

SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY

*The South African Road to Socialism*¹

CHAPTER 2 COLONIALISM OF A SPECIAL TYPE

An internationalist struggle is required to build a socialist world, a world based on human needs and not private profits for a tiny minority. But there is no single road to socialism. We have to struggle for these shared human goals in different places, from different histories and national circumstances, each with its own advantages and challenges. To understand the South African road to socialism, it is crucial to understand the history that shaped and distorted our country through its incorporation into the world capitalist system. And we have to understand the powerful legacy of popular struggles that have been constantly waged against oppression and exploitation in our country.

In the 16th century, the place we now know as South Africa, was weakly linked for the first time into an emerging world capitalist system through a handful of anchorage and watering stops along our coast-line. These were occasional stop-overs for European merchant fleets sailing to and from an East Indies, rich in spices and other precious cargoes.

This was the era of an earlier, a mercantile-dominated capitalism. It was a system based on long-distance trade in which profits were made less through the direct expropriation of surplus from the production process itself, and more through buying cheap in one location and selling dear in another. This earlier phase of capitalism was the major source of primary accumulation of finance capital that was soon to fuel the take-off in Europe of capitalism in its more developed, industrial form.

By the mid-17th century, the first permanent colonial settlement on our shores was established by the mercantile capitalist Dutch East Indies Company. The colony at the Cape imported significant numbers of slaves from the East Indies, from Angola, from Madagascar, and elsewhere. Slaves were pressed into work on farms, in homes, and in local artisanal work. Many were originally owned by the Dutch East India Company itself, others by farmers and tradespeople where they were subjected to the inhumane domination of the patriarchal

¹ These are excerpts from the Draft Programme of the SACP, which was presented to the SACP's 12th National Congress in July 2007 for discussion, amendments and adoption.

house-hold head. The slaves at the Cape were from diverse societies and cultures, their identities were stripped from them, families were broken up, partners separated, children taken from mothers. But slaves always resisted, forging new collective identities and cultures, of which “kitchen-Dutch”, today’s Afrikaans, was one achievement. An unbroken three and half centuries’ tradition of Islam was another. Slave resistance and the periodic outbreak of slave revolts were a constant feature of the Cape.

In this period, and through to the second half of the 19th century, the hinterland of South Africa held little interest for the hegemonic Dutch and then British powers. For these major imperial powers of the day, southern Africa was little more than a back-water on the way to somewhere else.

However, over several centuries there was to be relatively extensive European settlement into the interior of our country. This colonial settlement occurred on a scale that was eventually to be relatively large in comparison to the rest of sub-Saharan Africa, but it was similar to European settlement in other temperate zones of the world, in North America, the cone of South America, or Australasia. European colonial settlement occurred in these other localities at much the same time and under the impetus of similar social and economic factors. First it was the network of European mercantile trading routes that circled the globe. And then, on an expanding scale, the advancing capitalist agrarian revolution back in Europe uprooted millions of peasant farmers, who were shipped out as destitute “surplus” people to the so-called New World.

But, compared to Canada, the United States, Argentina, or Australia, for instance, there was to be one extremely significant and enduring difference in South Africa. Despite wars of conquest and dispossession, by the end of the 19th century indigenous Africans still constituted the overwhelming majority of the population. In South Africa, as in the Americas and in Australasia, indigenous hunter-gatherer and herding societies (in our case the San and Khoi) despite brave resistance against great odds, suffered almost complete cultural and, in the case of the former, virtual physical extinction.

However, Bantu-speaking agricultural societies in the summer rainfall areas of South Africa proved to be more cohesive. For the better part of a century, armed colonial advances on the so-called “eastern frontier”, for instance, were fiercely resisted and often beaten back. Settler occupation, supported by an imperial army, could only advance on this “eastern frontier” at an average rate of a mere one kilometer a year for over a century – such was the capacity for resistance.

Despite massive land and livestock dispossession, despite murderous incursions, and despite their own ethnic divisions, a majority of African indigenous people carried into 20th century South Africa their own languages and cultures, and an unbroken and collective tradition of anti-colonial struggle. This was to be the core popular mass base for a future African National Congress when it sought from 1912 to unite and re-build resistance in the new conditions of a changing society.

