

The NDR & the struggle for socialism in SA

Draft *SA'n Struggle for Socialism* Party Programme
pages 14-20

Presentation to Jack Simons Party School

July 2, 2022

Role & Character of Party in Changing Circumstances

- Over the 100 years of the Party's centenary of struggle -3 high-points when Party's vanguard role really came to the fore:
 - 1940s when Party was more effective and possibly larger than ANC. Party's activism rooted in trade unions (1945 Mineworkers' strike), community (Yusuf Dadoo – Indian Passive Resistance campaign).
 - mid-1960s – 1990 – a tight, relative small party active inside of the ANC and broader MDM
 - Early 1990s – emerging mass party – critical in negotiations process
- Now – in our very challenging situation - What can we learn (ideologically AND organisationally) from these different moments in the Party's history?

3 major periods in contemporary world history

1945-1970s, late 1970s-1990, 1990-present

- **1945 – late 1970s** – the defeat of fascism at the end of World War 2 produced a changing global balance of forces
 - Red Army's liberation of Berlin and defeat of Hitler – resulted in an expanded Soviet Bloc, soon after Chinese Communist Party's victory 1949– one-third of humanity now living in nominally socialist countries
 - In developed capitalist countries – working class greatly strengthened – able to drive through social-democratic reforms (nationalisation, welfare states, etc)
 - In Global South – great stirring of radical National Liberation Movements (India 1947, Cuba 1959, Algeria 1962, Vietnam – 1974)
- Two power blocs (imperialist bloc under US domination/socialist bloc led by SU) –
- Cold War (with hot wars in contested regions – one of which = southern Africa) – imperialism used regional “gendarme” states to counter advance of NLMs – one of which was apartheid state

Post-1945 in SA

- Here in SA – National Party 1949 election victory – first major act Suppression of Communism Act 1950
- CPSA disbanded – but SACP launched in 1953 in deep underground
- Party members activism now much more within ANC and Congress movement – Defiance Campaign, Congress of People and Freedom Charter. Party members also major journalists The Guardian, New Age (Ruth First, Govan Mbeki, Brian Bunting)
- 1960 ANC banned, 1961 MK launched, 1965 Rivonia arrests – strategic defeat of our movement

SACP's vanguard role mid-1960s to 1990

Factors that positioned the Party's vanguard role within the broader ANC-led movement:

- Party's underground experience – 10 years ahead of ANC
- Military experience of Party members (Slovo, Wolpe, Rusty Bernstein, Arthur Goldreich, Wolfie Kodesh, Fred Carneson)
- Party's international links (British Communist Party & Soviets and Chinese) – compared with ANC's disappointing experience in independent Africa
- Strategic outlook – Road to South African Freedom 1962

SACP's strategic vanguard role 1960s-90

- RtSAF drew on declarations of the International Meeting of Communist & Workers' Parties 1957 & 1960 – characterising the global situation as one in which “communism” was “the dynamic social and political force of our times”, supporting and supported by supporting radical NLMs in the South, and militant worker and democratic movements in the developed capitalist countries.
- Road to SA'n Freedom – introduced concept of Colonialism of a Special Type
 - Main content of our struggle = a national liberation struggle, for a national democratic revolution
 - But...in the particular context of a relatively developed, national monopoly capitalist system – i.e. no longer a struggle against “settler colonialism”, but against indigenised white minority rule buttressed by national – SA'n - monopoly capital itself linked into imperialist capital
 - Which meant that NDR struggle required a socialist orientation

SACP's strategic vanguard role

- RtSAF – located our struggle within a global context – with our main content being part of global anti-colonial/anti-imperialist (a radical NDR)
- But at the same time adapted this understanding to our specific SA'n reality
- You can find a brilliant development of these 2 aspects in Slovo's No Middle Road (1975) where he seeks to counter demoralisation – SA's armed struggle is stuttering. Why? Enemy well entrenched across entire territory – but precisely BECAUSE of relative sophistication of enemy (rail lines, power-lines, dependence on blk workers) vulnerable

SACP's vanguard influence on ANC programmatically

- ANC's 1969 Morogoro Strategy & Tactics: *"The struggle of the oppressed people of SA is taking place within an international context of transition to the socialist system, of the breakdown of the colonial system as a result of national liberation and socialist revolutions, and the fight for social and economic progress by the people of the whole world."*

