacity of the African National Congress to monitor and evaluate the implementation of economic policy, including through: Establishing dedicated capacity, with the requisite resources, to monitor policy implementation and conduct ongoing assessment and engagement around economic policy issues, at national, provincial and regional level. A national programme of economic literacy for ANC members...'

Social transformation: In relation to the social transformation, there are some positive features, but the resolution is weak on the whole. Some features which more or less consolidate/advance progressive perspectives include:

- The emphasis on attacking poverty and inequality, although commitment to this objective may be undermined by some of the proposals on social security;
- Commitment to extend the child support grant to 18 years, and equalise the pensionable age at 60;
- Commitment to expand no fees schools to 60% by 2009;
- Commitment to progressively introduce free education 'for the poor' until undergraduate level;
- The commitment to make education and health the 'two key priorities' of the ANC (although this raises the question of the impact of this on other areas);
- Strengthening the public health care system, hospital revitalisation, and ensuring adequate provision of funding (although there is ambivalence on the National Health Insurance)
- Roll out of comprehensive health care, including the provision of ARVs
- Explore the possibility of creating a state-owned pharmaceutical company to provide affordable medicines;
- Provide alternative housing stock, including rental; curb the cost of construction; coordinated planning of human settlement, acceleration of land acquisition etc. ;
- Progressive proposals on land, which are dealt with in detail in the rural development resolution.

Rural development and land reform: The resolution on rural development, land reform, and agrarian change is generally pro-

gressive, although it has some areas of ambivalence, and some gaps. Taken as a whole, it constitutes a major intervention, and strategic shift from current government policy. In effect the Polokwane resolution, read together with the ANC's 2008 programme of action, rejects existing policies on rural development as woefully inadequate, and proposes the formulation of a new, comprehensive rural development plan, a White paper on rural development, land reform and agrarian change, and a legislative programme to implement these changes.

It is worth quoting extracts from the resolution at some length to indicate some of its progressive dimensions. It resolves inter alia to:

- Embark on an integrated programme of rural development, land reform and agrarian change;
- Strengthen the voice of rural South Africans, empower poor communities and build the momentum behind agrarian change and land reform by supporting the self-organisation of rural people;
- Build stronger state capacity and devote greater resources to the challenges of rural development, land reform and agrarian change;
- Ensure that the state regulates the land market effectively with a view to promoting the goals of rural development and agrarian change, limiting the unsustainable use of land for elite purposes;
- Review and change all institutional, legislative, regulatory and tax-related policies that create a bias in favour of large-scale, capital intensive, environmentally damaging agriculture and under-utilisation of land and which constrain the emergence of a vibrant, poor rural economy;
- Support the growth of rural market institutions including through the provision of infrastructure and by helping rural communities and small farmers to build organisations which help them to access markets, build links with formal sector value chains and coordinate their activities to realise economies of scale;
- Where necessary, expropriate property in the public interest or for public purpose in accordance with the Constitution to achieve equity, redress, social justice and sustainable development;
- Work together with the progressive trade union movement, government agencies and civil society to realise the rights of farm workers and farm dwellers, combat human rights abuses and super-exploitation, and provision of support and advice to communities living on farms. To ensure the vigorous implementation of laws that protect farm workers and farm-dwellers by strengthening the capacity, resources and resolve of government to protect and advance their interest;
- Ensure that the allocation of customary land be democratised in a manner which empowers rural women and supports the building of democratic community structures at village level, capable of driving and coordinating local development processes;
- Find ways to stabilise food prices in order to prevent inflationary surges, protect food security and combat hunger;
- Accelerate the roll-out of rural infrastructure, particularly roads but also other services including potable water, electricity and irrigation and ensuring in particular that the former Bantustan areas are properly provisioned with an infrastructural base for economic and social development.

Organisational renewal: This resolution focuses mainly on internal organisational questions, which are obviously important in terms of the revitalisation of the ANC, and its ability to take the new perspectives of Polokwane forward. We focus here on those aspects, which deal with the relationship of the ANC to governance, as well as the Alliance:

- (There must be) greater coordination between work of the ANC structures and governance work, to give strategic leadership to cadres deployed in the state and to improve capacity to hold cadres deployed accountable.
- Constitutional structures (must) strengthen caucuses as instruments for robust oversight, mutual accountability, collective leadership and discipline among cadres deployed to government, parliament, legislatures and municipalities.
- Improve capacity of ANC structures to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policy by cadres deployed in government. A monitoring and evaluation mechanism should be developed and include annual assessment of public representatives by branches and regions and mid-term performance evaluations by provinces and HQ.
- The National Policy Conference should become a consultative platform for policy review and debates in the run-up to National Conferences and a consultative body for the development of the Election Manifesto in the run-up to national and local government elections.
- The Policy Institute should be actualised as a matter of utmost priority
- We should strengthen list guidelines and processes for public representatives to enhance democratic participation, ensure that we select and deploy the best

cadres for public office and involve the broader community in our candidate selection processes.

- Champion the introduction of a comprehensive system of public funding of representative political parties in the different spheres of government and civil society organisations, as part of strengthening the tenets of our new democracy. And (implement) an effective regulatory architecture for private funding of political parties and civil society groups to enhance accountability and transparency to the citizenry.
- Confirm the relevance of the alliance, united in action for the joint programme of social transformation, using its collective strength to continue to search for better ways to respond to the new challenges. We must enhance coordination amongst alliance partners, and strengthen the organisational capacity of each individual component. We should respect the right of Alliance partners to discuss and arrive at their own decisions on how they seek to pursue their strategic objectives.
- The leadership role of the ANC places on it the primary responsibility to unite the tripartite alliance and all the democratic forces. Within three months after Conference the NEC must convene an Alliance summit to discuss a joint programme of action, including strengthening local structures of the alliance, and an approach on how the alliance manages with differences and discipline.

Transformation of state and governance:

This resolution on has some progressive dimensions, including proposals to:

- Abolish floor crossing;
- The creation of a single public service needs to involve an engagement by the

NEC sub-committee with relevant Alliance structures;

- The resolution on transformation of the judiciary has a number of progressive proposals, but the detail needs to be carefully scrutinised. The proposal for integration of courts into a single court system proposes that the Labour Appeal Court should be integrated into the SCA as a separate chamber, and the Labour Court be integrated into each division of the High Court 'possibly as separate Chambers'. We need to respond to this proposal;
- Introduce measures to combat corruption both by 'those who corrupt as well as those who are corrupted'. The resolution is short on detail;
- On post-tenure employment rules for elected representatives and public servants, the NEC needs to urgently develop a framework to regulate 'the flow of skills between the public and private sector'. The resolution proposes elements which must guide this framework.

International relations: This resolution includes a number of progressive dimensions, inter alia: That the ANC should ensure that the intensification of what it calls 'economic diplomacy' leads to 'changes of colonial patterns of economic relations, and creates possibilities for equitable and balanced North-South relations, transformation and beneficiation of African natural resources, sustainable flows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), market access for products from the South to generate employment, and contribute to poverty eradication.

- Related to the above the resolution calls for a legislated code of good business practice, for South African compa-

nies doing business in the continent, and for the ANC to interact with countries in Africa to: encourage them to strengthen their labour and trade laws; and encourage the private sector/business to comply with the standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The code of conduct should have general standards that guide it, such as prohibition of child labour, criminalisation of bribery, the encouragement of recruitment of local labour, imparting of skills, and contribute to the social responsibility programmes of that country;

- On migration, immigrants and xenophobia, it was resolved that the ANC needs to review the current policy, legislation and systems; harmonise policies in SADC; called for humane treatment of refugees; and embark on programmes to combat xenophobia.
- Decided to convene a meeting of progressive parties and movements in Africa, as a run-up to holding a global meeting of all progressive movements; and formalise relations with progressive movements particularly in Latin America and Asia;
- Resolved to support various international struggles of oppressed peoples, but very weak on Zimbabwe;
- Resolved to reject, with other African countries, current moves by the USA to enlarge its military presence in Africa by establishing the African Command military Centre (Africom).

Communications and the battle of ideas:

This resolution correctly notes that 'the media is a contested terrain and therefore not neutral, but reflects the ideological battles and power relations based on race, class and gender in our society'. It then

goes on to undertake 'to vigorously communicate the ANC's outlook and values (developmental state, collective rights, values of caring and community solidarity, ubuntu, non sexism, etc) versus the current mainstream media's ideological outlook (neo-liberalism, a weak and passive state, and overemphasis on individual rights, market fundamentalism, etc.)'

The resolution proposes a number of important interventions and objectives:

- To encourage a more representative and diverse media environment which must also address the qualitative transformation of the newsrooms that reflect the transformation agenda of the country;

An investigation should consider the establishment of a Media Appeals Tribunal as a statutory institution, established through an open, public and transparent process, and made accountable to Parliament. The investigation should consider the mandate of the Tribunal and its powers to adjudicate over complaints expressed by citizens against print media, in terms of decisions and rulings made by the existing self-regulatory institutions.

- The proposed Tribunal has to be understood as an initiative to strengthen the human rights culture embodied in the principles of our Constitution, Section 36 ...on the need to balance the right to freedom of expression, freedom of the media, with the right to equality, to privacy and human dignity for all.

- The state must substantially and urgently increase its funding of the public broadcaster from the current 2% to a minimum of 60% by 2010, so that the SABC can properly fulfil its public mandate.

- In accordance with the Broadcasting

Act, the appointing body, (must) ensure that the SABC Board is representative of all sectors broadly in our society.

The expressed objectives of the proposed Tribunal are well understood. However Cosatu needs to consider whether any of the concerns expressed about unintended consequences of this initiative may have validity.

Areas of ambivalence

There are a number of areas in the resolutions where either vague or ambivalent statements are made, which can be interpreted to mean different or even opposite things. In some cases resolutions are silent on areas, even though they may have been debated at the Policy Conference or Polokwane. Some of this may be because of the time pressures on the Conference, clumsy drafting, or deliberate attempts by some technocrats to fudge issues. Of course, it may mean that in some areas there is still insufficient clarity or coherence and a meshing of a range of different perspectives in what is sometimes a messy compromise. The latter situation obviously poses greatest challenges since in effect it means that some policy questions have not been fully settled, and that various interests will attempt to appropriate the direction of policy, using this gap. This is both a danger and an opportunity for progressive forces. But clearly there is a particular concern that those in government will attempt to dominate this policy debate, using their particular leverage. This is something that is already being witnessed in the post-Polokwane period.

