

An attempt to re-brand the ANC by attacking the SACP – a response to Michael Sachs

Jeremy Cronin responds to Michael Sachs, arguing that his critique of the SACP masks an agenda to promote liberal democracy in South Africa

At its most obvious level, Michael Sachs' paper, "Has socialism left the Party?", is a critique of the SACP's strategic perspectives emerging from our 12th National Congress in July 2007. At the heart of this critique is the claim that the SACP has failed to elaborate what it means by "socialism", and the SACP is, accordingly, lost and confused.

Of course, like any serious left formation, the SACP faces challenges in a complex global and national conjuncture. Yes, indeed, our 12th national congress had its rough edges, its disagreements, disputes, and unfinished debates, as can be expected from any dynamic and democratic event. The SACP will need to take all of these matters forward in collective discussion and in practical work. In the process, we will certainly welcome robust engagement from other comrades.

However, the real meaning and unintended value of Sachs's paper lies elsewhere.

The attempt to re-brand the ANC

In seeking to critique the SACP, Sachs reveals the threadbare ideological assumptions of an attempt from within the ANC to re-brand it as a "social democratic party". Let's be very clear – there is ab-

solutely nothing heretical or taboo about invoking the "best of social democracy", or the "best of" anything else, for that matter. It is with open minds that we need to analyse the widest range of progressive legacies, and assess their relevance to our own situation.

As a broad and relatively diverse national liberation movement, it would be surprising if social democracy were not one of several ideological currents within the ANC. *But it is not communism and nor is it social democracy that holds the ANC together and that best describes its historic role and its contemporary vocation.* That role, as the ANC itself has re-affirmed in conference after conference, is to lead a national democratic revolution. As we will argue in this paper, the attempt to re-brand the ANC, at least as it is exemplified in Sachs' paper, is, in effect, a huge retreat from the strategic concept of a "national democratic revolution". Sachs's critique of the SACP is in effect a diversion covering the tracks of this retreat.

The attempted critique of the SACP, consciously or otherwise, serves to kick up clouds of dust that obscure the key question: *Why are we committed to a national democratic revolution in the current reality?* In our view, Sachs avoids this question by dodging any serious analysis of the two

major systemic realities that are shaping our society and our world:

- the present South African capitalist accumulation path that is still characterised by the key structural features of its origins in the late 19th century as a semi-peripheral zone of capital accumulation within the world capitalist system. This accumulation path, which the 12th SACP congress referred to as a “CST (or dependent-development) accumulation path”, is still actively reproducing an all-round crisis of racialised underdevelopment in our country; and
- the structural contradictions of the current global economy, fundamentally characterised by the intensification of imperialist divisions (North/South, development/under-development) driven by a headlong, profit-driven growth that is propelling billions of former self-subsistence farmers and their families into abject poverty in sprawling slums across the face of the third world; restructuring the working class through informalisation, downsizing, mass retrenchments and enforced migration; depleting natural resources on an unprecedented scale; and carrying us closer to environmental collapse. What are the implications for humanity? And what are the implications for a society like South Africa?

It is only on the basis of a collective and sober analysis of these and other critical contemporary realities shaping both our country and our world that we can appreciate the centrality of a national democratic revolutionary strategy for our country. Sachs, as we shall see later, is in denial about these critical realities. He seems to

believe that “history has ended”, that the major problems of humanity have basically been resolved, and all that is required is some regulation and technical correction from time to time. As a consequence, his would-be social democratic re-branding of the ANC represents a major revisionist abandonment of the NDR, and, indeed, an abandonment of the struggle and aspirations of millions of South Africans still living in poverty.

It is interesting (and encouraging) to note that the attempt to consolidate this revisionist perspective of the ANC has failed to win substantial support at both the ANC’s 2005 National General Council, and at the ANC’s 2007 National Policy Conference. Undaunted, Sachs and a handful of others who have been touting this position push on regardless. The ANC, Sachs asserts, is “*the leading and most popular social democratic formation in South Africa*”. When did the ANC become a social democratic formation? At which national conference was this ever endorsed? And why are he and others so keen to push this agenda?

To answer these questions more fully, it will be useful to now proceed to unpack his critique of the SACP. It is in the course of this critique that he gives much of the game away.

Has the SACP forgotten “socialism”?