SACP & ANC a shared strategic vision 1979 the Green Book

1979 internal ANC report, the "Green Book" – *"We debated the more long-term aims of our NDR, and the extent to which the ANC, as a national movement, should tie itself to the ideology of Mxsm-Leninism and publicly commit itself to the socialist option...the ANC is not a party, & its direct or open commitment to socialist ideology may undermine its basic character as a broad national movement. It should be emphasised that no member of the Commission had any doubts about the ultimate need to continue our revolution towards a socialist order..."*

A vanguard Party – 1970s -80s

- This shared strategic understanding of the global and national realities created conditions in which the SACP could play a specific vanguard role and with a specific organisational character AT THAT TIME
- Party was small (never more than 3000), largely in exile – by mid-80s underground presence actively involved in Party units inside SA possibly around 300, tight probation of members.
- Party's public profile was minimal (at first only *The African Communist* quarterly). In 1970s *Inkululeko* appeared in underground. Only the Party's general secretary and chairperson made public
- Party's activism within ANC, MK, within TU and MDM
- Main focus was to be a Party of vanguard influence WITHIN the ANC and broader movements COSATU, UDF, MDM
- Extremely successful – key to 1990-4 breakthrough, Hani 2nd most popular political figure in SA, JS not far behind. Party's July 1990 Soweto coming out rally – 40,000 attended

The neo-liberal counter-revolution

- The shared strategic perspective on global trends had seemed to be confirmed by:
 - 1959 Cuba, 1964 Algeria, 1974 Vietnam
 - 1968 student rebellions W Europe, Mexico, social movements (peace, feminist, black power, civil rights – massive worker strikes Italy, France)
 - Deepening economic crisis of capitalism – 1973 OPEC oil price shock, stagnation plus inflation (stagflation)
- Neo-liberal counter-revolution
 - 1979 Thatcher, 1981 Reagan – assault on TU's, rolling back welfare states,
 - IMF/World Bank – structural adjustment programmes – neo-colonial, debt enslavement
 - Crippling arms race against SU
 - Contra wars (Nicaragua, Colombia, Angola (Unita), Mozambique (Renamo))
 - Local “gendarme” states – apartheid SA, Zionist Israel, shah in Iran, Marcos – in Philippines
- By late 1980s the 3 revolutionary streams – socialist bloc, TU and democratic struggles & radical NLMs ...all rolled back, momentum slowing

The paradox of early 1990s for SACP

- With formal unbanning in 1990 – the SACP more popular than ever before in its history...a five-fold increase in membership to 30,000 reported to 8th Congress 1991
- But our reference point – the Soviet Union collapsing (Berlin Wall comes down 1989, SU dismantled 1991)
- Early gains in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe rolled back.
- Around half of CC elected in April 1989 at 7th SACP congress left the Party a few months later, early 1990 – included 2 future presidents Mbeki & Zuma
- These departees now led a reformist and increasingly anti-party agenda from within ANC

A new class agenda from within ANC

- On negotiations:
 - Reformists in favour of an elite pact – “don’t rock the boat”, demobilise the mass base – spiralling violence = ‘third force’ (and not the apartheid regime)
 - SACP – a people-driven negotiations process therefore continued mass mobilisation
- On the spiralling violence in midst of negotiations
 - Reformists – “it’s the 3rd force” (not De Klerk)
 - SACP so-called “black on black violence” = integral part of regime’s negotiating strategy. “3rd Force = 1st Force”. Therefore imperative of building community self-defence capacity.

UMSEBENZI

VOICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

KRIEL ON VIOLENCE



'It's just the Sixth Kaffir War' - See Page 3

Volume 8 No 2

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FW's war on the people...

Build people's self-defence units!

1. Introduction

The ugly violence that has been unleashed against township residents makes the question of self-defence a vital necessity.

In the past our attempts to defend ourselves have been spontaneous and sometimes poorly-planned, and lacking in discipline.

What we need is an organised and disciplined force, guided by political leadership, which will serve both to protect the community and to ensure law and order.

2. Self-Defence is a Right!

The government allows Inkatha imps to carry so-called "cultural" weapons and to mobilise in battle formations. Minister Vlok tells the AWB with its military camps that there is nothing wrong with "self-protection" provided the commandos do not attack anyone.

Our people, who are overwhelmingly the victims of the violence, demand the right of self-protection too. This is a political demand and a right. It must resound throughout our country.

