

DRAFT POLITICAL PROGRAMME OF THE SACP 2012-17

The South African Road to Socialism

CHAPTER 4: THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION – THE
SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD TO SOCIALISM

Without understanding the deep-rooted capitalist accumulation path legacy we are up against, it is impossible to provide a clear programmatic understanding of the national democratic revolution. The contemporary relevance of each of the three interlinked dimensions – the “national”, the “democratic”, and, above all, the “revolutionary” becomes vague.

This general vagueness about our history is not accidental. Vagueness has helped to clear the way for *an emergent bourgeois endeavour to assert a new ideological hegemony over our national liberation movement. In this endeavour, the “NDR” is presented implicitly, and often explicitly, as the “bourgeois” “stage” of the revolution. The capitalist revolution, we are told, must first be “completed”.*

But the Capitalist Revolution in South Africa has long been made!

The commanding heights of our economy have long been occupied by a monopoly-dominated, and increasingly transnationalised South African capitalist class. The great majority of South Africans have long been proletarianised, that is, alienated from

THE MARXIST

independent means of production and with nothing to sell but their labour power.

The NDR is not a “stage” in which capitalism has to be “completed” (or merely “managed according to its own internal logic”). The NDR is a struggle to overcome deep-seated and persisting racialised inequality and poverty in our society. It is a struggle to overcome the vicious impact of patriarchy, not just in some generalized way, but a patriarchy that was sharpened and integrated into capitalist relations of production over a century of CST-based accumulation. It is a class struggle for the wealth of our country to be shared, as the Freedom Charter declares. It is a struggle to place social needs above private profits.

To be all of this, the NDR has to be a revolutionary struggle to transform the underlying, systemic features of our society that continue to reproduce race, gendered and class oppression. Which is to say: *“The NDR in our present conjuncture has, in essence, to be a struggle to transform the dependent-development accumulation path of our economy, and the chronic underdevelopment that this accumulation path still daily reproduces.*

The SACP has consistently believed that it is possible and necessary to advance and develop a national democratic revolutionary strategy of this kind that unites, in action, a range of classes and social strata. We have also always believed that within our South African reality, unless the working class builds its hegemony in every site of power, and unless socialist ideas, values, organisation and activism boldly assert themselves, the NDR will lose its way and stagnate.

WHY A NATIONAL REVOLUTION?

Understanding more clearly the key strategic tasks of the NDR helps us to understand why we speak of a *National* democratic revolution. The “national” in the NDR has three key dimensions.

In the first place, the NDR is a struggle for *national self-determination*. It is a struggle to consolidate national popular sovereignty for our country, to ensure that, as much as possible, South Africans are able to determine democratically their own developmental path, free of external manipulation or domination.

It is here that *the dependent development path into which we have been locked for over a century presents the major challenge*. Our excessive primary product export dependence, our excessive import

dependence for capital goods, our vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations and to looming oil shortages, the danger of allowing the pursuit of “global competitiveness” to always trump national development, the negligent way in which we have allowed foreign multi-nationals to buy up and to monopolise strategically critical sectors that were once state-owned, like iron and steel production – all of these undermine our national sovereignty.

This is not to say that we should close South Africa off from the rest of the world. That is neither possible nor desirable. But we have to overcome our dependent-development growth path. This requires not just a national effort, but also the consolidation of a vibrant, democratic and developmentally-oriented southern African regional community both at the inter-state and at the popular level. It requires building strategic South-South alliances. It requires striking up ties of solidarity with progressive forces around the world. Internationalism and the struggle for progressive national self-determination are not opposites, they are integrally linked.