As we have already mentioned, at the heart of Sachs’s critique of the SACP’s 12th congress is the claim that the Party has failed to elaborate what it means by “socialism”. He says of the draft programme (*The South African Road to Socialism – SARS*) that “despite the lofty ambition of its title, the shortest chapter in the document is the one headed ‘The SACP and Socialism’”.

Sachs bumps into a title in which there are three substantive issues – “South African”, “Road To” and “Socialism”, but he can only see that last word. And this goes to the heart of the problem.

Sachs wants to disconnect socialism from the struggle for socialism. Sachs does not want the SACP to be looking at the road, here and now in South Africa, upon which we have to travel. Instead, he wants us to lift up our heads and gaze hopefully into the future. He implies that the present is the business of the ANC (a re-branded ANC, of course). As for the SACP, it must bide its time elaborating a vision of a distant socialism. This is exactly the kind of speculative “socialism” that Engels roundly criticised nearly 130 years ago: *“The solution of the social problems...the Utopians attempted to evolve out of the human brain...These new social systems were foredoomed as Utopian: the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure fantasies.”* (Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*)

Of course, Engels, Marx and Lenin, in rejecting the utopian elaboration of fantasy socialist blueprints, always advanced a general definition of socialism and of communism (). And this is exactly what the SARS programme does – socialism, in general terms, is a transitional economy towards a classless communism. Socialism is an economy in which the socialised sector of the economy (a public-, state-, and cooperatively-owned sector), has become dominant over the privately-owned capitalist sector. This dominance lays the objective basis for an economy in which social development can increasingly be prioritised over private profits. For as long as the capitalist sector remains dominant, the determining factor will be an accumulation

path that reproduces exploitation, inequality, poverty and the destruction of the environment – regardless of the ameliorative efforts that might be made.

But Sachs is not satisfied with responses like this. He contrasts the 12th congress and the SARS programme with an earlier period in SACP history when we were supposedly unabashedly revolutionary socialists, when we were not afraid to come out of the closet. Interestingly, even a quick scan of the two major pre-1990 programmes of the SACP – *The Road to South African Freedom* (1962), and *The Path to Power* (1989) will confirm that both have no more (in the case of the former, much less) to say about the SACP’s longer term general vision of socialism. Both the 1962 and 1989 programmes, like the 2007 programme, are overwhelmingly concerned with the strategy (i.e. the programmatic “road”, or “path”) to achieve a thorough-

1. Marx, Engels and Lenin also always studied and popularised partial victories and advances of the working class in struggle. They celebrated these as confirmation that a “different world was possible”, seeing in them, however partial or temporary they might be, a momentum towards and even elements of what would constitute a future socialism. Their shared interest in the political forms, organs of popular power and self-governance, that spontaneously developed in the Paris Commune, is well known. But it is often forgotten, for instance, that Marx also hailed social and economic advances, like the Ten Hours’ Bill, not just as an important reform but as the harbinger of something qualitatively different, “the first time that in broad daylight the political economy of the middle class succumbed to the political economy of the working class”. (Marx, *Inaugural Address of the Working Men’s International Association*, 1864). Likewise, Marx celebrated contemporary worker cooperatives, with all of their limitations, as “a still greater victory of the political economy of labour over the political economy of property.” (ibid.) In particular, he singled out co-operative factories: “By deed, instead of by argument, they have shown that production on a large scale...may be carried on without the existence of a class of masters employing a class of hands..” (ibid.)

going NDR and therefore a socialist South Africa. All three documents provide a general outline of socialism, and in much the same terms. But, above all, the three programmes come to the same fundamental conclusion – in South Africa the road to the goal of socialism is a radical national democratic revolution. For this reason, all three devote most attention to the immediate tasks of the national democratic revolution.

The inexorable march of history?

Does this mean that from 1962 through 1989 to 2007 the SACP has simply been repeating itself? There has indeed been a steady consistency about the centrality of the NDR to the socialist struggle in South Africa in the Party's programmatic perspectives. However, all three programmes were written in considerably different conjunctures. Successes and failures in the intervening years have compelled an ongoing process of criticism and self-criticism – in short, the collective development and renewal of our Marxism-Leninism.

