

# STATE POWER AND FRONT POLITICS ARE INSEPARABLE

## *Towards a New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism*

*“It is time to recognize the historic and titanic nature of the fight, and to unite all our forces in countering the enemy’s palpable activity with an even more active **Red Forward Movement**, political and industrial, of all the workers; a **Great Push** so militant, well organized and unified by solidarity as to deliver, in co-operation with the advanced Labour Movement of the rest of the world, the knockout blow to a hated class system.” (CPSA/SACP, 1921)*

The South African Communist Party (the Party) is the vanguard party of the working class in South Africa. Since inception, the Party has always been deeply engaged and actively involved in the struggles of ordinary citizens. The Party is a product of the struggles of ordinary South African citizens fighting for an end to Capitalism and a better life for all. In his paper, *South Africa – No Middle Ground*, Comrade Joe Slovo argues that, “For those who live in Apartheid’s reality, not in debate but in their daily experience, the need to destroy it in all its manifestations is a self – evident truth. That is the starting point and the only remaining question is how?”<sup>1</sup> The same can be said about Capitalism today. Therefore the only remaining question is how do we end Capitalism in South Africa in contributing to the end of Global Capitalism? What type of Society will replace it? What then is the Party’s projection in this respect?

In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte, Karl Marx wrote, “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by them, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.”<sup>2</sup>

As communists guided by the ideology of Marxism – Leninism, we are therefore called upon to make our own history by circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.

### **What are these circumstances?**

The fundamental cause of the societal crisis and state decay is the untransformed semi – colonial capitalist economy and a governing party plagued with the diseases of capitalism thus incapable of leading a programme for the radical transformation of this capitalist economy.

The ANC itself is no longer capable of leading the victory of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). As a governing party in a capitalist society it continues to suffer from the life threatening diseases of capitalism such as greed, competition and accumulation. It is an organization besieged with patronage linked factionalism, gate – keeping and corruption, unable to lead the victory of the NDR. It has become a meditation committee for conflicting bourgeoisie interests where the political representatives of the dominant bourgeoisie exercise their influence, power and authority. This is precisely why very little content and direction has been provided to the second phase of the NDR. The embourgeoisement of the ANC has led to very little or no appetite for the development and implementation of radical economic

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<sup>1</sup> Joe Slovo, ‘No Middle Ground’ cited in Davidson, Slovo and Wilkinson, “Southern Africa – The New Politics of Revolution, 1976, p. 107

<sup>2</sup> Marx, 1852, p. 15

change that favors the working class. Some examples of change can be found in certain segments of the economy but none of which can be viewed as radical enough to transform the economic base and property relations in the country.

Post - 1994, we have continuously accepted and managed unholy alliances manifesting themselves in different shapes and forms within the ANC. These manifestations are bound to continue long into the future thus stifling the building of work class hegemony in society and deliberately postponing the Socialist Revolution. This is in direct violation of the principles agreed to in the South African Road to Socialism (SARS) whereby we have clearly stated that the advancement and consolidation of the national democratic revolution does not mean the suspension of the Socialist Revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The experience of the ANC as a governing party post - 1994 suggests the growth and entrenchment of a traditional bourgeoisie nationalism within the ANC itself. The rejection of this traditional form of bourgeoisie nationalism in favor of a more advanced revolutionary nationalism was the one of the pillars constituting the foundation of an alliance with the ANC and the acceptance of the ANC as the head of the Tripartite Alliance. The retreat to traditional bourgeoisie nationalism especially since 1996 and more overtly and arrogantly since 2009, together with the dysfunctionality of leadership within the ANC, raises the question of whether the ANC is still capable of leading the NDR. The struggle for the victory of the NDR post – 1994 has been abandoned to a political project of state capture by the dominant bourgeoisie as is the experience of many other liberation movements on the continent. It is a political project managed within the ANC leading to the capture of the state so as to win a share in the continued exploitation and domination of our people.

