

RECONFIGURING THE ALLIANCE:

MOBILISING THE MOTIVE FORCES OF A RADICAL NDR



African Communist

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A large, thick, red brushstroke 'X' that serves as a background for the central text.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

How neoliberalism uses
gender as a weapon



African Communist

Second Quarter 2018

Issue Number 198



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Is the revolution stuck?

Since the democratic breakthrough of 1994, the SACP has consistently advanced the slogan: *Advance, Deepen, Defend – the National Democratic Revolution!* Advancing, deepening and defending are three inter-related tasks which, in different situations, may require shifting emphases. Today, more than ever, the task of **defending** the revolution has acquired special importance. But what are we defending? Is it the unity of the ANC? Is it the state? Or is it something else?

After 1994 the most immediate threats to our post-apartheid democratic breakthrough came from a still recalcitrant white right wing embedded in much of the security apparatus. Two decades later, that threat has dwindled into the margins. In a more general way, monopoly capital and the broader imperialist camp were, and remain, our principal strategic opponents – not through any immediate threat of active regime-change insurgency, but rather through their capacity, both ideological and economic, to blunt and subvert the necessary deep-seated, radical structural transformation of our society.

But today, the gravest immediate threat to the 1994 democratic breakthrough comes from within. In particular, it comes from the endemic proliferation of parasitic interests and networks festering within much of the ANC and therefore impacting upon the state, and, indeed, in varying degrees, on our broader alliance as well.

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- The headline is an adaptation of a statement by French revolutionary Louis Antoine de Saint-Just in 1794, five years after the start of the French Revolution: "The revolution is frozen [stuck]; all its principles are weakened...", referring to the paralysis then gripping the French Revolution.

How are we to understand this distressing reality? And what is to be done? To answer that question and to set our challenges within an internationalist context, it might be useful to briefly remember the work of Samir Amin.

Revolution or decadence?

The most important African Marxist activist-theorist of our times, Samir Amin, passed away on 13 August at the age of 86. In the final chapter of his most recent book, Amin considers the present from the perspective of a lifetime of activism stretching back to the 1940s. The central thrust of this chapter (appropriately titled “Revolution or decadence?” – available at the *Monthly Review* website, May 2018 edition) provides South African revolutionaries with some important reference points that help to clarify our own situation and help to situate our reality within a wider set of global trends. Let’s honour this great African revolutionary, and do ourselves a favour, by learning from his work.

Importantly, Amin’s strategic perspective has consistently been framed within the broad line also advanced by the SACP. In the chapter, “Revolution or decadence?”, for instance, he writes: “In the periphery [the geo-political South] the socialist transition is not distinct from national liberation.”

Amin proceeds: “It has become clear that the latter [national liberation] is impossible under local bourgeois leadership, and thus becomes a democratic stage in the process of the uninterrupted revolution by stages led by the peasant and worker masses.”

There are several pertinent matters to be noted in this rich formulation.

In the first place, Amin usefully distinguishes between a “democratic” stage and “national liberation” as such, arguing that a local national bourgeoisie (in our case both black and white) is incapable

of leading a decisive, if relative, de-linking from the imperialist system – the necessary condition for a serious advance of the national democratic revolution. However, the national bourgeoisie might, nonetheless, be capable of playing an important role in advancing a democratic breakthrough, a platform from which more decisive advances might be made, led by other social forces.

Secondly, although Amin is using the language of “stages”, it is important to note that he speaks of an “uninterrupted” process, and not a stop-start progression in which an earlier “stage” must first be completed (e.g. the “de-racialisation of capitalism” in South Africa, as the Mbeki-ites used to argue) before advancing to the next “stage”. Third, and more importantly, the movement between these “stages” (democracy, national liberation, socialism) is not a guaranteed evolutionary process. For Amin there are likely to be advances and reverses: “The fusion of the goals of national liberation and socialism engender in its turn a series of new problems that we must evaluate. For the emphasis shifts from one aspect to the other, due to which the real movement of society alternates between progress and regression, ambivalences and alienation, particularly in nationalist form.”

The regressive decadence in a “nationalist” form to which Amin refers is, sadly, all too apparent around us in contemporary South Africa. It is apparent in the national chauvinism of demagogic forces like the EFF, a spin-off from our own movement. It is apparent in the daily deluge of yet more evidence of state capture, of tens of billions of rand parasitically looted from state owned enterprises and the public sector more generally. Nor is this decadence confined to the upper reaches of the political and bureaucratic strata, it is in evidence in the smallest local municipal tenders and in ANC branch activity. Trade unions, often via their investment arms, have also been affected by this wave of primitive accumulation.

Decadence of the state, alienation of the popular masses

Amin correctly argues that a revolution cannot be advanced simply with a vanguard political formation, or with state power. Popular forces that are, in his words, “non-alienated” are the critical factor. But decadence in the political-bureaucratic cadre in South Africa has its counterpart in a deepening alienation of the key popular forces, the motive forces of the NDR.

There is, of course, popular activism in South Africa. Countless “protest” actions are a constant feature of our society. The morning and evening radio traffic reports now include, almost on a daily basis, updates on road closures “owing to protest action”. Many, probably most, of these actions have a legitimate basis in social grievances and sheer desperation. But they often (not always) take an alienated form. For instance, there is a demand for a re-demarcation of municipal boundaries and more than 20 schools are burnt down and schooling halted for months. In other protest actions, crèches, university libraries, or community halls are destroyed.

This widespread, self-defeating destruction of what is, or should be, community assets is often the work of a fringe group among the protestors. But this simply underlines another symptom of deepening popular alienation – the loss of sustainable revolutionary cohesion and leadership at the community level. Community alienation and the parasitic looting by the political-bureaucratic stratum reproduce each other. Public property is destroyed because it is seen as “state” property, destruction becomes a symbolic act of revenge against a state from which there is a deepening sense of popular alienation.

There is another symptom of popular alienation in these protests, even those that are more peaceful. One study of the surge of popular protests is aptly entitled *The Smoke that Calls*¹. The authors persuasively note that the repertoire of protest action, while often taking the form

of “anti-state” actions locally, is very often designed to bring a premier, or a president to their locality. The burning tyres in the road is a smoke that calls, a cry for outside help. And so, instead of organising themselves as their own collective self-emancipators, there is a tendency to recycle a top-down delivery dependency.

Of course it is important to state that decadence in the political-bureaucratic ranks and alienation in the mass base are not the only realities. There are many pockets of effective and principled revolutionary activity. But the danger of the negative tendencies overwhelming advances in the national democratic revolution is very real.

So what is to be done?

Defend our constitutional democracy – build a patriotic front

The SACP’s Central Committee meeting of August correctly noted that the defence of our democracy against large-scale looting of public resources by a parasitic political-bureaucratic stratum is the first order of the day. It is a parasitic stratum that subverted our criminal justice system and key state agencies like the South African Revenue Service to pave the way for their multi-billion rand primitive accumulation that has brought key strategic state agencies and capacity to the brink of bankruptcy and dysfunctionality.

Since his election as state president in February, following his narrow electoral victory in the ANC December national conference, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, working with key ministers in his cabinet, has deployed the state and his presidential powers to begin the process of dealing with the state-capturers. State owned company (SOC) boards have been changed, disciplinary actions undertaken, life-style audits launched, key new appointments made in the criminal justice system, and criminal cases opened.

But in the face of these long overdue moves, a vicious fight-back

campaign has been launched against Ramaphosa and other leading figures. Paradoxically, but not surprisingly, this fight-back has been led from within the ANC itself. Which is why the SACP believes that the ANC is best defended not by mechanically closing ranks, not by defending an artificial unity in the interests of next year's elections. We appreciate that for President Ramaphosa as ANC president, a certain degree of circumspection might be necessary – but the SACP is under no such constraint. We have a duty to the ANC that we have helped to build in the trenches to expose and carry out a remorseless struggle against the parasitic forces within. All the more so, because the scoundrels in our ranks seek to camouflage their crimes by pretending to be left-wing, anti-imperialist fighters of the first order, mouthing the words “radical economic transformation” without content.

Which brings us to another paradox. It is a paradox which our brief reflection on Samir Amin's analysis helps to clarify. As we noted above, in analysing the struggles of the Global South, Amin distinguishes between a democratic constitutional breakthrough and national liberation in the fuller sense. He also argues that, while a local bourgeoisie is capable of playing a central role in the breakthrough to democracy, it is incapable of driving a national liberation process. If the defence of our national democratic revolution in our current South African conjuncture requires a necessary defence of our democratic constitutional breakthrough of the mid-1990s, we might expect to find temporary allies within the local bourgeoisie itself, whose own profitability is threatened by the current trends towards populist anarchy and predation.

As Marx long ago noted, class struggle always results “either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.” (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848). We are in a

situation in which the prospect of “the common ruin of contending classes” is a distinct possibility. Hence there are also prospects for a broad patriotic front against common ruin.

Interestingly, this is exactly the experience that the SACP had in the latter part of 2017. With ex-president Zuma and his Gupta associates still in place, it fell to the SACP to lead the struggle against state capture from within the Alliance. We were the only mass-based formation within the Alliance that had the coherence, capacity and unity to lead this struggle in 2017. But as we did so, we found a range of ANC-aligned institutions, like the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and sizeable parts of the ANC parliamentary caucus, turning to the SACP and its organisational and mobilising capacity. What is more, a much wider array of forces including faith-based formations and business associations, among them Business Unity South Africa, turned to the Party and attended our anti-State capture *imbizo*.

In many respects, this broad-church, nation-building role is, in theory, the strategic task of a broad-church, multi-class ANC – a role it managed to play effectively under the presidency of Nelson Mandela, for instance, in the critical transitional period of the early 1990s. As we have already noted, since his election as state president in February, Cde Ramaphosa has sought to fill the gap, relying more on the state (and Alliance partners) than on an often paralysed ANC. The SACP has pledged its support to build what is, in effect, a broad patriotic front against state capture, against demagogic populism, social alienation and generalised decadence.

But is ending decadence and state capture enough?

Build left popular fronts! Re-configure the Alliance!

The August Central Committee statement reflected precisely on this question. It stated: “it is...important to realise that dealing with endemic corruption...will not, on its own, fix the problems within the

state and specifically within the SOCs. Many of the present problems can also be traced back to the ill-advised, neo-liberal turn taken by government in the mid-1990s...The necessary task of returning our SOCs to sustainability cannot be a return to the costly neo-liberal errors and illusions of privatisation.”

It is in this context that the Political Report presented to the August Central Committee (which is published in this issue of AC) devoted considerable attention to the idea of left popular fronts (LPFs). As the Political Report argues, it is a mistake to imagine that an LPF is simply an alternative electoral option (it may or may not also be this). Critically, the LPFs we seek to build must be focused on building the capacity to mobilise the popular motive forces to advance and deepen national liberation. Put another way, the task of LPFs in our situation is to be an active ingredient in overcoming the alienation that is pervasive among the popular masses, helping them to become collective self-emancipators.

But what is the organisational line-up of an effective LPF in our reality? In the past a great deal of energy has been wasted on the left in debating whether the ANC, or those in an alliance with the ANC, should be part of an LPF – as if the ANC (or, for that matter, other formations) were a monolithic reality. Instead, LPFs need to be forged around practical revolutionary tasks on the ground, and not through brokered deals in head-offices.

Where does the Party’s call for a re-configured Alliance fit into this perspective? Again, we must not make the mistake of pitting the idea of an LPF against the task of a re-configured Alliance. They are neither identical tasks, nor are they alternative choices (whether electoral or not). For the SACP, the perspective of a re-configured Alliance is, precisely, to seek to build an ANC alliance that is, once more capable of organising and mobilising the key motive forces of a radical national democratic revolu-

tion. But the success or otherwise of such an endeavour remains uncertain – what cannot be doubted, however, is the continued mass support for the ANC.

Traversing all of these tasks and challenges is, at the same time, the imperative of a united, socialist (which is to say anti-capitalist), but non-sectarian, SACP. ●

Note

1 Carl von Holt, *The smoke that calls*, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation 2011, <https://www.csvr.org.za/docs/thesmokethatcalls.pdf>

CENTRAL COMMITTEE POLITICAL REPORT

Revitalising the motive forces

Building a left popular front to strengthen driving the second and more radical phase of the NDR

Our 14th Congress took a resolution calling for the SACP to build a left popular front (LPF), but as part of the possibility of the SACP contesting elections separate from the ANC. The resolution on state power and popular states, stated: “The SACP has a leadership role in the struggle to build a reconfigured Alliance, while recognising that we cannot place all of our hopes and expectations solely on a favourable outcome in this regard.

“Both for electoral purposes and for defending, deepening and advancing a radical second phase of the national democratic revolution (NDR), the SACP must play an active and leadership role in the consolidation of an LPF of working class and progressive forces

“Based on these engagements (with our Alliance partners and with a wide range of working class and progressives forces) the SACP must play a leading role in developing a common platform for a left popular front of working class and progressive forces”.

While this resolution remains relevant, it is important to elaborate on it as part of its implementation, in a manner that locates the idea of a popular front beyond just a front for electoral participation by the SACP. Contrary to the belief or misrepresentation that our Congress called for the establishment of a left popular front only for electoral

purposes, the resolution called for an LPF both for electoral purposes and for the broader struggle to drive a second, more radical, phase of the NDR. What therefore follows below is by no means changing, but is instead firmly grounded in, the original Congress resolution.

Implementation of resolutions must, of course, also take into consideration the current conjuncture and whatever new challenges may have arisen. One of the most pressing immediate tasks is that of the necessity not only to mobilise the motive forces to drive a second, more radical, phase of our revolution, but also to play a vanguard role and give effective direction and leadership over such mobilised forces. South Africa is presently, and over the last decade or so, characterised by what we normally refer to as ‘service delivery’ protests. This in itself shows that we have relatively high levels of mobilisation of the motive forces, but these protests are often misguided and lack decisive leadership to channel them to make maximum impact and build the confidence of our people.

We are in a period in which there is co-existence, and often contradictory articulation, of both progress, threats and regression in the political economy of our country. There is some notable progress in attempts by government to roll back the parasitic, often criminal, networks in the state. There are also indications that sections of the national leadership of the ANC are willing to work towards repairing relations within the Alliance, committing to thorough discussions on the reconfiguration of the Alliance. We have also had a successful Brics summit that adds further momentum to the president’s goal of attracting over a trillion rands’ worth of investments into the South African economy.

However, existing side by side with these is the threat of imperialist protectionism driven by the United States through the Trump government. Indeed, this protectionist offensive is not without its problems as it tends to sharpen the contradictions within the imperialist camp.