The “national” in the national democratic revolution refers also to the task of *nation building*. Nation building is, in the first instance, the important task of consolidating a single “*collective South Africanness*, building unity in plurality. This aspect of nation building is not merely symbolic, it is a necessary task in the struggle to mobilise our forces for the ongoing NDR. But nation building must also critically address *the material infrastructure that can help to build this sense of unity, and whose current highly divisive patterns still often undermine it*. Our national revolution has to be a revolution that addresses, for instance, the skewed nature of our infrastructure and the CST patterns of development and under-development that are evident in the spatial inequities of our towns and cities, and in the divide between developed urban and devastated rural areas. Above all, this kind of infrastructural transformation is not just about technocratic “delivery”, if it is to really be nation-building then it must actively involve the collective mobilised energies of millions of ordinary South Africans.

The third dimension of the “national” in the NDR is *Revolutionary nationalism*. We have noted that one of the great assets of our revolution is an unbroken legacy of popular struggle stretching back over several centuries. This legacy has been constantly drawn upon, replenished and transformed in struggle. It continues to provide a source of collective identity, of popular capacity and empowerment

THE MARXIST

for a majority of South Africa's workers and poor. It is this reality that accounts for the enduring popularity of the ANC, whatever the challenges it might be facing. This is not to say that any of us can simply take this popularity for granted. It is a popularity that has to be constantly won in leading the struggle, in empowering popular forces to be their own emancipators, and in grasping the class and gender content of the national struggle.

The SACP's strategic alliance with revolutionary nationalism is very much part of our Leninism. It was *Lenin who first comprehensively analysed the revolutionary character of the nationalism of colonially oppressed peoples, and the imperative of the workers socialist struggle to support and draw strength from this Third World revolutionary nationalism.*

It is important to emphasise this point in the present because the revolutionary nationalist traditions of our struggle are under threat from various directions. In some left quarters there is a tendency to see all nationalism as inherently reactionary. In other quarters, even from within our movement, there are tendencies, often of a "modernizing" and technocratic kind, to view the dominant African nationalist traditions of our struggle as simply "populist", or as "backward" vestiges from our past. In these quarters, the national dimension of the NDR tends to be reduced to a prickly "national question", a problem of grievances, ethnicity and tribalism that require sensitive "management". For the SACP, following Lenin in this regard, the "N" in the NDR is not just a national "question", it is a national answer. It is a positive revolutionary legacy.

Of course, the meaning of African nationalism in our context is contested by many class and other social forces. The struggle for working class and popular hegemony of African nationalism is a struggle against elite abuse of nationalism for narrow self-promotion, a tendency that invariably reduces African nationalism to an exclusivist ideology, to vacuous and sentimental notions about the uniqueness of one group of people as opposed to others. *Revolutionary nationalism in SA must be contested for, broadened so that it remains the shared legacy of all South Africans, and drawn upon in the struggle for a socialism that is both patriotic and internationalist.*

WHY A DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION?

Democracy is both the goal of, and a critical means for waging the NDR. In the objective reality of our country and world, the South African NDR will have to be thoroughly democratic, or it will not succeed at all.

Historically, in the 18th and 19th centuries, many (but not all) bourgeois national revolutions in Europe saw considerable democratic advances for a wide array of popular classes, and not just for the principal beneficiary, the emergent bourgeoisie. These democratic advances had little if anything to do with the “inherently democratic” nature of capitalism, and everything to do with the class struggle that was required to dislodge feudal ruling classes and the state apparatuses that upheld their domination. Broad movements were mobilised around the banner of basic democratic rights for all, general equality, freedom of worship, and for the franchise. The democratic rights and institutions that emerged in earlier centuries out of these national popular struggles were always curtailed and constantly threatened by the exploitative nature of the newly dominant capitalist relations of production.

Nevertheless, the achievements of these earlier bourgeois national democratic revolutions marked important historical progress, and the demands they advanced for equality, for the vote, for self-determination, served as inspiration to the anti-colonial national democratic revolutions of the 20th century (which were often directed at the very nation-states – like Britain or France etc. – that had emerged from the earlier bourgeois democratic revolutions and were now bourgeois democracies at home, but colonial powers abroad).