To the traditions of slave resistance, and African anti-colonial struggle, a third mass-based struggle tradition was later to be added at the beginning of the 20th century. The development of capitalist agriculture in Natal relied on the extensive importation of hundreds of thousands of indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent. Today South Africa is home to the largest diaspora community of people of Indian origin. It was here in SA and amongst this community that Mahatma Gandhi pioneered the strategy of mass defiance campaigning. It was this tradition of defiance and of mass boycotts of all kinds that was rekindled in the late 1940s in SA by the Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, led by communists.

And all of these traditions of collective struggle, of patriotic capacity to resist centuries of oppression, were taken up again, transformed and transmitted into the present through decades of anti-apartheid struggle in the last century. They remain a major resource for the national democratic revolutionary challenges of the 21st century.

The South African road to socialism is an internationalist road...but it is also profoundly rooted in the patriotic soil of popular struggle.

THE IMPERIALIST-DRIVEN CAPITALIST REVOLUTION IN SA

The establishment of colonial port-enclaves, relatively extensive colonial settlement, and an unvanquished flame of collective resistance...all of this was the immediate pre-history of modern South Africa.

The decisive turning point came in the last quarter of the 19th century with the mining revolution in the hinterland. It was a revolution that coincided with and was integral to what Lenin described as capitalism's "highest stage" - the stage of imperialism dominated by finance capital and massive productive investments (in contrast to mercantile trade in goods that were still produced within earlier forms of production).

The introduction of highly advanced capitalist forces and relations of production in the hinterland of our country constituted an externally imposed

capitalist revolution that shaped and was shaped, in its turn, by the social reality of SA in the second half of the 19th century.

The mining revolution imposed on South Africa an extremely advanced form of capitalism “out of the box”. It was advanced in its capital-intensity (including deep-level mining technology), its long-distance modern logistics rail and port infrastructure, its modern joint-stock company institutional form, and its dominance by global finance capital.

As with all major revolutions, the capitalist revolution in South Africa was not just about introducing new technology and forces of production, it also involved a major social and political revolution. The Anglo-Boer War, in particular, was directly linked to the commitment of huge investments in industrial mining in a hinterland not directly controlled by the hegemonic British colonial power. It was a war waged by British imperialist forces against independent, semi-feudal Boer republics. The war was part and parcel of the South African capitalist revolution. Its strategic objective was to forge a single politico-juridical state entity, i.e. one of the “super-structural” requirements for the expanded reproduction of capitalism in South Africa. The achievement of this politico-juridical dimension of the South Africa capitalist revolution was signaled by the 1910 Union of South Africa. For the first time South Africa became, so to speak, South Africa, a single nation-state.

CORE AND PERIPHERY – THE EXTERNAL DIMENSION

From the late 19th century, the emerging South Africa ceased to be a largely marginal zone within the capitalist global economy. It was now actively linked as a centre of capitalist production into the circuits of global accumulation...but still as a semi-peripheral zone, dominated by the economic interests of British imperial capital. This new capitalist state was, then, launched onto a path of rapid capitalist development. But, imposed from without as it was, and dominated by foreign financial capital, it was essentially a dependent development path.

The key systemic features of this dependent development path still persist within our economy today. South Africa’s dependent development path, subordinated to the hegemonic domination of the core economies of the imperialist centre, is not unique. Dependent-development is, precisely, what makes the whole of the Third World “third”. But the core/periphery (initially Britain/SA) external dimension was complemented in South Africa by a very significant second, an “internal” colonial, core/periphery type relationship.

CORE AND PERIPHERY – THE INTERNAL DIMENSION

The capitalist revolution in South Africa was associated, on the one hand, with the most advanced forms of capitalist development of the period. On the other hand, the deep-level mining that lay at the heart of this revolution, also required enormous numbers of unskilled workers. This mass of workers was drawn from the “native reserves” to which the great majority of South Africa’s population was now confined. A constant supply of hundreds of thousands of such workers required the coercive squeezing (through military pacification, restrictions on land access, poll tax, hut tax, etc.) of the areas under African occupation AND the simultaneous conservation of these areas. A key part of this “conservation” was the preservation of the “traditional” power relations of African societies in a subordinated and perverted manner. As one scholar has put it, colonialism in SA sought to preserve “not the force of tradition, but the traditions of force”, seeking to accentuate whatever authoritarian, quasi-feudal “traditions” it could find in African societies.