The political representatives of the bourgeoisie in the ANC have become more differentiated after 20 years as the governing party in Post – Apartheid South Africa. We can no longer speak of the political representatives of a single capitalist class or black bourgeoisie existing within the ANC. One can identify the political representatives of three propertied classes competing with each other for resources that are under the control of the state: a national bourgeoisie whose base is internal and whose interests lie in the ownership and control of industrial capital; a comprador bourgeoisie composed of the black middle class working with western imperial capital and/or eastern imperial capital and whose interests lie in acquiring a share of the domestic exploits by Imperialist capital; and the political representatives of a parasitic bourgeoisie whose interests lie in the extraction of resources from the state not for the purposes of social reproduction, but to sustain a power elite. The interests of these three propertied classes are found to be competing but not contradictory. The political representatives of these three bourgeoisie continue to fight for dominance in the ANC having captured the structure and culture of the ANC.

The Post – 1994 ANC is more engaged in the mediation between the national bourgeoisie, the comprador bourgeoisie and the parasitic bourgeoisie. While the ANC is more involved in moderating and mediating the conflict between these propertied classes the masses want to redistribute wealth in their own favor. However, this redistribution of wealth in favor of the working class and rural peasantry will inevitably harm the interests of the competing bourgeoisie. The ANC can therefore not be depended on to lead the victory of the NDR as this will contradict the interests of the competing bourgeoisie within its ranks and push the revolution beyond the bounds acceptable and beneficial to any of these propertied classes.

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<sup>3</sup> SARS, 2012, p. 7

The ANC post – 1994 has played a mediatory role between the political representatives of the conflicting propertied classes. It now has the responsibility of moderating, managing and preserving the social relationships of the propertied classes which the capitalist economy requires. Consequently it can no longer be tasked with the responsibility of leading the victory of the NDR.

The Post – 1994 ANC is at best capable of leading the country ‘out of the Capitalist crisis’ but not ‘out of Capitalism in crisis.’ The result of which would be the continuation of the capitalist system through the exploitation and domination of our people. To advance ‘out of Capitalism’ towards a Socialist Developmental Path would not be acceptable or beneficial to the needs and interests of the dominant bourgeoisie that has captured the ANC. It is only the SACP with the interests of the working class that can successfully and meaningfully lead the working class and other progressive strata ‘out of Capitalism in crisis’ and towards a more humane and just social order.

Capitalism was founded on the exploitation of man by man. It is based on the principle of ‘Survival of the Fittest’ and gives rise to competition, greed and inequality. Democracy was founded on the principle of political equality implying that the majority rule. It is therefore impossible for Capitalism to be compatible with the victory of the NDR and Socialism. To achieve the victory of the NDR and Socialism requires the end of Capitalism in South Africa and the means to achieving this objective is the formation of a *New Front* of the working class in alliance with the rural peasants, non – comprador bourgeoisie and progressive sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie. This New Front will require a new organizational vehicle that displaces the current organizational vehicle which is led by the ANC.

### **A New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism**

The political representatives of the differentiated and competing bourgeoisie have entrenched themselves into the ANC to the extent that the working classes have gained the least and suffered the most from the legislation and policies adopted by the ANC post – 1994. The current conjuncture requires a new alliance of progressive revolutionary classes that can be mobilized in support of the victory of the NDR and Socialism. A *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism* requires a new organizational vehicle with a new leadership to achieve its goals.

The SACP should lead a *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism* focused on building the unity of progressive revolutionary classes and other strata in South Africa in deepening, advancing and consolidating the NDR as the most direct route to Socialism. It is only the SACP as the political vanguard of the working class that can meaningfully lead a *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism* united across racial and gender lines. We can no longer afford to be in alliance with and to be led by an ANC that has abandoned its revolutionary progressive nationalism of the past in favor of a traditional bourgeoisie nationalism that we see today. The ANC of today is a party that exercises state power in the interests of a dominant bourgeoisie and not in the interests of the working class. It is a party of the bourgeoisie who have welcomed the personality flaws of President Jacob Zuma, as they did of former President Thabo Mbeki, and have cultivated such flaws for their own ends. This tendency of the bourgeoisie in the ANC will continue long into the darkness of Capitalism.