In 1962, the South African national liberation movement was under strain, on the brink of a major strategic defeat at the hands of the apartheid regime. But, so it seemed, there was still hope – the world revolution was marching forward: “*It is no longer the imperialists, but the international working class and its proudest creation, the world socialist system, which determine the main characteristics and trends of our times.*” (RSF, p.291)

In 1989 it was as if this dialectical reality, a down-side and a simultaneous up-side, had been inverted. On the international front things were no longer so bright. The “proudest creation” of the international working class, “the world socialist system”, was manifestly tottering. But on the home

front, it was clear that some kind of breakthrough was imminent.

And now, in 2007? More than ever, it is no longer possible to believe that history is a neat procession of stages – whether within our country or globally. There have always been Marxist critiques of an Hegelian conceptualisation of history as a stage-by-stage evolution towards some ultimate goal in which the eventual outcome of history is always guaranteed. But it is true that in some of the classic texts and also in more recent decades, particularly in periods of apparent socialist advance, there have been dangers of assuming this kind of inexorable evolution.

This was indeed a *tendency* in 1962 (a tendency also apparent in the ANC's 1969 Morogoro *Strategy and Tactics*). In contrast, the fact that a world socialist revolution is probably not about to happen does not mean (as Sachs would seem to believe) that capitalism has somehow overcome its crises. But nor will the current systemic crises of capitalism, which the SACP's 2007 SARS seeks to analyse in some detail, necessarily give way to socialism. This is why SARS asserts: “*The world capitalist system is faced with and simultaneously it is provoking a series of interlinked crises that threaten natural, biological and social sustainability. Will these crises prove terminal for capitalism? Or for human civilisation? Will a socialist world begin to emerge from these crises? Nothing is guaranteed. The crises can be surpassed, but only with concerted social mobilisation of the great majority of humanity.*” (SARS, p.8)

Compare this perspective with Sachs' schoolboy version of “revolutionary communism”, which is supposedly: “*founded on the belief that socialism... will supersede capitalism on a global scale... this belief is based on the claim that a scientific analysis of con-*

temporary capitalism reveals such a transition to be inexorable and (in the view of some) imminent. For Marxist-Leninists, therefore, communism constitutes the inevitable end of history. Reason thunders new creation and a humane and rational society is born at the conclusion of so many heroic millennia of struggle between the classes."

Leaving aside the obvious sarcasm, Sachs is erecting a straw-person here, a vulgarised version of a "true" Marxist-Leninist. The point of doing this is to put the Party into a supposed jam. Either we don the clown's clothing of his version of a "Marxist-Leninist" (in which case he can scoff at our naïveté in believing in some imminent world socialist revolution), or we decline the clothing, in which case Professor Sachs will pronounce the Party "no longer Marxist-Leninist".

This debating trick is directly linked to a second sleight of hand in his paper.

The NDR and socialism – two separate seizures of power?

Claiming to speak on behalf of a "widespread concern" amongst Party cadres and sympathisers, Sachs tells us: "*The SACP has a long and proud history of applying Marxist theory to analyse contemporary society and connect the tasks of socialists in the NDR with the struggle for a socialist future. But there is widespread concern amongst cadres of the Party and sympathisers about the paucity of original thinking and considered Marxist analysis arising from the 12th congress. Instead, the congress was concerned mainly with frustrations and unhappiness about the implementation of ANC policy and the functioning of the alliance.*"

As the key example of our "paucity of original thinking" Sachs notes that while the debate on state power dominated much of the 12th Congress, this debate

"lacked substance because, since it did not address the question of socialism, it could not answer the question: what is it that the working class will do with state power that fundamentally differs from what the ANC is already doing?"

It is precisely in the manner of framing the question that we can see Sachs's sleight of hand. The SACP congress had many critical things to say about what needed to be done differently "with state power". In fact Sachs has already noted this (as we have just seen) but he does so in order to pour scorn on the congress, treating the critiques as "frustrations and unhappiness about the implementation of ANC policy and the functioning of the alliance" – i.e. he is wanting to suggest that these were little more than negative and petty grievances.

But these "frustrations", which he wants to rule out of order, are, in fact, not a diversion from the SACP's "long and proud history of connecting the tasks of socialists in the NDR with the struggle for a socialist future". Among the causes of these frustrations concerning the implementation of ANC policy and the dysfunctional state of the alliance are, to use the prescient words of the 1989 *Path To Power* programme, "*such negative tendencies as the stifling of popular democracy, the bureaucratisation of the state and corrupt practices in government or in society as a whole*" (p.39). Analysing the causes of our frustrations and proposing programmatic struggle remedies to them are, precisely, among the key tasks of socialists (and all progressives) in the NDR in the current reality.