These protectionist moves by the United States, and the consequent trade war with China, also pose a serious threat to many developing countries, including South Africa.

Domestically, there is stubborn persistence of the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, together with what seems to be rising levels of violent criminality. There is a serious looming job loss bloodbath in the mining industry. There is also resurgence in gender-based violence across social classes – from informal settlements of the working class and the poor to the gated estates of the wealthy. This is accompanied by increasing levels of social distress in many of our communities and the emergence of a new epidemic in the form of poor mental health in the form of depression, accompanied by rising levels of suicide and generalised violence. There is also a growing scourge of drug and substance abuse which is ravaging significant sections of unemployed youth and, increasingly, youth coming from middle class and professional families.

The current period is also characterised by what seems to be an intractable stalemate inside the ANC between its two major political factions, leading to the contradictory levels of progress in the state, but some regression in the Movement.

All this re-affirms and underlines the correctness of the programmatic posture of the SACP 14th Congress, that it is a period requiring **strategic consistency, analytical awareness and tactical flexibility**. However underpinning this approach to the challenges of the period requires sustained mobilisation of the motive forces of the NDR towards the desired kinds of outcomes and impact.

While it was not incorrect for our 14th Congress to resolve on the necessity to build an LPF, it is important that the building of a popular front should not only be restricted to electoral factors. Progressive popular fronts can be mass-based based on joint mass campaigning.

Such fronts may or may not automatically or necessarily translate into electoral fronts.

In other instances, there are popular fronts built specifically as electoral fronts to contest elections. One such example is that of India where a left front made up of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Communist Party of India have both contested and held state power in some of the Indian states like Kerala, working together with a range of other progressive political formations and mass movements.

Our point of departure in our tasks of building popular fronts must be informed by our programme *The South African Road to Socialism* (SARS), whose objective is to build working class hegemony in all key sites of power. Popular fronts are important as one of the mechanisms to realise the objectives of SARS.

Building left popular fronts

It is important that this Central Committee spends some of its time elaborating on the task of building left popular fronts, as part of elaborating on one of the 14th Congress resolutions, but at the same time as an urgent task for the conjuncture. We must not be tempted to change Congress resolutions, but we must recognise conditions at the time of adoption of a resolution may differ from those prevailing when the resolution may have to be implemented. New considerations may have to be taken into account without any substantive deviation from the *intention* of the original resolution.

The aim of this section is to put forward a number of partly theoretical but programmatic propositions on the tasks of building LPFs in South Africa today. The communist movement internationally, as well as in our own South African realities, has had enormous experience in the building popular fronts, that sometimes have included formations of various ideological persuasions, but with the common goal of defeat-

ing what is often an immediate enemy.

One of the modern, earlier forms, of fronts in which communists either participated or built, were the anti-fascist fronts in Europe, especially in the 1930s. One of the most pressing challenges in these fronts was how to build anti-fascist fronts without submerging the identity of communist parties, while at the same time not seeking to impose a Marxist-Leninist identity on the character of such broad fronts. While these anti-fascist fronts were somehow fuelled by combatting concrete local realities of fascist ideology and violence, they were fronts that were largely built from above.

In our case one of the more recent experiences of the politics of building fronts was that of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983. The UDF was a front whose gestation could be immediately traced to the 10-year period preceding its formation. The foundation of the UDF can be regarded as having been laid by the 1973 workers' strikes, followed by the 1976 student uprisings, with these two strands uniting through community struggles of the late 1970s into the early 1980s.

The lesson from virtually all popular fronts is that they are united by the fight against a common enemy. In the case of the UDF the common enemy and the most immediate challenge was to defeat the apartheid regime. Of course, the immediate fuse for the formation of the UDF was opposition to the establishment of the tricameral parliament as well as the hatred for the Black Local Authorities Act, both of which were part of reformist initiatives by the apartheid regime to try to prolong its hold onto power.

However much as these overarching struggles helped to cement common goals, most local UDF affiliated structures (youth, women, religious) would often fight local realities – eg an unpopular apartheid imposed councillor or a rent boycott – and have these linked to the overall goal of dislodging the apartheid regime.

More recently, the SACP can learn from its own Red October Campaigns, which has produced a variety of front-type formations and struggles. The SACP has had close to 20 years' experience now of Red October campaigning. But the most effective and popular mass Red October Campaign of the SACP was that launched in 2000 on the transformation of the financial sector under the slogan *Make banks serve the people*. This campaign managed to bring together about 50 organisations and formations, ranging from political formations to NGOs and mass organisations, including different kinds of lobby groups. All these were brought together under the umbrella of the Financial Sector Campaign Coalition (FSCC).

One of the most important lessons from the FSCC was that it is important for any front type campaign to win some gains and notch advances in the short term as a spur for further mass mobilisation. The fact that within the first three years of the campaign, there was the convening of a summit involving the banks and other financial institutions; commitment to the legislative regulation of the much-hated credit bureaux; and opening of dedicated bank accounts for the unbanked, drew even more people not only to the FSCC but also directly into the ranks of the SACP itself as the leading formation of this campaign.

Other Red October campaigns managed to build similar broad fronts on land and agrarian transformation, social grants, transformation of the health system, etc. In fact the impact of these campaigns contributed to significant and long lasting transformation impact. For example, our campaign on the transformation of the health system laid the foundations for the struggle and government's commitment to building a National Health Insurance Scheme that is being implemented today. Our campaign on social grants highlighted, amongst other things, the dirty role played by *mashonisa* who were preying on the elderly and other recipients of social grants. Our campaign on land and agrarian

transformation acted as a direct trigger for a Land Summit that for the first time rejected the idea of ‘willing buyer, willing seller’.

An important lesson from these struggles is that playing a vanguard role does not always mean being the lead organisation. Instead we often play our vanguard role through provision of ideological and organisation clarity and direction. A question arises here on the role of the ANC Women’s League (ANCWL) in the recent mass campaign of *#Total-Shutdown* – whether it is important for the ANCWL to seek to place its identity first, instead of seeking to unite the broadest range of women in the important struggle to fight against gender-based violence.

It is also important to bear in mind that the SACP’s strength and capacity to continuing to play a vanguard role in the South African revolution primarily rests on its unity and common purpose. The building of popular fronts also obliges the SACP to give attention to the production of dedicated SACP cadres, located in all the spheres in which popular fronts are to be active.

Our struggle and commitment to build an LPF may mean building many fronts. One lesson from our Red October campaigning is that to take forward the many struggles we have waged under this banner, perhaps we may have to build a number of fronts at the same time, on land and agrarian transformation, on the NHI, on public transport, etc. And it would be the concrete struggles on these fronts that will determine whether these various struggles or fronts cohere into an overarching LPF.

It is also important to state upfront that an LPF is neither necessarily against the ANC nor in opposition it, either in the leadership of the NDR in elections. But an LPF is not an extension of the ANC (or the SACP and the Alliance for that matter). Like the ANC did with the UDF it must be through principled participation in the daily struggles of the people. For example the ANC’s armed propaganda through MK

played a crucial role in the 1980s in sending a message of strong support to the mass and other struggles of the people on the ground. It was through these that the ANC and the Alliance built their hegemony among the people.

Popular fronts can play a crucial role in radicalising the ANC, the SACP and the trade union and civic movements. Such fronts can also be crucial in the struggles against factionalism and corruption in many of our formations, although they may not be automatically incorruptible themselves.

While there is a dialectical relationship between building the two types of formations, there can be no militant LPFs without a strong and militant trade union movement at the core. It is for this reason that the SACP needs to pay attention to the strengthening and rebuilding of Cosatu as a strong and militant allied formation. At the same time the SACP needs to reach out to all potentially progressive trade union formations as part of the bigger challenge of uniting the working class in action.

That the working class must play a central and often leading role in popular fronts does not necessarily mean that we should limit the class composition of popular fronts to the working class alone. In fact, historically many fronts have managed to attract middle class support for common goals and objectives. Our own Red October campaigning has often led to attracting sections of the middle class for instance on the struggle for the transformation of the credit bureaux.

The heartbeat of any popular front in our circumstances must be strong organisation of women and deeper mobilisation against patriarchy and gender based abuse, and for gender equality. This should involve the strengthening of existing forms of women organisation, in the trade unions, stokvels, school government bodies, etc.

Women and gender struggles to fight gender based violence

In October 2017, we launched our Red October Campaign with a focus on gender-based violence, but unfortunately we were unable to sustain it. That 2017 campaign was launched against the backdrop of increasing reports on incidents of gender-based violence, and as a resolution from our 14th Congress. That resolution was one of the most comprehensive resolutions on patriarchy and gender relations in South Africa, incorporating, amongst other things:

- “The 2017 Red October Campaign must be a national campaign against abuse of women and gender based violence...”
- “The Party must strengthen its visibility and activeness in campaigning against gender based violence, in the form of marches and pickets at courts as well as improving law to enable proof of rape access;
- “Male members of the SACP must also be at the forefront of campaigning against violence against women and children;
- “Campaigns against gender based violence must be ongoing and not merely reacting to occurrences in society”.

Our Central Committee is taking place against the background of ever more incidents of gender-based violence. Our August Women’s Month has been launched through mass demonstrations by women in various parts of the country, in which many SACP members participated, albeit unevenly. We are in a period where gender-based violence seems to be more violent, brutal and brazen, with increased number of deaths, including suicide by some of the women victims.

There is a deep interconnection between the stubborn persistence of inequality, poverty and unemployment and generally the depressed state of our economy, and general degeneration in societal conditions in many of our communities. In capitalist societies violence tends to be directed towards more vulnerable groups in times of socio-economic

stress and to take more patriarchal forms. These realities further underline the importance of struggling for an alternative socialist society, with more advanced levels of morality and social conduct.

Most of the post-1994 community protests have become less planned and often characterised by regressive attitudes and practices. In a number of instances, these protests, no matter how legitimate, have also been characterised by a narrow ideological outlook, and with a very clear disconnect between the struggles against apartheid and its current forms.

These regressive tendencies include wanton destruction of property, including property sorely needed by communities – schools, libraries, community halls, trains, etc.

Some of the regressive ideological tendencies beginning to manifest themselves in some current women's struggles include:

- Calls for castration of men who are guilty of rape, as if rape was a sexual act, rather than an aggressive act of violence against women;
- Emergence of anti-men sentiments that go directly against the history of progressive women's struggles in our country and the SACP's own recent call coming out of its 14th Congress that "male members of the SACP must also be at the forefront of campaigning against violence against women and children";
- Sectarian attitudes from some of the women's formations, not least the ANC Women's League itself, by acting in a manner that is inward looking ("We insist in wearing our uniform and colours at all times" and therefore unable to lead a broad front of women's formations and struggles;
- 'Fallist' modes of struggle and sloganeering eg. #totalshutdown with no or very little articulation and capturing of the key issues in women's struggles; and
- Lack of ideological clarity women's and gender struggles, in a

manner that threatens to roll back the many gains made over the decades of heroic women's struggles in our country.

In this period and in these resurging women's protests and struggles the SACP has to play a vanguard role:

- The SACP needs to immerse itself in and provide ideological clarity in current gender and women's struggles. Guided by our 14th Congress resolution on the struggles against patriarchy, the SACP must contribute towards turning these protests in communities and on university campuses into sustained mobilisation of both men and women against gender based violence and patriarchy;
- The SACP must actively forge a front of a broad range of women's formations and organisations at the forefront of the struggles against patriarchy and gender based violence. These struggles must strengthen women so they do not see themselves simply as 'victims', but instead to see themselves as part of the revolutionary motive forces to transform gender relations in our country;
- The SACP must seek to place at the centre of the struggles of the progressive trade union movement the question of the intensification of the struggles to eradicate gender inequality in the broader economy as well as in the workplace;
- The SACP also needs to undertake a comprehensive review of advances and gains achieved, as well as setbacks and new challenges, over the 25 years since the adoption of that seemingly forgotten document, the Women's Charter of 1993. That charter was adopted on the eve of our democratic breakthrough and precisely in anticipation of opening up of significantly new terrains and opportunities through the dislodging of the apartheid regime. We need to ask whether the establishment of a Women's Ministry has not compromised gender mainstreaming or weakened these efforts. The implementation of the post 1994 gender machinery in itself requires a

thorough evaluation; and

- In all these initiatives, the SACP must develop a comprehensive analysis of gender and women's struggles, including the distinct but complementary roles of men and women in these struggles.

Towards the Gender Summit

President Cyril Ramaphosa has recently announced that government is going to be convening a Gender Summit¹ at the end of August. Though the period is rather short, it is essential that the SACP play its vanguard role in the run up to and at this Summit.

It is also essential that our Gender and Social Transformation Commission to work towards convening a planning session of representatives drawn from a wide range of women's organisations, both inside and outside of our Alliance. We may want to undertake this task working together with Cosatu. The SACP will have to draft a short discussion document to be used in preparing for the summit. Whether that discussion document comes out as an SACP document, or generally a broader progressive document, is something that this Central Committee may want to reflect upon if this idea is accepted. The Gender Summit is an important site of deepening the struggles against patriarchy and to take the struggles against gender based violence to higher levels. Precisely because the time available before towards the Gender Summit, it is important to focus on the type of resolutions the summit needs to adopt and on a post-summit programme of activities.

The role of the SACP in relation to the ANC

Having held both our respective Congresses (the SACP's 14th Congress, and the ANC's Nasrec Conference), it is important once more to honestly and frankly reflect on the relationship between the SACP and the ANC. In particular, we need to define our own vanguard role in relation

to the ANC. We cannot talk about the task of mobilising the motive forces of the NDR, or the possible formation of LPFs, without looking at this relationship.

The history of the relationship between the SACP and the ANC has been one of common struggle and of mutual influence. The SACP has historically played an important role in helping the ANC to transform itself into a revolutionary movement.

And the ANC has had its own influence on the SACP: it was the experiences of trying to build an alliance with the ANC from the late 1920s into the 1950s that the SACP came to appreciate both the practical and theoretical importance and significance of the National Question in our revolution. It was this experience and reality that evolved and was captured in the SACP's historic 1962 programme, *The South African Road to Freedom*. It was in this programme that the SACP managed to theoretically and programmatically grasp the elusive relationship between the class and the national questions. Out of this emerged an indigenous South African elaboration of the concept of the NDR as the most immediate path of our struggles and the basis for a sustained alliance between the ANC, SACP and the progressive trade union movement.

The relationship between the SACP and ANC has experienced problems and difficult moments over the past 90 years. The lowest ebb was in the early part of this relationship, in the 1930s and 1940s.