We do not intend to attack anybody but we demand the right to protect our lives, our families, our homes, our communities!

Clearly we cannot rely on the apartheid police and army.

When they are not attacking us they are siding with the attacking imps and vigilantes.

The impression that the sinister hit-squads are recruited from their ranks is very strong too. No! If we are to protect our lives then we must rely on our own strength, organisation and resources.

Our strength is in our numbers

BUILDING SELF-DEFENCE UNITS A new Umsebenzi series



but it must be organised strength. A group of 200 armed thugs cannot possibly overcome a township of 20 000 if the people are ready, prepared and organised.

3. About this series

This series will attempt to give guidance and provide ideas on the building of defence units. It should, however, be viewed as a contribution to the on-going discussions that are taking place everywhere.

To be relevant our series requires comments and contributions from activists who have gained invaluable experience over the years in the struggles to defend their communities.

There is a wealth of experience that has been growing up out of township and rural resistance. Theory must grow out of practice and in turn guide practice.

4. Tackling the problem

How do we build defence units? We need to tackle the problem in an organised and systematic way.

We cannot simply rely on calling together any group of people off the streets and run about haphazard in the face of attack.

There are various elements and tasks we will have to tackle. Amongst these are

- Organisation
- Structure
- Recruitment
- Training

- Communication
- Intelligence (gathering of information on hostile forces)
- Observation (of hostile force movements)
- Barricades and fortifications
- Weapons
- Tactics
- Plan of operation (which requires study of the area).

5. Organisation

The setting up of a defence system for a township or area must first be discussed with the local organisations such as ANC and SACP branch, civics, trade unions, women, youth groups and other formations.

These organisations should discuss the idea with the community at large, and ensure the community's understanding and acceptance.

The local, popular organisations should then elect or appoint a committee for self-defence. This committee will be responsible for the protection of the community.

It should be composed of reliable and decisive people who have the ability to organise and command without being dictatorial.

Comrades with military skills, such as MK ex-prisoners or reliable expolicemen, will play an important role.

It is important to stress that the committee is appointed by the popular organisations and that anyone who proves unsatisfactory can be immediately replaced by these organisations.

The committee serves the community and the people's organisations and is subservient to them.

But at the time of attack or impending danger all must obey the orders of the defence committee.

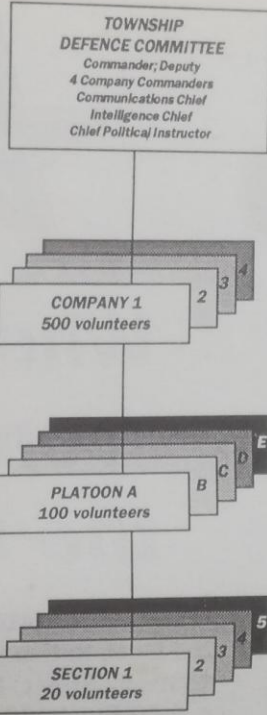
The committee must be headed by a commander who works with a deputy (2nd in command), and about six or seven others (depending on the township's size) who head the various defence formations and structures - company commanders plus those responsible for communications, intelligence, political instruction, etc.

6. Structure

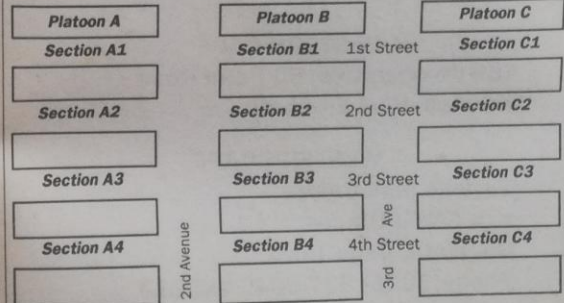
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Twenty volunteers could conveniently make up the basic section which is headed by a section leader and deputy.

Each section is responsible for the defence of a single street - from one intersection to the next.



STREET DEFENCE SYSTEM



In this system Section 1 of B Platoon (B1) defends 1st Street, between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, and the houses on the north and south sides of 1st street. The five sections of B Platoon defend the houses on 1st to 4th Streets between 2nd and 3rd Avenues.

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These companies constitute the Township Defence Force.

The rest of the population should be organised in an auxiliary or support capacity assisting at the section level.

This support should be organised with the assistance of the township street committees where these exist.

Every person, young and old, has a role to play and all should be organised (more about this later).

7. Recruitment

Joining the defence units must be on a voluntary basis.

The volunteers must be carefully selected. Criminals and other unreliable elements must be excluded until they reform and prove their reliability.

Would-be recruits must be screened and checked by the street committees and popular organisations so as to prevent infiltration by izimpimps.

The capability of the volunteers must be constantly developed.

They must undergo physical fitness training within their sections; receive education about their role as defenders of the community; and be trained to understand the needs of discipline and to obey orders.

The wearing of uniforms, drilling and political education will build the required discipline and morale.

Those with outstanding qualities are appointed to leadership positions.

In this way we will build defence organs that serve the people and complement our political organisations.

• To be continued...

Defend the people!

Free all political prisoners!

A new class agenda in ANC contd.

- On economic policy

- Reformists – capitalist growth first (through neoliberal macro-economic reform) so redistribution can follow
- SACP – growth through redistribution and structural transformation – a people driven RDP

- On meaning of 1994 democratic breakthrough:

- Reformists – “Free at Last!”, manage down popular expectations, top-down delivery
- SACP – “A luta continua!” – 1994 = a major bridgehead – now advance, deepen and defend a radical NDR

Contrasting messages in June 1994



The meaning of an NDR

- Reformists

- NDR = a capitalist stage in which SA'n capitalism is “modernised” & “normalised” i.e. de-racialised. A struggle for elite inclusion (i.e. BEE becomes central)

- The National Question is reduced to a race question thus under-stating the anti-imperialist side of national question (i.e. struggle for democratic national sovereignty)

- SACP 1995 Congress – Party breaks with idea of “stages”, “first an NDR, THEN socialism” – “Socialism is the Future – Build it Now!” Build momentum towards, capacity for, and elements of Socialism – NOW!

- NDR doesn't “belong to ANC”, with SACP hitching a ride and waiting for our time to come in some 2nd stage (that never comes)

The struggle within the struggle

- From around mid-1990s the reformist wing achieved dominance within the ANC (and ANC-led government) – GEAR enforced without consultation in 1996 = clear indication of this dominance
- Hence collective name given to this tendency by Party – “the 1996 class project”
- However, dominance never unchallenged, never completely stable.
- Key to sustained challenged = the SACP-COSATU left axis – blocked some privatisation, for instance, and sustained battle of ideas and a degree of popular mobilisation.
- Increasing tensions between ANC leadership and SACP (accused of ‘ultra-leftism’ and even of planning anti-ANC government insurrection)
- Momentarily improved (at least at national level) following 2007 Polokwane ANC national conference – but quickly unravelled as JZ attempted to hold together left/right-wing demagogues/neoliberals

What kind of SACP do we now have?

- Early 1990s – big internal debate – what kind of party? – mass or vanguard? Resolution a “mass vanguard party”
- With deepening hostility from 1996 class project, Party deliberately grew in size – currently over 300,000
- But do we have a cadre party? No longer probation, no longer clear targeted recruitment.
- How effective is our political education?.

What kind of SACP do we now have?

- What is the “sociology” of the Party?
- Gender? Racial diversity? Generational?
- A few thousand in employment (mainly in government, in unions), a tiny full-time staff, and a large number of unemployed?
- Does that impact on internal debates and different perceptions re. being a Party of influence within ANC?

What kind of party do we now have?

Is there a disjuncture between our programmatic and ideological work
AND our organisational work?

Do we evaluate and discuss our experience in government (eg. What lessons if any from Metsimaholo?) or our Red October campaigns?

In CC's why do we have a Political Report and a separate Organisational Report?

Do our publications devote any attention to organisational matters?

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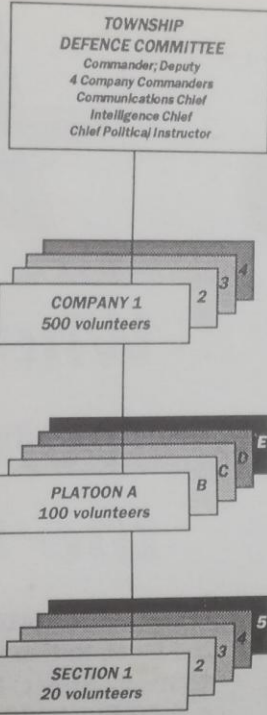
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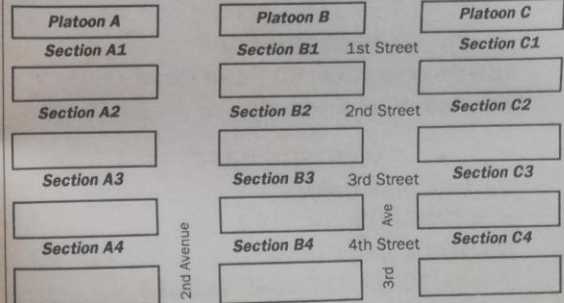
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How to defeat Low Intensity Warfare

- Build **DEMOCRATIC** organisations, in which differences are debated openly and in a comradely fashion — Low intensity Warfare exploits factionalism, whispers and gossip inside the liberation movement.
- Build **UNIFIED** organisations — LIW seeks to split leadership from its base.
- Build a **BROAD DEMOCRATIC COALITION** against murder and corruption — LIW aims to build its own "moderate" coalition.
- Build a **DISCIPLINED SELF-DEFENCE** ability — LIW wants communities to feel hopeless.
- Spread **INFORMATION** about LIW — LIW

depends on disinformation and confusion.

- **EXPOSE LIW** — we must welcome the media, we must call for international monitoring.
- **We must be the champions of PEACE and DISCIPLINE** — every act of indiscipline, every piece of ultra-militant rhetoric, every act of coercion against the people, every short-cut is a space for LIW to exploit.

REMEMBER —
LIW has worked quite well for the imperialists in places like Nicaragua and the Philippines. It has also had a devastating effect in remote rural areas of

Mozambique and Angola —

BUT HERE IN SOUTH AFRICA —

- **LIW is being used in the industrial heartland of our country, in the full glare of the world's TV cameras. This makes it a much more clumsy and risky weapon for De Klerk. It also disrupts FW's own economy, we must make him pay.**
- **LIW depends on building a credible "pro-Western" alternative to the liberation movement. FW was hoping to be that alternative. Let us make sure that the people of our country and world never forget the blood of Bhalpatang. LIW CAN BE DEFEATED!**

Hostels: Dwelling units or military bases?

There should be no doubt at this stage about the pattern of the violence on the Witwatersrand. There is one recurring feature in all the killing and that is the presence of Inkatha — and more particularly, of its Youth Brigade.

Around the middle of 1991, there were positive developments in progress around the hostels in most areas of the Transvaal. The hostility which had been festering between hostel dwellers and the residents of

the surrounding townships since 1976 — when hostel dwellers were used as police auxiliaries against township youth — were in the process of being resolved. The hostels were gradually becoming integrated into the broader community.

At this point a campaign of militancy conducted from within the ranks of the IFP's Youth Brigade worked to turn hostels on the Reef into little more than military barracks. With the formation of the

Inkatha Freedom Party in July 1990, Youth Brigade leaders moved from hostel to hostel playing on tribal tensions, persuading Zulu-speaking inmates their lives were under threat from the ANC and the 'Xhosas'. At the same time large numbers of IFP imps were moved into the Transvaal from Natal, providing a fighting core to be deployed in the hostel-centred violence which followed. The broad was, cynically, to extend the sphere of influence of

KwaZulu Chief Minister Buthelezi into the Transvaal, and make him a political force more to be reckoned with than his minuscule degree of democratic support would indicate.

Two things happened around the time of the IFP takeover of hostels: one, non-IFP supporting hostel dwellers were either killed or forced out of the hostels, making way for imps from Natal. Many hostel refugees then moved into squatter camps surrounding the hostels — which

became the focus of much of the war of destabilisation.

Two, with the hostels consolidated as IFP strongholds, a cycle of violence was initiated from within the hostels which continues to this day. This violence has apparently been geared toward destabilisation and sowing terror in random ways among the township population at large.

In every case, it is areas where there are IFP-controlled hostels that the violence has been

prevalent. Areas around hostels like Sebokeng's KwaMazulu and most of the hostels in and around Pretoria — where it never succeeded in getting foothold — have remained relatively untouched by the township killings.

Equally suggestive is the fact that it was only after imps forcibly took over Madala hostel in Alexandra in March 1991 that this area became, in a matter of months, one of the worst flashpoints in the country. ★

SDUs: Let us learn from our mistakes

Numerous self defence units (SDUs) have been established in our country since the December 1990 ANC Consultative Conference resolution in this regard. There can be no question that the formation of these units has contributed to saving many, many lives in a situation of escalating violence.