Economic transformation: As was seen in the above analysis, the economic transformation resolution, taken as a whole, is largely progressive, and reverses the mar-

ket-driven, 'business as usual' perspective of the original document, on which the resolution was based. However it still retains remnants of the original formulations, which creates a tension in the resolution. The progressive, transformative and state-led dimensions of the resolution are slightly watered down by the formulations on BEE and anti-monopoly policy, which while raising some important issues, retains elements of the market-driven competitiveness model:

- Broad-based BEE aimed at broadening and de-racialising the ownership and control of productive assets by black people, women and youth, promoting new black enterprises which are engaged in the production of goods and services, building the skills required by the economy and advancing employment equity in every area of work and economic endeavour.
- Anti-monopoly and anti-concentration policy aimed at creating competitive markets, broadening ownership and participation by our people, addressing monopoly pricing and other forms of rent-seeking and anti-competitive behaviour and overcoming barriers to entry that inhibit the growth of small enterprises, including strategies to increase competition by promoting the emergence of new players in both South Africa and the SADC region.'

The formulation on world trade, quoted above, while generally a progressive improvement on previous government policies, includes a formulation which might suggest that a degree of additional liberalisation is acceptable, as long as it is not 'significant': 'The position adopted by South Africa in global trade reform talks must continue to emphasise the need to retain policy space on tariffs and industry protec-

tion for developing countries and avoid obligations to significantly liberalise our manufacturing or services sector.'

The most serious gap in the resolution is any meaningful discussion on macro economic policy. The proposals by provinces are not reflected in the resolution, and to that extent, it should be accepted that delegates took their eye off the ball, and government technocrats managed to achieve their objective of avoiding clear policy directives from Polokwane on this holiest of holy cows. As discussed above, however, while the resolution is vague and ambivalent on this point, the formulation certainly lends itself to progressive contestation on the direction of macro-economic policy. It may be important to assemble the resolutions of ANC provinces on this question, since they raise a number of important questions on both monetary policy and fiscal policy.

An important element where there is some silence and ambivalence in the resolution is on the question of state ownership. Again it is unlikely that this was the result of a deliberate decision by delegates, but rather the combination of time pressure, and a failure to bring forward the deliberations of the Policy Conference. In the Policy Conference resolution, a number of decisions were 'parked' because it was determined that they 'required further discussion' before Polokwane. The Policy Conference resolution included the following important areas:

- Commissions proposed the establishment of a State Bank to fast track development and that we establish a bank to provide start-up capital to small and micro enterprises and co-operatives.

* Retain and expand state ownership of strategic assets in sectors of the economy that are critical for the success of

our economic transformation agenda, such as mining, steel, energy, ICT and land.

- The proposal that the state establish a mining company to exploit our mineral resources and direct the proceeds towards social needs should be discussed.'

None of these issues is included in the Polokwane resolution. It is unlikely that this was as a result of a deliberate decision by delegate. Comrades who were in this Commission need to clarify whether these issues were incorporated in the draft resolution, which was put before the Conference. If they weren't, it might suggest a deliberate manipulation of Conference documents. If this were the case, obviously this would be a serious matter. If it was in the document, clarity is needed as to how these issues fell through the cracks.

It is also of concern that issues flagged in the Policy Conference resolution for further discussion on BEE, are not contained in the final resolution. These include:

- Commissions highlighted the need for better monitoring of BEE implementation to avoid abuse and opportunism in the implementation of policy.
- BEE remains relevant and must be strengthened, with greater emphasis on collective benefit and ownership, including support to community business formations, micro-enterprises and cooperatives.

Social transformation: The social transformation resolution, as already indicated, is weak and contains a number of confusing formulations. These include:

- The formulation on health might create confusion as to whether the ANC is still supporting the creation of a NHI, or is opting for the problematic SHI, since the resolution doesn't take a stance on

the SHI proposals. The resolution states: 'Reaffirm the implementation of the National Health Insurance System by further strengthening the public health care system and ensuring adequate provision of funding.'

- The housing formulation is unclear and does not give a coherent directive in relation to the new housing strategy of integrated human settlements, and combating apartheid geography. It also does not clarify an approach to the provision of public housing, and public land.

Rural development, land reform, and agrarian change: As indicated this resolution is largely progressive. There are a few areas, however, which require clarity, or raise strategic questions:

- Although the resolution has a progressive statement on democratising the allocation of communal land to empower rural women etc, it is silent on the ANC's approach to the Communal Land Rights Act (CLARA) legislation, which Cosatu opposed, which entrenches traditional leaders power over land, and privatises communally held land;
- The resolution also appears to be silent on the issue of publicly owned land, collective ownership and the promotion of rural co-ops.

The resolution on organisational renewal is relatively progressive but suffers from one major omission, namely: It is silent on the discussion of the relationship of the Alliance to processes of governance, the political centre, policy formulation, and the Alliance Pact.

Transformation of state and governance: This resolution requires additional scrutiny in the following areas:

- The part of the resolution dealing with transformation of the judiciary contains complex and detailed proposals on a range of areas, which we have not been able to do justice to for the purpose of this analysis. It therefore requires additional scrutiny;

- The resolution although strong on the need to fight corruption, is largely silent in proposing concrete measures to fight corruption

- Under 'defending the democratic state' there is a confusing formulation which might be one-sided only in condemning violence by protestors and not condemning violence by the police: 'The use of force during public demonstrations and mass protests resulting in such unacceptable actions as violent assaults against the people, intimidation in various forms, looting and destruction of property should be unequivocally condemned.'

A further general observation which applies to a number of the resolutions is that the spirit of the Conference, also reflected in the January 8 speech, of unleashing the creative energy of the people to address various issues, deepening democratic participation, and the relationship of this to governance, is not given clear expression. The one exception is the formulation in the economic transformation resolution which calls for 'building the capacity of the state to mobilise the people as a whole, especially the poor, to act as their own liberators through participatory and representative democracy'.

Problematic areas

Finally, we briefly identify here a few openly problematic formulations and decisions. We are not dealing here with silences or ambivalent areas. It should be stressed

that these are exceptions in an otherwise largely progressive set of resolutions

Social transformation: The social transformation resolution, as already indicated, contains a number of problems. A key one is: Contradictory and confusing statements on social security, including that it must be 'comprehensive' and 'targeted' - a contradiction; that grants must be 'linked to economic activity' suggesting a coercive USA style welfare approach - (this is a system wherein to be entitled to welfare you must prove that you have not refused any job on offer - this forces workers to accept any job no matter how bad or poorly paying); and excludes the statements from the Policy Conference resolution that 'there is a need to expand the social wage'. And 'targeted interventions in this regard should include measures aimed at unemployed adults'. Therefore it again (as in previous resolutions) claims to be advancing 'comprehensive social security' but only focuses on children and pensioners, thereby leaving the huge gap occupied by unemployed adults.

Transformation of state and governance:

The resolution contains the following problem area: The resolution to retain the current PR (proportional representative) electoral system (and therefore rejection of our demand to introduce a constituency-based element at national and provincial level)

International relations: The resolution has one major problem: Its approach on Zimbabwe is very weak and merely states: 'The people of Zimbabwe in the main would find a solution to their current problems. The Conference expressed support for South Africa's mediation effort as mandated by the SADC region.'

Strategic options and challenges for Cosatu

Let us re-emphasise that the resolutions from Polokwane are largely progressive and do not represent 'business as usual'. Shifts happened consolidating in some areas the shifts that we celebrated after the ANC Policy Conference. But as we have indicated in some areas there is ambivalence, confusion and contradictions; and outright problematic areas in few areas. The challenge Cosatu faces is how do we consolidate the advances and fight for a more progressive interpretation of resolutions. How do we deal with the ambivalences, contradictions and problematic formulations? Overall, how do we position Cosatu to continue the march of ensuring that our revolution leads to fundamental change?

Polokwane represented a sea change in the ANC generally in the positive direction. It has definitely opened new exciting possibilities that the working class must grasp to maximise its political gains. At the same time there are certain risks in the political climate. The most obvious risk is the unravelling of the coalition of forces that coalesced around the 'JZ-led leadership collective campaign'. Another risk is that the legacy of the past 10 years is still with us for example the email saga; special browse report, suspension of the NPA director. How we handle these delicate issues will set the tone for the coming few years. This section discusses political strategy for Cosatu to navigate this exciting and complex terrain.

Cosatu's political strategy must be informed by the principle of empowering the working class and placing its concerns at the centre stage. The working class must win more allies towards its goals and interests and therefore avoid alienating potential supporters. This is easier said than done and the temptation to take a short

cut or path of least resistance can be tantalising. The temptation for triumphalism in view of the decisive outcome of Polokwane must be avoided. Still what adjustments are necessary post-Polokwane? We have definitely entered a new period but what should be our posture and tone?

The first option is to be exceedingly cautious to avoid rocking the boat and the fragile coalition emerging from Polokwane. In this option Cosatu will moderate its stance, particularly in public because it fears to alienate the new ANC leadership. This places tacit faith in the ANC leadership collective to consistently pursue a worker-friendly political rhetoric and perhaps even interventions. This posture must however be evaluated on the grounds of whether the working class is being empowered and is in the driving seat? Another danger of this approach is to place too much faith in the leadership process while demobilising members in the long run. Cosatu will then fall into a false sense of comfort until it is rudely awoken one day.

Within the contours of this option, if it is seriously considered by Cosatu, the question is what is our leverage? Cosatu's source of strength in any of the scenarios includes the moral obligation to respond to the wishes of the popular masses that placed them in office. Capacity to mobilise is also Cosatu's source of strength but should not be taken for granted.

If it is accepted that the situation is fluid, judging for example by the contradictory approach of reassuring both capital and labour, then a different strategy is required altogether. It is a strategy that first and foremost places Cosatu's organisational muscle as the key decisive factor to tilt the balance of forces.

It is, therefore, not a strategy based on a

belief in messiahs that somehow will act on behalf of the class. The objective constraints as well as opportunities facing the current leadership must be fully unpacked to avoid unrealistic expectations on what is possible or feasible. It must also be borne in mind that things may further change in 2009 when the new leadership moves into government, and no one can tell how things will shape up.

The political approach and tone may have to adjust in the new reality, but there is no compelling reason for Cosatu to abandon its multifaceted strategy of engagement, and place all eggs in one basket. The best assurance for Cosatu is not mere undertakings by leaders but a concrete programme, with clear implementation strategies, as well as monitoring and evaluation. In this context, the mooted alliance summit and the electoral pact should be considered as important vehicles to obtain strategic agreement on the way forward. The CEC must therefore confront the following questions:

* What should be on the agenda of the Alliance Summit including the issues of an Electoral Pact and Election Manifesto?

* How to we knit the different engagement processes to achieve clearly set out goals? How should we use Nedlac, the Presidential Working Group, bilaterals with Ministers, and so forth?

* In terms of deployment, should we revisit the decision to deploy Cosatu leaders as MPs and in other positions of power in 2009?