These conserved and perverted “traditions of force” were essentially patriarchal in kind. Peasant households were controlled and administered by what was often a colonially hand-picked “traditional” leadership that constituted a subordinate state apparatus within the white minority state. Chiefs who sought to resist were often deposed or banished. It should be noted, however, tradition had its own relative autonomy, and there were always traditional leaders who continued in varying degrees to resist colonial and racial oppression. Patriotic traditional leaders were among the founders of the ANC and this tradition of resistance was perpetuated through the anti-apartheid struggle, finding its organised expression in the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa).

Nevertheless, colonial and apartheid rule in South Africa always sought to subvert traditional patriarchal power to its own purposes. The mining houses also perpetuated this patriarchal-type domination over the black work-force at the point of production itself, through a system of “tribal” segregation in compounds, and subordinate supervisory adjuncts in the shape of “indunas” and “boss-boys”.

In short, the “conservation” of “native reserves” and colonially-perverted “traditions” was designed to ensure indirect rule, and these were part and parcel of the new capitalist relations of production. The simultaneous coercive squeezing and conservation promoted the conditions for the “cheap” (cheap for monopoly mining capital) reproduction of labour for the mines. The capitalist revolution in South Africa was based on an articulation between two modes of

production. The one dominated by advanced monopoly capitalism, the other “tribal”, patriarchal-based agriculture – in which the main “crop” was not cotton, or tobacco, or cocoa, but male migrant labour. These were not “two economies” but rather one economy, one South African capitalist economic growth path...but based on a systemic duality that had both an external dimension (European metropole/African colony) and, increasingly, a dominant internal dimension (monopoly capital/labour reserves).

This combination of factors has laid the basis for South Africa’s capitalist growth path over more than a century and a quarter. Naturally, many things have changed through the course of the 20th and into the 21st century, but the underlying systemic and structural features of CST capitalism persist into the present. In the most general terms these systemic features include: an excessive reliance on primary product exports (minerals and agricultural products) and an equally imbalanced reliance on imports of capital goods and manufactured consumer goods; a relatively weak national market dominated by a small middle class; the dominance of the mineral-energy-finance complex to the relative disadvantage of other sectors (eg. manufacturing); and a dual labour market, characterised by a small band of skilled (and now semi-skilled) workers and a mass of marginalised workers (previously largely migrant, now largely casualised, under-employed, “a-typical” workers).

All forms of colonialism and neo-colonialism are characterised by duality – essentially the subordination of a peripheral zone to the imperatives of an external metropolitan centre and its accumulation path. This form of “external” duality, as noted above, has also been a defining feature of modern South Africa. But much more than in most other variants of colonialism, in South Africa systemic duality has also been a pronounced “internal” feature.

This internal duality is, of course, precisely what defined the politico-juridical state form of South Africa’s colonialism of a special type. The white minority rule that characterised most of 20th century South Africa saw the consolidation of a white colonial ruling bloc occupying the same territory as the majority colonially oppressed. It was a state form in which whites were enfranchised citizens, while the black oppressed majority was disenfranchised, and many of them regarded as black “tribal subjects”.

In the last few decades, pro-capitalist ideologues have claimed that capitalism in SA was always “anti-racist”, that the “free market” was antithetical to apartheid. In fact, all of the key features of CST were pioneered, or lobbied for, by monopoly capital in South Africa (and particularly the mining houses) – including pass laws, compounds, and labour reserves. In the last decades of white minority rule the apartheid state was financed, armed and generally

buttressed by monopoly capital. White minority rule created the conditions in which the capitalist revolution in South Africa was consolidated and its expanded reproduction was guaranteed for the greater part of the 20th century. Far from capitalism and apartheid being inherently antagonistic, South African capitalism was built on the bedrock of national oppression. And it proved (from the perspective of monopoly capital) to be an extremely successful bedrock for many decades. For example, between 1963 and 1973, at the very height of apartheid oppression, the capitalist economy grew on average between 6-7%. It was precisely in this period of heightened repression and booming profits that most of today's major capitalist corporations in SA, the ones that still dominate our economy, consolidated their power within our society.

White minority rule, the state form associated with CST, has been formally abolished by the democratic breakthrough of 1994. But CST was not just a constitutional dispensation with white citizens endowed with rights, on the one hand, and black non-citizens on the other. It was also marked by other forms of stark duality – administrative, economic, social and spatial. These latter forms of duality, including persisting dualities within the anatomy of our new democratic state itself, remain deeply embedded and are continuously reproduced in our present reality.