The *Freedom Charter*, correctly, conceptualizes democracy across three mutually reinforcing dimensions:

- Democracy as *representative* democracy, with the right of all adult citizens to vote for and to stand in elections to the legislatures of the country;
- Democracy as *equality of rights* for all citizens, regardless of “race, colour or sex”; and
- Democracy as a struggle of collective self-emancipation, as an *active and participatory process* facilitated by what the Freedom Charter describes as “democratic organs of self-government.”

THE MARXIST

The SACP believes that each of these dimensions is critical, and that a one-sided emphasis on one or the other carries grave dangers. *A one-sided emphasis on democracy as regular multi-party elections*, as important as these certainly are, *can turn democracy into a formulaic and episodic reality dominated by professional elites*. It can also transform progressive political movements and parties into *narrow electoralist machines*.

A one-sided emphasis on democracy as a rights-based system ends up with a liberal “equal opportunities” perspective in which the constitutional right of every one to, for instance, “trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions” (to quote from the Freedom Charter), is elevated above and *at the expense of the need to radically transform the systemic features of our society*. Which is why, in the Freedom Charter, this particular sentence on the right of everyone to “trade where they choose” etc is *subordinated* to (but not eliminated by) the preceding sections in the relevant Freedom Charter clause: “The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people. The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole. All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people”. It is only after affirming all of this, that the Freedom Charter then correctly upholds, contextualizes and subordinates, the individual right to trade, etc.

In the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, the struggle against apartheid-colonialism saw the semi-spontaneous development of *localized organs of popular power* – street committees, self-defence units, mechanisms for popular justice, popular education endeavours inside the very class-rooms of Bantu Education schools, and worker committees on the shop-floor. These moves in the direction of popular power marked the beginnings of implementing the Freedom Charter’s vision of “*democratic organs of self-government*”. These traditions have been carried forward into the post-1994 period with a range of institutions intended to advance popular participation in governance. They include community policing forums, school governing bodies, and ward committees. The degree to which any of these have lived up to the possibilities of being active institutions for the consolidation of people’s power needs to be assessed. Nonetheless, they represent an understanding that democratic governance is not

something which can be consigned to government alone. These and other potential sites of localized popular power have to be contested and transformed through active working class and popular struggles.

But here, too, we must guard against a one-sided elevation of localized (or sectorally based) organs of people's power to the detriment of the other important dimensions of a flourishing democracy. Such *one-sidedness can lead to a neglect of the struggle to transform the content and character of the central commanding heights of state power*. It can also lead to a *syndicalist or populist rejection* of representative democracy, or even of a respect for a progressive law-based constitutionality rooted in social solidarity. The 20th century is littered with examples of Communist, broad left, or national liberation movement rejections of electoral politics, or constitutional rights on the mistaken grounds that these are inherently "bourgeois" (or "imperialist"). Tragically, but frequently, it has been genuine communist, progressive and working class forces that have ended up becoming the major purged victims of democracy curtailed in the name of fighting "liberal rights", or "foreign ideas".

For the SACP, representative democracy, the respect for progressive solidarity-based rights, and the consolidation of organs of popular power are all critically important dimensions of the national democratic and, indeed, vibrant socialist democracy we strive to build.

WHY A REVOLUTION?

Our ND struggle is *revolutionary* because it requires a major transformational process to achieve its strategic objectives. In earlier decades, the ANC always correctly insisted that ours was not a "civil rights" struggle. While civil rights are critically important, our strategic national democratic objective was never understood to be a struggle simply for the "inclusion" of the black majority, by providing them rights within what were then the *existing structures of power*. It was never a case of struggling to make apartheid structures "more representative". We understood very clearly that the structures of power (whether racial, class, or patriarchal) had themselves to be thoroughly transformed.

However, since 1994, and particularly (but not only) in the decisive area of *economic* power, there have been strong tendencies to slide backwards into exactly that kind of rights-based, "representative",

THE MARXIST

inclusion. Thus, “transformation” of the apartheid economy (or more accurately of a capitalist economy shaped by CST) is too often reduced to “de-racialising” board-rooms, share-holdings and senior management structures through the promotion of “representative” blacks or women, without addressing the underlying systemic features of an economy that those very board-rooms, share-holdings and management structures daily promote and reproduce.