The focus in our congress was, correctly, on how together as an ANC-led alliance, recognising the working class as the key (but not only) motive force of the NDR, we should greatly improve what we are currently doing. Sachs doesn't want to allow

this discussion. The SACP should instead build fantasy socialist castles in the air, while a supposed “social democratic” tendency controlling a re-branded ANC gets on with managing the capitalist economy.

To buttress this sleight of hand, Sachs refers us back to 1989 and the SACP’s *The Path to Power* (PTP) programme. In *PTP*, he tells us: “*the transition to socialism was conceived as directly and inextricably linked to seizure of state power by the working class in a socialist revolution.*”

But *PTP* nowhere asserts any such thing!

What *PTP* does say is the following:

*“Victory in the national democratic revolution is, for our working class, the most direct route to socialism and ultimately communism ... In order to create the conditions for such an advance, the working class will have to ensure that the national democratic tasks are consistently carried out. **The working class must win for itself the dominant role in the new government,** and see to it that the character of the national democratic state accords with the genuine interests of the people. The programme to eliminate monopoly control over the economy and to tailor economic policies according to the needs of the people will have to be scrupulously ensured.*

*“**In the period after the seizure of power by the democratic forces, the working class will need to continue the struggle against capitalism.** It will need to strengthen its organisations and build the bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in the communities where people live...In order to prevent the emergence of a seed-bed for capitalist resurgence and ensure an advance to socialism, the working class must win to its side other sections of the working people, both now and **after the popular seizure of***

power.” (*PTP*, p.39 – my emphases)

Two fundamental things should be clear from these passages:

- When the 1989 programme of the SACP speaks of a “seizure of state power” it is referring to the national democratic revolution – and *not*, as Sachs claims, to a second, a socialist revolution, in which, presumably the working class overthrows its own former popular allies in the NDR;
- The SACP’s 2005 Medium Term Vision (strongly re-affirmed and elaborated in our 2007 12th National Congress), calls for the consolidation of working class hegemony in all sites of power *as part of the NDR* directed, critically, against monopoly capital. It is obvious that this medium term vision is already fully anticipated in the 1989 programme. The 1989 programme, as we have just noted, insists that in the course of the NDR the “*working class must win for itself the dominant role in the new government*”, and it must “*build bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in communities where people live*”. In *PTP* (as in our 2007 SARS) this consolidation of working class power is manifestly conceived of as a process, a hegemonic class contest (a “war of position”, not an insurrection) within the NDR itself.

In short, contrary to Sachs’s claims, the SACP’s 12th national congress was continuing the SACP’s “long and proud history of applying Marxist theory to analyse contemporary society and connect the tasks of socialists in the NDR with the struggle for a socialist future.”

Mixed economy – but what's in the mix?

Sachs briefly quotes the broad definition of “socialism” in the SACP’s 2007 draft programme, SARS. The definition, as we have noted, sees socialism as a transitional society with a mixed economy “in which the socialised component...is dominant and hegemonic”.

Sachs says: *“This is remarkably similar to the ANC’s vision of a National Democratic Society. The ANC’s draft resolution on economic transformation also envisages ‘a mixed economy’ in which ‘the state, private capital, cooperative and other forms of social ownership complement each other in an integrated way to eliminate poverty and foster shared economic growth’”*.

We agree that there are important points of potential convergence between the SACP’s vision of a radical NDR and passages like this from the ANC’s *Draft Resolution on Economic Transformation* (ANC National Policy Conference, point 5e). The SACP has not abandoned hope in the ANC, still less in the possibilities of advancing a radical NDR. The renewed emphasis on state, cooperative and other forms of public ownership in current draft ANC policy perspectives is a welcome shift away from the reality of just five and ten years ago. In that recent past, a dominant group in the ANC/government was pushing for massive privatisation of state-owned enterprises, and for the down-sizing of the public sector. There was also a great deal of contempt for our supposedly “mickey mouse” advocacy of a cooperative movement. The language (and hopefully the thinking) has changed somewhat and that is welcome, but we are still suffering the disastrous consequences of the neo-liberal flirtation. We can see it in the huge problems besetting our healthcare and public education sectors; in time lost in

shoring up our faltering energy generation capacity; in incoherence in our telecommunications sector; in serious rail and public transport under-investment; in a stalled land reform programme; and in the persisting crisis of the mis-named “second economy”. The SACP, COSATU and many other comrades in the ANC-led movement fought hard against this disastrous neo-liberal deviation, and we welcome a renewed ANC affirmation of the critical strategic significance of a public, state-owned and cooperative sector.