In reflecting on the current relationship, can we not say that this relationship has, in some of its concrete manifestations, deteriorated to the period similar to that of the 1930s-1940s? To take one significant, example: senior SACP leaders were not elected in their own right to the NEC of the ANC at Nasrec, arguably taking us back to the 1930s. Similarly, there is a paucity of communists elected on to ANC PEC structures during recent ANC provincial conferences. These developments

could possibly create a situation where the mutual influence that has characterised the SACP-ANC relations over decades may wane – to the detriment of the revolution as a whole.

This CC must closely analyse this, building on our previous analyses of the state of our two formations over the past 12-18 months. Perhaps this situation is an outcome of the uncertainties experienced by both our formations particularly in the run-up to our respective congresses in 2017.

It has historically been very dangerous for the ANC to go forward without effective, but non-sectarian, participation of the SACP in the structures of the Movement. We may have to pose the uncomfortable but necessary question of whether the SACP has exhausted its historical vanguard role in relation to the ANC? Our answer must be an emphatic **no**, and we need to engage and guide our own lower structures in this regard.

One of the issues that emerged at our last Party Building Committee in August was the observation that today's ANC is vastly different from the pre-1994 ANC. But this reality applies to the SACP too. If both our formations are vastly different from the earlier period, then we need to undertake an honest and detailed analysis of the nature and implications of these changes. As the SACP we must be clear that without effective, non-sectarian participation in ANC we would be creating an extremely dangerous situation that could seriously compromise our revolution.

We therefore need to decide what is to be done to attend to the relationship between the SACP and the ANC. This could include:

- An intensive strategy to seek to positively impact on the ANC, both inside and through the broader Alliance;
- Focused and intensive SACP cadre development, so we produce cadres capable of playing important roles in both the SACP and

ANC;

- The need to confront factionalism and money politics in all our structures;
- Use the building of LPFs to drive mass based campaigns and intense political education;
- Build a strong YCL capable of producing a layer of revolutionary young cadres, and at the same time influencing the ANC Youth League, Sasco, Cosas, and among other youth formations .

Strengthen the relationship between the SACP and YCL

At our early August Politburo, concerns were expressed about increasing instances of tensions between SACP and YCL structures at subnational levels. This matter was also placed before the August Party Building Committee for consideration and discussion. It is important for this CC to reflect on this matter.

The SACP can only be able to effectively play its vanguard role in the NDR if it is united. Divided, our Party will never be able to act as a vanguard. A key aspect building the unity in the SACP is ensuring that we build a strong but dynamic relationship between the SACP and the YCL. Our point of departure is that the YCL is a youth formation of the SACP, although it has the autonomy to run its own structures and programmes.

There have been instances of ugly conflict between SACP and YCL structures. Sometimes the SACP or YCL structures have stood in factionalist opposition to each other. When pointing out that it is incumbent on SACP structures not to lament the YCL, but to guide it towards programmatic work and loyalty to the ANC, some provincial leaders point out that some YCL members do not understand the SACP and do not engage. The SACP must pay close attention to the YCL, and have dedicated SACP cadres to focus on this task. At the same time both

the SACP and the YCL must strongly condemn as highly unacceptable form of ill-discipline the raid on a YCL National Committee meeting by a section of YCL leaders from KZN. The SACP's KZN provincial structures must also be asked to publicly condemn this behaviour if we are to maintain internal communist discipline in our structures.

On Zimbabwe

Our neighbour Zimbabwe has just held a generally peaceful election, unlike any of the previous three. The SACP needs to closely observe and analyse post-Mugabe Zimbabwe and understand the lessons to be learned. Most importantly we need to clarify the posture we adopt to Zimbabwe, and specifically to its various political formations.

It should come as no surprise that Zanu-PF has won the 2018 presidential, national and local elections. In the early 2000s, an SACP fact-finding team concluded that Zanu-PF had become a movement dependent on its control over the levers of the state. We also observed that Zanu-PF seemed to have lost support from key motive forces of the Zimbabwean revolution, particularly the urban-based working class and large sections of the middle class and the intelligentsia.

The recent rupture in Zanu-PF that saw the ousting of long serving former President Robert Mugabe may or may not mark a significant change in the political orientation and character of the organisation. This requires closer scrutiny on our part. The Zanu-PF offensive against the progressive trade union movement in the 2000s, especially the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), significantly weakened the base of Zanu-PF within the ranks of the organised working class. Perhaps Zanu-PF could withstand this rupture primarily because of its hold over the rural masses of that country.

Much as Zanu-PF has lost large sections of the urban population, through its patronage networks and hold over the traditional leaders in

the rural areas – where the majority of Zimbabweans still reside – it is able to wield significant political and electoral power power, including electoral power.

The larger section of the MDC, which campaigned in the recent elections as MDC-Alliance is very different from the MDC led by Morgan Tsvangirai in the 2000, an MDC that arguably won the 2008 elections. The MDC has got great appeal and support in the urban areas, but insufficient to electorally unseat Zanu-PF.

Zanu-PF's weakening of ZCTU also weakened the MDC. The strength of ZCTU buttressed the MDC in 2008.

We also have lessons to learn from the MDC experience in the 2018 elections. In particular, we must learn from the fact that there is a big difference between mass electoral appeal and organised and sustained presence among the masses. The MDC could call upon its voters to mass protests in the streets of Harare, but it quickly lost control of the situation because of the absence of solid **organised** presence among those voters.

The SACP has over the last few years been working closely with progressive but smaller left wing forces and organisations, a relationship that has led to the formation of the still very small Zimbabwean Communist Party. It is important that the SACP to maintain these links, while also broadening its engagement with other political forces in Zimbabwe, including Zanu-PF itself. ●

Note

1 The Gender Summit has been postponed

GENDER VIOLENCE

Gender violence in the neoliberal era

Tithi Bhattacharya assesses the social impact of neoliberalism – particularly its contribution to surging gender-based violence and femicide statistics

Let us begin with an image: a naked white man pursuing a low-wage black female asylum seeker down the corridors of an expensive Manhattan hotel to force her to have sex with him. The man, of course, is the then-director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn, and the woman, 33-year-old Nafissatou Diallo, a housekeeper at Strauss-Kahn's hotel who was also at the time seeking asylum in the United States from her native Guinea, a former colony of France.

Although all criminal charges of rape and assault were dropped against the IMF chief, he had to pay a somewhat heavy price that included, among other things, his resignation and a hefty financial settlement to Ms Diallo. Was justice, then, served? The answer should be of interest to all revolutionary Marxists. This is because a veritable cartography of dispossession extends between these two figures, and it is the purpose of this essay to outline that map.

This image ought to be considered an icon for our times. It is iconic in the sense that the scene captures a moment when the distinction between the individual and societal vanishes, and the individuals – the naked wealthy white man and the black low-waged woman – emerge

as pure embodiments of the societal.

Needless to say, the representative power of the image of Strauss-Kahn assaulting Diallo lies in the actual power that international financial institutions such as the IMF have over countries of the Global South such as Guinea. From the 1980s onwards, the Keynesian steering of national economies was systematically dismantled in favour of a new mode of capital accumulation. This new era, accurately christened neoliberalism in hindsight, reversed, in the words of Nancy Fraser, “the previous formula, which sought to ‘use politics to tame markets’” and instituted a new political process of using “markets to tame politics.”⁴ In countries such as Diallo’s Guinea, this took the form of extra-national institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank imposing Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) “at the gun point of debt.”³

When analysing neoliberalism, mainstream commentators tend to guide the conversation toward a discussion of certain sections of the formal economy, most often those sections of the economy over which ordinary people have the least control. In this version, understanding how our world changed from the 1980s seems to be limited to understanding how the stock market works or how a credit default swap takes place. As revolutionary Marxists, however, we understand capitalism not merely as a collection of economic processes but as an integrated system of socioeconomic relationships. We see neoliberalism as a particular strategy developed by capital in the post-war era that has a far denser history and more far-reaching consequences than the buying and selling of derivatives.

Neil Davidson’s recent essay in *International Socialism*⁴ gives the history of neoliberalism its required breadth and historical complexity. Davidson’s is an outstanding comprehensive account of the involved and often contradictory processes that went into the making of neoliberalism as a “political-economic” strategy developed by ruling class

“vanguards” (such as Margaret Thatcher in the UK) from the mid-1970s in response to capitalism’s crisis of profitability. He shows neoliberalism to be both (a) a new economic strategy of capital accumulation adopted after the crisis of 1973–1974, and (b) a set of political policies to enable capital to accumulate and to smash the working class and its organisations. Over the 40 years that Davidson maps, it is only natural to find that the policies of elected governments across the world did not always coincide with the new needs of capital reorganisation along neoliberal lines. Hence the system was in need of political vanguards in the ruling class – Davidson calls them bourgeois “anti-Lenin[s]” – who succeeded in leading class wars within their own national economies to ensure the development of neoliberalism. Although it took time and several adjustments, neoliberalism as economic policy, political strategy, and (consequently) ideology became hegemonic between 1973–1974 and the financial crash of 2008.

Once the neoliberal order had been established in the US and imposed on the transnational economic institutions which it controls, the model acquired a cumulative force: in the developed world the need to compete with the US compelled other states to try to adopt the organisational forms which seemed to have given that economy its advantage; in the Global South states accepted conditions which restructured their economies in neoliberal ways to obtain access to loans and aid.⁵

Davidson’s narrative is a magisterial overview of more than 40 years of global history and political economy. Although he does not specifically address the fate of gender under neoliberalism, Davidson nevertheless makes a number of incisive observations about the individuation of social life under this order that ought to be taken seriously. First, he notes how social services were not abandoned by the state but “reconfigured” such that care of children or family members “increasingly ... passed from the state to the family – which generally

mean[t] the female members of the family – with these ‘informal’ arrangements then subject[ed] to evaluation by state agencies.” More significantly for purposes of this essay, Davidson, following sociologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, reminds us that the unintentional consequence of increased social inequality under neoliberalism was a virtual breakdown of cohesive social relations “despite there being no government intention to lower social cohesion or to increase violence, teenage births, obesity, drug abuse and everything else ... [these were] ... an unintended consequence of the changes in income distribution.”⁶

This essay aims to further develop this insight. How did neoliberal policies and its attendant ideology affect gender relations? Can we understand gender violence as an outcome – often intended as ideology and policy from the ruling class – of socioeconomic processes? Since, following Davidson, we understand the consolidation of the neoliberal order to be fragmented and irregular across space (nation-states) and time (1970s – to the present), it is important to underscore that the fate of gender relations follows this combined but uneven trajectory. What this essay indicates are general outlines of a framework for understanding the relationship between gender and the political economy, not necessarily a detailed historical account of specific countries or policies. Key elements of the argument are:

First, the last four decades of neoliberalism have created a marked escalation in gender crimes in most countries. The financial crisis of 2008 exacerbated what was already a serious problem; this is no longer a situation of “business as usual” and it requires socialists to critically engage with the problem.

Second, as Marxists it is not enough for us to describe the effects of this current intensification of violence, we need to also provide an explanation for it.

Third, capitalism, faced with a crisis, is seeking a resolution in two

connected ways: (a) through an attempt to restructure production, as manifest in the drive for austerity and (b) by trying to reorder social reproduction, as evidenced in its efforts to recraft gender identities and recirculate certain ideologies regarding the working-class family. In order to understand this simultaneity and unity in capitalist restructuring, we need to revisit the Marxist analysis of women's oppression that is best approached through the analytical framework of social reproduction theory.

Social reproduction as a framework

Social reproduction is a key concept of Marxist political economy that shows how the “production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process.”⁷ According to Marx, human labour is the source of all value under capitalism. Lise Vogel, following Marx, defines labour power as “a capacity borne by a human being and distinguishable from the bodily and social existence of its bearer.”⁸ In class societies, the dominant class is able to harness labour power's ability to create use-values for their own benefit. At the same time, the bearers of labour power are people – they get sick or injured, grow old, and eventually die and need to be replaced. Therefore, some process of reproducing labour power, meeting their daily needs and replacing them over time, is necessary.

Although Marx viewed the reproduction of labour power as critical to social reproduction, he did not provide a full explanation of exactly what such reproduction entailed. Vogel suggests three kinds of processes that comprise the reproduction of labour power in class societies:

- Various daily activities that restore direct producers and allow them to return to work;
- Similar activities directed at non-working members of the subor-

dinate class (children, elderly, infirm people, or people who are not part of the workforce for other reasons); and

- Activities that replace those members of the subordinate class who no longer work for whatever reason.

Social reproduction theory, then, is crucial to understanding certain key features of the system.

1. **The unity of the socioeconomic whole:** It is certainly true that in any capitalist society the majority exist through a combination of wage labour and unpaid domestic labour to maintain themselves and their households. It is critical to understand both kinds of labour as part of the same process.

2. **The contradiction between capital accumulation and social reproduction:** Capitalism's sway over social reproduction is not absolute. Indeed social reproduction may create the essential ingredient of production, i.e. humans, but the actual practices of reproducing life develop and unfold in tension with production. Capitalists attempt to extract as much work as possible from the worker, but the worker in turn tries to extract as much in wages and benefits as possible as ingredients that will allow her to reproduce herself, individually and generationally, for another day.

3. **Bosses have an interest in social reproduction:** Social reproduction should not be understood solely as the lonely housewife cleaning and cooking such that her worker husband can get to work refreshed every morning. The employer is invested in the specifics of how and to what extent the worker has been socially reproduced. In this sense, it is not simply the food, clothing, and morning readiness at the gates of capital that matter, but everything from education, "language capacities ... general health," even "predispositions toward work" that determine the quality of labour power available.⁹ Each cultural capacity is again determined by historic specificity and is open to negotiation by

both sides. Labour laws, policies about public health and education, and state support for unemployment are only some of the many outcomes and constitutive sites for such bargaining.

This is why we need to sharpen our understanding of social reproduction as being performed in three interlocking ways: (a) as unpaid labour in the family increasingly being performed by *both* men and women; (b) as services provided by the state in the form of a social wage to somewhat attenuate the unpaid labour in the home; and finally (c) as services sold for profit by the market.

Neoliberal policies scaffolded by the rhetoric of individual responsibility sought to dismantle state services and turn social reproduction entirely over to individual families or sell them on the market. It is important to note that capitalism as a system *benefits* from the unpaid labour of social reproduction within the family and the limited expenditure on the social wage outside of the home. The system cannot afford to fully dispense with social reproduction “without endangering the process of accumulation” since social reproduction ensures the continued existence of the one article that capitalism needs most of all: human labour.¹⁰ Understanding this contradictory dependence of production on social reproduction is key to understanding the political economy of gender relations, including gender violence.