And this is what is at stake.

Will our historic 1994 democratic breakthrough merely usher in some symbolic changes, a new political elite, and partial de-racialisation in the board-rooms of the very same corporations that prospered so well during the apartheid period? Will our 1994 democratic breakthrough deliver a still-born revolution? Will we have superficial changes that are little more than diversions, fronts behind which race, class and gendered oppression is reproduced for the great majority? Will we be blocked in a state of neo-colonialism of a special type?

Or will we succeed in using our 1994 democratic breakthrough as a bridgehead to consolidate a Freedom Charter society in which South Africa belongs to all who live in it? A society in which the wealth is shared, the power of monopolies is broken, and, as the Freedom Charter plainly says, the land is transferred to those who work it in order to banish starvation and land hunger?

These are the stakes. Many outcomes are possible. One thing is certain, the intensified class struggle that is apparent across the length and breadth of our society will be the decisive factor determining the outcome.

Which is why the SACP says:

**WORKERS TO THE FRONT TO BUILD
PEOPLE'S POWER ACROSS OUR LAND!**

**CHAPTER 3
THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION –
THE SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD TO SOCIALISM**

Collective analysis of the reality that has shaped South Africa is an integral part of our overall struggle. It is not just an academic exercise.

But in recent years, there has been a tendency to be vague about this history, about imperialism's role in shaping and distorting modern SA. Little serious attention has been paid to the dependent-development accumulation path into which we have been locked for more than a century now. Capitalist wealth accumulation and the deepening, abject under-development it reproduces for the majority are presented as if they were two unrelated universes. The one is viewed as a dynamic and generally admirable "first" economy; the other as an unfortunate "second" economy that just happens to be "lagging behind". This mechanical, undialectical approach continuously disconnects cause from effect, everything is presented in dichotomies.

When structural problems are acknowledged – "distance from major markets", a "skills deficit", or an over-reliance on capital goods imports – these tend to be treated as more or less random facts unrelated to any systemic historical process. They are seen as "constraints". But constraints for whom? And for what? The manner in which, for instance, an "ageing logistics infrastructure" is spoken of, gives the game away. It is a "constraint" for the "market", it increases the cost of doing business for business. Too often insufficient attention is paid to the non-existent infrastructure in deep rural areas, or in working class townships.

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

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

LONG BEEN MADE! The commanding heights of our economy have long been occupied by a monopoly-dominated, and increasingly trans-nationalised South African capitalist class. The great majority of South Africans have long been proletarianised, that is, alienated from independent means of production and with nothing to sell but their labour power.

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

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

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

WHY A NATIONAL REVOLUTION?

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

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

It is here that the dependent development path into which we have been locked for over a century presents the major challenge. Our excessive primary

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

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

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

The third dimension of the “national” in the NDR is REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM. We have noted that one of the great assets of our revolution is an unbroken legacy of popular struggle stretching back over several centuries. This legacy has been constantly drawn upon, replenished and transformed in struggle. It continues to provide a source of collective identity, of popular capacity and empowerment for a majority of South Africa’s workers and poor. It is this reality that accounts for the enduring popularity of the ANC, whatever the challenges it might be facing. This is not to say that any of us can simply take this popularity for granted. It is a popularity that has to be constantly won in leading

the struggle, in empowering popular forces to be their own emancipators, and in grasping the class and gender content of the national struggle.

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

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

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

WHY A DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION?

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

Historically, in the 18th and 19th centuries, many (but not all) bourgeois national revolutions in Europe saw considerable democratic advances for a wide array of popular classes, and not just for the principal beneficiary, the emergent bourgeoisie. These democratic advances had little if anything to do with the "inherently democratic" nature of capitalism, and everything to do with the class struggle that was required to dislodge feudal ruling classes and the state

apparatuses that up-held their domination. Broad movements were mobilised around the banner of basic democratic rights for all, general equality, freedom of worship, and for the franchise. The democratic rights and institutions that emerged in earlier centuries out of these national popular struggles were always curtailed and constantly threatened by the exploitative nature of the newly dominant capitalist relations of production.

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

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

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

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

A one-sided emphasis on democracy as a rights-based system ends up with a liberal “equal opportunities” perspective in which the constitutional right of everyone to, for instance, “trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions” (to quote from the Freedom Charter), is elevated above and at the expense of the need to radically transform the systemic features of our society. