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STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION TO DEFEND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, DEEPEN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND ADVANCE INTERNATIONALISM



STATE AND REVOLUTION - THE STATE OF WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS IN ORGANISING PROLETARIAN COMMUNITIES – COMRADE. TEBOGO PHADU

Capitalism in any other country in the world manifests itself in different variant forms. We need to go deep down to see what kind, what way capitalism has shaped itself. In the context of South Africa, we have Colonialism of a Special Type [CST] Capitalism and that the struggle for socialism is not a one-day event, it's a struggle which is also a process. Sometimes, we use words like a direct route. Our struggle must go through a process before we can say we have a socialist society. Words like transition even become concepts to understand a transition. In our case, if our strategy for socialism is the National Democratic Revolution [NDR] under what conditions will we say we are in a socialist society. What are the things that will justify us that we are already in a socialist society and we have moved from capitalism to a socialist

society. In the discussion, we will focus on changing class dynamics, reconfiguration of class forces in South Africa. The transition itself has led to changing dynamics between two principal class forces that is the bourgeois and the proletariat. We have to look at that from a long series.

Overcoming CST Capitalism

The first thing about Colonialism of a Special Type Capitalism, we say this is a unique variant of capitalism in South Africa which has features of colonialism, yes colonialism of a special type. It is intertwined with capitalism. We say it's unique precisely because the coloniser co-exists with the colonised. We share common territory. In the South African context, the coloniser settled and became a

significant presence which is unique. There are few countries around the world where you find such form of colonial settlements. In other countries it became upside down, the coloniser became the majority of society and the colonised the minority.

Here at home, black people despite extermination, yes there was extermination of the indigenous people, but the black majority remain the largest majority. Those are uniqueness that we need to understand because they are not just to characterise, they are important for theory of revolution. Another important feature for CST, is that it not internal grown on its soil but rather it was externally imposed. Capital came from outside and was imposed under conditions of colonial domination. However, that is not



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enough to say that as here in South Africa, it was advanced capitalism in terms of capital, technology and resources. British Imperialism did not leave underdeveloped capitalism. Capitalism in South Africa is more advanced than in countries where colonialism had taken place.

If you have a CST Capitalism of such a nature, then the state itself will become CST, the coloniser will come in power, the black majority will be denied of basic rights just like in any colonial setting, basic democratic rights to vote, to participate, attend meetings and have your own political party all kind of those things are part of colonial oppression. Which is why the issue of nationality, race and oppression became very important for any revolution that wants to build a socialist society. In other words, you can't be a socialist if you ignore just only look at class, but cannot look at the dimensions of that class.

While socialism is about emancipation of this working class from exploitation from the bourgeois, you cannot ignore the fact that within this class there's a racial question. So, our struggle is to liberate those who are racially oppressed/colonised. At the same time make sure that liberation is a true liberation meaning it is a socialist content to it.

Colonialism and Capitalism are interconnected and therefore if you want to liberate people, free in the true sense of the word, you have to also attack Capitalism.

That is why the concept of CST implies that we are also talking about CST Capitalism. "Fundamental question of any revolution is that of state power", so says Lenin. But we can amend, the fundamental question is also of popular power!

SACP's strategy for transitioning from CST to socialism. Historical documents: 1928 'Native Republic Thesis' and 1962 Programme. "Phased" or "Staged" approach to revolution. Strategic Thinking from the 1960s to the 1980s

If look ANC's Morogoro Conference in 1969, we shared the perspective that transition from colonialism of a special type to socialism. There was no such a thing as the National Democratic Society. It's revolution, socialism. Morogoro conference said the working-class in order to ensure socialism happens there must be working-class leadership.

The 'Green Book' of 1979 also said that the only route and the successful conclusion of the National Democratic Revolution is through socialism not capitalism and that for tactical reason, let us not mention that we want socialism because we want even those that do not know socialism and have not yet been drawn in to be part of the movement of liberation.

The Statements and writings of OR Tambo indicate that he was clearly a revolutionary democrat, especially around the period of the sixties, seventies and eighties in his

addresses, published writings, OR was clear that the liberation of our people will not be guaranteed unless we eliminate exploitation of men by men. OR said on many occasions that the South African revolution will not be complete without ending exploitation of the working-class.

There was this strategic thinking that we shared with the African National Congress.

Strategic Rupture and Neoliberal Defeatism
There emerged a rupture and that rupture happened largely influenced after the collapse of the Soviet in the nineties. Actually what they delivered was not to say how do we learn in order to improve in other words, they did not apply dialectics, they didn't apply historical analysis and critical analysis that Marxism-Leninism offers to us as a way of thinking about the revolution. So what they offered is what you can call a neoliberal defeatism. The Party evaluated the 30 years of government and was able to trace right there that shift towards neoliberal policies which is popularly known as the class project.