But before we seek to understand how social reproduction theory can explain gender relations, we should acknowledge the extent of gender violence of recent years that makes such an investigation a matter of urgency. The first comprehensive study of violence against women from the World Health Organisation, published in 2013, assessed that one-third of all women worldwide, 35,6%, will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, usually from a male partner. The highest levels of violence against women are in Africa, where nearly half of all women, 45,6%, will suffer physical or sexual violence. In low-

and middle-income Europe, the proportion is 27,2%; and one-third of women in high-income countries, 32,7%, will experience violence at some stage in their life.¹¹

There is then a correlation between poverty and gendered violence, but what really are the ingredients of that connection?

Many have used the Marxist understanding of alienation to illuminate this relationship. For example, one author seeking to explain rape points out: Rape doesn't happen because of men's "natural" instincts. It results from the way that class society distorts sexuality and alienates people from each other and themselves... . We become alienated from ourselves and from each other. Rape and sexual violence are some of the most extreme forms that this alienation takes.¹²

It is undeniable that all expressions of sex, sexuality, and gender are alienated under capitalism. Marx, however, understands alienation not as individual or contingent dissatisfactions and frustrations – that may rise or fall during specific periods – but as a condition which affects everyone in class society, including the ruling class. Alienation as an explanatory tool *by itself* also does not fully explain why it is that the majority of rapes and instances of sexual violence are committed by men and not by women. Put differently, alienation, as understood by Marxists, is a pervasive condition under capitalism while sexual violence is a much more specific phenomenon, in the sense that while everyone is, at all times, alienated under capitalism not everyone suffers sexual violence on a daily basis.¹³

Instead of starting with the concept of alienation, I suggest that we start by laying bare the multiple interacting factors that might produce *the conditions of possibility* for gendered violence. Those factors, affecting gender and relationships within the family, however, are not restricted to the "private sphere" of social life, outside the ambit of the formal economy. Indeed, the fate of social reproduction under neoliberalism

shows, inter alia, how the dynamics of production (formal economy) have the capacity to disrupt the processes of social reproduction (“private sphere”) and vice versa.

Social reproduction theory, is in part a historical materialist account of social provisioning, or an account of how women and men are able to procure and access the means of sustenance, both material and psychical, in order to face another day of work. These means are historically determined and depend upon a given society’s specific circumstances, such as its general level of development/infrastructure and the standard of living the working class has been able to wrest from capital for itself. In some societies, the rise in the price of bread or rice may throw the working class family into crisis, while in others the point of crisis might arrive with the privatisation of essential social services. Since women continue to carry the vast bulk of social provisioning within the home, the changes that take place in the dynamics of social provisioning and the extent to which it can or cannot take place within the enclosure of “safe” spaces also determines the contours of gender relationships.

What constitutes social provisioning?

What are some of the fundamental components of social provisioning for the vast majority of people? Food and shelter are two basic requisites for reproduction to take place – and following from those, other socialised services necessary for maintaining human life and dignity such as healthcare, education, childcare, pensions, and public transport.

Shelter, or home – just like the family – operates at two opposing registers under capitalism. On the one hand, the home appears as a safer place to most of us as compared to the violence and uncertainty of the public world. Real human relations of love and cooperation can flourish within the four walls of a home captured fleetingly in a child’s

laughter or a kiss shared between a couple. But the home, shielded from public scrutiny, can also be a theatre of personal violence and shameful secrets. Anyone who has witnessed a woman trying to hide discoloured bruises with a scarf or seen a child clamming up over a discussion about a “loving” uncle knows the extent of such horrors. However the psychic dynamics of the family as an institution are played out, the home nevertheless serves as a shelter in a cruder and more material sense. It is literally the physical shelter that allows the worker to rest before the next day’s labour.

It is no surprise then that in the post-2008 Global North a significant contributor to the rise in intimate partner violence has been the financial stress associated with mortgage arrears and foreclosures, or in the language of social reproduction, due to the annihilation of a safe shelter as one of the basic components of reproducing the labouring body. In the United States, data from the census and the National Survey of Families and Households have conclusively proven women in general and African American women in particular as most at risk of being victims of both predatory loans and from the domestic violence resulting from foreclosures and evictions. A report on the recession from the National Resource Centre on Domestic Violence states this connection in very clear terms:

Women who leave their abusive partners often stay with family members or friends ... If family members and friends cannot house them, they may go to domestic violence or homeless shelters. Research shows that nearly one fifth of DV survivors combine informal (family/friends) and formal (domestic violence/homeless shelters) sources of housing assistance when they leave abusive partners ... But this same research also shows that more than a third of DV survivors report becoming homeless as a result of trying to end the abusive relationship ... This percentage may rise because of the current economic downturn

... Unfortunately ... the already strained budgets of service providers, including domestic violence and homeless shelters, are being cut at the same time that they are facing greater need.¹⁴

There are numerous stories documenting this overlap between the 2008 housing meltdown and domestic violence. For example, there is the 2008 suicide of an older husband and wife in Oregon that followed their home foreclosure.¹⁵ In Los Angeles, California, an unemployed man who once worked for PricewaterhouseCoopers and Sony Pictures murdered his wife, three sons, and his mother-in-law before turning the gun on himself. He left a suicide note saying that he had been financially ruined and had considered suicide, but decided in the end to kill his entire family as it was more “honourable.”¹⁶ Let us archive away the significant use of the word “honourable”, we will have cause to return to it later.

Next let us look at food, water, and other products that make up household economies that embody women’s labour and responsibility. In this context it is important to remember that women have often produced goods of use value within the home. For women in the pre-1920s Global North, such commodities included hand-stitched clothes, lace, and baked goods; while in the Global South before the onset of structural adjustments, women procured fuel and processed food grains for their families. Because they fell outside the circuit of commodity production, both the products and the producer of this kind of labour were invisible to the formal economy. In the North, from the 1920s and 1930s, the rapid expansion in the production of electric household appliances and processed food entirely changed the picture. First, white middle-class women’s, and subsequently all women’s participation in the commodity economy rose rapidly.

In the Global South, the annihilation of the subsistence economy and women’s full integration into the market came later and at the be-

hest of neoliberal policies. In several parts of West Africa, for instance, SAP agreements have forced governments to cut financial aid to public water companies. Yet, water – the essential ingredient to cooking, cleaning and care work – is a woman’s responsibility. So in locations where the government does not provide water due to cuts, women do. In rural Senegal women will walk up to 10km to fetch water for the family.

The picture is even starker in the case of food. One of the major demands of the IMF on southern economies was that they devalue their currency. The goal of devaluation was to raise the price of imported goods and thereby to reduce the consumption of these goods. Of course, food, fuel, and medicines form the bulk of imported goods for southern countries.

Two kinds of processes, then, take place in the home under capitalism. On the one hand, it continues to be the caring, non-instrumental space in an increasingly commercialised and hostile world. On the other hand, it is also the site of highly gendered expectations – where at the end of a tyrannical shift at work one anticipates a hot meal and a bed, both “made” by women. This contradiction is true for nearly all periods of capitalism’s history. But in the four decades under neoliberalism, the home was hollowed out of all subsistence resources – there remains no vegetable garden in the back, no common lands to gather firewood, and the lone rice mill in the yard was sold in order to pay for packaged rice from Texas. Yet the need for material provisioning for the human labouring body within the home remains, laced with the ideological expectation that women ought to be providing for such a need in the form of food, water, and care. The real material need for food and shelter combined with the highly ideological expectation that women are responsible for meeting that need within the home, provide the conditions of possibility of gendered violence.

The attack on social provisioning

Neoliberal restructuring of global capitalism from the 1980s played a specific part in the story of social reproduction in general and social provisioning in particular. It is important to understand that neoliberal policies were so effective in the sphere of production and trade because they simultaneously eliminated the supports that underwrote the work of social reproduction. From health care and education to community services and public transit, the public infrastructure was rapidly stripped in a manner similar to how in many parts of the world the land was stripped for the new emerging extractive industries.

How did this help capital? The elimination of public support for social reproduction did not mean that workers were then excused from being workers in the sphere of production. Instead, this simply meant that all support that was previously public was either transferred onto individual families or privatised and priced out of reach for the vast majority. Public parks, whose infrastructure was built with public money, got injected with fresh cash from corporations and closed their gates to working-class children. There were still pools, after-school programmes, and decent health care, but only for those who could afford them. “By default *and* by design then, families, particularly the women within them picked up the work not provided publicly and not affordable personally.”¹⁷ This made all workers, male and female, vulnerable in the workplace and less able to resist the assault.

When the neoliberal era faced its crowning meltdown in the global financial crisis of 2008, social reproduction for the global working class was already under severe strain.

It is now a well-documented fact that the financial crisis caused a rise in gendered violence. In the UK, domestic violence rose 35% in 2010. In Ireland there was a 21% rise in 2008 of the number of women who accessed domestic violence services compared to 2007, the number

rose even further in 2009, up 43% from 2007 figures. In the United States, according to a 2011 private survey, 80% of shelters nationwide reported an increase in domestic violence cases for the third year in a row; 73% of these cases were attributed to “financial issues” including job loss. I am using the 2008 financial crisis as one such instance of capitalist crisis, bearing in mind that it is neither the first nor the last. Indeed, social scientists have regularly used the research metrics of the 1930s Great Depression in the West to understand the domestic relations of subsequent economic crises. How does this picture of escalated violence fit our social provisioning framework?

Unable to meet their families’ needs within the home, women were often literally forced from the home to forage on the street. A World Bank survey of civil society organisations found that during the economic crisis poor people “resorted to increased participation of women and children in subsistence activities, like cardboard collection” on the streets.¹⁸

The financial crisis did not just add to the burden of reproduction, but wide-scale job losses and wage-cutting by bosses meant that women were either forced to take on more than one paid job or accept worse conditions at their current jobs.

But even when women worked ever-longer hours, and became the chief breadwinner in the family, women’s labour in the *public* sphere continued to carry the stamp of informal unwaged work that she performed in the *private* sphere. Consider the case of the United States, where sixty-five million jobs were created during the era of neoliberal restructuring and women filled 60% of those jobs, between 1964 and 1997. But what kind of jobs were these? Sociologist Susan Thistle shows how: “Women have been instrumental in the rapid expansion of the low wage lower tier of the service sector, providing the bulk of workers in both the fastest and largest areas of such low wage growth...

Economists have long recognised ... that the development of new regions and the conversion of nonwage workers into wage workers can create great profits, leading corporations to set up factories overseas... . we must realise that a similar lucrative process was happening within the United States itself... . As the market reached into kitchens and bedrooms turning many household tasks into work for pay productivity rose greatly...”¹⁹

Because it is unregulated and free from labour laws, the true horror of this so-called informal sector is that, like housework within the private sphere, it is unending and can function beyond what are considered to be acceptable business hours within that society. Two recent cases of violent rape in neoliberal India reveal the connecting tissues between neoliberal policies and assault on women.

A common method of “blaming” the victims of rape subjects the woman rather than the rapist to critical scrutiny. In India, women who have suffered rape have been blamed for being out “late at night”, which, this argument goes, made them deserve their violent fate. In court, a defense attorney for three of the five men accused in the case of the woman raped and killed in Delhi in 2012 stated that “respectable” women were not raped. “I have not seen a single incident or example of rape with a respected lady,” Manohar Lal Sharma told the court, instead blaming the victim for being out at night with a male friend to whom she was not married.²⁰

Both of the victims of much-publicised rape cases in Delhi – the woman killed in December 2012 and the woman attacked in Dhaula Kuan – worked at outsourced Western call centres. They worked evening schedules to correspond to daytime business hours in the West. To their low-waged, precarious position on the labour market was added the risk of night-time walks to and from work on the streets of a city with a hideous record of state protections for women. In Lesotho, women

have been raped leaving garment factories late at night, while garment workers in Bangladesh reported that working long hours and arriving home as late as 2:00 a.m. can provoke the suspicion and threats by husbands and male relatives “especially when their employers – hiding evidence of excessive overtime – had punched their...hour card to show that they left the factory at six [pm].”²¹

How should we read the widespread anxiety about female sexuality that has become the ubiquitous handmaiden of neoliberalism? In one sense, of course, it is the result of the widespread commodification of sexuality, but I propose that such anxieties are the expression of deeper mechanisms of labour discipline and violence.

The EPZs as theaters of discipline and punishment

To fully appreciate the horrors of labour discipline under neoliberalism let us take a step back and recall here our insistence on regarding capitalism as a unified socioeconomic whole. Unless we understand the global and systemic nature of capital’s strategies our resistance to them will remain piecemeal and incomplete. Hence parts of the globe where capital appears to be less dominant need to be viewed through the same indices of analysis with which we subject the advanced capitalist economies of the Global North. As David McNally argues, we “miss much of ...[the] story if we ignore the phenomenal expansion across the neoliberal period of major East Asian economies, which have grown at three or four times the rate of the traditional capitalist core.”²² Economies outside the core countries thus play an important role in the global process of capital accumulation. This is why no account of gendered violence and labour discipline is complete without a history of the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) – a unique and specific product of the neoliberal order – that are situated, for the most part, in the Global South.

The use of cheap female labour within special “economic zones” free from the labour laws of the country in which they are based, was first tried in South Korea during its “economic miracle.” Economist Alice Amsden argues that the key to South Korea’s success was the wage gap between male and female labour.²³ These zones mimic in truly macabre ways the contours of the home under capitalism. Like homes they are private, shielded from social and state scrutiny, produce items of social provisioning (clothes, shoes, food processing, toys) by female labour, and are secret theatres of rampant violence.

Women working in EPZs are subject to widespread verbal abuse, unpaid overtime, sexual harassment, forced sex, and physical violence. Women applying for these jobs have been forced to take health tests, including pregnancy tests, and examined naked and asked questions such as “Do you have a boyfriend?” and “How often do you have sex?” In Kenya, more than forty EPZs employing more than 40 000 workers produce close to 10% of the country’s exports. Here the job competition between men and women results frequently in women being forced to have sex, despite HIV risks, in order to secure a job. International Labor Rights Fund revealed that 95% of Kenyan women facing workplace harassment do not report the crime; women working in the EPZs formed 90% of the women studied in this report. Similarly in Lesotho, EPZ women are frequently subjected to complete strip searches to ensure that they have not stolen anything, including having to remove their sanitary pads while menstruating. Close to the United States, the maquiladora factories display some of the most egregious forms of violence against women. This EPZ, established through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992, is located in Ciudad Juarez on the US-Mexico border. Since 1993, more than 400 female workers of this EPZ have either “disappeared” or have been murdered, earning Ciudad Juarez the title “The Femicide Capital.” In

2003, EPZs in 116 countries employed forty-three million people. The numbers are higher today.²⁴

Management of sexuality and management of labour, then, are braided chains of discipline that bind the most vulnerable sections of global labour. But who executes this managerial function? It is important to understand the various strands of this complicated answer. First, working-class men are not innocent in this process. A study commissioned by the International Labour Rights Fund in Kenya found that 70% of the men interviewed for the study viewed sexual harassment of women workers as “normal and natural.”²⁵ In her ground breaking study of maquiladora workers, Maria Fernandez-Kelly takes seriously the widespread anxiety about female sexuality in Juarez, and she links this moral panic to women’s increased visibility in the public sphere. Insofar as wage labour is providing women with a certain degree of financial independence, these factory jobs, according to Fernandez-Kelly, are regarded as a threat to “traditional” forms of male authority. The fears that this potential loss of social control engender are “made explicit, albeit in a distorted manner” by a rhetoric of increased female promiscuity.²⁶ We will have occasion to unpack this particular concept of “tradition” in the next section.

While it is true that working-class men have some control over the time and sexuality of working-class women, they are, however, playing according to the rules set by capitalism. As Hester Eisenstein shows, in regions of low-wage labour, women receive a “woman’s wage” but men do not receive a “man’s wage.”²⁷ In 2003, *Business Week* reported the case of one Michael A McLimans, who works as a delivery driver for Domino’s and Pizza Hut. His wife is a hotel receptionist. Together “they pull down about \$40 000 a year – far from the \$60,000 Michael’s father, David I. McLimans earned as a veteran steel worker.”²⁸

Leslie Salzinger’s work on maquiladora labour offers an excellent

and accurate account of why this kind of feminisation is one of the best strategies of labour management for neoliberal capital. Salzinger sets out to explain the pervasiveness of what she calls the “trope of productive femininity” – that is, the “icon of the ‘docile and dexterous’ woman worker” as both preferred and expected embodiment of export-processing labour. Salzinger shows that while the trope of productive femininity would seem to aptly describe the gendered nature of Mexico’s maquiladoras, the maquilas have always employed a large minority of men, leading her to argue that productive femininity is not necessarily about the sex of the worker but is a process of severe labour disciplining of both female and male bodies in different ways, to produce a pool of ‘maquila-grade’ labour.”²⁹

If working-class men prefer lower wages to “women’s work” and solidarity with women workers then is it patriarchy that binds all men in a conspiracy of silence and dominance? Can we talk about a so-called brotherhood of all men? The next section seeks to answer these questions by revisiting the question of “honour” and “tradition” that seem to underlie many of the justifications for gendered violence.

Inventing tradition

In an interview with the World Bank an Egyptian man from Borg Meghezel, a small fishing village in the Nile valley, had a materialist explanation for violence against women: “The insufficiency of income is what affects the man-woman relationship. Sometimes she wakes me up in the morning asking for five pounds, and if I don’t have it I get depressed and I leave the house. And when I come back, we start to fight.”³⁰ Needless to say, this particular part of the Nile Valley has been fighting an acute water crisis since the involvement of the World Bank in this region. A Ghanaian man had an even sharper appraisal of the problem: “It’s because of unemployment and poverty that most men

in this community beat their wives. We have no money to look after them.”³¹

In these stark and direct accounts, we face the precise moment of violence and find that we are still left with a range of questions. So far we have talked about the context of such violence, how the home and subsistence-based communities are systematically rendered resourceless and empty. While this certainly provides the conditions for possible violence, we are still left with the problem of how to account for the historical rationale for the perpetrators of this violence. It is not enough to say that the working-class man comes home after being fired, finds an eviction notice instead of a hot meal and thus proceeds to beat his wife: because such a picture, though certainly true in many cases during this current crisis, raises many more questions. For instance, why doesn't the working-class woman come home and beat up her husband since being fired from a job is certainly not exclusive to men and in reality more women have lost their jobs during this recession than men?

There are no real rationales for why gendered violence takes place, and yet we, as human beings, have to be able to rationalise it for ourselves at least minimally as a form of regrettable but meaningful action. Capitalist ideology seeks to provide meaning to such violent actions in two basic ways:

One is through the deeply rooted sexist idea of the gendered division of labour within the family. Despite the fact that in the vast majority of households both men and women have to work for pay outside the home, there is a sexist expectation that it is women who will take care of the home. The reasons for this are manifold and have been discussed creatively by Marxists. For our purposes, it is important to note that according to this particular aspect of sexism it is women who are expected to be responsible for providing for the family within the home

and hence also responsible for any lack in provisioning.

Two, existing sexist ideas try to legitimise themselves through an appeal to tradition. In some ways this is an old capitalist trick. As early as 1852, Karl Marx pointed out that when the bourgeoisie want to justify something “they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honoured disguise and borrowed language. Thus Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789–1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire...”³²

The “borrowed language,” as Marx calls it, is moreover used quite specifically. Most often it comes in the guise of ideologies that deny class divisions and emphasise what Benedict Anderson has called “a deep horizontal comradeship.”³³ For example, nations are projected as free of class divisions and religious communities are portrayed as homogenous collectives where all members supposedly have similar interests irrespective of class. Similarly, in the case of sexism, such ideas are projected under the assumption of a common brotherhood of all men (presumably against a common sisterhood of all women) and by obscuring the actual existing divisions of class and exploitation that exists between men. How does the appeal to a mythical community of men justify violence against women? Consider the appeals that people make to tradition and lineage in order to justify the misogynist violence of honour killings.

The practice of honour killings, where family members murder women considered to have violated a family’s honour, provide great grist to the imperialist mill. Racists can use honour killings as evidence of the inherent backwardness of all Muslims. A Zionist news source recently titled one of its leading op-ed articles, “Let’s admit it: honour killing in the west is by Muslims.”³⁴ Similarly, such instances of violence are used

as justification for Western imperialist intervention in the Middle East in the name of women's liberation.

But how then can we explain honour killings, for it is undeniably true that they are committed in families that are most often not white and have certain historic connections with specific countries in the Global South?

According to the Iranian and Kurdish Women's Rights Organisation (IKWRO), more than 2 800 honour-related cases of violence were reported in the UK in 2010. Evidence from police reports suggests an increase of 47% since 2009.

The Guardian journalist, Fareena Alam, provides a heart breaking but materialist analysis of such killings. Writing in 2004 she asserts correctly that: (1) "Honour killings are not a Muslim problem"; and (2) "Honour crimes have no relation to religiosity."³⁵ Instead, she shows how "most migrant families, including mine, stay closely connected to relatives 'back home.'" This is an enriching connection that "offers a safety net in the face of a hostile society." However, Alam is far from misty-eyed about such networks:

"[T]oo often these networks are sexist, stifle dissent and demand loyalty at all costs ... Young men are allowed to carry on a relatively unsupervised public life – socialising, drinking and womanising. Upholding honour, which is linked closely to social standing and upward mobility, falls to women. The mere allegation of impropriety – such as being seen with a man outside the family network – can damage a woman's, and thus her family's, reputation... . Honor killing is neither simply a gender issue nor an individual aberration. It is symptomatic of how immigrant families attempt to cope with an alienating urbanisation. In villages "back home," a man's sphere of control was broader, with a large support system... . Failed efforts to retain control can be devastating – enough to generate the unim-

aginable rage that it must take to kill one's kin."³⁶

For our purposes Alam's argument about the *perceived* loss of male control as a trigger for violence is important. While honour killings maybe extreme examples of violence, a wide range of gendered violence seems to take place in the name of loss of "traditional" male authority or control.

A study published in the *British Medical Journal* in 2012 found that across Europe suicide rates rose sharply from 2007 to 2009 as the financial crisis drove unemployment up and squeezed incomes. The countries worst hit by severe economic downturns, such as Greece and Ireland, saw the most dramatic increases in suicides. In the UK, men were found to be three times more likely to commit suicide than women, resulting in the study's conclusion: "Much of men's identity and sense of purpose is tied up with having a job. It brings income, status, importance... ." ³⁷ In 2011, *Time* magazine echoed this view that the recession created a loss of 'traditional' roles for men and resulted in a rise in male depression: "With men culturally shouldering the role of primary breadwinner for their important factor in depression risk, is often contingent on their role as provider."³⁸

The operative term here is "culturally shouldering". All these reports and studies indicate that although men were not always the primary breadwinners in the family, they *believed or expected* that this was indeed their real role.

The reality in the United States, as in the rest of the industrialised world, is that, increasingly, both men and women work (paid labour) to maintain a household; and both men and women work at home (unpaid labour) to take care of the house and children.

Most recent US studies on employment show that women are breadwinners for 40% of families – a vast majority of them single mothers and women of colour. We can add to this actual reality the data from

20 industrialised countries over the period 1965–2003 that reveal an overall cross-country increase in men's proportional contribution to family work.

The same is true for men/fathers helping in the home. Sociologist Francine Deutsch noted that working-class fathers perform more hours of child care than their managerial counterparts.³⁹ According to a 2011 survey of 963 fathers holding white-collar jobs in Fortune 500 companies, 53% of the fathers said that they would consider being stay-at-home parents if their family could live on their spouse's salary.⁴⁰ While people at the top of society castigate men of colour for abandoning their families, research by the American Psychological Association and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development disproves all such racist mythology: Low-income, minority, and non-residential fathers who have jobs and education are more likely to be involved with their children ... African American men are more likely to physically care for, feed and prepare meals for their infants than either white or Hispanic fathers.

Some ethnographic data has emerged that significant amounts of paternal financial support (both cash and in-kind aid) may go unreported in formal systems.⁴¹

This indeed is a strange phenomenon. While the material reality of most men is that in families both partners work for increasingly lower wages and increasingly longer hours, yet expectations of gender seem to be based on a mythical model of the happy wife cooking at home and waiting for her male spouse to return home from work. If the vast majority of women are working in maquiladoras, Wal-Mart, and Starbucks, or housekeeping for the rich, then whose dreams are forging these cardboard cutouts of femininity? We should examine this cardboard cutout closely because as we trace its real lineage we can begin to understand how the justification for gender violence is rooted in

a combination of material reality and ideological expectations about gender.

Legal scholar Joan Williams makes an important observation about working-class masculinity in her recent work on the relationship between class and gender in America. According to Williams, gender acts as an “important ‘hidden injury of class’” reflected in “the sense of inadequacy that stems from working class men’s ever-increasing inability to perform as bread-winners.”⁴² Williams’ account of how this perceived inadequacy is played out in class terms deserves to be quoted in full: “For two brief generations after World War II, the separate-spheres ideal was democratized, but today the ability to achieve the breadwinner ideal is once again tied to class privilege ... Because breadwinner-homemaker families have signalled middle-class status since the 1780s, successful performance of these roles is seen as vital among working class families ... Conventional gender performance, in short, is a class act.”⁴³

Williams’ timeline for when the traditional gender model of “breadwinner-homemaker” becomes unfeasible for the working class, exactly match the timeline Davidson sets out for the beginning of the neoliberal order. The traditional breadwinner-homemaker role and the gendered expectations that flow from it, then, was never a working-class tradition to begin with, but was loaned to the working class by capital. The power of this model lies precisely in its ability to (a) erase actual existing class differences by presenting a universal brotherhood of all men; and (b) divide the working class along gender lines by imputing unrealistic gender expectations on both men and women, which, by necessity, will always fail in reality.

Let us now take a second look at our cardboard figure. The model wife and her model family, whether pulling off the perfect dinner in New York or New Delhi is in fact a class warrior. Her ideal family is preserved in the timeless amber of capital’s glory days where men will

always be men, labour unions will always be unheard of, and slaves or lower castes will always bring home the cotton.

Resources of resistance

In the current crisis of capital, gender is an important ideological weapon used to hide the fault lines of class. The rising tide of rape defence from figures of social standing, the spate of bills attacking reproductive and LGB rights, slut shaming and victim blaming are various ways to reorder femininity and re-invoke the mythic breadwinner-homemaker family, thus providing ballast to unrealistic gender expectations and models for working-class men and women.

How do we fight capitalism's family values? It is worthwhile to point toward the challenges we face as we try to revivify new ways to apply Marxism to our world.

There are, in the main, three interrelated challenges that we face as revolutionaries in the current era:

- Understanding the precise nature of capitalism as a system of production;
- Identifying the subject of revolutionary transformation of the system; and
- Determining the nature of that transformative process – how does it start, what are its sites, and so on.

The answers to these three problems help determine whether and how we can change the fate of gender in our present day world.

Neoliberalism as a new way of organising capital accumulation may last for some time yet. But it is important to qualify the extent and limitations of its novelty. While we discuss the various new kinds of economic arrangements and forms of social relations this new assemblage of capital has thrown up for us, it is equally important to emphasise the continuities that exist. The economics of neoliberalism, although varied

in its national expressions, do not herald a new kind of capitalism, but rather a set of heterogeneous efforts, initially tried and later systematized, by ruling classes over time to overcome the crisis of profitability inherent in capitalism. In other words, unlike what some scholars have suggested, this is not a new form of capitalism but rather a new form in which capitalism is trying to recover and maintain profits. This means that the fundamental insights of classical Marxism about capitalism as a system still hold, as do its conclusions about how to fight it – namely through the self-activity of the working class.