A *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism* led by the SACP is a direct response to the triple crises’ of legitimacy, integration and participation in the ANC as the leader of the alliance. A crisis of legitimacy as a result of the ethical and moral degeneration in the ANC, a crisis of integration as a result

of dysfunctionality in the leadership of the ANC and a crisis of participation as a result of gate – keeping and degenerative patronage linked factionalism at all levels of the ANC. As the governing party post liberation, the ANC chose to embrace Capitalism but soon became infected with its’ life threatening diseases of greed, competition and accumulation.

The Party has previously argued that a rupture has occurred in the multiclass consensus post – 1994 around the national democratic revolution. This rupture requires the formation of *A New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism*. It is only the SACP as the vanguard party of the working class that can lead a mass democratic movement, a *Red Forward Movement*, of the working classes in alliance with other progressive revolutionary classes. *A New Front for a New Democracy and Socialism* will place the working class as the primary motive force for deepening, advancing and consolidating the NDR.

There are a series of questions that we may need to address in the discussion around this *New Front* in relation to state power. These questions have previously been posed by the Party for discussion but have not been sufficiently addressed:

- 1) What constitutes a revolutionary approach to State Power?
- 2) What would be the consequences and impact on the Party directly contesting elections in a multi-party setting as the head of *The New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism*?
- 3) What are the immediate struggles and how do we link these struggles to the struggle for Socialism?
- 4) Other than political power, what are the other key sites of power to establish working class hegemony?

### **Peoples Power for State Power and State Power for Socio – Economic Transformation**

One of the most immediate struggles should be the revitalization of the motive forces and the re-establishment of the working class as the primary motive force in the NDR. The organizational vehicle of a tripartite alliance led by the ANC is incapable of such a task given its leadership deficiencies and its new primary role as a mediator of competing bourgeoisie interests. The current epoch has also seen significant differences emerging between the Party and the ANC on the main content, strategy and tactics of the national democratic revolution. This is further compounded by the lack of joint decision making by all partners in the alliance.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Congress Programme adopted in 2007, “The South African Road to Socialism (SARS),” provided a basis for a revolutionary approach to state power. The SARS 2007 programme argued that a revolutionary approach to state power is the antithesis to a narrow, electoralist approach to the capture of state power by the working class.

Marx and Engels argued that the working class could not effect the economic and social transformation of society without state power but they also argued that achieving state power was impossible without

conscientizing the masses, through struggle and through their own experience, that Socialism and ultimately Communism was possible.<sup>4</sup>

Popular peoples' power is necessary for state power and state power is necessary for socio – economic transformation. For the Party to lead the victory of the NDR it will need to end the unholy alliance with the national bourgeoisie, comprador bourgeoisie and parasitic bourgeoisie. It will have to forge a new alliance of revolutionary progressive classes united behind *A New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism*. The revolutionary progressive classes would be the proletariat, the peasantry, the non – comprador bourgeoisie and progressive sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie. *A New Front* would result in a *New Peoples' Democracy*, not in capitalism, and would lay the basis for a Socialist South Africa.

If the achievement of state power is an objective of the SACP, and indeed it should be, who then has the role of conscientizing the workers if not the SACP as the vanguard party of the working class? It is only the Party through a *New Front* of progressive revolutionary classes and other strata that can consciously and actively lead a programme for the development of workers' class consciousness. The current configuration of the alliance that includes political representatives of the traditional national, comprador and parasitic bourgeoisie has no interest or intentions to advance the development of workers' class consciousness as this would lead the revolution beyond the bounds acceptable and beneficial to these sections of the bourgeoisie.

### **The Twin Task of the SACP**

In its approach to unity contained its 'Strategy and Tactics' document, the ANC states:

We are revolutionaries, not narrow nationalists. Committed revolutionaries are our brothers to whatever group they belong. There can be no second class participation in our movement.<sup>5</sup>

The post – 1994 character of the ANC clearly suggests a deviation from the Strategy and Tactics with the introduction of narrow nationalist tendencies within its rank and file. This deviation has subsequently led to a rupture and disunity in the revolutionary alliance with the working class. How does the ANC of today intend to lead the victory of the NDR when it has deviated from its strategy and tactics and serves only as a mediation committee for the different interests of the competing bourgeoisie?