National elections

The ANC has correctly started to prepare for the next elections, which will take place around April – May next year. Cosatu already is being drawn into task teams to prepare for these elections and is participating.

The National Congress, whilst calling for the strengthening of the Alliance, made it clear that will no longer sign a blank cheque. The Congress called for the restructuring of the Alliance and the introduction of the Alliance Pact or a programme of action for governance.

The CEC must discuss the totality of the political report and indicate if the shifts that we have seen in Polokwane, the January 8 statement and Lekgotla are good enough and satisfy the Congress demands. We must however relate the shifts to the practical reality of the government programmes. To measure the shifts in the context of the effective ‘two centres of power’ makes the whole assessment a little bit more complex than it would be after 2009.

Lastly, we need to discuss if Cosatu will back any of its leaders to stand for parliament and government in 2009. This cannot only be a debate about advancement of the careers of tired unionists or even those ejected upwards, but must involve a serious debate about what we seek to achieve. The broader assessment of our deployment strategy in the context of the Congress resolution has to be made. Congress demanded that we should have a broader right to recall those we deploy to government. ★

POLITICAL REPORT TO THE SACP CALEB MOTSHABI DEC MEETING

Deepen the ideological debate, sharpen class struggle and build the revolutionary movement: Communists to the front!

Plotting the course in the aftermath of Polokwane

By **GUNNETT KAAF**

This political report will discuss and assess the immediate post-Polokwane situation and its implications for the class struggles, ideological struggles and the broad revolutionary movement led by the ANC.

The overriding proposition of working class power and hegemony in the NDR and for building a socialist future will inspire our discussion and analysis. The centrality of the task of building working class power in key social sites of power is well elaborated in the 12th Congress Party Programme, The South African Road to Socialism (SARS), as our midterm vision.

160 Years of the Communist Manifesto

Working class power is the historical mission of communists. But when and where did it all start? The modern communist movement has its roots in the Communist Manifesto first published in February 1848. This year marks the 160th anniversary of that historic document. The Communist Manifesto was written by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels and was prepared as a political platform of an organisation of Euro-

pean communists called the Communist League, which is the predecessor of modern communist parties.

The Communist Manifesto is the most popular political pamphlet in modern world history. It is the greatest programmatic document of scientific communism. Vladimir Lenin's words remain valid: 'This little booklet is worth whole volumes: to this day its spirit inspires and guides the entire organised and fighting proletariat of the civilised world.'

The Manifesto is a necessity of basic political education in communist and left circles. It is a must-read for all communists.

The Manifesto has four chapters; appropriately named:

- (1) Bourgeois and Proletarians;
- (2) Proletarians and Communists;
- (3) Socialist and Communist Literature; and
- (4) Position of Communists in Relation to the Various Existing Opposition Parties.

The introduction is very powerful, describing communism as a spectre that haunts ruling classes. Then it declares: 'It is high time that Communists should openly, in the face of the whole world, publish

their views, their aims, their tendencies, and meet this nursery tale of the spectre of communism with a manifesto of the party itself.

The Communist Manifesto is the most incisive classical work of Marxism that must continue to guide us today. It elaborates the basic revolutionary propositions for communists, outlines the vision of a communist society (of which socialism is a transitory stage) and makes a profound analysis of capitalism. The basic tenets of this analysis remain relevant to this day despite the many changes capitalism has undergone over last 160 years.

The primacy of class as a category of political struggles is the basic guide for communists: 'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles ... Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinct feature: it has simplified class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat.' It then concludes with the most famous revolutionary slogan of modern times: 'Workers of All Countries, Unite!'

The manifesto also recognises the centrality of alliances in political struggles. In a capitalist class society, politics is essentially characterised by class alliances and political alliances in the raging class, national and gender struggles: 'The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement... Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements,

they bring to the front, as the leading question in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time.'

In the South African situation, communists continue to raise the class question in the NDR (National Democratic Revolution) and as a basic category of political science – so basic in social relations that the radical class reconfiguration, with the working class at the helm, will mark the ultimate revolutionary change of society. And that the logical and sustainable conclusion of the NDR should therefore be through an advance to a socialist future – '... in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement'.

With this framework of alliances and class struggle, let us now discuss the Polokwane 52nd National Conference of the ANC.

Polokwane: What kind of a contest did it contain?

Before we are accused of intruding into ANC internal affairs, let's answer the question: what business does a Communist Party have in an ANC conference?

The nature of our alliance with the ANC is such that, while we are independent formations in a voluntary alliance, we are in a liberation movement headed by the ANC. The state of health of ANC, organisationally, politically and ideologically, is therefore always a matter of concern to us as the party.

What an alliance document of 1993, Strategic Objectives of the National Liberation, had to say about the ANC in relation to the alliance is even more valid now than ever: 'The ANC as a leader of the NDR has to be rooted in the masses of the working class. An ANC cut loose from independent

working-class formations, would find itself more easily dislodged from its historical vocation. Regardless of good intentions and an heroic track-record it would become more susceptible to the pressures of governmental office, and to influence of non-popular strata inside its ranks and beyond. An ANC without the Alliance would be an ANC in which the confusions and sense of betrayal among its own grassroots membership would be increased.’

In the media as well as within the movement, an incorrect view has persisted that the leadership contest and differences that obtained at Polokwane were purely a clash of personalities; there was nothing political whatsoever. The contest at Polokwane, yes, had within itself personalities, because personalities play an important role in politics; but the contest in Polokwane was, above all, political. It was about how political leadership should be exercised. It also had an element of class struggle and even some ideological differences.

From the November PGCs until the actual voting at the Polokwane Conference in December, the membership of the ANC was clear in saying they want change in leadership. This was a manifestation of a crisis that has been building for over many years. Over the past decade, the mass participatory traditions of the ANC have been run down, consultation with, and involvement of, communities has been sidelined, and an unceasing offensive unleashed against alliance partners. From a wide range of quarters – the youth and women sectors, MK veterans, many deep rural areas – there is a single basic refrain. Enough is enough, things cannot continue in the same way.

Cde Jeremy Cronin was correct, when interviewed by an Irish academic in 2002, in pointing out at the existence an exclusivist

leadership project that was consolidating in the ANC. And characteristic of its debate-suppressing nature, he was severely criticised.

It is through this exclusivist leadership that conservative economic policies, anchored around Gear, were imposed. They have in the recent past claimed that we are in the post-Gear era. The current power outages arising from Eskom’s load-shedding refute this statement. Remember that these power blackouts are as result of lack of investment in the Eskom infrastructure, which was a direct policy directive of Gear – cut social expenditure, and the privatisation of Eskom that was initiated, but never really done.

There was a relationship between the rejection of conservative policies in the ANC, which started at the 2005 NGC, the deepening social iniquities, the yearning for a much more meaningful role of the state in the economy and the acceleration of social policies including the embrace of the demand for free education, on one hand, and how the succession debate unfolded and eventually culminated on the other hand.

The outcomes of the ANC succession also coincide with the crisis of the 1996 class project. The main tendencies of this project include: revisionism, capitalist reformism, a technician approach to governance and the transformation of the ANC into a social democratic party.

Polokwane: Some useful lessons

Democracy means members possess power, not leaders: It seems that for a long time some ANC leaders thought they were in themselves powerful, forgetting that at least in radical politics power resides with the people. Leaders only get entrusted with power by the people for purposes of exercising leadership on behalf of and for the

people. Polokwane revived the noble democratic traditions which are so indispensable to our movement. The leadership succession was highly democratic, both as a process and in its outcome.

Free debate for all is a necessity: For a very long time, genuine political debate, whether in real terms or perceived, was suppressed in the movement. The movement must be seen and must really promote ideological discourse, particularly because of its multi-class nature. Different ideological thoughts must be allowed to freely compete so that whichever wins becomes hegemonic legitimately. There was a time when legitimate working class views were branded ultra-left. Rosa Luxemburg was correct: 'Freedom is always and exclusively for the one who thinks differently. Not because of the fanatical concept of "justice" but because all that is instructive, wholesome and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effectiveness vanishes when "freedom" becomes a special privilege'.

Unity-in-action is a cornerstone of the movement: A perception existed for some time that a certain faction is in control of the movement and unless you associate with them, your contribution can never be recognised and you will be sidelined. Unity is so key that it must not only prevail, it must also be seen and felt by all. The acrimony in the succession debate has exacerbated the disunity that was already emerging.

Polokwane: A platform for a fresh start and building a left hegemony

Already flowing from both Cde Jacob Zuma's closing speech at the Polokwane conference and the ANC's January 8 Statement, there has been a stress on the need to build unity and overcome the tensions

of the pre-Polokwane lobbying period that threatened our unity.

We have to combat factionalism in all its manifestations. We must, as communist cadres in our own right and as ANC members, play a vitally important, unifying role in the process towards the ANC regional conference. SA Communists are renowned for our high level political capacity and being disciplined and ethically distinguished, as well as our dedication to the movement. If there is a time when these features are needed most it is now.

The ANC has in recent times showed signs of being left-leaning, embracing many of the positions we had earlier advocated. The many examples include the strong emphasis on a developmental and interventionist state, industrial policy and free education. We therefore must consolidate on these and push for more of the working class demands within the space that has been created by Polokwane. We must avoid being complacent because 'we have won'. We must continuously canvass for and assert working class left perspectives in the ANC and in the Alliance.

The working class cannot afford to be sectarian in raising issues because it should lead the NDR as a multi-class project. There has to be consistency of articulation and application of the notion of the leading role of the working class as a motive force of the NDR. To the extent that leadership is a subjective exercise, we need, as the party and the movement, to consciously continuously build the consciousness and capacity of the working class to be able to fulfil its historic mission in the NDR. We need to secure the interests and hegemony of the working class while it leads a variety of classes and strata for the success of the NDR.

80 Years of the Native Republic Thesis

This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the adoption of the Native Republic Resolution by the Executive Committee of the Communist International. This resolution, when formally ratified by the Communist Party of South Africa (as the SACP was named until 1950), marked the official adoption of the NDR as the most direct route to socialism in South Africa.

The resolution instructed: 'The Party must orient itself chiefly among the native toiling masses while continuing work actively among white workers.' Hence the resolution mainly enjoined the Party to adopt a revolutionary strategy for 'a native South African republic as a stage towards a workers and peasants' republic with full, equal rights for all races'. The resolution also argued that: 'Only by a correct understanding of the importance of the national question in South Africa will the Communist Party be able to combat effectively the efforts of the bourgeoisie to divide the white and black workers by playing the race chauvinism, and transform ... the African National Congress into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organisation.'