As we have seen throughout this essay, a key to neoliberalism's triumph always was, and remains today, a successful and highly gendered attack on the global working class. After all, it is an order built on a series of defeats for our side, the most spectacular examples being those of the air traffic controllers in the United States (1981), the mill workers in India (1982) and the miners in the UK (1984–85).⁴⁴ Trade unions, which remain a primary, often the only, expression of working-class organisation and tool of struggle, continue to be a major target for neoliberalism's onslaughts. But the long history of defeats and the relatively few instances of successful fightback by workers have led some scholars to question the centrality of the working class as the agent of change and doubt whether workers still have the capacity to bring the system to a halt and build a new world. Instead, many have looked to more amorphous collectives – the most famous being Michael Hardt and Anthony Negri's notion of the "multitude."⁴⁵

Meanwhile the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement in the United States have thrown up yet another question regarding the validity of classical Marxism, this time around the arena of struggle. Since occupations of public spaces in Spain, Tahrir, Zucotti, and most recently Gezi Park have been one of the more militant and mass expressions of struggle in recent years, it is only normal for many to see in this politi-

cal form of insurgent urban movements a new, possibly better, path to capitalism's demise than strikes or disruptions by workers at the point of production.⁴⁶

Revolutionary Marxism's task, unlike that of a fortune-teller, is not to predict where the next round of struggle will take place. Nor can it predict which particular struggle will take a generalised form through the system. In the case of Thatcher's Britain the most highly anticipated fight, one that also happened to be at the point of production, was the miners' strike. But while the miners' struggle ended in defeat, a more unlikely one, one not at the point of production – the poll tax riots – managed to have a far greater impact on Thatcher's regime. The strength of the social reproduction framework lies in its ability to understand capitalism as a unitary system where production and reproduction may be spatially separated but are in reality organically conjoined. As Miriam Glucksman put it, the “necessity for analysing each pole in its own right does not detract from the fact that the distinctness of each can be fully understood only in its relation to each other and to the overall structure that comprises both.”⁴⁷ As we seek to rebuild and strengthen our organs of resistance against the neoliberal order – whether they are trade unions or revolutionary Marxist organisations – we should bear in mind this concord between production and reproduction. The Chicago Teachers Union's (CTU) model of social justice unionism is inspiring and worthy of replication precisely because it tries to apply this insight in practice. The CTU strike was not merely a struggle for better working conditions for the members of the CTU. The strike was built by linking the wider issues *outside* the workplace – racist school-closure policy, the economic condition of the students and their families, urban history – to the issues *within* the workplace, such as wages and benefits for the teachers.⁴⁸

Our fight for rape crisis centres near our homes, thus, cannot be

separated from our defence of public services to facilitate social provisioning or our battle for better wages and reproductive justice. But the final victory for gender justice will be won when we rebel against the fundamental tyranny of capital to take our labour in order to make profits. That battle may be sparked anywhere in society, but it will have to be won at the point of production, in our workplaces and at the barricades where uniting the strands of our previous struggles we can take that famous leap “in the open air of history.”⁴⁹ ●

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Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Snehal Shingavi, Ashley Smith, and Bill V. Mullen for their comments on an early draft of this essay
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THE ANC

Assessing the 54th National Conference

Sithembiso Bhengu argues that a reconfiguration of the Alliance, in the wake of the ANC's 54th National Conference, necessarily entails reconfiguring the ANC itself

The African National Congress (ANC) 54th national conference, in December 2017, has been described as a watershed moment, in the same vein as was said in the aftermath of the 52nd Polokwane conference.

After months of intense campaigning under the banner of CR17 and NDZ¹, Cde Cyril Ramaphosa and the current Deputy President of South Africa, Cde David Mabuza, and trumped the former African Union chairperson Cde Nkozana Dlamini-Zuma, to clinch the presidency.

The newly elected NEC led by president elect Cde Ramaphosa was promptly choreographed under the theme 'unity', 'renewal' of the ANC and 'jobs'. Central to the new theme is the clear intent to reclaim the historic ethical and political high ground of the ANC as the leader of society. The integrity of its leaders with the populace, as well as an era of unity, is meant to move the ANC beyond the factional politics that have blighted the organisation in the last decade - and threatened to split the organisation in the build-up to the conference. This article attempts to provide an analytical review of the conference and the grand claims made in its aftermath. It inter-

rogates the ‘unity’ assertion, shows the problematic nature of the elected leadership, and the challenge this poses for the ANC and the broader movement.

Newly elected NEC – balance or contradictions?

If one looks at the overall picture of the top six and the complex mix of the additional members of the NEC, one cannot help but think that the ANC President might be on a tight leash, or ‘in borrowed robes’, as Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet. The top six of the ANC together with representation of ‘both factions’ in the NEC, suggest a mutually check-mating, “balanced” representation of both slates. I am not sold on the claim that this “balance” will unite a divided ANC or end “slate politics”.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that, behind personalities and slogans, the two slates and the manoeuvring within each were organised around two fundamentally opposed agendas – the one to root out state capture and corruption within the organisation and state, and the other to defend those implicated and to perpetuate looting.

Six months before the conference the ANC’s National Policy Conference (NPC) had adopted a thoughtful organisational renewal discussion document, which identified specific challenges, weaknesses and areas of structural change necessary to reinvigorate the ANC as the leader of social transformation. The key areas of change identified in the report include:

- First, reinvigorating intellectualism, a politics that sufficiently addresses the complexity of the South African masses in post-apartheid South Africa;
- Second, addressing the issue of corruption and ‘sins of incumbency’ bedeviling the movement, resulting in a growing trust deficit with the voting populace; and

- Third, building a united movement, addressing the challenge of factional politics that plagues ANC structures from branch to national levels.

But the election of some officials and additional NEC members goes against the intended objectives of organisational renewal and unity. Some of the leading members of the top six, for instance, have been dogged by claims of being unethical and of contravening the ANC's organisational and constitutional guidelines in running the provinces they had presided over until recently². And among the additional members elected into the NEC are many who have been constantly featured in a negative light in the media and who clearly played a leading role in the Gupta state capture project.

What does the 54th conference tell us about the ANC today?

The notion of unity, void of tangible progress towards renewal and reducing the trust deficit between political careerists and the masses, is hollow and meaningless in the broader scheme of regaining mass support leading to the 2019 elections³. The organisational renewal report presented at the NPC noted the challenge to broaden the ANC beyond a monolithic perspective of its motive forces and reaching out to other social forces.

While there has been growing criticism of the progressive deterioration of the ANC organisationally and politically, most of this is reduced to mere moralistic outbursts, devoid of analytic rigour. I want to suggest that only proper political and ideological analysis is likely to provide concrete programmatic ideas to rejuvenate the movement. The results from the 54th Conference succinctly point to a deepening de-politicisation in the ANC. The outcome of the 54th Conference is a culmination of a brand of massification without political content⁴, in which numbers become an end in themselves, and not a political

means to build a political agenda. Let me illustrate this point by briefly comparing the 53rd Conference in 2012 with the 54th Conference in 2017. The first glaring observation is that all the provinces alleged to be constituents of ‘the Premier League’ have experienced a considerable ballooning of their membership.

Mpumalanga Province is the most significant case in point. At the 53rd conference, Mpumalanga was only the fifth largest province in ANC membership, with 467 delegates. By the 54th conference, Mpumalanga had leapfrogged everyone except KZN, to be the second largest province in ANC membership, with 736 delegates. The Free State ballooned from 324 delegates to 409 delegates in 2017. So too the North-West: from 234 delegates in 2012 to 538. The growth in membership (hence delegates at national conference) in Mpumalanga, North West and Free State are abnormal, against the growth trajectory norm in the ANC in the last two decades. There are widespread allegations about a growing trend of ‘buy a member’ and many uncharacteristic measures used by ambitious political careerists at all levels of the ANC to manufacture membership and numbers that can secure them strategic positions in the organisation and a seat at the table of power and influence.

Complicity of the ‘class project’

Another omission in most commentaries has been their failure to account for the political and organisational genesis of this degeneration into de-politicisation and narrow careerism. While many accurately highlight the Zuma era of ANC politics as the politics of numbers (massification) and the erosion of ‘politics’, what made this possible was the concentration of power in what has been depicted as the ‘class project’. With all the accolades for his intellectual acumen, it is no secret that the presidency of Thabo Mbeki closed spaces for engagement in the

ANC and the broader movement, elevating the ‘thinking’ and ideas to himself and his anointed lieutenants. Before 1990, the ANC was influenced by the Marxist-Leninist conception of organisational politics as well as the politics of ideology linked to Gramsci. What the Mbeki era signified was in many ways the manipulative management (a version of ‘Taylorism’)⁵ of the ANC, characterised by creating a “thinking core” (think-tank), while relegating the rest of the organisation to ‘yes men and women’ and implementers (like capitalist control over the shop floor). Both dissent and failure to ‘stay in one’s lane’ had repercussions and career threatening consequences at the hands of the ‘class project’ exponents.

With the systematic concentration of power in the presidency during the Mbeki reign, this became the basis on which those in the periphery took over the ANC, culminating in the Polokwane moment. The leadership that emerged in the post-Polokwane era, and the practices that became hegemonic thereafter show a shift into an era of de-politicisation. There were growing assertions about increasing intolerance of debate or any form of intellectual engagement. Symptomatic of anti-intellectualism in the ANC is the phrase, ‘clever blacks’, widely used in ANC quarters to denigrate criticism and dissent⁶. The irony is that the ANC and the broader Congress Alliance prides itself with a long legacy of theoretical and analytical work that influenced liberation struggles in the entire continent. The ANC of numbers, tenders and money has spurned the very essence that made the ANC consistently relevant, the cutting edge of South African politics.

The Polokwane Conference dislodged the elite politics associated with Mbeki, allowing the ascension into levels of power leaders who were no longer required to have political depth, but who could muster the numbers at every election. While the 1994 and subsequent elections ushered in an electoral era giving birth to a close electoral

bond between the ANC and the electorate, the 52nd conference and the subsequent conferences have altered the narrative from an activist-oriented organisation to an instrumental relationship between the ANC and its members.

Conclusion

The SACP message of support at the 106th anniversary of the ANC, which highlighted the significance of engagement between Alliance partners on the reconfiguration of the Alliance, raised an important intervention, with possibilities for guiding the kinds of political and structural arrangements needed towards a project of renewal and regaining sustainable unity within the ANC and the Alliance. But a narrow instrumentalist application of reconfiguring the Alliance, focused on a mechanical reordering of structures of Alliance members and their lines of consultative engagement, is unlikely to produce key political and structural deliverables outlined in the ANC's Organisational Renewal Report. At the centre of the conception of a reconfigured Alliance is an actual reconfiguring of the ANC, characterised by revitalising the culture of politics, debate and engagement in the ANC. This exercise should also enable the Movement of return to precision in defining, coining and using concepts that have been debased and abused in the ANC, and also hijacked by enemies of the movement.

Take the concept of a “cadre”, for instance, which has a long and honourable communist tradition. In the words of Che Guevara, a cadre is someone who is able to make the strategic perspectives and line of the revolution his/her own “and convey them as an orientation to the masses, a person who, at the same time, also perceives the signs manifested by the masses of their own desires and their innermost motivations”. Nowadays anybody and everybody is a “cadre”. A critical aspect

of rebuilding the ANC should involve reestablishing programmes to develop cadres, in the real sense of that word, of the Movement. ●

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Notes

1 CR17 was the tag of the campaign to elect Cde Cyril Ramaphosa, and NDZ are the initials of his opponent in the campaign race, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.

2 Nick Anderson, "Who is David Mabuza? The ANC's new Deputy President", *The South African* (18.12.2017)

3 *The Citizen* (9.12.2016) quoted Supra Mohumapelo (ANC Northwest Chair), as saying: "Oliver Tambo knew nothing about governance, there was no PFMA, there was no public protector, no constitution to abide by", as he was arguing that people must stop comparing Zuma to Tambo and Mandela. At face value this is just an inept utterance, depicting obtuse understanding of the ANC and its history. But, when moving beyond the surface, what Supra is alleged to have said is for the first time a dichotomisation of the ANC from its history, a disassociation of the current ilk of leadership from values, principles and leadership acumen of leaders that made the ANC such a historical colossal in Africa and the entire Global South.

4 What I term massification in the ANC means the recent, yet growing trend of manufacturing large numbers of ANC members from branch level, all the way to regions and provinces, for the sake of hegemony in elections at BGMs, RGMs and at PGCs. The recent elective conference of the ANC represents in the best case the triumph of massification in the electoral outcomes of conference.

5 Scientific management (also known as Taylorism) is a set system of managerial control over the shop floor and production, through a division of labour practices that primarily separate conception, design and control to a managerial core and breaking down production into specified tasks, given as instructions to workers on shop floor. Frederick Taylor an engineer, developed this system, which gained renowned prominence in Henry Ford's

'Ford' production in 1913. The seminal work of Harry Braverman set out a comprehensive critique of monopoly capitalism, and particularly of scientific management.

6 It is ironic that political elites in the ANC labelled critics "clever blacks", as a negative depiction, something loyal and good standing members of the ANC should desist from doing and disassociate themselves from these 'foreign tendencies'. The word clever is associated with words like smart, thinking, logical, with reason, knowledgeable, etc. It says much about the current ilk in the ANC.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE

Lessons from Greece's communist struggle

Giorgos Marinós traces the Party's experiences in the electoral arena, and the lessons it has taken from involvement in parliamentary politics.

The KKE (Communist Party of Greece) was founded as a party of the working class 100 years ago, in November 1918, as a result of the merging of the labour movement with scientific communism, under the decisive impact of the October Revolution.

In the 1920s and 1930s the Party was taking its first steps while at the same time it was at the forefront of the people's struggle. It faced the repression of the bourgeois state, dictatorship in 1925 and 1936, severe conditions of illegality, imprisonment and exile.

During World War II, within the framework of the struggle for liberation, it played a leading role in the foundation of the National Liberation Front (EAM) and the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), which liberated a large section of the country from the Nazi occupation forces, where cells of people's power, people's militia, people's justice, and local government were formed.

Following the ousting of the German war machine and the liberation of the country, the Party, due to its mistaken strategy, did not move forward to assert state power. On the contrary, it became entrapped in an effort to ensure smooth democratic developments: it signed unacceptable agreements with bourgeois forces; it participated in the bourgeois

government in September 1944 with six ministers and in February 1945, it surrendered its weapons.

In other words, our Party was not able to utilise the revolutionary situation that was created at the end of 1944 and ended in 1946 after a period of decline.

Under conditions of harsh repression, in 1946 our Party took up guerrilla warfare. It founded the Democratic Army of Greece which fought heroically for three years, a struggle that constitutes the crowning moment of the class struggle in Greece. The civil war was won by the bourgeois class, which was supported by British and US imperialism, and in 1949, the militants of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) sought refuge in the socialist countries.

Thousands of communists fell on the battlefields, were executed by the firing squads of the bourgeoisie, and were imprisoned or sent into exile. The KKE was outlawed from 1947 until 1974. This period was the longest period of illegality for our Party.

After the civil war and under the harsh conditions of illegality, the Party maintained underground Party organisations. At the same time, after 1951, the Party operated within the ranks of the coalition “Unified Democratic Left” (EDA), an alliance with a social democratic programme, which comprised communist and social democratic forces. Despite its struggles for the interests of the working people, the EDA proved to be a breeding ground for opportunist positions and illusions.

In 1958 the leadership of the Party decided on the dissolution of the Party organisations and the accession of the communists to EDA, which participated in the elections and in 1958 it held the second position with 24%. The dissolution of the Party organisations was a grave mistake – negatively affecting its organisational, ideological and political independence.

Parliamentary illusions were further fostered: the Party cooperated with bourgeois “centre” social-democratic forces, whereas its forces were unprepared when military dictatorship was established in Greece in April 1967. Nevertheless, the communists with their illegal activity played the leading role in the struggle against the dictatorship, and many were sent to prison and exile.