But before we celebrate too enthusiastically, let’s follow Sachs’s argument a step further. Having noted the “remarkable similarity” between the ANC’s “vision of a National Democratic Society” and the SACP’s definition of socialism, Sachs proceeds:

“The main point of divergence appears to be the relative strength of public versus private capital. In the “socialist” mixed-economy the state and social capital is ‘dominant and hegemonic’ whereas in the ‘national democratic’ mixed economy ‘the private sector is the main engine of investment, growth and employment creation’ even though ‘the state plays a decisive role in shaping economic development’”.

Two related points should immediately be noted here:

- First, as we will argue further in a moment, the question of whether it is the capitalist or the socialised sector of the economy that is hegemonic and dominant is no small matter. In fact, from a socialist perspective, it is the *decisive* question.
- Secondly, Sachs is preparing the ground for another sleight of hand in his choice of words. He refers to “public *capital*”, to “state and social *capital*” and he distinguishes these from “pri-

vate capital". But in using the word "capital" he is beginning to blur precisely what is distinctive about a socialised public/state/cooperative sector. A socialised sector of the economy, if indeed it is socialised, does not function according to the law of capital – this is what defines it as *socialised*.

The law of capital

To clarify many things that get hopelessly confused in our debates, let's briefly suspend our engagement with Sachs and remind ourselves of some very basic theoretical points.

A socialised sector is not defined mechanically by the legal *form* of ownership of productive property, but by the active *function* of that productive property within an accumulation process. Every capitalist society has a "mixed" economy – even in the United States there is a public sector. In Nazi Germany, in Fascist Italy, and in apartheid South Africa there were very extensive public sectors. In other words (and contrary to what Sachs might be implying) not all mixed capitalist economies are "social democratic".

Under apartheid, the state, parastatal and cooperative sector was fundamentally subordinated to and served (although not without "non-antagonistic" class contradictions) the accumulation interests of monopoly capital, while ensuring redistribution of some surplus to the multi-class white ruling bloc – the better to bind it together as a necessary condition for reproducing the apartheid capitalist state and the CST accumulation path.

In other words, under apartheid an extensive public sector was subordinated to a particular (CST) capitalist accumulation path, which itself was ONE *variant of capitalist accumulation in general*. The CST ac-

cumulation path is characterised by (and reproduces) the semi-peripheral location of the South African economy within a wider global capitalist accumulation process. It locks us into one variant of dependent development.

Capitalist accumulation in *general* is based on the *law of capital* – which is the maximisation of profit, through the ever-increasing intensification of labour exploitation, and the tendency to commodify all resources/use-values. Economic textbooks present these tendencies as if they were "universal" and "timeless" features of any society. But in fact these tendencies are specific to the capitalist mode of production. For instance, the tendency to the commodification of all resources was absent in pre-capitalist societies. This tendency is counter-intuitive to many ancient human values preserved today in religions, cultural norms (eg. ubuntu), and "family values" (where, for example, the socialist credo is usually taken as self-evident: "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs") – all of which tend to abhor the idea that "everything has its price", or that an injury to one is a market advantage to another.

In other words, it is conceptually wrong to consider the resources (physical, technical and human) in a socialised sector (or for that matter in a pre-capitalist mode) as *capital*, they are social use-values that are delinked (however precariously) from a capitalist accumulation path. Water, education, sport and culture, professional skills, labour-power, for instance, become social use-values increasingly distributed and rewarded according to social need, all-round sustainable development and not according to their capitalist market exchange values driven by the law of profit maximisation.