The formation of SDUs has also meant there has been space for building democratic organisations. The very existence of the ANC in Richmond, Natal, to take just one example, has depended upon the capacity of the people to defend themselves.

An inspiring feature in the formation of the SDUs has also been the great popular creativity we have seen.

Many SDUs have demonstrated the potential our people have to organise themselves, to acquire skills and weaponry. Our people have been moving away from the old habit of passively waiting for material from MK.

MK does not and will not have the capacity to defend our people against all the violence coming from the system.

SACP general-secretary CHRIS HANI writes about lessons to be learnt on the growth of Self-Defence Units

These, then, are some of the positive and inspiring features of the SDUs. These positive features once more underline the absolute correctness of our resolution calling for their formation.

But, generally speaking, it is now time to revisit this whole area of SDUs honestly and self-critically. We must admit that their record has been uneven.

Weakness

- In the first place, there has often been a clear weakness on the side of the political organisations themselves. The first step in setting up an SDU is strengthening our political and community organisations. Individuals cannot just set themselves up as an SDU. Community control is central to SDUs. SDUs must serve the interests of the community, and they must derive

their authority from such community based organisations.

Absence of political control

- As a result of this first weakness, there has often been a glaring absence of political control and a clear line of command. Where this is the case SDUs have sometimes been hijacked by criminal elements. These elements have then used the space created by the SDU to organise all sorts of rackets. I have heard of examples where some SDUs have tried to exact a special tax on township business-people with some implied consumer boycott if they don't comply. Political organisations must curb any such tendency immediately.

Kangaroo courts

- We have also seen an alarming revival of kangaroo courts and kangaroo justice and even

the horrifying method of necklacing. It is extremely important to note that the entire national liberation movement has taken a very, very strong stand against the barbaric method of necklacing.

Obstructing police

- Some elements have used SDUs to obstruct the police when the police have been engaged in justifiable crime prevention activities. SDUs must never be seen to be sheltering criminals. Criminals who prey on our communities can never be seen as modern-day Robin Hoods.

Weapons aren't for settling differences

- The weapons in the hands of SDUs must never be used to settle political differences, or to get rid of a leadership by threats. Even if the leadership in question has become extremely unpopular, the only way to settle political differences is through debate, and through the proper democratic channels.

Political short cuts

- Another great danger is the

use of SDUs as the cutting edge for political work — for example, comrades sometimes want to take a political short-cut. "Let's attack the hostel!", they say, instead of addressing the whole question of the hostel politically. We must avoid at all cost tendencies to elevate military and offensive action over political and defensive operations.

Infiltration of SDUs

- The enemy is generally worried by our movement's strategy to encourage the setting up of SDUs. Consequently the police and Military Intelligence have intensified their strategies to smash SDUs. Already we know of some SDUs that are heavily infiltrated. In some cases elements of the system have actually taken over SDUs.

They then use them to carry out operations to discredit the national liberation movement. Wrong targets have deliberately been carried out that are not understood or even denounced by the community.

The infiltration of SDUs has also led to a situation where rivalry has been stoked between

SDUs, taking advantage of poor co-ordination between different SDUs. This has happened in the Vaal, for instance.

Lessons

From all of these negative problems certain clear lessons emerge:

- selection of people for SDUs, especially for the leadership of SDUs, must be carried out with extreme care. Only people with a clear track-record of service to their communities should be selected.
- Care must be taken to avoid those whose main track-record is militant rhetoric. Make sure that people incorporated into SDUs are not lumpen elements — people who are highly adventurous, often very brave, but who are open to manipulation by the system.
- SDUs should never be cut off from the leadership of community organisations. The leadership of these organisations must demand reports from the SDUs on their activities and there must be a regular check on material used.
- Community and political organisations must be seen to be



What kind of Party do we now have? Contd.

- What is daily practice and focus of the Party? Are Party structures embedded in daily struggles of communities and trade unions (as we were in 1940s)?
- Is the Party's focus still largely to influence the ANC (as we did so successfully in 1960s-70s-80s – but in a very different global situation, with a different ANC in which its class character has changed significantly)?
- Or should the Party seek to influence a mass-based constituency? To be a party of influence within society? If so, what public profile does the Party have?
- Or is that a false dichotomy? And if so – what is the correct balance?