In the 1960s, opportunism was reinforced inside the Party leading to an intense ideological political confrontation. In 1968, after a hard battle at the 12th plenary session of the CC, in conditions of illegality, the right-wing opportunist group was defeated and the Party split.

The Party got on its feet and continued its struggle. After the fall of the dictatorship in July 1974, the Party assumed its *de facto* legalisation, and operated openly.

The 1980s was marked by the development of Party organisations, which were reconstructed during the period of dictatorship, as well as by the development of the Communist Youth Organisation (KNE), founded in 1968. The communists won many positions in the trade union movement and played a leading role in the class struggle.

In a period when the signs of counterrevolution and the overthrow of socialism were evident, the KKE cooperated with opportunist forces, which had been expelled from the Party in 1968, as well as with social democratic forces. In 1989 it formed the so-called “Coalition of the Left and Progress”, the predecessor of Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza), currently Greece’s ruling party.

This development gave rise to a new wave of opportunism. The existence of the KKE was at stake given the counter-revolution and the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union and the other countries of socialist construction. The communists resolved the problem at its 1991 13th Congress, where it decided to withdraw its forces from the “Coalition”, cleared its ranks and moved forward based on Marxism-

Leninism, committed to revolutionary change.

The study of the history of the KKE in this period helped us to draw significant conclusions:

- On the necessity of revolutionary strategy, which must be in line with the character of our era, an era of transition from capitalism to socialism;
- On the multifaceted ideological-political and organisational preparation of the Party to deal with the complex conditions created by the class struggle;
- On the necessity to reject parliamentary illusions and utilise the revolutionary situation for the socialist revolution and the struggle for working class power;
- On the safeguarding of the organisational, ideological and political independence of the Party under all conditions, including illegality, imperialist war, dictatorship, fascism, and on the rejection of the participation in bourgeois alliances, “left coalitions” (or whatever name they take) which in practice negates the independence of the Party and leads to compromises at the expense of the struggle for power;
- On the rejection of the participation or the support of bourgeois governments and the safeguarding of the Party so as not to come under the flag of sections of the bourgeois class; and
- On the resolute, uncompromising struggle against opportunism, which is a vehicle for the penetration of bourgeois ideology in the labour and communist movement, which can lead to liquidation.

Building on the lessons in the 1990s

After the crisis in 1990-1991 the Party moved decisively to reconstruct the Party organisations; it reinforced its orientation towards the working class, winning over forces and trade unions. At its 15th Congress in

1996, it began the elaboration of new programmatic guidelines. In this context, it replaced the strategy of transitional stages arriving at the conclusion that in Greece, a country with an intermediate position in the imperialist system, the material preconditions for the new society have matured and, thus, the struggle must aim at the solution of the basic contradiction between capital and labour.

This was a significant achievement which was further developed with the study of the causes and the factors that led to the overthrow of socialism in the Soviet Union and the countries of socialist construction, an issue which was dealt with by the 18th Congress in 2009, and the relevant discussion that contributed to the enrichment of the strategy of the Party.

Based on the further elaboration of this material and new studies on the development of capitalism in Greece, as well as on the experience of the international communist movement, our Party approved a new programme at its 19th Congress in 2013.

The programme further clarified that the counterrevolutionary overthrows do not change the character of our era, the character of revolution as a key element of the strategy of the Communist Party which acts under the conditions of monopoly capitalism, i.e. imperialism, is not determined according to the current correlation of forces but by the maturation of the material conditions for socialism and the contradiction that is to be resolved according to historical evolution (that is, the contradiction between capital and labour).

The Party programme states that the Greek people will be liberated from the bonds of capitalist exploitation and the imperialist unions when the working class, together with its allies, carries out the socialist revolution and moves forward to construct socialism-communism with working class power, socialisation of the concentrated means of production, development of the economy with central-scientific plan-

ning, disengagement of the country from the imperialist organisations of the Nato and the EU.

The motor forces of the socialist revolution will be the working class as the leading force, the semi-proletarians, the oppressed popular strata of the urban self-employed, the poor farmers, who are negatively affected by the monopolies, and for this reason have an objective interest in their abolition, the abolition of capitalist ownership, in the overthrow of its power, in the new relations of production.

Today in conditions of a non-revolutionary situation, the KKE works to prepare the subjective factor for the prospect of socialist revolution, despite the fact that the time period of its outbreak is determined by objective pre-conditions – the revolutionary situation: that is, when “those above” are no longer able to rule and “those below” no longer wish to live as they used to.

The necessity of the preparation of the Party and the workers’ people’s movement involves the following tasks: the strengthening of the KKE, the regrouping of the labour movement, the social alliance which expresses the interests of the working class, the semi-proletarians, the self-employed in the urban centres and the poor farmers, the youth and the women of the working class and the popular strata in the struggle against monopolies and capitalist ownership.

The work of the Party in all fields of class struggle is guided by its strategy and the corresponding line for the rallying of forces. Likewise, the intervention of communists in the trade union movement, in parliamentary work, in local administration, in all fronts that concern the problems of the working class, the popular strata, and the youth.

On the KKE’s parliamentary work

Our Party participates in the elections as KKE. Its lists also include militant people who are not communists but cooperate with the Party and

the mass organisations supported by the Party – trade unionists, workers, farmers, self-employed, craftsmen, tradesmen, students, scientists and veterans.

Today the KKE has 15 members of the parliament (MPs), two members of the European Parliament, five mayors (among them of Greece's third biggest city, Patras), 31 regional councillors, and hundreds of municipal councillors.

The KKE intervenes in the National Parliament, trying to prevent the adoption of anti-people measures and voting against anti-people drafts laws or directives and other legislative acts of the EU. It tables questions, draft laws and amendments on serious issues that concern the working class – among them the relief of the people's families from loans and taxation, healthcare, education, in tandem with the struggle of the trade unions, the labour and people's movement.

Recently the Party utilised an initiative of All Workers' Militant Front (Pame) and 513 trade unions, federations and labour centres concerning collective bargaining agreements and tabled a draft law initiating a debate in parliament. This initiative has been very useful, despite its rejection by the Syriza-ANEL (Independent Greeks) government and the other bourgeois parties.

The positions of the KKE are normally rejected by the bourgeois and opportunist parties. Nevertheless, these interventions help us to reveal the exploitative character of capitalism and bourgeois democracy as the "dictatorship of the monopolies".

They contribute to the enlightenment of the working class, the popular strata, and the youth. Based on this information, the working people can improve the organisation of their struggle.

Every time that anti-people measures are adopted, our Party strives and struggles persistently so that they are not legitimised in people's consciousness.

These interventions – among them the intervention denouncing measures that commercialise healthcare or impose taxes on the people – can be used in the broad mass struggle by Party organisations and the communist youth or by the trade unions and other mass organisation of the people’s movement. This is the very content of the struggle of our Party and our MPs.

The Communist MPs maintain strong bonds with workers in the factories, in enterprises, and with the poor and medium-sized farmers, the self-employed, with the youth in schools and universities, with the employees in healthcare services, and generally, with the working people in the workplaces and the popular neighbourhoods.

In cooperation with the Party organisations, they collect material for parliamentary interventions to be more effective and revealing.

They are at the forefront of the workers’ and people’s struggles, contributing to the organisation of the struggle.

Communist MPs are not detached from the working class and the popular strata, even in terms of income. They give their entire parliamentary salary to the Party, which, to the extent that’s possible given the needs of the class struggle, provides them with an income that cannot exceed a workers’ salary.

Our Party has also a significant experience from the struggle against the Nazi criminal organisation “Golden Dawn”¹. Our Party confronts them both in parliament and in the workers’ and people’s movement and tries to reveal the dangerous role of the fascists, currently in the courts for crimes, murders of militants and immigrants, attacks against communists and forces of Pame. The KKE and KNE, along with militant workers, contribute decisively to the protection of the struggles so that the working class isolates the fascist monstrosity.

The members of the Party who are elected or appointed by the Party to legislative bodies, in representative or other elected bodies and gen-

erally in the institutions of the bourgeois state, implement the policy and the decisions of the Party, are committed to the cause of the working class and the defence of its interests and consistently defend the people's interests.

When Party members are proposed to undertake duties in these positions, the opinion of their Party Base Organisations and the respective organs must be taken into account.

This position is at the disposal of the Party. The leading organs may appoint them to another field of responsibility according to the Party's needs.

The salaries, the allowances and the pensions or any other economic benefits that flow from this position belong to the Party and are granted to it.

The MPs who are members of the Party comprise the parliamentary group. The lists of the Party are drafted by the CC, according to the proposals of the leading organs of the Party organisations. The CC decides on the composition of the parliamentary group and the secretariat that coordinates its work.

The Party's parliamentary activities serve the goals and the needs of the class struggle.

The KKE fights against parliamentary illusions

The KKE tells the people that parliamentary work is merely an aspect of the struggle. The main issue is the acceleration of the labour movement's regrouping, the strengthening of the trade unions, the consolidation of class orientation, the change of the correlation of forces, the defeat of the forces that support the EU, the bourgeois policy of the reformist, and opportunist forces that promote class collaboration and seek to disarm the labour movement.

It explains the need to construct the social alliance so as to strength-

en the anti-capitalist, anti-monopoly struggle and rally forces for the overthrow of capitalist barbarity.

The KKE emphasises that the struggle against the bourgeois and opportunist forces in parliament and the European Parliament – for all the people’s problems in confrontation with the bourgeois class, the bourgeois state, the EU and the capitalist system – has nothing to do with the fostering of illusions and confusion that parliamentary struggle can lead to a pro-people reformation of the capitalist system or the EU, the imperialist Union which is supported by strong monopoly groups, a position promoted by the ELP² or Syriza or other forces in Greece.

The experience of our Party demonstrates that this position has created serious damage to people’s consciousness. It is based on the dangerous illusion that capitalism can be humanised, in a period that the capitalist system in its current imperialist stage is becoming increasingly reactionary and dangerous.

Our fundamental position is that we cannot talk about “democracy in general” but only about bourgeois democracy. Likewise, there is no “dictatorship in general” but dictatorship of the oppressed class, the proletariat, over its oppressors and exploiters, namely over the bourgeois class aiming at the defeat of their resistance in their struggle for domination: “The most democratic bourgeois republic is nothing more than a machine for the suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie, for the suppression of the mass of the toilers by a handful of capitalists ...” (VI Lenin *On “Democracy” and Dictatorship*, Collected Works, V. 27, pgs., 388-393) and that this suppression escalates when the power of capital is at stake.

In our opinion, these issues are fundamental for the elaboration of the policy of the Communist Party, and are useful for the struggle to win over workers’ people’s consciousness, and for the maturation of the subjective factor.

The bourgeois parties utilise the political, ideological mechanisms of the system, the repressive mechanisms, the intervention of the employers. They deceive, they use false dilemmas and the logic of the “lesser evil” to trap popular forces.

The participation of communists in the elections is based on other criteria. Communists defend the truth, they do not ‘sweet-talk’ the masses, they struggle against the logic of the “saviour” from above. On the contrary, they show the real revolutionary path and as far as possible, the pre-election battle is organised around the mobilisation of the working people.

Based on the above, our Party dealt with the complicated developments in the period 2012-2015, a period that was marked by the rise of Syriza. Syriza was a small opportunist party that emerged from the split of the KKE in 1991. In the elections it got 3-4% while having no bonds with the working class. It was transformed into a party with a social democratic strategy and prepared for bourgeois governance with the support of powerful sections of the bourgeois class.

Syriza took advantage of the damage done to the old social democratic party, Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) during the capitalist crisis. It gathered leaders of Pasok and utilised forces from its support base.

Dealing with Syriza was not an easy task. Syriza utilised left slogans, exploited the struggles of the communists and tried to ‘sweet-talk’ the working people. In January 2015 it won the majority and formed a government with the bourgeois nationalist party “independent Greeks” (ANEL).

Our Party predicted the social democratic transformation of Syriza way ahead of time, its promotion as a new social democratic pillar of the bourgeois political system and capitalist development, and revealed its role from the very first moment.

The KKE resisted the pressure exerted on it with the discussion about a left government. Despite the fact that this principled position caused a loss in votes and seats in the parliament in the elections of June 2012, the KKE followed a policy that laid a strong foundation for the development of the class struggle in conditions of a deep capitalist crisis. At the same time, at the international level it dealt decisively with the opportunist forces and particularly the ELP, which played a leading role in the support of Syriza at the expense of our Party and sought to deceive the working people.

The position of the KKE was soon confirmed and vindicated in practice.

When Syriza took power in January 2015 it continued the anti-people policies of the previous bourgeois governments and parties. Together, (with New Democracy (ND) and Pasok) it adopted and implemented the 3rd memorandum which was jointly elaborated by the government, the EU and the IMF promoting a package of measures that abolished collective labour agreements, imposed cuts in salaries and pensions, and abolished basic social rights.

This period is marked by privatisation in strategic sectors of the economy (airports, ports etc); heavy taxation is being imposed on the working people; and healthcare and education are being further commercialised.

Syriza supports big capital with funding, tax exemptions etc. High unemployment rates remain and exceed 20% and flexible forms of employment, which intensify capitalist exploitation, are being expanded. These policies are being continued today in the conditions of the weak recovery of the capitalist economy. The anti-people measures are being maintained and reinforced. In many cases, the struggles of the peoples are met with repression. Recently the government passed a law that undermines the right to strike, with 90% of strikes declared illegal.

However, the most prominent contribution of Syriza-ANEL government is the support of Nato, the USA and the EU and the involvement of the country in the imperialist plans, the use and the creation of new US-Nato military bases which are used in the war against the people of Syria, Libya, and in all imperialist interventions.

The KKE and Pame are at the forefront of the struggles of the working class, the farmers and generally the popular strata with strikes, demonstrations, occupations, struggle against imperialist wars and for the development of internationalist solidarity.

More and more people have understood today the decisive position of the Party towards the so-called left, social democratic government and the fact that no bourgeois party, no bourgeois government that serve the interests of capital can implement pro-people policies.

On the basis of this line, communists are organising the struggle in factories workplaces, in schools and universities, in neighbourhoods and are strengthening their influence in the labour and people's movement.

The forces of Pame are winning positions in the trade unions. The class-oriented movement occupies the second position in the trade unions with 25%. The lists supported by KNE in the universities are also second, exceeding 20%.

Reflecting on strategic and tactical decisions

There is a crucial question: what would have happened if the KKE had retreated and had cooperated with the so-called left government, with social democracy and opportunism?

The damage would have been dramatic. The prestige and the character of the Party would have suffered a great blow. Our people would have lost their confidence in communists and would have been deprived of a strong force that struggles both inside and outside the par-

liament for the interests of the people, concentrating and educating forces for the overthrow of capitalist exploitation.

The KKE uses its 100-year history, its achievements and mistakes; it examines its history objectively. Communists are not distracted by successes. Complacency is a big enemy. It is necessary to deal decisively with our weaknesses. Class struggle is hard, but the way is paved and we struggle for a strong Party in the struggle for the strengthening the labour movement, the consolidation of the anti-capitalist anti-monopoly social alliance. We struggle for a Party that has deeply assimilated the scientific theory of Marxism-Leninism, and that will be prepared to lead the struggle against imperialist war, for working class power – socialism-communism. ●

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Notes

1 Golden Dawn is a neo-Nazi mass movement, strongly racist and xenophobic, and campaigning for the conquest of counties to the north of Greece and of Istanbul to form a "Greater Greece". It's leader and several MPs are on trial for the murder of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas.

2 ELP: Party of the European Left – association of European social democratic parties represented in the EU parliament

CHINA'S WANSHOU FORUM

China's evolving approach to socialist construction

Chris Matlhako outlines China's long-term approach to socialist development, as set out in *Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era*

The 19th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), held last October, is regarded as a watershed congress. Taken with the decisions of the previous congress, the 19th Congress will go down in history as a defining moment in China's socialist construction and its impact on the world, as far afield as Europe, North America, and Africa. The 19th Congress amended the CPC constitution to include General Secretary Xi Jinping's analytical contribution, *Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era* as a new component of the Party's guide for action. There was also a clear endeavour on the part of the Chinese leadership to take control of key instruments of society, such as the military, with Xi Jinping installed as Chairman of the Military Commission and recognised alongside Mao Zedong as the 'Core'. This is accompanied by a renewed focus on Party discipline and tough stances on dealing with "tigers and flies" and "hunting foxes". Xi was re-elected General Secretary of the Party for another five-year term – in the process, according to *The Times* magazine, joining "Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in the pantheon of modern China's most powerful leaders".

This accolade is based on the political report that Xi gave at the 18th

Congress, at which he urged the CPC to thoroughly understand, that “‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ consisted of a path, theory and system”¹. The 18th Congress expounded on the scientific meaning of the path, theory and system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the relationship between the three. It further articulated that the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics is the way to reach the goal, that theory offers a guide to action, and the system provides a fundamental guarantee.

In China, as we found during a recent high level South African Communist Party (SACP) visit – in part to attend the 2018 Wanshou Forum – new elaborations are being developed on key positions on the Party, the economy, the military and an advanced culture. There is also renewed enthusiasm for Marxism: we not only encountered this during an event marking the bi-centenary of Karl Marx, but Xi had also convened a Politburo meeting to discuss the Communist Manifesto and has urged all Party members to (re)familiarise themselves with the Manifesto. The “Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era” has become the most important elaboration since the process of the “opening up and reform” 40 years ago. The resolution of the 19th Congress notes that since the Party’s 18th Congress, and in response to contemporary developments and by integrating theory with practice, Chinese communists have systematically addressed the major current question in China – what kind of socialism with Chinese characteristics the new era requires them to uphold and develop and how they should uphold and develop it, thus giving shape to *Xi Jinping Thought*. *Xi Jinping Thought* is a continuation and development of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, the Theory of Three Represents, and the Scientific Outlook on Development.

The 19th Congress concluded by asserting; “[T]he Congress urges Par-

ty organisations at all levels and all Party members, under the firm leadership of the Party Central Committee with Cde Xi at the core, to hold high the great banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics ... and more purposefully study, observe, apply, and uphold the Party constitution. The Congress urges the entire Party to uphold and strengthen the overall leadership of the Party, ensure the Party's strict self-supervision and strict self-governance in every respect, and keep working to secure a decisive victory in finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, to strive for the great success of socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era, to realize the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation, and to see our people fulfil their aspirations for a better life”.

During the dark days of China's subjugation, it became obvious that, to achieve national independence and peoples' liberation, the Chinese people had to overthrow the feudal autocratic rule and conduct fundamental social change. To this end, “numerous people with lofty ideals” made brave sacrifices and unremitting efforts to explore the correct road for saving the country. For many years, these struggles were fruitless: The Movement of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, the Hundred Days' Reform movement, the Yi Ho Tuan Movement, and the Revolution of 1911, occurred over half a century, but they and other initiatives – such as the peasant uprising, constitutional monarchy, and bourgeois republicanism – failed to achieve the desired results. At that time, China suffered continuous wars, mass impoverishment and many humiliating defeats. After Sun Yat-Sen first proposed the slogan of *Rejuvenating China*, the CPC believes the goal became clear. Thus, in modern times China has vigorously pursued this rejuvenation to achieve the “China Dream”.

China in the new era and what it means

Perhaps the most important subtext of the engagements in the spirit

of fraternal exchanges at the Wanshou Forum, 2018, was to attempt to strip away the layers of myth and misunderstandings that have characterised much of the Western-dominated perspective on China, since the spectacular growth of China and its increasingly central role in the world economy. Many of the Western-driven myths are simply a result of an inability to fully comprehend Chinese reality, as well as scapegoating, especially for some problems that have arisen on the continent, and a shallow analysis of China's history and revolutionary process. It is also a result of an ideological blinker that inhibits comprehension since China's development doesn't fit into the neoliberal prescriptions of development. The usual retort of Western commentators to a 'model' that doesn't comply with their predetermined 'one size fits all' market dominance is to pour scorn on the alternative model.

"China's reality today, should be seen against the backdrop of its real historical context: the struggle against feudal and colonial control, the initial stages of the revolution during the era of Mao Zedong, as well as the economic and political developments since", argues Kenny Coyle in the pamphlet *China's new era and what it means*, published by the Communist Party of Britain. Coyle is particularly thorough in locating China contextually in today's reality; there is a congruous link with what the outcomes of the 19th Congress stipulate.

China's spectacular recent rise has taken many commentators by surprise, particularly because its project has not played out according to long-held dogmas. China suffered severely under colonialism and brutal occupation. Coyle says China, overwhelmingly rural and its population made up of impoverished and mostly illiterate peasants – and suffering from numerous devastating famines that periodically swept the countryside – was hopelessly backward and given no chance of pulling itself out of that misery.

Today this is a distant memory: within a decade or so, according to

the World Bank and others, China is projected to become the world's largest economy, toppling the United States from the pole position it has held for more than 100 years. This will take place amidst huge and deep challenges for a country with the world's largest population. China already has had its fair share of devastating challenges and seems determined not to repeat these, but rather follow a steady, assured and measured course of development into the future. In Xi's leadership and the tremendous achievements realised to date, the CPC is planning to assume an even greater role globally.

This will pose huge challenges to China and, if badly handled, could result in the derailing of its tremendous progress. However, there seems to be some countervailing forces that suggest that these challenges can be met successfully. Xi said as much to the 19th Congress, telling delegates China is well on the road to becoming "a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence".

The Belt & Road Initiative

By far the most notable imprint on China and the CPC has been Xi's *Belt & Road Initiative*. It is an ambitious plan, tapping deep into Chinese history and culture. Xi outlined his plans for a 'New Silk Road Economic Belt' on a visit to Kazakhstan in 2013. The Silk Road was the ancient trade route that criss-crossed Eurasia, connecting China with Europe, the Middle East, and Central and South Asia. The modern plan covers numerous projects over several countries and is centred on large-scale investments in new infrastructure – highways, energy pipelines and power networks, railways, along with port and logistics investment in partner countries outside the Belt but linked by maritime trade routes, dubbed the *Maritime Road*. The estimates of the overall investment needed to realise the '*Belt & Road Initiative*' lie somewhere between £650-billion and £850-billion (R11 000-R15 000-billion), says Coyle.

China and Africa

China's growth has benefited its partners, particularly in Africa, such as Ethiopia and Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, through a programme of resource-for-infrastructure partnership and other *Belt & Road Initiatives*. China is constructing a railway link from the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa to the port city of neighbouring Djibouti and has also, for the first time, established an overseas military base in that country.

There is contested narrative about China's role in Africa, although it had been on the continent for many years before the decolonisation period of the 1950s. There is a growing negativity in much Western-linked media about China in Africa: "It is not only the western-driven ideologues' narrative and the right that has maligned China, but some sections of the left who are too easily seduced by the idea that China represents a version of untrammelled capitalism or even that it is a new imperialist enemy," argues Coyle.

A careful reading of CPC congress documents since the "reform and opening up" process began, indicates the remarkable progress achieved by China was precisely because it *didn't* follow the paths of former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where socialism was overturned and capitalism restored. China has also not repeated the familiar forms of socialist development – pioneered in the Stalin era in the USSR and replicated widely, including in China in the formative years of the consolidation of the Peoples' Republic of China. The articulation of building *Socialism with Chinese characteristics* has created a unique model for the conditions of China and on its own terms.

China faces huge challenges even today, evidenced by its internal east-west divide, urban-rural paradigm and numerous ethnicities that make up that huge nation, among them Tibetan and other regional minorities and pockets of dissent in Hong Kong, which have attempted to foster a "colour revolution" of some sort. There are also serious la-

bour and trade union issues. China's political, economic and foreign policy over the next decade is not only fundamental to the country itself, but also to the wider Asia-Pacific region and, increasingly, the world beyond.

China already represents 16% of global gross domestic product (GDP), projected to rise to 28% by 2030. China is also by far the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Furthermore, continued maritime boundary disputes in both the East and South China seas are a significant contributing factor in the region's underlining strategic instability. How China deals with each of these challenges is therefore of significance to us all.

Wanshou Forum 2018 – “Marxism of the 21st Century and Xi Jinping thought on socialism with Chinese characteristics for a new era

At the Wanshou Forum 2018, at Beijing's Renmin University, leaders of the SACP discussed with leading academics, researchers and students their interpretations of the socialist construction in China, its implications and in particular, its relationship with Africa and the world, presenting a unique opportunity for frank and deep exchanges and sharing of ideas. Forum panels presented on different topics and were generally well received in the spirit of fraternal relations our two parties enjoy. It was repeatedly noted that the CPC and the SACP were founded in the same month of the same year – July 1921.

Chinese academics and researchers at the Wanshou Forum 2018 pointed out that China has had to undergo comprehensive and deep adjustments over the years - from collectivisation and problems of the attempt at rapid industrialisation during the “Great Leap Forward” period, forcing the CPC to develop alternative programmes. They pointed out that they studied and researched extensively the very notion of socialism, its experimentation in the USSR, proposals made by various

people such as Leon Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin and others to arrive at a point where they named their process *socialism with Chinese characteristics*. They argued that they learnt important lessons from places such as Hungary and Yugoslavia.

The Chinese subsequently concluded that steady development was to be preferred to attempts to accelerate economic growth at unrealistic levels. Today, the CPC is articulating considerably longer-term targets and timeframes for building socialism than envisioned by many communist parties. The general assumption has been that the transition from backward capitalist or semi-feudal societies to a fully socialist one could be accomplished in a matter of a couple of decades. But Xi told the 18th Congress; “Their Parties’ basic line for the primary stage of socialism was the life line of the Party and the state. In practice we must firmly adhere to ‘one central task, two basic points’, neither deviating from the ‘one central task’, nor neglecting the ‘two basic points.’” Since the late 1970s, under Deng Xiaoping’s strategy, a long-range programme was articulated, looking toward the middle of the 21st century to realise industrialisation and advances in the process of building “socialism with Chinese characteristics”.

Building socialism: a long-term approach

China will be celebrating important anniversaries in the coming years. In 2049 China will mark the centenary of the founding of the Peoples’ Republic of China. By then it intends to have achieved all-round transformation and development into a “modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious”. This lengthy period is referred to by the CPC as the “primary stage of socialism”.

A key milestone on this path is another centenary – that of the CPC itself – in 2021. Here the modest target, reaffirmed at the 19th Con-

gress, is to “build a moderately prosperous society in all respects”. This essentially means eradicating absolute poverty and consolidating the living standards of the Chinese people at all levels, a process we observed during study tours to poverty alleviation programmes in rural areas in the west of China.

Indications are that China will indeed achieve these goals. The 19th Congress emphasises: “A major political conclusion is drawn in the political report to the 19th Party Congress that the principal contradiction facing Chinese society has evolved and is now that between the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life and unbalanced and inadequate development; it reflects the realities of the development of Chinese society, and serves as an important basis on which we formulate major policies and long-term strategies for the Party and the country. The Party constitution is revised accordingly to provide guidance for us to better understand the new historic juncture in China’s development and its particular features in the current stage and to further advance the cause of the Party and the country.

“The Congress holds that statements on our people-centred philosophy of development; on innovative, coordinated, green, and open development that is for everyone; on coordinated efforts to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, comprehensively deepen reform, fully advance law-based governance, and strengthen Party self-governance in every respect; and on all-out efforts to build a great modern socialist country, represent the ultimate purpose, vision, overall strategy, and overarching goal of the Party in upholding and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

China will carry huge responsibilities placed upon it by its rise on the world stage, with enormous challenges, although its achievements are already colossal. The process will not be without its contradictions. But the commitment of the Chinese people – and the CPC leadership

under Xi Jinping – to peaceful development characterised by a win-win relationship, presents an opportunity for Africa to partner with China in mutually beneficial ways. The ideological onslaught on China and its role in the world and in Africa must be engaged. Contrary to Fukuyama's assertion, history has not ended. Karl Marx writes, in the *18th Brumaire of Luis Bonaparte*; "Hegel remarks somewhere that all great, world historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice. He had forgotten to add, the first time as a tragedy, the second as a farce." It will be a farce indeed, if the left allows the ideological attack on China to triumph and another socialist elaboration and construction to be undermined by Western ideologues.

A deeper study of the process underway in China is critical for our Party and others interested in the important role China plays. Coyle writes: "Socialists and anti-imperialists who undermine China's importance or who dismiss the country as some kind of equivalent of the US not only fail to understand the complex historical processes at work, may also fail to see advantages of the many tactical and strategic opportunities for the left that China's rise will produce. The shift in the international balance of forces is already being felt".

Cde Matlhako is the SACP 2nd Deputy General Secretary

Notes

1 "Socialism with Chinese characteristics" has its roots in the "reform and opening up" initiative ushered in by the CPC Central Committee in 1978 – although it had been debated for at least the previous two decades. It was first explicitly articulated in 1987 as socialism with Chinese characteristics" in a report to the CPC's 13th Congress titled *Advance along the road of socialism with Chinese characteristics*.



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