What has happened with the rupture is that revolutionary aspirations of our people were affected and undermined. When we analyse what has happened in the last 30 years, politics of the bourgeoisie have increasingly taken over politics of the working-class, which means the working-class become weaker and when that happens capitalism becomes powerful. When the bourgeoisie



maintain high-level of unemployment, its capitalist labour market is unable to absorb our people, we become weak. Neoliberal restructuring of the economy has undermined our revolutionary aspirations.

Expanding on Party Perspectives

What is the position of the Party at this moment? One of the most important things that has happened in the recent years in the Party, is expanding the understanding of the NDR and Socialism. It's not a mistake that the Party has rephrased its programme from South African Road to Socialism to South African Struggle for Socialism. The current period means that we have to go back and begin to relook the Party and the movement by reaffirming the connection between national liberation and socialism. In order to achieve emancipation of our people, the class struggle is fundamental.

We have to combat neoliberal defeatism. Neoliberal austerity is a political programme. We have been able to show with evidence that there are alternatives to austerity. When Lula Da Silva came into power, he made it publicly that neoliberal austerity is not the official policy of government, basically saying that the focus will be on expanding budget rather than cutting it. All of the things that are affecting the working class and our revolution, austerity is the major threat.

The Organised Working-Class in Post-1994 South Africa

Overview of the impact of hyper-financialisation and neoliberal economic restructuring on South Africa's working class and trade unions since 1994.

In the last 30 years, we have seen capital being dominant but there's a fraction of capital that actually it's so dominant that it influences conduct of other fractions, and that is the financial sector – financial capital. The Party refers to this explosion of financial

capital as hyper-financialisation. It's not a South African phenomenon but a global one. In South Africa it's hyper – too much money in the hands of the financial sector, whether in the form of pension funds, banks, insurance or floating money in the stock exchange. It's too much than the Gross Domestic Product [GDP] maybe seven times. We are talking about trillions, which is now become a way in which we must understand capitalism. We must know where its strength and weaknesses are. This financialisation has a huge impact on the working class.

Impact of Hyper-Financialisation

The progressive trade union movement (excluding public sector) have become weaker precisely because of this class force. The impact of hyper-financialisation has also brought about high unemployment rate nearing 50%. Over the last 30 years, there was jobless growth during improved GDP phases. De-industrialisation and shift to warehousing due to the fact that financial does not invest in industrialisation, investing in new industries and factories. Most of the money goes to the stock exchange, which is a simple way of making money for them as there's no labour, no unions, etc... That is what financial capital has been doing. De-industrialisation is the consequence of financialisation.

The end result is a fragmented working class. The working class is unemployed, there's a majority that is casualised. That is a fragmented working class, it's not cohesive. If you have that, you will have a weak trade union movement, but also consequently the rest of us, our capacity organisationally is undermined.

This has led to high trade union density at 29%, Division and fragmentation with 224 registered unions, Retrenchments and workplace fragmentation, Defensive stance and internal poaching and Leadership factionalism.

Government Actions

Now you also have a state that is supposed to be on the side of the working class reneging on wage agreements, neoliberal wage suppression in the public sector. Wages are not growing, does not keep even with the Consumer Price Index. If we are to put in place a powerful movement of workers, even of the poor without a strong trade union at its core, we may not be able to do that. We need to rebuild worker strength and unity.

SACP's Role and Goals

We need to rebuild unity in the progressive trade union movement. We know very well that COSATU and affiliates are working very hard for that. We need to look at this phenomenon called the informal sector, it may need different strategies than we have.

Lastly, the issue of union-community unity through shop steward and organisers. The early trade unions in the eighties organised workers in a different manner. In those days, it involved going to communities in the townships, going house to house.

Building Working-Class Influence

Part of our discussion is on the need to extend influence to middle strata and 'precarial.' They can be muddled, they don't have objective class interest, which is way they say they're a strata. But which side they take in a revolution is fundamental. Do they take the side of NDR and Socialism or the side of the capitalists? Well, some of the electoral results of 2024 can tell you where this middle strata is drifting ideologically and politically. We need to look at whether we cannot unite them around the common struggle against neoliberal austerity and its impact. There are other issues that we need to unite the working class around to address social decay symptoms: corruption, state capture, xenophobia, violence, and more.



THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION IN THE EMERGING CONJUNCTURE – COMRADE SIDNEY KGARA



COMRADE SIDNEY KGARA

It is often assumed that the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is a uniquely South African strategy for the national liberal struggle. In this input, we begin by reasserting the NDR as a Marxist-Leninist strategy in the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggles - in the stage of Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism. In this regard, we should start by saying that in the 19th century and early 20th century the Marxist strategies for class struggle were based on the socioeconomic and political conditions that prevailed in the advanced capitalist countries of the west. For example, in the broad outline of the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Marx and Engels (1848). Therefore, the NDR is an adaptation of the class struggle in different political, socioeconomic contexts of the colonized countries of the global-south. After providing the international and ideological background to the NDR, we shall cover the development of the perspective of the NDR as our strategy for political and socioeconomic emancipation in South Africa.

We shall then briefly deal the NDR post-1994 - covering the whole arch of the democratic transition up to the end of the sixth administration. On this basis then, we shall provide an overview of the emerging

conjuncture of the seventh administration, as ushered in and significantly shaped by the collapse of the ANC's decisive majority.

In this regard, we shall then grapple with the current political context and state of the NDR. • Let me say that it is part of the Marxist methodology to locate the object of analysis within its historical context and its evolution, so as to better comprehend its present manifestation. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel in outlining the strategic tasks as the resolutions of the 14th COSATU Congress generally remain valid and the political school would also review them during day four. However, we shall briefly elevate them, together with the key strategic outcomes of the 15th Congress of the SACP, held in 2022. Nonetheless, inherent in this input would be pointers pertaining to the tasks of the working class in this emerging conjuncture.

Before plunging into the presentation, let's ask some questions that would be answered either during this presentation or by the political school itself, hopefully. So, one often hears comrades talking about "our revolution", comrades saying that the revolution is on the cross-roads; others even saying that it has off-ramped, and so on. So, here are the questions then: Is South Africa

a revolutionary society at the moment? If so, what is the character and content of that revolution in practice? Indeed, what is the class-orientation of the post-Apartheid state? Do we have a revolutionary state? Are we engaged in or going through a revolutionary process as a society?

THE NDR AS AN INTERNATIONAL MARXIST-LENINIST STRATEGY

The Communist Party of South Africa (later SACP) joined the Communist International (Comintern) in 1921. At that time, the Comintern had already started discussing how to wage class struggles under conditions of colonialism - where the working class is not necessarily a predominant majority and where there is a large presence of the peasantry or the rural-poor. In fact, Vladimir Lenin had already laid the theoretic foundation for the NDR as a strategy in the Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Comintern, held in 1920. However, the debate around this strategy evolved over the following decades in the communist movement - marked by a theoretical shift from the characterisation of such anti-colonial struggles as "bourgeois-democratic" to "national-revolutionary" - in which the working class was positioned as



the primary motive force - in alliance with other popular strata in driving the transition to socialism.

The South African dimension of this theoretical evolution included the resolution on the Black Republic thesis adopted by the sixth congress in 1928 - to its abandonment by the seventh congress of the Comintern in 1935.

The experience and success of the communist-led Chinese revolution in 1949, in which the working class, supported by the peasantry, were the primary motive force - helped to clarify the theoretical conceptualisation of the class content of the anticolonial struggles for Marxism-Leninism internationally. The Chinese revolutionaries called their struggle - the people's democratic revolution - a strategic perspective developed based on the practical lessons drawn from their experiences of the bourgeois-democratic character of the anti-colonial struggle that was earlier led by Chiang Kai-shek's and his nationalist movement called the Koumintang (in the 1920s and 1930s.)

Similarly, Vietnam followed suit, in which the Vietnamese Communist Party itself espoused its struggle as the NDR, waged against the local bourgeoisie, the French and American imperialist forces. In fact, based on several revolutions that had taken place after the World War II, the category of the NDR was extensively used in the documents of the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties in the 1960s, which the SACP attended.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NDR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The 1960 International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties agreed on the NDR as a proletarian-led "united national democratic front of all patriotic forces of the nation" to achieve "revolutionary democracy", whose content must lead to a transitional "non-capitalist path". For its part, in its 1962 programme, called The South African Road to Freedom, the SACP envisaged the "state of national democracy" as a transitional phase in the SA revolution and added that: "such a state will provide the most favourable conditions for advance, along non-capitalist lines, to socialism".

The contextualisation of the NDR in the reality of South Africa was based on the characterisation of SA as Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), given the internally intertwined nature of racial oppression and capitalist exploitation - and this thesis was later assimilated by the ANC. The 1967 International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties consolidated this radical perspective, stating that the NDR is a strategy for a "socialist-oriented path" rather than just a "non-capitalist path".