Where all cows are grey

But, as we have seen, Sachs applies the concept “capital” indiscriminately. This misuse of the concept is not innocent. It lays the basis for the next sleight of hand in his argument: “So the ANC sees the private sector as the main agent of accumulation and the state’s role is to structure and regulate accumulation and redistribute part of the surplus it generates. The SACP would rather see a much greater substitution of public for private capital in the accumulation process. In either case, however, we are still talking about the accumulation of capital in a (capitalist) mixed-economy, or at least the SACP programme offers nothing to the contrary.”

And so we end up in a thick fog in which all cows are grey (or, perhaps, in which all cows are capitalist commodities). This grey fog is nothing more than a semantic construction, the product of Sachs’s circular argument in which ultimately what’s in the mix of a mixed economy is irrelevant because it is all “capital”. Regardless of what is hegemonic, it all boils down to the “accumulation of capital in a (capitalist) mixed-economy”! There, by definition, you have it. There is no escaping capitalism. Hallelujah!

This brilliant semantic sleight of hand “proves” that the class struggle is over. Indeed, Sachs aligns himself with that iconic representative of US neo-liberal triumphalism – Francis Fukuyama – in pronouncing that history is over (and I am not exaggerating). In a passage that must have his fellow “social-democrats” wincing, Sachs blows the cover on the ANC re-branding exercise:

“social democrats would largely agree with Fukuyama’s view that the ‘End of History’ has already arrived, and with the assertion that ‘scientific socialism’ has lost all meaning. For them, there is no new mode of

production waiting to be born in the fires of proletarian revolution having been conceived in the minds of revolutionary communists, scientifically or otherwise. Consequently, the struggle of the working class...is to improve the economic, social and political conditions within the framework of the current mode of production; to reform capitalism until it becomes ‘socialism’, in the sense that the logic of the market is effectively tempered by the rational will of a democratic state accountable to the working class.”

If we were living in a country in which there was relatively full employment (and not structural unemployment stubbornly above the 35% mark); if we were living in a country with excellent health-care facilities, and not a society in which a for-profit private healthcare system consumed a disproportionate and increasing amount of health resources, while remaining inaccessible to the majority; if we were living in a country in which there weren’t 5 million people suffering from HIV/AIDS; if we were living in a country in which life expectancy was rising (not falling); if we were living in a country in which a “willing-seller, willing-buyer” capitalist market, “tempered by the rational will of a democratic state”, was delivering a major land reform process to the millions of landless and land hungry; if...and we could go on and on...if some of these things were for real, then Sachs’s Fukuyamist “social democratic” complacency would still be wrong, but at least it would be understandable.

Life would be great if we didn’t have to struggle! It would be great if we could sit back now and enjoy our hard-won freedom, allowing capitalism to get on with being “the main engine of accumulation”. Our job would be to ameliorate things here and there, redistributing some of the capi-

talist surplus to deserving cases, and tempering the logic of the market with our democratic state's "rational will".

SACP longer- and shorter-term perspectives

But the capitalist engine of accumulation, on both the national and global scale, is precisely what is reproducing crisis upon crisis, including the persisting racialised inequality and underdevelopment that remain the defining features of our own society. And therefore, unfortunately, we have to wage a transformational struggle to break radically from the logic of capital. We have to abolish the dominance of the law of profit maximisation, of labour exploitation, of the commodification of all resources. This is the SACP's vision of socialism, this is the SACP's longer term vision.

This struggle to progressively abolish the logic of capital, to roll back the empire of money, does not mean that in South Africa we now have to plan for a second revolution, a working class insurrection – of the kind that Sachs wants us to go off and conspire for (presumably so that he can ridicule us, or so that others even less sympathetic can call for the SACP's banning). Breaking with the logic of capital does mean that we have to wage an ongoing national democratic and class struggle to **transform** the current dominant capitalist accumulation path.

And so, our **shorter-term perspective** is that we have to **break with the logic of our particular, special colonial capitalist accumulation path**. We offer this shorter-term perspective not only for our own SACP edification – but as a shared, national democratic, multi-class programme. For communists this shorter-term perspective is the road to a socialist South Africa. For other comrades it may well be a "maxi-

mum" programme, whose elements they may come (and they increasingly are coming) to accept, not on ideological grounds, but on the "balance of evidence". We are convinced that in offering this perspective we can help to consolidate and unify our national democratic movement, including the best of social democrats, radical democrats, progressive nationalists, honest liberals, workers, professionals, small and medium business people and the widest range of patriotic forces.