It is precisely this notion of “deracialisation” without class content that underpins much of the present elitist “black economic empowerment” model. An agenda of “deracialisation” without a systemic understanding of CST, or of class power, or of patriarchy, also means that there are no national democratic strategic guidelines provided to those who are promoted to board-rooms and senior management positions.

This is *not* to say that nothing short of communism, that is, nothing short of abolishing capitalism will enable us to at least *begin* to make major inroads into overcoming the dependent-development and chronic underdevelopment of our society. There is, indeed, both the possibility and the imperative of building a broad multi-class movement around a concrete, national democratic programme of *transformation*.

At the centre of this multi-class movement needs to be the working class. But it is a working class that must exert its hegemony through, in the first place, forging national democratic ties with the great mass of urban and rural poor, and impoverished black middle strata. But a working class hegemony over the NDR must be more ambitious than even this. Emerging strata of capital, and even established capital must be actively mobilised into the transformational agenda. This will not happen spontaneously, and it will seldom happen willingly. Which is why an NDR agenda, including the agenda of mobilizing private capital resources, has to be driven by active working class struggle.

The mobilization of private capital into an NDR struggle should be based on clear objectives and concrete tasks, which should include a priority on job-creating investment, skills training, appropriate and sustainable development of the forces of production, the elimination of compradorist, parasitic and other corrupt tendencies, and an active contribution to a strategic industrial policy that overcomes CST sectoral and spatial imbalances. Quite how various capitalist strata, black and white, (or, rather, the immense resources controlled by them) get to be

mobilised into such an agenda will vary according to circumstance. It will range from enforcing effective strategic discipline on movement members involved in business, through increasing worker democracy on the shop-floor, state-led strategic planning, and state-provided incentives and infrastructure, effective state and also popular regulation, public private participation arrangements, to straightforward compulsion and even expropriation. The tasks outlined above should constitute the strategic core and the basis for a developmentally oriented and strategically driven professional cadre in the state, in boards of parastatals, and in sections of the private sector.

Two things are certain. Firstly, we will never achieve broad national democratic mobilization, including of capitalist resources, if, as the liberation movement, we are unclear ourselves as to what the “R” in the NDR is all about. Secondly, working class hegemony within the state, the economy, our communities and, of course, within our organisations, is the critical factor for developing a purposeful, strategically clear, and practically effective NDR.

Since the late 1920s, the Communist Party in South Africa has identified the national democratic revolution as the South African road to socialism. The rich struggle history that this strategic perspective has promoted over many decades speaks for itself. The wisdom of this strategic perspective is even more relevant in our post-1994 South African and global reality.

The NDR is not a “stage” that must first be traversed prior to a second socialist “stage”. The NDR is not a detour, or a delay, it is the most direct route to socialism in the South African reality. The NDR is also not the “postponement” of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class. How could it be? That class struggle is a daily reality embedded in the very nature of capitalism itself. *The NDR is a strategic approach to advancing that class struggle in the material conditions of SA and the world in which we live. The prosecution of an NDR is the strategic means for maximizing the size and coherence of a popular camp and for isolating and out-manoeuvring our principle strategic opponent – monopoly capital and the imperialist forces that underpin it. The success of an NDR is, however, not guaranteed by theory and declaration. Working class and popular struggles, guided by clear strategies and tactics, and effective organisation, are the determining reality.*

THE MARXIST

It is for this reason that the SACP regards the alliance as still relevant and central to the executing of the NDR. The alliance is not just a convenient conduit for our struggle for socialism but it is necessary for the achievement of the goals of the NDR itself.