The Freedom Charter was already adopted in 1955 as a minimum programme for the national liberation alliance - but was now conceived in the context of this "socialist-oriented path" of the NDR. Hence, the 1969 ANC's Morogoro Conference in Zambia adopted the Strategy & Tactics document that underscored this growing strategic convergence between the SACP and ANC - stating that "the struggle of the oppressed people of South Africa is taking place within an international context of transition to the socialist system". In other words, from the beginning the NDR was never a bourgeois democratic revolution in character and content even for the ANC - as the Morogoro Strategy & Tactics conceived the national liberation struggle as directly linked to socioeconomic emancipation - stating that "our drive towards national emancipation is therefore in a very real way bound up with economic emancipation". To be sure, in his address to the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971, President Oliver Tambo, in fact proclaimed that the ANC was leading the NDR for the overthrow of the Apartheid regime and seizure of power to build a "socialist society".

Of course, the cynics might say O.R. Tambo had to make such a pronouncement because the Soviet Union was supporting the ANC with resources. However, these sentiments by O.R. Tambo were subsequently reiterated in his article in the journal called World Marxist Review, in which he stated that: "It is important that the world opinion should understand the true nature of the people's movement in our country. Some people are still inclined to think that the struggle of the black population is a struggle for civil rights. But this obscures the national liberation character of our movement. Perhaps this is partly due to the over-emphasis at certain times on the struggle against apartheid, instead of the struggle against the entire

system of national and class oppression...". As some of us might know, this strategic convergence between the SACP and ANC was later best expressed in the ANC's "Green Book" drafted in 1979. Nonetheless, the liberation of the oppressed black people in general and African people in particular remained the immediate strategic objective of the NDR. This was the basis of the principal contradiction in our struggle being between the people's camp and the Apartheid system, whilst the related capitalist character of the economic base of the CST remained the fundamental contradiction in the NDR.

This shared radical perspective of the NDR was sustained by the ANC-led Alliance from the Morogoro Conference throughout the period of the intensification of the struggle in the 1970s and 1980s - up to the negotiations with the Apartheid regime. Indeed, this includes even the period after the unbanning, whereby in 1991 at the 48th Conference of the ANC held in Durban, followed by the 49th Conference of the ANC held in Bloemfontein, in 1994, this radical orientation of the NDR was reaffirmed - with the working class as the primary motive force.

As can be seen, over several decades before the 1994-breakthrough, especially from the 1960s, the SACP earned its strategic influence within the ANC leadership structures, within the MK and in the popular formations inside the country, especially in the trade union movement and in the townships. This includes the leading role of its cadres during the negotiations with the Apartheid regime. So, this then was an unmistakable and practical vanguard role exercised by the party. In this context, whereby the correlation of the class forces within our common front that is the ANC were such that the working class was the primary motive force, made the idea of the ANC as the strategic political centre to make sense.

THE STRATEGIC BREAKTHROUGH

Combined with the militant civic, youth and students' struggles raging in the townships, the birth of COSATU in 1985 escalated the leading role of the working class at the practical level in the struggle. However, the insurrectionary wave of our struggle during the 1980s did not result in the armed seizure of power, as was envisaged in terms of the 1989 SACP programme, The Path to Power.



The negotiations with the regime took place in the context of the balance of forces that were relatively in a state of equilibrium (reciprocal siege) - in a sense that whilst the regime was more isolated internationally, economically and politically crumbling - it still had support of a large section of its white constituency and the Apartheid oligarchy - and its military was still standing, despite the defeat in Angola. This meant that the demise of the Apartheid regime and the establishment of a new democratic political and judicial superstructure - would be the precondition for a peaceful advance of the struggle for socioeconomic emancipation (transformation).

STRATEGIC RUPTURE AND THE NEOLIBERAL TRAJECTORY

The great General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Le Duan, has this to say on the NDR in terms of the multi-class alliances and fronts, that: "The classes and strata which come together in a front of struggle usually have different long-term interests and, often, even contradictory expectations from the immediate phase."

So, after the 1994 breakthrough, an ideological contradiction surfaced within the people's camp - at the time when the key task was how to use the democratic breakthrough to advance the struggle for socioeconomic emancipation. This was not just a theoretical disagreement about macroeconomic policies - fundamentally it was a contestation on the class-orientation of our transition. So, this cabal called the 1996 Class Project worked with sections of the white intelligentsia that represented the Apartheid oligarchy and developed a shared economic policy (Neoliberalism) consensus called GEAR.

The imposition of GEAR also meant that there was a "rupture" in the historically shared strategic outlook in the Alliance over the medium-term - meaning between the ANC on the one hand, the SACP and COSATU on the other hand. GEAR replaced the RDP immediately after the massive attack on the Rand, during the first quarter of 1996 - as the capitalists sold-off the currency - to make it plunge in terms of its international value. This created an excuse and conducive environment for the 1996 Class Project to impose GEAR, releasing it as non-negotiable.

However, it was clear that this document had been secretly prepared for some months before.

The imposition of GEAR meant that the first ANC-led democratic government had dumped the popularly mandated economic strategy that was broadly consulted upon and received support across society, in the RDP. From then onwards, our transition was locked-in on a different and divergent Neoliberal trajectory - that primarily favoured the interest of the Apartheid oligarchy and the overall elite strata.

In this regard, Madiba was used to neutralise, isolate and marginalise the influence of the SACP, which as we have discussed was very strong over the previous decades, as well as COSATU, especially given its capacity for mobilisation. The working class as the primary motive force found itself now relegated in the correlation of class forces within the ANC. This allowed the 1996 Class Project to seize control of the ANC as well as the state, virtually unchallenged initially. In turn, the dominance of the 1996 Class Project undermined internal democracy, unity within the ANC and cohesion within the Alliance.

The ANC started to pivot away from its traditional orientation as a people's movement, becoming more detached from the masses and desiring to take on the character of a typical western style party of government. The centralization of power around the president, the marginalization of the other components of the Alliance and the progressive civil society became one of the defining features of the ANC as a ruling party - that was to become entrenched in the period to come - up to today.

So, during this period of the first term of the ANC as a ruling party, three interrelated developments took place, that would lay the foundation for the current Neoliberal character of the transition - up to the seventh administration:

- Obviously, firstly it was the dumping of the RDP and the imposition of GEAR as "non-negotiable" from 1996.
- Secondly, in the following year (1997), the Alliance Summit was held, in which the strategic "rupture" that had emerged as a result of GEAR became cemented between the ANC on the one hand, the SACP and COSATU on the other hand. This

plunged the Alliance on a dysfunctional path.

- Thirdly, it was the outcomes of the 50th ANC Conference in Mafikeng (also held in 1997). This conference consolidated the rise of the 1996 Class Project as a dominant force, with Thabo Mbeki being elected as the President of the ANC and accordingly the successor of Madiba as the President of the Republic. This conference became a turning-point in the ANC's ideological orientation, when it adopted the concept of the National Democratic Society (NDS) as the goal or end-state of the NDR, whose content was basically a de-racialized capitalist democracy and completely abandoning the Freedom Charter in the vision of the NDS.

This basically turned the NDR into a bourgeois democratic revolution, ideologically speaking, and from 1997 until the 2007 Polokwane Conference, the 1996 Class Project entrenched Neoliberal macroeconomic policies and the Neoliberal character of the state.

The systemically entrenched nature of the Neoliberal economic policies became very clear even after the ANC's 53rd Conference held in Mangaung in 2012, five years after the 1996 Class Project was dislodged. That conference called for the "radical second phase of our transition", but both the fourth and fifth ANC governments under Jacob Zuma continued with the Neoliberal economic policies and its corresponding state apparatus, despite the rhetoric about the Developmental State.

The same applies to the sixth administration, which was elected with President Ramaphosa talking about the "new dawn" based on the Manifesto that promised the end of austerity and the implementation of progressive macroeconomic policies. We are now in the seventh administration in the form of the GNU, in which the ANC was once again elected promising an end austerity - through growth enhancing macroeconomic policies to implement the six priorities, including the NHI and Basic Income Grant. But, to understand the current socioeconomic context and this emerging conjuncture of the seventh administration, it would be illustrative to remember that by 1994 the South African economy was basically dominated by



about six pyramids of conglomerates that exercised control in multiple sectors across the economy.

THE NDR IN THE EMERGING CONJUNCTURE

Parallel to the political transition, there was economic transition – the economic isolation of South Africa was ended. This provided these conglomerates an opportunity to restructure and internationalise in anticipation of the potential radical socioeconomic transformation agenda. In addition to the negative consequences of the Neoliberal macroeconomic policies over the past three decades, this restructuring by capital - which continued over years - generated three main syndromes of the economic stagnation facing the country today:

- Firstly, this restructuring involved the unbundling of these six conglomerations into sector specific monopolies (often across value-chains particularly in the industries that are linked to the Mineral Energy Complex), that prevented the entrance of new competitors.
- Secondly, this restructuring unleashed massive retrenchments, outsourcing, intensive mechanisation and casualisation within these monopoly corporations in response to the introduction of a new and progressive labour relations regime.
- Thirdly, this restructuring unleashed de-industrialisation in favour of financialisation and capital-flight, including the flight of South African capital.
- So, on the one hand, the impact of this restructuring effort by capital, combined with the Neoliberal restructuring of the state by the first ANC administration, gradually but drastically weakened the radical trade union movement (COSATU). This obviously further eroded of influence and power of the working class within the ANC and in society and strengthened the upper-hand of capital – in terms of the balance of class forces. In addition, the dumping of the RDP in favour of GEAR, drastically shifted the political centre to the right (ANC became a centre-left party) and thus further reinforced the influence of capital and its policy lobbyist institutions within the state, especially in the SARB and Treasury.

This Neoliberal hegemony persisted and was uninterruptedly reproduced over the past six ANC administrations, despite the

occasional flirting with notions such as “the radical second phase” and “building the Developmental State”. So, we now enter in this emerging conjuncture of the seventh administration with drastically unfavourable balance of class forces, with the ANC that is almost on its knees politically and at the mercy of monopoly capital.

Therefore, in reviewing the NDR over the past three decades and analysing the current context of seventh administration that is likely to define this emerging conjuncture over the medium-term, we can make the following conclusions:

- Firstly, that whilst politically 1994 represented a strategic breakthrough for the democratic forces, the adoption of GEAR in 1996 was a strategic breakthrough for monopoly-capital and other strategic adversaries of the NDR. Hence, the Neoliberal paradigm became hegemonic and it has been entrenched up to the current context of the seventh administration.
- Secondly, that the ideological dilution of the NDR since the 1997 50th Conference of the ANC, as highlighted by the shift to the NDS as the goal of the NDR, cemented the strategic rupture within the Alliance and the shift of the correlation of the class forces within the ANC against the working class.
- Thirdly, that despite the involvement of different political parties in the GNU (about 10 parties), in essence the GNU represents the consolidations of an elite Neoliberal consensus between the centre-left ANC and centre-right DA. This underlined by their shared commitment to the Neoliberal macroeconomic policies and the so-called structural reforms.

As part of analysing the current context, what then are the outcomes of the 2024 elections telling us? That the ANC has significantly lost touch with the broad mass of the working class, especially in the townships of the metros. Voter turn-out was the lowest in these areas and this is also confirmed by the fact that the turning-point was already in the 2021 local government elections, whereby the ANC only got decisive majorities in two out of eight metros.

The outcomes of the 2024 national elections represent a monumental failure of the Neoliberal trajectory. They do not represent

the defeat of the NDR as our strategy for political and social emancipation. The outcomes of these elections highlight the political and socioeconomic unsustainability of the Neoliberal trajectory in the context of the national liberation struggle. In 2024, there was about 38.9 million Voting Age Population (VAP) or total eligible voters, 27.7 million registered voters but only about 16.2 million voters cast their votes. This indicates that there is a growing crisis of legitimacy regarding the formal democratic political processes. And that there is a declining interest even to register, let alone to vote, especially amongst the youth.

However, this is not voter-apathy (as the elite claim), its alienation or withdrawal of participation in the elections. This is informed by the fact that what the parties are promising is no longer relevant or making sense in terms of the daily experiences of the people. However, this does not mean that the working-class communities are generally passive politically – these communities still have their own agency in terms of the grass-root self-activities around poor service delivery, crime, housing, land, etc. More tellingly, this elections also mean that the ANC received support only from about 16.4% of the total eligible voters - in terms of the 38.9 million Voting Age Population (VAP). So, what is the implication of this for the NDR? The ANC faced the 2024 elections with yet another break-away group formed, in the uMkhonto we Sizwe Party (MKP). These break-away parties in every electoral cycles partially accounts for the collapse of the ANC's electoral support, from the heights of 69.69% (279 seats) in 2004 to 40.18% (159 seats) in 2024, a total loss of 120 seats over three consecutive national elections.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND THE EMERGING CONJUNCTURE

The public discourse was dominated by the centre-left and centre-right politics of the ANC and the DA, respectively. All the other parties were either extreme version of these centrist agendas or confused version of them. For a country with such proud history and diverse traditions of Marxist politics, it is a scandal that there was not even one nationally visible and coherent anti-capitalist voice, placing socialist solution on the table. It is not a uniquely South African phenomenon that amidst socioeconomic stagnation,



deepening crises of reproduction and the cost-of-living, that sections amongst the working class and the poor would look to the populist and demagogic big-men as their saviors or messiahs. Such one-man-show parties tend to thrive on such protracted conditions of socioeconomic degeneration, dangerously exploiting some apparent divisions – be it in terms of religion, ethnicity, race, sexual identity, etc. These backward tendencies are more pronounced in the politics of the Patriotic Alliance (PA) and the MKP, with the MKP using a fake perspective of radical economic transformation as a cover, but at the same time wanting to subject the democratic sovereignty of our people to the authority of the traditional leaders.

But these backward tendencies in our political landscape, also include the racist version of liberalism of the DA and the pseudo-militarism of the EFF. So, here are some of the additional questions that we should answer in this school in grappling with the current context and going forward: Firstly, in the light of this horrendous outcomes of the 2024 national elections, especially in the major industrial urban centres where the working-class communities are highly concentrated but significantly stayed away from the elections, can it still be up to the ANC alone to determine the form of the organisational structure, for providing strategic leadership of the NDR – in terms of the configuration of the Alliance? Individually and collectively, don't these organisations of the working class, in COSATU and SACP, have the responsibility to provide answers as to whether this dysfunctional mode of strategic leadership of the Alliance as led by the ANC would be the best form in which the interests of the working class and the poor would be served or otherwise, going forward? Put differently, would the NDR as our strategy for socialism, but headed by the ANC, be advanced, given this seismic shift in the political landscape, the increasing detachment from the working-class masses on the part of the ANC, and its convergence with the DA around the elite Neoliberal consensus of the GNU?

The point here is that – the questions of the correlation of class forces within our movement and the reconfiguration of the Alliance are now practical questions. These are no longer questions that must be resolved only through endless debates. The fact is that the ground has now seismically

shifted, whilst we continue to trail behind the ANC and indulging in endless sessions of lamentation about how badly and unfairly the ANC is treating us in the Alliance. The thesis here is that the strategic leadership of the NDR is now a question of practically rooting the socialist vanguard in the proletarian communities where there's a vacuum and to take up the struggles that these communities often face on their own, as part of the totality of the party's vanguard role in class struggles on the terrain of the NDR.

In terms of the Political Report adopted by the 15th Congress of the SACP, regarding this matter of the leadership of the NDR, the party's attitude remains that of "seeking to build working class hegemony within the Alliance and, through our participation within the ANC, to build working class hegemony within the state itself". Well, what is the scorecard or our performance in this regard? That Political Report further states that as the SACP "we should not abandon these efforts" and that "as a Central Committee we have come to the firm conclusion that we have not sufficiently reinforced these efforts (of building working class hegemony within the ANC) with active Party campaigning on the ground to build a powerful, socialist movement of the working class and poor. In this regard, in building a powerful, socialist movement of the working class and poor, the SACP Congress has identified "two key sites of potential working class and popular power – i.e. the workplace and the proletarian community (townships, informal settlements, rural villages)." This is a welcomed strategic approach of ensuring that the Party's structures become much more rooted and active amongst the working class and poor.

Comrades, at this early period of the seventh administration, we are faced with the situation where: Even after these elections, the Finance Minister still talks about "fiscal consolidation", meaning austerity. This is despite the fact that a primary budget surplus is expected to be achieved by the end of the current financial year and the public-debt is expected to peak and start declining from the 2025/26 financial year. For his part, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, at the time speaking as the President-elect and negotiating with the opposition parties to form the GNU, made it very clear that the support and continuation with the so-called structural reforms would be the precondition for any party seeking

to join the GNU. Note that the NHI and BIG were not elevated amongst these policy preconditions. Therefore, we can safely assume that the proposed National Dialogue that President Ramaphosa is talking about would ultimately be geared at resulting with an agreement on the same Neoliberal policies of the sixth administration.

It is an attempt to consolidate the Neoliberal hegemony in some form of a "social contract", especially with the NEDLAC "social partners". Comrades, it would be unrealistic to expect and hope for a different outcome. This is the same scheme as the one that unfolded during the drafting of the National Development Plan (NDP), between 2011 and 2012. At that time, there was the pretention that the fourth administration was committed to building the Developmental State and was embarking on an open-minded engagement for a social contract through public consultations. But, instead, the fourth administration of Jacob Zuma imposed the chapter on macroeconomic policies that was cast-in-iron, unchangeable, despite the widely expressed objections or rejection, especially in the Alliance. Therefore, we have seen enough in the past to readily conclude that there shall be no change in the macroeconomic policies through this National Dialogue, despite the commitment in the ANC Manifesto to the growth enhancing macroeconomic policies – although we are not necessarily saying it should be boycotted.

Comrades, the leverage that our revolution gained from the 1994 breakthrough has clearly been squandered through this Neoliberal trajectory. The past three decades of our transition were not used to deal with the inherited and vast class, racial, gender and geographic polarities of the CST. It was accordingly hoped that the Neoliberal policies would stimulate investment, the investments that did not materialised. Unfortunately, our revolution is still doing everything to create "business confidence" to stimulate investment. But all the time, the excuse by capital is that there is "policy uncertainty". If the balance of forces is about the power equation and the strengths and weaknesses of the two main contending class forces in society – capital and labour – how is the working class going to challenge this bourgeois hegemony when it does not have a clear voice that advances its interests in the formal political terrain. The Political



School must help clarify as to what would be the primary contradiction between the class and racial contents of our struggle in the current conjuncture, after thirty years since the 1994 breakthrough.