We refer back to the argument by Marx and Engels that the working class cannot effect the economic and social transformation of society without state power but state power was not possible without conscientizing the masses that Socialism is possible. Based on this logic, the Party has the twin task of deepening and advancing class consciousness amongst the people as necessary for state power and that of pursuing state power necessary for radical economic transformation in the interests of the working class.

These two tasks do not exist in isolation or have a certain hierarchy where first comes political consciousness for state power and then follows the task of the capture of state power necessary for effecting socio - economic transformation. The task of deepening and advancing class and political consciousness necessary for state power goes hand in hand and evolves side by side with the task of

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<sup>4</sup> [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org)

<sup>5</sup> Cited in Slovo, J. 'No Middle Ground' in Davidson, Slovo and Wilkinson, "Southern Africa – The New Politics of Revolution, 1976, p. 175

seizing state power necessary for radical economic transformation while laying the basis for the construction of a Socialist economic order. The dialectical nature of this twin task constitutes the theoretical underpinnings for the Party not to go it alone in the quest for state power but rather to lead a *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism*.

The twin task of popular peoples' power for state power and state power for socio - economic transformation must include the struggle for working class hegemony in all other key sites of power in society. It must include the building of a popular national sovereignty around the state. Any discussion around the formation of a *New Front for the Victory of the NDR and Socialism* must adopt the strategic thrust of the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress programme adopted in 2007 which directs us to build working class hegemony in the state, in the workplace, in the economy, in the battles of ideas and in our communities.

The SARS 2007 programme of the Party argues that for the NDR to succeed the working class will have to assume a hegemonic role in society and in the state. The reconnection of the motive forces with the NDR should not be placed before the capture and exercise of state power by the political vanguard of the working class. Instead the capture of state power by a new revolutionary front of united revolutionary class forces must constitute a necessary and immediate task of the Party based on the realities of the current conjuncture.

## **Conclusion**

The SACP as a 'party in government' has been relatively successful especially since the Polokwane Conference of the ANC in 2007 and the subsequent deployment of SACP cadres into the Zuma administration in 2009. The Political Report presented to the Augmented Central Committee in December 2016 points to these successes with particular reference to labour policy, competition policy, trade policy, infrastructure development, the spatial economy and the post –school education and training sector.<sup>6</sup> According to the report, "The left axis in government post - 2009 has succeeded in shifting government from a neo – liberal posture on state – owned companies and trade policy to a developmental policy largely embodied in the New Growth Path with explicit job goals."<sup>7</sup>

However, what more could the Party achieve with independent political power if it were to make the transition from a 'party in government' to 'the governing party?' Notwithstanding the international limiting factors, if the "deliberate check and counter – balances of the SACP influence in government" were to be removed as a factor how much more progress could we make towards the victory of the NDR and Socialism? It can be argued that given the track record of the SACP in government especially since 2009 much more progress can be made if the Party were to make the transition from 'a party in government' to 'the governing party.' A transition of this nature can only manifest itself through a radical shift in the strategy and tactics of the Party with particular emphasis to the question of the SACP and State Power.

The Post – 1994 ANC has suffered a crisis of legitimacy that is irreversible. The deficit of credibility has increased substantially during the Zuma years from 2007 and even more so in the second administration

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<sup>6</sup> Political Report presented to the Augmented Central Committee, 2016, pp. 7 -8

<sup>7</sup> Political Report presented to the Augmented Central Committee, 2016, pp. 7

from 2012. This crisis of legitimacy has made the possible task of the ANC leading the victory of the NDR impossible.

The crisis of legitimacy of the ANC in society, its limitations in leading us 'out of Capitalism in crisis' and towards socio - economic transformation in the interests of the working class, the abandonment of advanced revolutionary nationalism and the new role of the ANC as a mediation committee for the competing interests of the differentiated bourgeoisie classes, provides a basis for a discussion on the ANC and its ability to lead the victory of the NDR.

It is time for the SACP to deliberately lead a broad alliance of the working class and other strata with the aim of capturing state power and the creation of a state in which the working class in town and countryside, in alliance with the poor peasants, non – comprador bourgeoisie and progressive sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie will be the leading force. It is time for the Party to seize the moment!