BUILD SOCIALISM NOW

Socialism is a transitional social system between capitalism (and other systems based on class exploitation and oppression) and a fully classless, communist society. A socialist society has a mixed economy, but one in which the socialized component of the economy is dominant and hegemonic. The socialized economy is that part of the economy premised on meeting social needs and not private profits.

Socialising the economy includes the direct empowerment of workers on the shop floor; by progressively increasing their control over:

- the *powers of possession* – expanding workers’ real ability to impact on work place decisions, on the organisation and management of the production process, product development, safety and working conditions, etc; and
- the *powers of ownership* – expanding workers’ power over decisions around the allocation of social surplus, including investment policies, budgetary priorities etc.

Socialising the economy will also involve expanding a *wide range of social ownership forms*, including:

- A *predominant and varied public sector*, particularly in key strategic areas, with enterprises owned and managed by the central state, by provincial and municipal authorities. These public sector enterprises need to be subjected to various forms of democratic oversight and control, including the scrutiny of trade unions, work-place forums, parliamentary oversight, consumer councils and the media;
- A significant and *growing co-operative sector*, including small service and consumer goods providers networked through co-operative and publicly run marketing and purchasing cooperatives.
- The active use of *social capital* to achieve developmental objectives – for instance, worker-controlled pension and provident funds.

The struggle for socialism also involves:

· *Rolling back the capitalist market* – particularly through a struggle to “de-commodify” basic needs – water, energy, health-care, education, the environment, public transport, housing, social security, culture and information, and work itself. These are fundamental social rights. They should not be commodities whose availability, and whose price is determined by a profit maximizing capitalist market. De-commodification is not necessarily the same thing as making all such basic needs completely free. Some may be free, others not. In Cuba’s socialist economy, for instance, while health-care and education are free, other basic needs like household electricity are charged. However, the price for household electricity in this case is not based on a capitalist profit-making market criterion, nor even on complete cost recovery for the public entity providing the electricity. In the Cuban case, pricing of household electricity is used primarily to encourage household rationing of a scarce public good.

· *Transforming the market* – socialism is not necessarily about abolishing markets, but rather about rolling back the accumulated class power of capitalists in the market. Transforming the power relations on markets includes:

· Increasing the power of the working class on the labour market – eliminating unemployment, strengthening the power of trade unions, skills training, an effective social security net, and a massive land reform initiative;

· The effective use of state subsidies, tendering and procurement policies, regulatory controls, and the use, on the market, of public sector corporations to transform and democratize markets;

· The establishment of effective consumer negotiating forums and watchdog bodies, buttressed by the organised (consumer) power of the working class.

Ninety years ago, when the first pioneering efforts at constructing socialist societies began, it was possible to think that socialism, like capitalism, would be constructed on the basis of unlimited natural resources and endless growth. In what were described as societies of “actually existing socialism” in the 20th century, there were often strong deviations into an economism of “catch-up” and accelerated “modernization”, often at a great price to working people, to democracy, and to the environment.

A socialism of the 21st century will need to think and act differently. Already the Cuban revolution, faced with the sudden crisis of the

THE MARXIST

collapse of the Soviet bloc and with the abrupt loss of the majority of its oil supplied in the context of an ongoing US economic blockade, has pioneered a wide range of measures that focus on shortening logistics lines, moving to small farming plots, using organic fertilizers and pesticides, and combining the most modern scientific and technological interventions with non-motorised transport, like bicycles and even ox-drawn ploughs. These should not be seen only as emergency measures in a particular situation. Nor should they be seen as a step back into the past, they are, in many respects, a step forward into the only sustainable future. *A socialism of the 21st century will place a premium on ensuring food security for its people, on sustainable livelihoods, sustainable households and communities and the sustainable use of natural resources.*

Clearly, empowering workers on the shop-floor, rolling back the capitalist market by decommodifying basic needs, advancing a wide array of socially owned and regulated entities, and placing a premium on sustainability – none of these measures requires waiting for the NDR to be first “completed”.