Regarding the current programme of the SACP, as adopted at the 15th Congress in 2022, in addition to calling for - Public Employment Programme, A Transformative, Just Green Transition, the Tightening of the Exchange Controls, Transformation of the Banking and wider Financial Sector and opposing the Neoliberal Structural Reforms, amongst others, at the practical level the SACP's programme is based on five focus areas, which are called the tributaries: The First Tributary: is Rebuilding a powerful trade union movement. The Second Tributary: is Building working class and popular power in our proletarian communities. The Third Tributary: Land reform for urban and rural transformation. The Fourth Tributary: Fighting for radical transformation of the Financial Sector. The Fifth Tributary: is an internationalist call for Workers of the World Unite for Peace and Development.

This framework of the SACP's practical programme, is mutually complementary with that of COSATU, as adopted by the COSATU 14th Congress in 2022. Hence, we can say that in terms of the medium-term strategic outlook, the perspective of COSATU also remains valid, in the immediate and medium-term. This political school should consider it, together with the SACP programme, as part of our review of our Strategic Policy Framework (SPF). For now, it is sufficient to recap our immediate to medium-term integrated organisational and political strategy, as the federation - outlined as follows: Building and strengthening COSATU and its affiliates at the workplace, Building unity in action with other unions and federations, Building and strengthening the socialist-axis, Building campaigns with mass-based organizations and progressive NGOs, Building and fighting for the renewal of the ANC.

As COSATU and SACP, surely our primary responsibility over the period of the seventh administration, is to ensure that there are no reversals on the gains of the workers, the working class and the poor, as well as the broader black middle-stratum. Our overarching strategic tasks during the tenure of the (GNU), is to ensure that:

- We fight against attempts to reverse our

hard-won gains in terms of the labour relation regime

- We fight against attempts to further reduce the public service wage bill - by attacking pay, conditions of service and further reductions of the personnel headcount or the creation of more vacancies.
- We fight against the continuation of austerity into the seventh administration regarding public services which are vital to the working class and the poor.
- We fight against the privatisations of the public infrastructure and logistic networks.
- We fight for the implementation of the NHI and BIG.
- We fight for progressive macroeconomic policies to support the socioeconomic programmes outlined in the ANC six priorities of the Manifesto.
- We defend our foreign policy as anchored around solidarity with Palestine, Cuba, Western Sahara and the country's sovereignty regarding BRICS and other such forums for an anti-unipolar world order.

Conclusion

Comrades, in conclusion, we should say that: Revolutions take place in waves - the arches of revolutions are characterised by moments of intensified activity and lulls - ebbs and flows. Arguably we are now at the end of the arch that started in the early 1970s with the re-emergence of the militant trade unions in Durban - which escalated in the 1976 uprisings and intensifying from the early 1980s until we achieved the breakthrough in the 1990s. From then onwards we entered a phase of the gradual demobilisation, whether subjectively or due to the objective conditions. But this wave would not have been accidental. It was connected to the initial ideological and political preparation from earlier periods, especially the 1960s with the consolidation of a shared perspective around the NDR - amidst the regime's intensified repression, the formation of the people's army, MK and the underground structures and exile.

Comrades, in our discussions we should remember that this was the ANC-led election campaign, and so we must not view the poor performance of the ANC in isolation or outside the weaknesses of COSATU and SACP as well.

The ANC's quantitative decline in electoral terms is also related to the qualitative decline in terms of the organisational capacities of the totality of the entire movement. This means that it is not just the electoral decline. This also highlights the organisational decline in terms of the quality of cadreship, structures and their connection with the masses across all the formations of the democratic movement. This is therefore a moment to rebuild, to reimagine how to root our organisations amongst the people and to review and sharpen our strategic perspective. So, we conclude this presentation by coming back to the questions that we posed at the beginning - on whether South Africa is a revolutionary society, whether we have a revolutionary state and whether we are engaged in or going through a revolutionary process?

The Political Report to the 15th National Congress of the SACP, basically answered these questions with one sentence: that, "It is no secret that the momentum of our national democratic struggle has stalled on many fronts. In some respects, it is in reverse." So, maybe we should say that - the commissions are going to examine this conclusion by the SACP and further elaborate answers to these questions. This should be done together with some analysis on how to shift the balance of class forces in favour of the working class. Similarly, how to shift the correlation of class forces within the Alliance and the political landscape that is emerging - shaped by the aftermath of the May 29th and the formation of the seventh administration, in order to provide the answer, rather than lamenting.

Amandla!
Matla!
Matimba!
All power!