But what, concretely, does breaking with the logic of CST capitalism mean? Over the last decade and a half the SACP has devoted considerable time and practical campaigning efforts to that question. It means, amongst other things, analysing the present South African accumulation path – one that remains systemically characterised by the dependent-development, special colonial features within which the capitalist revolution was forged in South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. On the basis of this analysis, it means building a national democratic alliance and a national democratic state, capable of transforming the core features of this CST accumulation path – its excessive primary product export dependence, capital and luxury goods import dependence, distorted and narrow national and regional markets, domination by extraordinarily high levels of concentration in the minerals/energy/finance complex, weak manufacturing and lop-sided agricultural sectors, skewed spatial patterns, chronic dualism, neglect of skills and training, and predatory behaviour in our sub-continent. All of these realities continue to be actively reproduced by the current CST capitalist accumulation path within which we are locked. And this active reproduction of these features then reproduces extraordi-

narily high levels of racialised inequality and poverty in a relatively wealthy society. This CST accumulation path with its long logistics chains, weak local markets and unsustainable local communities also makes us especially vulnerable to global warming – .

If we are to transform the CST accumulation path into which we are locked, we will, as far as the SACP is concerned, have to build capacity for, momentum towards, and even elements of a socialised economy and society here and now in the present. This in turn requires building working class hegemony in all key sites of power. Which further requires rolling back the capitalist market and decommodifying basic social needs (water, energy, education, food security, housing, land, healthcare, transport). It means wrenching the commanding heights of our economy away from the domination of monopoly capital. It means using our new found confidence in the strategic importance of state-owned enterprises to advance a transformational agenda (and not merely to oil the wheels of the existing CST accumulation path by lowering the cost to doing business for business). It means building a strategic alliance between a radical national democratic state and the millions of survivalist and volunteer activities of the urban and rural poor, including the vast army of post-colonial new “middle” classes – liberating them from the suffocating grip of monopoly capitalism and from the cruel illusion that they are all capitalists-in-incubation, running mini-“enterprises” (SMMEs) on an ascending staircase to a “first economy”. It means empowering these activities by beginning to impose “in broad daylight”, as Marx put it, the “political economy of labour upon the political economy of private property”.

There have been left currents within social democracy (the “best of”) in which programmatic policies have been advanced which had a genuinely *transformative* objective, an objective of progressively abolishing at least some aspects of the laws of capitalist accumulation while still operating on the terrain of capitalism itself. As a recent COSATU critique of the ANC’s draft “Strategy and Tactics” document has noted, social democracies in Europe have included not only important comprehensive social protection and national health systems, but also “*significant incursions into capital’s prerogative to organize production, involvement in investment decisions, democratization of elements of the workplace, reduction of income inequalities; as well as significant examples of organized labour exercising substantial power in relation to matters of governance etc.*”

It is true that these gains have often resulted in a demobilising co-option/corporatisation of the trade union movement and they have often been seriously eroded in recent times by globalisation.

However, the rolling back of capital’s “prerogative to organise production” is a qualitative and potentially transformative step that moves beyond a merely “redistributive” approach. Deliberate transformative social democratic measures were introduced for a decade at least in Sweden, briefly in Chile under Allende before the brutal military coup, or again, arguably and briefly in France in recent decades. Many sympathetic analysts of contemporary developments in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay argue that these are essentially “social democratic” revolutions, but with serious potential for a qualitative transformation that will help these societies (more likely as a regional bloc) to finally de-link sufficiently from imperialist domination to

achieve a degree of regional autonomous development, and break out of their crises of capitalist underdevelopment.

If Sachs had challenged the SACP, and all of us in the ANC-led alliance, with some of these examples, he might have had a point. But instead of a transformative project that begins to grasp the enormity of the challenges, Sachs offers us a grey, Fukuyamist “social democracy” whose ambitions are limited to tempering the logic of the market with the rational will of a dem-

ocratic state. As COSATU has argued, this tepid programme amounts to subordinating the NDR to the logic of capital, and not subordinating capital to the logic of the NDR. It calls itself “social democracy”, but it is really *liberal democracy*.

Sachs sets out to belittle the SACP. He succeeds only in exposing the emptiness of his own agenda. ★

Jeremy Cronin is Deputy-General Secretary of the SACP