Indeed, all of these measures are critical to the effective advance, consolidation and defence of the NDR. Which is why the SACP says: *Socialism is the future – Built it Now!*

CHAPTER 5: THE SACP AND STATE POWER

The central question of any revolution, including the South African national democratic revolution, is the question of state power.

The NDR requires a strong state. Its strength needs to lie not in its capacity to exert bureaucratic power, but in its strategic coherence, its skill and catalyzing capacity and, above all, in its ability to help weld together a multi-class national democratic movement buttressed by mobilised popular and working class power. Without these realities, in a world dominated by powerful transnational corporations, no country can hope to embark on a progressive developmental path.

Since the democratic breakthrough of 1994 we have endeavoured to build a national democratic developmental state. This endeavour has been challenged by a range of objective factors, by the contestation of other class forces, and by subjective errors, confusions and instances of indecisiveness.

The South African democratic breakthrough occurred at a time in which neo-liberal triumphalism was at its high point globally. Inevitably, *neo-liberal ideas impacted upon the new state and its programmes*. In particular, and at first, the active role of the state in the mainstream economy was seen to be largely confined to creating a macro-economic climate favourable to investors and capitalist-driven growth.

These neo-liberal tendencies were *always partially mitigated by attempts to simultaneously fashion a “caring” state focused on redistribution of resources by way of “delivery”*. Indeed, the years since the democratic breakthrough have seen a very significant expansion of social grants, and millions of low cost houses, water, electricity and telephone connections.

However, the 1994 electoral platform of the ANC-led alliance, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, had envisaged a close, integral connection between growth and development – growth had to be developmental. In practice, the new state increasingly separated these critical pillars of the RDP, into a capitalist-led growth programme (GEAR) that would then, subsequently, provide the resources (primarily fiscal resources) to deliver, top-down, “development”. And development tended then to be conceptualized as a series of government “delivery” targets.

THE STATE APPARATUS – AND THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

In 1994 the state apparatus that the liberation movement inherited and sought to transform was thoroughly distorted by its internal colonial features. On the one hand, there was a relatively well-functioning but authoritarian and rigidly hierarchical state bureaucracy that had serviced a white minority welfarist system.

From the 1930s the white minority state also developed major parastatals in key strategic areas like Eskom, Telkom, SASOL, Spoornet, and Armscor. These were all part of an unfolding strategic industrial policy programme. From the late 1970s, the financial crisis and growing class differences within the ruling white minority bloc led to the privatization of key strategic parastatals (SASOL), and to the radical cutting back on public expenditure on others (for example, Spoornet). In 1994 the new democratic state found itself deprived both of key strategic apparatuses that had been privatized, and with a

THE MARXIST

seriously under-capitalised passenger and freight rail and ports system.

In the latter years of apartheid, as its own crisis developed, hegemony within the white-minority state increasingly shifted towards the military and security apparatus, with a vast increase in security budgets and personnel. International arms, oil and financial sanctions directed against the apartheid regime in its last decades, also saw the development of an extensive shadow-state network. An array of dirty-tricks front organisations and sanctions-busting networks emerged, involving state employees, spies, mercenaries, lumpen-business people, and criminal syndicates of all kinds. After 1994 many of these networks mutated into supposedly legitimate businesses, consultancies, and private security operations and many succeeded in infiltrating the new state and partnering in so-called BEE deals with some leading cadres in the movement. This legacy, whose effects persist into the present, has contributed to many of the challenges of corruption and factionalism, including within sensitive parts of the state, that we still confront.

On the other hand, what was also inherited in 1994 was an extensive, ethnically fragmented set of former Bantustan, township, “Coloured” and “Indian” bureaucracies. In 1994 the new state inherited almost 650,000 former Bantustan bureaucrats. While there were obviously dedicated professionals among them, the dominant ethos in the Bantustan bureaucracies was one of patronage and rent-seeking. Again this legacy continues to leave a powerful and perverse imprint on our contemporary reality. Provinces that incorporated former Bantustan bureaucracies are often those with the most serious administrative challenges in the present.

THE NEO-LIBERAL “NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT”

These various perverse legacies and their impact on the present have, unfortunately, not always been sufficiently analysed. More problematically, after 1994 the hegemony of neo-liberalism also negatively impacted upon the remedies that were sought in order to transform the state and its administrative apparatus. Essentially, the “remedy” applied was the neo-liberal aligned “new public management” approach.

The “new public management” approach is basically about applying (mis-applying) a private, for profit, corporate management approach to

the public sector. It includes:

- Replacing a public sector ethics of service to citizens with a managerialist ethics of “delivery” to “customers”;
- Replacing professional leadership of the public sector with generic corporate managers – as if auditing and financial skills were all that was required to run a hospital or a school, for instance;
- Replacing professional and vocational incentives in the public sector with monetary incentives that are, in turn, typically based on fulfillment of “performance agreements” that are often meaningless, and that frequently result in tick-box pseudo-compliance;
- Fragmenting line departments into dozens of stand-alone “agencies”, each with its own “corporate” structure – a board, a CEO, and an expensive head-office (what the SACP has referred to as the “agentification” of the state);
- Further transforming the public administration from a “doing” apparatus into a “purchaser” of services from the private sector. Professionals in the state apparatus, those that have remained, have been increasingly reduced to compilers and adjudicators of “tenders” with all of the moral hazard implicit in this (the SACP has described this as the “tenderization” of the state).

In developed economies, like the UK, Australia, Canada or New Zealand, the “new public management” approach was implemented variously with considerable zeal from the late 1970s through the 1980s and early 1990s. It was seen as a means to “right-size” welfare states that were deemed by conservative governments to be “bloated” and “inefficient”. Increasingly through the 1990s in these very countries that had pioneered the approach, the many problems associated with it were beginning to be evident – in particular the serious fragmentation of the state apparatus. Since the 1990s various attempts have been made in these countries to rebuild “joined-up” government.

Unfortunately, at the very time that there were these growing criticisms of the “new public management” approach, in the post-1994 South Africa we tended to uncritically adopt it as the silver bullet that would help us to transform our inherited public sector legacy. It was bad medicine to begin with, but it was bad medicine developed for an entirely different set of challenges in any case. It was not as if South Africa in 1994 was inheriting a unitary, professional, relatively efficient, rule-governed, and comprehensive welfare state.

THE MARXIST

That was not remotely our situation at all.

To this toxic mix of a bad legacy and a poor remedy was added the (in principle progressive and necessary) implementation of affirmative action measures to ensure equitable race, gender and disability representation in the public sector. However, since these affirmative action measures were introduced into a poorly conceived neo-liberal restructuring of the public sector, over-laid sometimes with factional ruling party appointments, they have often resulted in poor outcomes which then get blamed on affirmative action itself.

STRATEGIC COORDINATION OF THE STATE

There was, however, at least one area of the state that the dominant neo-liberalism associated with monopoly capital predictably sought to strengthen and hegemonies – this was the macro-economic apparatus (Treasury, the Finance Ministry, the Reserve Bank, the Auditor General's office, and the SA Revenue Services). Unquestionably SA requires an effective and honest public finance apparatus, but it is an apparatus that has to be strategically aligned with government policy and the ruling party's electoral mandate.

However, a centre-point of the neo-liberal agenda to restructure the state has been to make Treasury and its adjuncts the apex of state power, and the key transversal coordinator of all national line departments and other spheres of government. The introduction of the 1996 GEAR macro-economic policy marked a clear victory for this agenda.

Over the past few years there have been increasing efforts to assert a different strategic agenda for the transversal coordination of the state apparatus – including the establishment of Ministerial Clusters, a National Planning Commission in the Presidency, a Presidential Infrastructure Coordinating Commission, and the adoption of multi-sectoral policies like the Industrial Policy Action Programme and the New Growth Path. All of these need to be seen as attempts to assert, in the configuration of the state apparatus, and in policy, a national democratic developmental agenda to which micro-economic policy and the Treasury should be aligned – rather than the other way around.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CRISIS

In addition to all of these challenges, a further challenge to the endeavour to build a progressive, strategically-disciplined developmental state lies in the local government sphere. Prior to the 1994 democratic breakthrough, municipal governance was, essentially, a white minority reality. After the democratic breakthrough we set about introducing wall-to-wall democratically elected local government. In the municipal demarcation process care has been taken to incorporate former black dormitory townships and outlying ex-bantustan areas into former “white” local towns.

This has clearly been a progressive and necessary step – however, without further transformation of our urban and rural spatial settlement patterns, and without effective funding models for municipalities – this incorporation process has resulted in serious sustainability challenges. The Mangaung metro, for instance, is made up of the still relatively compact former Bloemfontein CBD and its adjoining residential areas and, 50 kilometres away, as part of the same metro, the former Bantustan area of Thaba Nchu. One-third of Mangaung’s population lives in Thaba Nchu, but Thaba Nchu has few amenities and job opportunities. It was designed as a labour reserve, and it remains one. Corridor development along the 50 kilometres that separates Bloemfontein from Thaba Nchu is not feasible. The responsibilities of the Mangaung metropolitan administration have grown immensely from the old whites-only Bloemfontein city council days – but the rates base remains essentially the same. This is just one, graphic example, of a story that is repeated in varying degrees throughout local government in SA. A better funding model for local government is absolutely imperative, as is the transformation of our urban and rural spaces through mixed-use, mixed-income settlement patterns, through much greater public control over land use management and planning, and a focus on infrastructure that supports such transformation, including significant transformation of the public transport sector.

Only working class hegemony and activism on the ground and in the state will ensure that the developmental state fulfils its developmental role.

But how do we take forward this struggle?

Since the democratic breakthrough of 1994 the SACP has been a “party of governance” – but not a governing party as such. Tens of

THE MARXIST

thousands of South African communists have taken up the challenges of governance, as cabinet ministers, members of legislatures, provincial executives, mayors and councilors, as officials and workers throughout the public service, including the armed forces and in the safety and security institutions. The SACP expects all of its members to conduct themselves as exemplary communists in these many deployments in the state apparatus, whether as ministers, senior civil servants or public sector workers.

In the first three rounds of national democratic elections in South Africa (in 1994, 1999 and 2004), and in local government elections, *the SACP chose to campaign on the basis of single ANC electoral lists*. The SACP was always active in seeking to shape the ANC election manifestos and the SACP always endeavoured to assert an independent profile in the course of these electoral campaigns. However, priority was given to securing overwhelming ANC election victories.

In the course of these elections, thousands of SACP members, endorsed by ANC-led branch-up nominations processes, have been elected into the National Assembly, the National Council of Provinces, provincial legislatures and municipal councils. Again, the SACP expects all of its members who are ANC public representatives to be exemplary communists, respecting the integrity, unity and discipline of our leading alliance partner, the ANC, without losing their own communist identity, principles and morality.

The extent to which these objectives are working satisfactorily in practice needs to be subject to ongoing SACP assessment and review. *The modalities of the SACP's participation in elections are not a matter of timeless principle. As an independent political party, the SACP has every right to contest elections in its own right – should it so choose. Whether the Party does this and how it does it are entirely subject to conjunctural realities and indeed to engagement with our strategic allies.* There are, however, three fundamental principles that will continue to guide us in this matter:

- The SACP is not, and will never become, a narrowly electoralist formation;
- Our approach to elections will be guided in this phase of the struggle by our overall strategic commitment to advancing, deepening and defending the national democratic revolution – the South African road to socialism; and

The South African Road to Socialism

· Our strategic objective in regard to state power is to secure not party political but working class hegemony over the state.

COMMUNISTS TO THE FRONT TO BUILD WORKING CLASS
HEGEMONY IN THE STATE!