The Communist Party had earlier in 1921, on its foundation, made history by becoming the first ever non-racial political organisation on South African soil. This was against the backdrop of an overwhelmingly racial and negative social reality as aptly described in a Central Committee Statement of 1971, Fifty Fighting Years, that the 'Party was born... [into] an arena of most acute imperialist, national and class contradictions and conflicts. Here, within a single state frontier are to be found modern imperialism, monopoly capitalism, and colonialism of a special type, brutally exercised against the indigenous Africans'.

The adoption of the Native Republic

Thesis in 1928 therefore represented a leap further in our status as the most sophisticated political party in SA. In 1962, consistent with our pioneering role, we developed the seminal thesis of characterising South Africa as a colonialism of a special type. And with this characterisation we outlined tasks and challenges for the revolution.

The best way we have to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the Native Republic Thesis will be by leading in the implementation of the most decisive contemporary tasks and challenges of the NDR conjuncture. We must champion the fight against unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment. The starting point will and must be reasserting the NDR as a working class-led and biased project. This is important in the light of the fierce class struggle being waged by the bourgeoisie and its allies over the NDR. The bourgeoisie works hard to ensure that the 1994 democratic breakthrough does not find any relevance and resonance in the economic sphere.

Develop working class leadership on the ground

To develop working class leadership on the ground is what the Party constitution particularly entrusts DECs to do. The main programmatic theme this year, as per the directive of the CC is appropriately: 'The year to build Active, Sustainable, Safe and Healthy communities'.

This theme is particularly relevant in light of the intensified capitalist assault on workers and the poor. This assault presents itself through the hike in the interest rates, food inflation above 10%, including the latest increase in the price of bread as result of monopoly pricing, and the envisaged tariff increase of up to 33% by private hospital groups. Related to the power outages,

Eskom intends increasing electricity tariffs. This will have a double impact since it will also cause an increase in the inflation rate because of the input role electricity plays in the economic production processes.

We therefore must intensify the 'Know Your Neighbourhood', 'Access to Health' and 'Land and Food' campaigns. In taking up these campaigns we must work with trade unions, ANC branches and various organs of civil society. We must accordingly engage government where their intervention will be required.

Let Karl Marx have the last word: 'Communists are... the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the lines of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.' ★

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A LIFE IN STRUGGLE

The legacy of Joe Slovo

This speech was delivered by **Ben Turok** at the Gauteng Joe Slovo Memorial Lecture in January

This is an emotional occasion for all of us as we remember the funeral of Joe Slovo when the whole of Soweto filled the streets to see him to his last resting place. It is also important to remember his legacy at a time when the movement is reviewing its policies and strategy. I shall deal with three themes, his life, his contribution to revolutionary theory, and its relevance to us today.

A life of struggle

I was born in the same year as Comrade Joe, in Eastern Europe, of very poor parents, came to South Africa as young boy, and like him, became active in the struggle at an early age. I can therefore claim to have some understanding of his life history.

Slovo joined the Communist Party of South Africa (as it was called then) in 1942, at the age of 16. He had to leave school early because of poverty, and joined the army at an early age. He won a scholarship to study law at Wits University, and became an advocate practicing in Johannesburg, where he was active in both the Party and the Congress Alliance. He was arrested in the 1956 Treason Trial and be-



Joe Slovo

came one of the defence team, where he soon showed legal brilliance and much toughness with the bench. It became clear that he was no ordinary lawyer, taking a political stance throughout.

When the movement decided to move to armed struggle in 1960, Slovo was in the forefront of creating Mkhonto weSizwe, and was one of the main authors of Operation Mayebuye. He went abroad soon after that, to work full time for the movement, pushing for the creation of an ANC-SACP alliance, the first time in history. He was also very active in the international Communist movement, speaking at meetings in many countries. But exile was a tough road, with many difficulties, as the armed struggle took a long time to develop momentum.

Slovo was prominent in the preparations for the 1969 Morogoro Conference in Tanzania, and played an important part in drafting the policy documents, pressing for a progressive orientation in the Strategy and Tactics adopted there. This was to remain the basis for later versions.

Slovo captured its main theses in an essay in *No Middle Road*, (Davidson et al 1976). While many of these positions re-

main in place, some of the formulations belong to a different epoch and a different phase of our struggle. Nor could it be anticipated then that the ANC would come to power through a negotiated settlement with the apartheid regime.

Many of Slovo's formulations emphasised the economic foundations of national oppression in capitalist economic relations, such as, 'The origins of apartheid lie in economic exploitation' (Davidson 1976 p118), 'A nationalist ideology which ignores the class basis of racism is false' (p139), 'It is impossible to conceive of true liberation separated from the destruction of capitalism,' (p161) 'No significant national demand can be successfully won without the destruction of the existing capitalist structure', (p140) 'If every racist statute were to be repealed tomorrow, leaving the economic status quo undisturbed, white domination in its most essential aspects would remain' (p141)

Slovo also emphasised the importance of identifying which classes should lead the struggle: 'The fundamental question is: which class or alliance of classes exercises state power in the immediate post-liberation period' (p148), 'The ANC must not be ambiguous on the question of the primary role of the most oppressed African mass' (p175).

And he warned of the possibility of the black bourgeoisie playing a reactionary role: 'It cannot be discounted altogether, that the role of the all-white bourgeoisie could be assumed by a black equivalent in the future' (p143)

The ANC has not followed some of these prescriptions and we need to examine why. Is it because of the collapse of the international Communist movement which was clearly influencing thinking in 1969? Or is it because we achieved a negotiated settle-

ment rather than outright victory? Slovo's crucial point was that the revolution would have to go beyond the overthrow of racism and destroy capitalism if true liberation was to be achieved. He also warned of the threat of a black bourgeoisie replacing the white bourgeoisie but retaining the essence of the system. We shall return to these issues later.

In 1969 Slovo became a member of the Revolutionary Council of the ANC, thereby breaking with the tradition of only Africans holding senior positions in the ANC, although MK had been non-racial from the start. After 1969 the ANC in exile soon became non-racial too.

In 1991 Slovo returned to South Africa and became an important figure in the negotiations with the regime. But in my opinion, he made a mistake in leading the move to turn the Party into a mass party when it might have retained its traditional role as a vanguard giving ideological and strategic leadership to the ANC (see below).

Slovo became Minister of Housing in the first democratic government in 1994, and an important figure in government. He died of cancer prematurely in 1995.

Contribution to revolutionary theory

After the Party was outlawed in 1949, it was reconstituted underground as the SACP, with Slovo as a member. It consisted of less than a 100 members, carefully recruited on the basis of their political consciousness and security awareness. All members were active in one or other of the Congresses, ANC, Indian Congresses, Coloured Peoples Congress, Congress of Democrats and SA Congress of Trade Unions, often holding senior positions.

The Party was therefore able to exercise considerable political influence, without ever attempting to take over the Congress

movement. 'There is no conflict between the vanguard concept and acceptance of the ANC as the head of the liberation alliance.' (Slovo p 25). In this respect the party was following the Leninist line on the role of a Communist Party that the vanguard party is a comparatively small organisation of highly conscious revolutionaries maintaining iron discipline, centralisation of leadership and coherence and unity in action. And striving to be effective not merely through its own actions but through moving the masses (Turok p 8)

Slovo put this very clearly. 'We do not regard the trade union or the national movement as mere conduits for our policies. Nor do we attempt to advance our policy positions through intrigue or manipulation. Our relations with these organisations are based on complete respect for their independence, integrity and inner-democracy. In so far as our influence is felt, it is the result of open submissions of policy positions and the impact of individual communists who win respect among the most loyal, the most devoted and ideologically clear members of these organisations' (Slovo 1990 p 26).

Here, Slovo was articulating what had been normal practice in the relations between the Party and the Congresses for some time. Party leaders like Kotane and Sisulu held high office in the ANC but never pursued a party line mechanically, always respecting the traditions of the ANC. In this they exercised wisdom and good judgement. They respected the mood of the masses but did not tail behind mass sentiment. They were careful to analyse the balance of forces at any particular time, and not to mistake their own advanced ideas for the mood of the masses.

For some leaders of the CP, this changed with the creation of MK. Che Guevara's

book *Guerilla War* had raised the concept of revolutionary war based on the 'detonator theory'. This led to some adventurist thinking and clearly influenced Operation Mayebuye. In retrospect, it would seem that the thrust for revolutionary action in many parts of the Third World tended to set aside the strictures of people like Lenin who had developed a thorough theory of revolution.

Lenin insisted that the decisive battle for power could not be waged by the vanguard of the revolutionary class alone. What was required was that

- The ruling classes were in disarray;
- The petty bourgeoisie had become discredited as the spokespeople for the people;
- The masses sought bold revolutionary action; and
- There was a national crisis (Turok p 17).

In addition what was required was

- Mass mobilisation around a revolutionary party or movement;
- A high degree of dedication to the cause by the revolutionists;
- A developed strategy and tactics; and
- Perhaps most important, aspirations towards ideals like liberty, equality, fraternity and national liberation (Turok p 17).

Revolution has to be seen as a major social upheaval rooted in fundamental contradictions in a society, and not a mere episode in the life of a nation. More attention has to be given to the defining elements of a revolution which were developed by Lenin and Macpherson:

- The transfer of state power from one class to another class;
- The use of force or the threat of the

use of unauthorised force;

- The consolidation of transferred power in order to bring fundamental change in social, economic and political institutions (Turok p3).

Mao Zedong argued that in colonial countries, it is necessary to unite the widest range of classes and social strata, first in the democratic revolution and then in the socialist revolution. But Lenin had added that although the initial objective was to clear the path for the development of capitalism, the democratic revolution had to be led by the proletariat with the aim of establishing a 'new-democratic society and state' to open the road for the development of socialism (p 9).

Slovo built on these ideas and argued that the South African struggle would not have two stages, but would be a single process from democracy to socialism.

In the event, the ANC today accepts that it is working within the framework of a capitalist economy, and even suggests that its ideology is social-democratic (Strategy and Tactics 2007). Slovo might have had reservations about such a position.

Slovo on the Soviet system

Slovo's other major contribution to revolutionary thought was his booklet *Has Socialism Failed?* (1990). This book came as bombshell to the Party and the world Communist movement. Slovo had been a constant visitor and defender of the Soviet Union in all his years in exile. He was responsible for much of the military and other aid given by the Socialist Bloc to the ANC, and was accused by the SA regime of being a 'colonel' in the KGB.

He became very familiar with the Soviet system and he blasted it in this book. He wrote: 'The term Stalinism is used to denote the bureaucratic- authoritarian style

of leadership (of parties both in and out of power) which denuded the party and the practice of socialism of the most democratic content and concentrated power in the hands of a tiny, self-perpetuating elite' (Slovo 1990 p3).

'Under the guise of "democratic centralism" inner-party democracy was almost completely suffocated by centralism ... The commandist and bureaucratic approaches which took root during Stalin's time affected communist parties throughout the world, including our own' (p24) (author's emphasis).

These statements caused great consternation among those loyal to Stalinism in the SA Party and elsewhere. But others had already seen such manifestations through contact with the Soviet Union and exposures in the press. It took great courage for Slovo to set it down in print. Whether South African Communists have taken this to heart more recently has yet to be seen.

Our situation today

The present situation in our country offers considerable potential for the Left if it acts with energy but adheres to well developed principles inherited from our history. Some of the key issues have been dealt with above, but bear repetition here.

In the 1970s when the SACP was imbued with militancy and revolutionary ardour, Slovo wrote, 'Victory must embrace more than formal democracy...' (Davidson, p115), 'Leadership must be won rather than imposed' (p25), 'The art of leadership demands in the first place the widest possible yoking of actual and potential allies, and the exploitation of division and weakness within the enemy camp, without of course compromising the main direction of the struggle' (p131), 'We can only earn our place

as a vanguard force by superior efforts of leadership and devotion to the cause of liberation and socialism' (P25). He attacked 'sectarian attitudes towards non-party colleagues and sloganised dismissals of views which do not completely accord with ours' (Slovo p24).

But, in the early years of our transition to democracy, perspectives were different. Slovo was recognised as an important leader of the ANC, and not only of the SACP. This placed him in a difficult position, especially when he became a member of the Cabinet. But he did not deviate from a position he had articulated many years earlier about the legitimacy of the role of the SACP. He argued in 1990: 'It is perfectly legitimate and desirable for a party claiming to be the political instrument of the working class to attempt to lead its constituency in democratic contest for political power against other parties and groups representing other social forces' (P27).

However it has proved difficult for the SACP to follow an independent course from the ANC, and there have been many tensions between the two organisations

which remain unresolved. What his position would have been on the SACP standing against the ANC in elections is difficult to predict.

To conclude, the current contradictions within the liberation movement demand a great deal of wisdom and good judgement from the leadership. While Slovo's work was produced in a different context, many of his propositions about revolutionary change nevertheless deserve our attention. ★

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LOOKING BACK

Cuito Cuanavale, turning point in the struggle against apartheid

2008 marks the anniversary of the decisive battle of Cuito Cuanavale. **Ronnie Kasrils** reviews the battle itself and the historic consequences for Angola, Namibia and South Africa

When the history of Africa is written, it will be written as before and after Cuito Cuanavale – Fidel Castro, 1988

When Jorge Risquet, one of Fidel Castro's shrewdest and most trusted colleagues, addressed the Seventh Congress of the South African Communist Party, hosted in Cuba in April 1989, he was greeted with the resounding salutation "Viva Cuito Cuanavale!"

For the South African delegates, many from military duty in Angola itself, there was no doubt that an epic victory had been won over the apartheid military machine in that embattled country the previous year, constituting a historic turning point in the struggle for liberation.

When Risquet quoted Fidel's assertion that "the history of Africa will be written as before and after Cuito Cuanavale", he brought the house down.

The generals and pundits of the former South African Defence Force (SADF) are at pains to claim victoryⁱ at Cuito Cuanavale. The acid test is to consider the outcome.

The SADF had carried out continuous in-

vasions and incursions into Angola since that country's hard-won independence in 1975 (which was the reason for the Cuban military presence in the first place). After Cuito, they were forced to withdraw totally; the independence of Namibia was soon to be agreed; the prospect for South African freedom had never been more promising. Before the commencement of the battle for Cuito Cuanavale in October 1987 the apartheid regime was implacably opposed to any of those options.

While the post-Cuito negotiations also agreed on Cuban troop withdrawal from Angola, and relocation of ANC military camps (which went to Uganda), this was no set-back compared to the enormity of the strategic gains.

In commemorating the 20th anniversary of the battle this year and the historic outcome that changed the face of Southern Africa – according to Nelson Mandela "a turning point for the liberation of our continent and my people"ⁱⁱ – it is necessary to clarify what exactly happened.

The place where Southern Africa's history dramatically turned is, paradoxically, well off the beaten track. Cuito Cuanavale



Jorge Risquet

is a minor town near the confluence of two rivers that constitute its name, set in the remote, bushy and featureless expanse of south-east Angola, a region the Portuguese referred to as the Land at the End of the Earth.

The battle had its beginnings in July 1987 when Angolan government forces (Fapla) attempted to advance on Jonas Savimbi's Unita strongholds at Mavinga, the strategic key to his base at Jamba near the Caprivi Strip. With Pretoria's assistance in the south and Mobutu's help from Zaire, Unita had grown stronger over the years and its actions had spread to the north, central and eastern parts of Angola. Fapla believed that a direct attack against Savimbi's south-eastern headquarters would most disrupt him, but this was contrary to Cuban advice.

Surprise attack

At first the offensive progressed well, with a battle-hardened and superbly equipped Fapla gaining the upper hand, inflicting heavy casualties on Unita, driving them south towards Mavinga, some 150km distant. But in October, Fapla's advancing 47th Brigade, at the Lomba River, 40km south-east of Cuito, was all but destroyed in a surprise attack by SADF forces hastening to Unita's rescue.

Catastrophe followed as several other Fapla brigades sustained heavy casualties and wilted under overwhelming ground and air bombardment, but managed to retreat to Cuito. The situation could not have been graver. Cuito could have been overrun then and there by the SADF, changing the strategic situation overnight.

The interior of the country would have been opened up to domination by Unita. Angola would have been split in half. This was something Pretoria and Savimbi had

been aiming at for years. But the SADF failed to seize the initiative. This allowed an initial contingent of 120 Cuban troops to rush to the town from Menongue, 150km to the north-west and help Fapla organise the defences. As the ferocious siege developed, Pretoria's generals and western diplomats confidently predicted Cuito's imminent fall.

I have had the opportunity to hear the views from both Fidel Castro on the one hand, and General Kat Liebenberg, South African army chief at the time, on the other. The briefing from Fidel took place in Havana's Defence Ministry, at the end of 1988. He pointed out on a huge table-top, sand model of southern Angola, how the drama had unfolded. Our delegation, headed by Joe Slovo, hung on his every word. The SADF was far too cautious and missed a remarkable opportunity, Fidel observed. After their success on the Lomba they could have quickly taken the town.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to General Liebenberg, with whom I later established a convivial relationship, the SADF's main aim apart from stopping Fapla's advance, was to keep the town under constant bombardment to prevent its airstrip from being used. He politely stuck to the conventional SADF face-saving explanation for he well knew that if Cuito had been taken Unita would have been placed in a most advantageous position. But admitting that meant they had failed in their objective.

The actions of the SADF are clear evidence of their determination to break through to the town. For six months they threw everything they had at the beleaguered outpost. They relentlessly pounded Cuito with 16 massive 155mm G-5 and G-6 (self-propelled) guns and staged attack after attack led by the crack 61st mechanised battalion, 32 Buffalo battalion (actually two battalions with its own armour and ar-



Securing dominance of the southern Angolan skies: MiG 23s prepare for action against South Africa's Mirages(left and below left) and the results of that dominance(below) - the wreckage of a South African armoured car



tillery units), and later the 4th SA Infantry group. These units operated as a powerful ad-hoc brigade.

The Fapla defenders doggedly held out, reinforced by 1 500 elite troops who arrived from Cuba in December.

By 23 March 1988, the last major attack on Cuito was “brought to a grinding and definite halt”, in the words of 32 Battalion commander, Colonel Jan Breytenbach.^{iv} He writes: “the Unita soldiers did a lot of dying that day” and “the full weight of Fapla’s defensive fire was brought down on the heads of [SADF] Regiment President Steyn and the already bleeding Unita.” The SADF prided itself on a minimal loss of life – but only because it used black infantry

troops from Unita and the (Namibian) ‘South West African Territory Force’ as cannon fodder, while the white troops brought up the rear from the safety of armoured vehicles and tanks.

The SADF deployed upwards of 5 000 men at Cuito alone, according to their commander-in-chief, General Jan Geldenhuys,^v but this could possibly have been as much as 6 000 men^{vi}. In addition there were several thousand Unita troops involved. They were repulsed by the Cubans and 6 000 determined Fapla defenders.

The numerous pro-SADF accounts focus on the engagements leading up to Cuito, and the siege itself, meticulously recorded battlefield manoeuvres and achievements.

These accounts describe tactical efficiency and resourcefulness, but cannot conceal the fact that they failed to conquer the town.

They also play down the later – and decisive – military developments on the Namibian border that commenced in April 1988 and peaked in June. Breytenbach is the exception, observing: “With a lack of foresight the South Africans had allowed the bulk of their available combat power to be tied down on the Cuito Cuanavale front.” In his view this should have been regarded as a secondary front. This was in sharp contrast to Geldenhuys’ fixating on the pretence of a SADF victory at Cuito and lamely claiming that the new front opened up by the Cubans in the west was akin to Castro “kicking the ball into touch” as though that part of southern Angola was outside the field of play. His actual words were: “Our opponents boast that they beat us... because they won some line-outs.”^{vii}

Defensive victory

The saga at Cuito Cuanavale can be correctly characterised as a Cuban-Angolan defensive victory. Wars are not won by defensive engagements. The significance of Cuito is that the defenders not only saved the day, but bought the time to enable the Cuban-Angolan side to turn the tables and by April launch a breathtaking offensive in the southwest that changed the course of our history.

Geldenhuys knew very well, like a rugby captain suddenly forced on to the defensive, that the ball was very much in play and his opponents were robustly driving forward. By stopping stopped the SADF in its tracks at Cuito and then decisively seizing the initiative and going on the offensive was similar to the great turning point in

the Second World War, when the Nazi forces were halted at Stalingrad at the end of 1942 and subsequently driven back to Berlin.

Lest there be any lingering doubt about the outcome at Cuito Cuanavale, listen to what the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), closely monitoring events in Angola, noted in an intelligence report dated April 15, 1988: Cuito Cuanavale was no longer an isolated outpost. Cuban troops had secured the road from Menongue to Cuito. “Any SADF/Unita attempt to cut off the main supply route would be met with very heavy resistance.” Cuban planes and anti-aircraft weapons had reversed the situation for the South African forces arrayed against Cuito: the absence of the SA Air Force in the area had become “notable”. The JCS further observed: “Lacking air superiority, the SADF was unable to conduct an air resupply effort resulting in less responsive resupply effort over land.”^{viii}

At his table-top model Fidel pointed out the amazing feat of a 10 000 strong Cuban, Fapla and Swapo troop deployment, along a front stretching from Angola’s southern port of Namibe in the west along the railway line, through Lubango on to Menongue and Cuito in the east. The SADF forces at Cuito were sidelined, like a major piece on a chess board that has prematurely advanced, as powerful armed forces with the latest Soviet weaponry, moved forwards in the south west, under superior air cover, towards the Namibian border. Angola’s Cunene and Mocamedes provinces were liberated after years of SADF control.

A master stroke was the rapid construction of airstrips at Cahama and Xangongo near the border, which brought the strategic Ruacana and Calueque hydro-electric dam systems on the Cunene River within

striking distance. Soviet Mig-23s had demonstrated their superiority over South Africa's aged Mirage fighters and now that they commanded the skies the network of SADF bases in northern Namibia was at their mercy.

Fidel showed quiet pride in this achievement, cutting a thoughtful figure. Behind the singular achievement was outstanding military acumen and not a foolhardy gambler depicted by his detractors (including Greg Mills in a recent "Sunday Independent" article^{ix}).

It was at this point that he used his now famous boxing analogy to explain the carefully formulated strategy: Cuito Cuanavale in the east represented the boxer's defensive left fist that blocks the blow, while in the west the powerful right fist had struck – placing the SADF in a perilous position.^x

To return to that other sporting metaphor misused by Geldenhuys, play swung robustly from the east end of the rugby field to the west-end with the Cubans, Fapla and Swapo on the attack and the SADF uncomfortably pinned back on the borderline.

The end for the SADF was signalled on June 27, 1988. A squadron of Migs bombed the Ruacana and Calueque installations, cutting the water supply to Ovamboland and its military bases and killing 11 young South African conscripts. A Mig-23 executed a neat victory roll over Ruacana on the Namibian side of the border. The war was effectively over.

The SADF was clearly out-foxed in Angola. Magnus Malan, South Africa's Minister of Defence, had admitted that "as far as the Defence Force was concerned [Fidel Castro] was an unknown presence in military terms, and therefore it was difficult to predict his intentions."^{xi} This amounted to an astonishing intelligence failure coming a

dozen years after the SADF first encountered the Cubans in Angola. Malan was not alone in this ignorance: for the Americans had been in confrontation with Havana since the 1960s and appeared to know little more. Along with Pretoria they expected the Soviet Union, eager for rapprochement with the West, to curtail Cuba's actions. They were surprised to discover that the Soviet Union's so-called proxy had not even consulted Moscow over Havana's massive intervention. They were even more taken aback when sophisticated Soviet military equipment was rushed from the USSR to Angola to supply the Cuban-Angolan offensive.

To the negotiating table

The Cubans could have marched into Namibia but exercised restraint, with all parties, including the USA and Soviet Union, looking for compromise and a way forward in negotiations that had previously been going nowhere. Fidel was not looking for a bloody encounter which would have cost many lives on both sides. Neither were apartheid's generals and political leaders. They could afford casualties even less than the Cubans, considering the popular mass struggle and growing armed actions within Namibia and South Africa and the serious problem with white conscription.

Chester Crocker, America's chief negotiator, had to be given a special exemption to meet with the Cuban delegation and sidestep the United States embargo of Cuba. Crocker, whose country had long supported Unita and earlier Holden Roberto's FLNA against the MPLA, was to confide: "Reading the Cubans is yet another art form. They are prepared for both war and peace. We witness considerable tactical finesse and genuinely creative moves at the

table.”^{xii} His opinion of the South Africans was that “they confused military power with national strategy.” In his book *High Noon in Southern Africa*, Crocker writes: “. . . a former academic colleague confirmed my impressions. After spending ten days with Pretoria’s military, diplomatic, and intelligence establishment, he reported to me that he had seldom seen a government so utterly confused and at cross-purposes over basic questions of policy. Given the absence of strategic guidance from top political levels, it was remarkable that SADF chief of staff Jannie Geldenhuys and his military colleagues avoided disaster in Angola during the first half of 1988.”

The central negotiation issue was UN Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978, concerning South Africa’s withdrawal from Namibia, and that country’s independence. Linked to this was the departure of Cuban troops from Angola. It is now history that the last SADF soldier left Angola at the end of August 1988, and that Namibia became independent in March 1990, even before the Cuban exodus from Angola. Apartheid Foreign Minister Pik Botha, had tried to modify Resolution 435, asserting that the SADF would withdraw from Angola only “if Russia and its proxies did the same”. They made no mention of even considering a withdrawal from Namibia. *Business Day* reported on March 16, 1988 that Pretoria was “offering to withdraw into Namibia – not from Namibia – in return for the withdrawal of Cuban forces from Angola. The implication is that South Africa has no real intention of giving up the territory any time soon”.

These attempts, however, proved futile in the face of the changed balance of forces and were demolished by Jorge Risquet who gave Pik Botha a roasting: “The time for your military adventures, for the acts of

aggression that you have pursued with impunity, for your massacres of refugees . . . is over,” he chided. He accused Botha that Pretoria was behaving as though it was “a victorious army, rather than what it really is: a defeated aggressor that is withdrawing. . . South Africa must face the fact that it will not obtain at the negotiating table what it could not achieve on the battlefield.”^{xiii}

Chain reaction

What materialised at Cuito Cuanavale set in chain a process that finally broke the ascendancy of the military hawks and politicians in Pretoria. With the struggle within South Africa, and apartheid’s international isolation, the country’s freedom was soon achieved. It is fitting that at Freedom Park, outside Pretoria, the names of Cuban soldiers who fell in Angola between 1975 and 1988 are inscribed along with the names of South Africans who died during the liberation struggle. Those patriots and internationalists were motivated by a single goal – an end to racial rule and genuine African independence. After 13 years defending Angolan sovereignty, the Cubans took nothing home except the bones of their fallen – and our eternal gratitude.

It is also noteworthy that for most of those years Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) combatants engaged the adversary in many parts of Angola, co-operated with Fapla and Swapo units, as well as with Cuban and Soviet advisers, aided in the interception and translation of Afrikaans radio traffic, and provided invaluable intelligence on the SADF. One hundred-and-thirty MK combatants lost their lives in action during that time.

Tens of thousands of Africans were killed by South Africa’s murderous security

forces, in Angola and Mozambique where they waged almost continuous dirty wars against those newly liberated countries, and in bloody massacres of civilians, refugees and freedom fighters in such places as Cassinga, Gaborones, Maseru, Manzini, Matola and elsewhere, in the desperate attempt to save white supremacy and prevent the future being born.

The die-hard officers of the former SADF and apartheid politicians of the time try to claim they were fighting to save Southern Africa from communism, but that was a myth to curry favour with the West during the cold war. The era of racist, colonial rule they strove to perpetuate has thankfully passed into history.

All the states of our region are enjoying peace and stability and getting on with the developmental tasks of creating a better life for their people now that apartheid is no more. Fidel's prediction that Africa's history would radically change after the Battle for Cuito Cuanavale has been borne out. It is imperative that our people, and particularly the younger generation, be made aware of Cuba's remarkable sacrifice and contribution to Africa's freedom and independence, and the heroic role of the independent states of our region. ★

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NOTES

i Magnus Malan "My Life with the SA Defence Force"; Jan Breytenbach "Buffalo Soldiers"; Helmoed Heitman "War in Angola"; Peter Stiff "Silent War"; Fred Bridgland "The War for Africa".

ii Piero Gleijeses "Cuito Cuanavale Revisited" (Mail & Guardian) July 11, 2007

iii Ronnie Kasrils "Armed and Dangerous"

iv Jan Breytenbach, "Buffalo Soldiers"

v Le Figaro (Paris), April 1, 1988

vi Piero Gleijeses' interview with Lt Col Hutchinson who was at the Directorate of Operations at Army Headquarters, Pretoria

vii Jannie Geldenhuys "Die Wat Wen"

8 I am indebted to Piero Gleijeses for this and other material he has uncovered in his outstanding research and writings on the subject.

viii Greg Mills, "The Sunday Independent" – February 24, 2008

ix Piero Gleijeses, "Moscow's Proxy? Cuba and Africa 1975 – 1988", Journal of Cold War Studies, Harvard 2006.

x Magnus Malan, *ibid*

xi Chester Crocker "High Noon in Southern Africa"

xii Piero Gleijeses, "Mail & Guardian", July 11, 2007

SOCIALIST HISTORY

A brief early history of Co-operatives and Socialism

Judy Mulqueeny outlines the still-contested development of the co-operative movement from its utopian socialist roots nearly 200 years ago

In South Africa the spirit of collectivism is not a distant memory. In many ways it is still with us. The desire for community beats strong in the human breast. Through the ages men and women have lived, worked or prayed in communal ways. Also, most religions have cultivated the values of equality, sharing and redistribution.

These were the ideals of socialism too. Many died for them. The term 'socialism' was first heard in England and France around the 1820s and 1830s. Based on solidarity, socialism was a vision of a new kind of social co-operation. It presented an alternative to the evils of capitalism which threaten social ties.

Utopian socialists

The rise of modern civilisation in Europe was rooted in a strong belief in progress and reason. It was associated with the development of capitalism. This system emerged out of a feudal order of landlords and serfs where men dominated. In the transition, the agrarian economy made way for the growth of industry. There were different paths to the transformation of agriculture.

As a new economic system capitalism was based on the exploitation of workers. It brought in its train undreamt of wealth

for a few. Social relationships melted to be replaced by monetary ones. For the majority it meant untold misery and deprivation. Many longed for a golden age or a coming millennium.

At the turn of the 19th century, a diverse throng of social critics clamoured for attention with their doctrines. They were aghast at the working and living conditions of workers and by the break up of communities.

Crystallising visions of utopias or ideal societies or 'commonwealths', they later came to be called 'utopian socialists'.

Some of them saw themselves as continuing an earlier Christian tradition based on small communities. Others searched for alternative social systems which could be constructed in the here and now. Strong believers in the power of reason, they conducted model experiments in their search for a possible future. Later socialists were convinced that people could relate to nature, to each other and to work in non – exploitative ways. They tried to achieve this by reform or revolution.

Some early thinkers on co-operation and socialism:

Francois Babeuf fought for the poor and downtrodden in the French Revolution. The Babouvist movement struggled for

communal ownership of land and tools. It was based on a politics of the seizure of power by a secret organisation of a small group of revolutionaries. They were called the *Conspiracy of Equals*. Condemned to death for being involved in the Jacobin conspiracy, Babeuf died for his ideals by committing suicide.

Etienne Cabet was a leftwing journalist, lawyer and novelist. He wrote a utopian novel called *Voyage to Icaria*. On the utopian island of Icaria communism would reign. It would become the terrain where true democracy would be realised. Cabet portrayed this as the direct descendant of early Christian principles. In 1834 he was condemned to death for his political activities.

Henri Saint-Simon was said to be the first socialist theorist. He believed in the use of science to perfect society. Opposing inherited wealth and unearned income, he propounded that all men ought to work. In his utopia the state would take ownership of the land, factories and machines. It would plan and manage production and distribution for the social good. Favouring a top down approach, Saint-Simon paid little attention to involving the masses. Industrial entrepreneurs and experts should keep a check on the state, controlling the allocation of resources, he advocated.

Charles Fourier was against the state and capitalism. But he was not in favour of the abolition of private property. What he envisaged was a utopian society in harmony with the universe, which could be achieved by non-violent means. He also drew up a scheme for producer-consumer co-operatives called *philanxes*. They would be self-sustaining enterprises based on self-management, each consisting of between 2

000 to 3 000 people. Fourier was the first to declare that in any given society the degree of women's emancipation was the natural measure of the general emancipation.

Pierre Joseph Proudhon favoured a decentralised stateless utopia. It would be based on workshop associations organised as co-operatives. He helped inspire 'co-operative' socialism in France and elsewhere in Europe. His ideas influenced the First International and the Paris Commune. Asking the question: "What is Property"? Proudhon answered: "Property is theft!" But he did not condemn all ownership of property. He supported economic co-operation rather than political revolution.

Louis Blanc was a radical journalist and organiser for socialism. He considered competition to be the root of all evil and advocated state socialism. In his utopia the state would look after the welfare of the workers. It would do this by fostering industrial employment through production or worker co-operatives. These would eventually replace private enterprise. Blanc came close to expressing the communist ideal of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs".

Robert Owen case study

Born in 1771, the son of a poor saddler, Owen early showed an aptitude for business. When he was 18 he and a partner opened a factory to make spinning wheel machines. After this Owen managed a huge cotton spinning factory employing many workers. Then in the period 1800-29 he served as managing partner of the great cotton spinning mill at New Lanark in Scotland. Here he was faced with his biggest challenges so far. At the same time,

he became convinced that utopia was possible.

The working and living conditions of the 2 500 workers were very demoralising. They lived in utter squalor, with many in debt. Owen was a capitalist and idealist. He dreamed of improving the plight of the workers. Yet he did not have great faith in their ability to bring about change themselves. He regarded them as irrational people who had to be educated to new habits. Among the changes that he brought about was to end the employment of children under 10.

Owen is regarded as the father of the co-operative movement. At the cotton mills he started a consumer co-operative in the form of a co-operative store. He also set up a production co-operative based in the factory community. New Lanark was turned into a model colony. Business boomed, yielding large profits. Owen won wide recognition as a philanthropist, a rich man who wanted to help the poor.

Yet as a revolutionary he was still dissatisfied. His workers had not attained the rational and all-round development of character and intellect he desired. The newly created productive forces such as factories and machines were used to enrich individuals, while the masses were being enslaved. How could they be used to restructure society?

He concluded that they should become the common property of all, to be used for the common good. This was a step in the direction of communism. But great obstacles seemed to him to block the path to social reforms. These included private property, religion and the form of marriage.

Excited by his successes, Owen attempted to extend his concept of a co-operative factory community into agriculture. He worked out his plan for self-sufficient

villages of co-operation in great detail. These would provide the basis for a new morality. Here workers would be able to pull themselves out of poverty by growing their own food, making their own clothes and becoming self-governing.

In the 1820s Owen experimented with new model colonies at Orbiston in Scotland and at New Harmony in Indiana in the USA. The aim was for the colonists to own the land and to work the farm machinery in common. But these and later attempts by Owen and his followers proved abortive. There was conflict among the colonists about the ownership of property, the form of governance or lack of democracy.

Owen was ruined by his utopian experiment in the USA. He had sacrificed all of his fortune and was banished from official society. Returning to England, he started 'time shops' or labour exchanges. Workers made their own 'time notes' for the time spent in making and selling goods through the shops. But the experiment to give their own value to their labour also failed.

For the next 30 years, Owen turned to working directly with and amid the working class. He was a pioneer of trade unions. The most notable one was the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union, set up in 1834. Owen became its first president.

He favoured the role of the state in bringing about reforms such as the reduction of working hours and improved working conditions. He also supported co-operation, or what is now called social dialogue, between the workers and the bosses. What was important was that these reforms would make industry more productive and profitable.

It has been said, that 'every social movement, every real advance in England on behalf of the workers links itself to the name

of Robert Owen' (Engels: *From Utopian to Scientific Socialism*: 1875: 11). With his co-operative experiments too, Owen had taken a step towards shaking the very foundation of private property.

The Rochdale pioneers and co-operative principles

William King, a medical doctor, also searched for ways to overcome the social problems of workers. He tried to make the co-operative ideas of Owen more workable. A believer in self-help, he favoured evolutionary change. The flour milling societies which poor workers were trying to organise excited his interest. He began to publish a periodical called *The Co-operator*.

His major contribution was to focus on the power that workers possessed as consumers. Workers should join together to start a co-operative store, he advocated. They could pool their small savings, raising their own capital. Instead of profits going to the capitalists, now the workers could retain them.

In 1843, the weavers at the cotton mills in the town of Rochdale went on strike for higher wages. The employers responded by locking them out. In their parlous economic condition, 28 of the weavers joined together to make a plan. Inspired by the ideals of Owen and King, they formed an association called the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society.

Their aim was to improve the social and domestic conditions of the members. A store was set up for the sale of provisions and clothes. Another intention was to build houses where a co-operative way of life could be practised. For those members without work the aim was to provide employment in manufacturing and on the land. Each member bought a pound share. This was by contributing two pence, later

three pence, a week. In this way the capital of the society of 28 pounds was made up eventually.

In 1844 the weavers developed the Rochdale Principles. On these the co-operative movement of today is based:

- Prevailing market prices were charged and no credit was given
- A limited rate of interest on capital was payable
- Profit was allocated to members in proportion to their spending
- With one member, one vote, periodic elections of officers and committees were held
- A percentage of profits was allocated to education

These rules united the members in a common bond of self-interest. The co-operative enterprises of the Rochdale Pioneers prospered. One of these grew into a cotton and woolen manufacturing co-operative association. Most of the Pioneers were utopian socialists. They wanted to set up a home colony, or to assist other societies to set up such colonies. But to succeed these would have to be self supporting.

The First International of Working Men

As industrial capitalism took root in Europe, class struggle grew bitter. Revolutionary movements began to develop all over the continent. In England the Chartist Movement had grown into the first mass revolutionary movement of the British working class. A revolution against kings and feudal landlords also took place in Germany in 1848.

However, working-class organisations were smashed by governments dominated by the bourgeoisie. To be able to sustain the revolution, the parties of the working class had to join together. The First Inter-

national of Working Men was set up in 1864. It emerged largely out of criticisms of the utopian socialists.

The movement to transform factories into co-operatives by workers had been growing in places like Prussia. Managed by workers or worker unions, they represented a “greater victory of the political economy of labour over the political economy of property”. As great social experiments their value could not be overrated. This was stressed by the revolutionary Karl Marx in his inaugural address at the First International.

By deed and by argument it had been shown that large scale scientific production could be carried out by workers. Hired labour, just like slave and serf labour, would make way for associated labour. But Marx warned that landlords and capitalists would use their political privileges to defend their economic monopolies. Therefore, to conquer political power had become the great duty of the working classes. So, “Proletarians of all countries unite!”

However, a bitter feud developed at the International between Marx and the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. The latter rejected the establishment of any kind of state. He advocated that the revolution needed to move immediately to communism. Also, peasants must play a leading role in a revolutionary movement. Following a peasant uprising, the land should be seized and worked by self-governing and decentralised communes.

Marx campaigned for the expulsion of Bakunin from the International. Yet both believed that state power was exercised by and in the interests of the class that owned and controlled the machines and factories. They also thought socialism would eliminate the division of labour between mental

and manual work, and between men and women.

Scientific socialism

Criticisms of the utopian socialists had been growing. Critics in the 19th century and later have said:

- Socialism was presented by the utopians as if it was an absolute truth, an expression of reason and justice, waiting to be discovered
- The schemes of the utopian socialists, often worked out in detailed blueprints, were based on fantasies and were mostly impractical
- The small utopian socialist experiments were islands in a capitalist ocean and they ignored the need for political struggle
- Utopians had wanted to develop a new person as a condition for socialism, rather than create socialist conditions that would enable the new person to be born
- Utopians had wanted to build a new society from very virtuous men and women who had been specially reared, instead of from people stained by capitalism

The early socialists had denounced the exploitation of the working class. Yet they had been unable to show how it had arisen

The approach of the utopians to socialism was elitist with little role for the workers themselves

Marx and fellow revolutionary Friedrich Engels went beyond the speculations of the utopians. They discovered the materialist conception of history. The first volume of Marx’ masterwork, *Capital*, was published in 1867. It showed how socialism would result from the growing conflict between proprietors and non-proprietors (or capi-

talists and wage earners) on the one hand and anarchy (chaos) in production, on the other. With this discovery socialism became a science.

In other works the two revolutionaries advocated class struggle as the engine of history. Closely linked was the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It would follow after the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the seizure of power by the working class. The period after capitalism was divided into stages: the period of political transition and the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat; socialism and communism. In the period of transition the working class had to use the state to create a democratic social republic where it would be in control.

The Paris Commune

The working class citizens of Paris seized power in March 1871. They elected their own government setting up the Paris Commune, a form of municipal direct democracy. It came after the defeat of France by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War. In attempting to regain Paris, French troops refused to fire on the crowds. Instead they turned their weapons on their officers.

The commune was “the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour” (Marx: *The Civil War in France: May 1871: The Third Address*). The aim was to uproot the economic foundations of classes and class rule. As the “self government of the producers”, the Paris Commune brought about a number of reforms. Women were involved in all of its major activities. Various decrees were issued which helped free them from their special oppression and lack of rights.

Another reform was that all workshops and factories which had been closed had to

be surrendered to associations of workers. The class property that made the labour of many the wealth of a few had to be abolished. Expropriate the expropriators, advised Marx. Transform the means of production, such as land and machines, into the instruments of free and associated labour. Anarchists and socialists in the Commune helped set up co-operatives in the workplaces. The anarchists also propagated a vision of a confederation of communes to replace the state.

Yet members of the ruling classes were also preaching the value of co-operative production. If the capitalist system was to be superseded, co-operative societies had to unite. Regulation of national production had to be based on a common plan. Only in this way could the anarchy and convulsions of capitalist production be overcome.

However, the Paris Commune was defeated in May 1871. Government troops had attacked the barricades set up by the people. Nonetheless, worker co-operatives spread elsewhere in France, Italy and Germany. But they experienced a number of difficulties. Many collapsed. One reason was because in the worker co-operatives were reflected the defects of the capitalist system.

It was an advantage that workers in association made democratic decisions about production. Yet at the same time, in becoming their own bosses, they gave value to their labour in an exploitative and competitive capitalist society.

The ideas of Marx about co-operatives changed over time and sometimes were not clear. In his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875: 94) he noted that co-operatives were of value only if they were created independently by workers. They should not come under the control of the state or the bourgeoisie.

In later volumes of *Capital* Marx wrote that co-operatives should be viewed as transitional forms of production. They were a new form of production emerging out of the capitalist system of factories and credit. As the new economic system emerged, classes would be eliminated gradually but the market would continue.

Co-operative enterprises would abolish the antagonism between capital and labour, but still produce goods for sale in the market. This would continue until the abolition of the capitalist mode of production. The building of the co-operative system in both industry and agriculture should be considered as a stage in the transition from the capitalist to the full communist society.

Engels expanded on these ideas of Marx. In *The Peasant Question in France and Germany 1894/5* he highlighted agricultural co-operatives. He argued that in the transition land must remain in the hands of the state. While the self-managing co-operatives could lease the land, the state should supervise them. Ownership of the means of production in the co-operatives of town and country had to be retained by society. In this way the private interests of the co-operatives would not undermine society's interests as a whole.

The Second International and co-operatives

But what did Marx really mean by the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'? There were many debates about how to overthrow capitalism and achieve socialism. Some of these debates took place in the Second International 1887-1914. The large German Social Democratic Party dominated proceedings. It was wrestling with winning power through the electoral process.

An upper layer of workers had emerged

in Europe called a 'labour aristocracy'. Its members were skilled and relatively well paid. In England these workers leaned towards the building of 'New Model' trade unions and 'bread and butter' consumer co-operatives. Marxists were often critical of consumer co-operatives. They contended that in them the class struggle was submerged.

A range of co-operatives, with a similar petit-bourgeois bias, was coming to the fore. Credit unions, often started by parish priests, were popular in Germany and Canada. Called 'people's banks', by the turn of the century there was one in nearly every village. In North America, Denmark and Japan agricultural co-operatives appeared earliest.

The International Co-operative Association was set up in the mid 1890s in London. It became the ultimate authority for defining co-operatives and elaborating co-operative principles. Members were drawn from Europe, India, Australia, Argentina and the USA. From the start the ICA adopted a stance of political neutrality in the international co-operative movement. But some came to associate it with colonialism.

Co-operatives as a hybrid form in capitalism

Polish-born revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg moved to Germany in 1898. She joined the Social Democratic Party there. A debate was raging in the Party. One of its members, Eduard Bernstein, had written a series of articles on the Problems of Socialism in the *Neue Zeit*. In them he argued for the use of evolutionary electoral methods to bring about socialism.

Bernstein presented a view of co-operatives as an intermediate form, a middle way between socialism and capitalism.

This was similar to Beatrice Webb in England. It reflected the growing mood of large sections of the labour movement in and outside the Second International.

Strong opposition to these views came from elements in the German Social Democratic Party. They included Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg. These two were also in the forefront in taking up the issue of women's oppression.

In her *Reform or Revolution* Luxembourg challenged Bernstein's contentions as little more than utopian. They overlooked the importance of political struggle in achieving reforms, she contended. Unions and electoral reforms should not be used to suppress contradictions between workers and the bosses. Luxembourg added that in her view co-operatives and trade unions alone were incapable of transforming the capitalist mode of production.

She also challenged the widespread belief that the gradual development of co-operatives could be a path towards socialism without a socialist revolution. Co-operatives, especially those in the field of production, constituted a hybrid form in the midst of capitalism. They were small units of socialised production within capitalist exchange or the market.

Worker owners of co-operatives had to govern themselves with an iron hand. This accounted for the usual failure of the co-operatives. They either became pure capitalist enterprises, or, if the workers interests continued to dominate, they ended by dissolving. Worker co-operatives could survive in capitalism only by removing themselves from the influence of the laws of the market. Consumer co-operatives could provide a constant market or a constant circle of consumers for production co-operatives.

Nonetheless, Luxembourg maintained

that the scope of producer co-operatives was limited. They were excluded from the most important branches of production. Operating in the small local market, they manufactured articles serving immediate needs, especially food products. Because of this, Luxembourg did not consider co-operatives to be a serious instrument of a general socialist transformation.

Marxism-Leninism and co-operatives

The Russian Revolution started in 1917. After the seizure of power by the Bolshevik Party, socialism began to be built in a revolutionary and creative way in Russia. Industries grew, the peasantry was collectivised and a cultural revolution took place. In the transition to the new society there was an outpouring of utopian dreams and ideals. Numerous social experiments based on collective labour and communal living occurred. At their centre was a commitment to equality and brotherhood.

Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Bolsheviks, expanded the views of Marx and Engel's. He wrote that elements of socialism had to be built during the transition. This was of pedagogical and economic importance. Included among the 'bridges' to socialism were co-operatives and communes. The transition to a socialist economy required conscious, disciplined masses. What had to be addressed also was the 'woman question'.

Lenin noted that the belief of the utopian socialists in a 'co-operative' socialism was romantic. It was a dream of transforming class enemies into class collaborators, and class war into class peace, through the so-called 'class truce'. This was by organising people into co-operative societies. But political power in Russia was now in the hands of the working class, Lenin stressed. The exploiters had been overthrown. Also,

the working class owned all the means of production. Under these conditions the growth of co-operatives was part of the growth of socialism.

Lenin's most important writings on co-operatives can be found in *On Co-operation*. They were written in 1923 during the period of the New Economic Policy in Russia. Some private enterprise was allowed, and some concessions made to the peasants. Under a capitalist state, co-operatives were collective capitalist institutions, Lenin argued. But under the conditions of the NEP, the question had arisen of a third type of enterprise.

The context was one of the revolutionary leadership of the working class. It was in alliance with many millions of small and very small peasants. From the standpoint of transition to the new socialist system, the support of the peasants had to be won. A simple, easy and most acceptable way was to build co-operatives. These should be organised on a large scale, under state supervision and subordinated to the common interest.

As a private and collective enterprise, a co-operative was distinct from state capitalist ownership. It also differed from the concessions made to private enterprise by the working class state. To ensure the co-operatives did not fail, they had to be efficient, self sufficient and based on the development of the means of production. Universal literacy was also required.

The Third International, imperialism and co-operatives

Another great contribution made by Lenin to Marxism was *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*. It was written in 1916. A new kind of imperialism had arrived on the world stage. It was based on the colonial policy of financial capital. In Europe

the era of free competition and free trade had ended. Industries were being concentrated in huge combines. In this new system of 'monopoly capitalism', financial capital was dominating.

There was a hunt for territories around the world by the European powers. As the search for raw materials became more intensive, the world market was divided among the capitalist companies. The contest for colonies by the leading European powers reached a frenzy. In the colonies agriculture and mining were developed to feed the furnaces of industrialisation in Europe it has been noted. Imperialism violated the independence of colonised nations or their right to self determination. How to resist this came to be called the national question.

At the Third Communist International Lenin called on the workers to fight against imperialism. He also recognised that the struggles for national liberation in the colonies could strengthen the world revolution for socialism. In the 1920s at the Third International the role of peasants was put forward as the central problem in revolutionary changes. It was an important feature of the agrarian question.

Associated with this was the need to draw co-operative organisations into the class struggle. The International considered the co-operative movement to be one of the chief instruments for uniting workers and peasants. Co-operatives were seen as a way to raise the political consciousness of working people too. For this propaganda work was important because:

- The principles and methods of revolutionary co-operation had to be explained
- The importance of worker co-operatives actively providing support for the militant working class had to be showed

- Workers were urged to fight to change the entire national distribution of goods, including consumer goods
- Co-operatives were charged with the responsibility of building the co-operative movement on an international scale. International commercial and financial co-operation between different worker associations and combined production projects were imperative.

The Third International also established a women's secretariat. It set up a monthly international magazine for women in its constituent political parties. Clara Zetkin played a leading role in these developments. She wrote Theses for the Communist Women's Movement in 1920.

Socialism was the logical answer of the working class to imperialism. But imperialism tried to divide the workers internationally. Infected by it, the labour aristocracy grew racist and chauvinist, bribed with privileges. The intention was to detach it from the masses of workers in Europe and in the colonies.

Imperialist countries carried the co-operative idea to their colonies. They tried to set up the same kind of co-operatives as found at home. Ideas of class co-operation were spread especially among the rural working people. Organising them in co-operatives would help foster production for export. The aim was to develop the market economy in the interests of the imperialists.

But the peasant masses were suspicious of co-operatives. On the other hand local elites were attracted to them. The co-operative movement began to emerge in a number of African and Asian colonies at the beginning of the twentieth century. From the start co-operatives came under the influence of forces which either supported or opposed national liberation. The

colonial authorities kept the co-operatives under constant and strict control. As a result, the co-operative movement developed slowly under colonialism.

Socialist ideas spread too. Communist and worker parties highlighted that there was a need to draw co-operatives into the class struggle. But co-operatives had to travel a long and winding road before they were able to contribute effectively to the struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

Summary

In this article it was learned that:

- Values such as co-operation, solidarity, equality and sharing were integral to the concept of socialism
- Visions of ideal societies or utopias came to the fore in a time of transition in Europe
- The concept of modernity as modern civilization in Europe was based on beliefs in reason and progress
- There were differences between utopian socialists and scientific socialists
- Co-operatives organised in a formal way were based on a common bond of self interest and clear co-operative principles. A range of different kinds of co-operatives developed, including worker, consumer, financial and agricultural co-operatives
- Associated labour, as distinct from slave, serf or hired labour, was expressed in different forms such as factory communities, villages of co-operation, communes and collective farms
- There were debates about co-operatives as transitional or hybrid economic forms or as a middle way between capitalism and socialism
- For Marxists co-operatives were

linked to political, class and revolutionary struggles

- It was implied that under revolutionary socialism there was a need to develop new women and men, new educational and cultural values and new productive forces
- Marxist-Leninists regarded co-operatives as a method to solidify the worker-peasant alliance, and to raise the political consciousness of the working class
- Other theorists associated co-operatives with evolutionary ways to achieve socialism
- Imperialist countries spread the idea of co-operatives in their colonies
- Co-operatives also formed part of the plans of those fighting national lib-

eration struggles against imperialism
– The ‘women question’ was linked to the history of the development of co-operatives. ★

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Recommended Readings

1. Frederick Engels, 1875, **Socialism: Utopian and Scientific**. Chapter One – *The Development of Utopian Socialism*
2. Ian Tod and Michael Wheeler, 1978, **Utopia**. Chapter One – *The Earthly Paradise and the City of God*; Chapter Six – *The Land is the People’s Farm*; Chapter Seven – *Harmony: Utopia in the New World*.

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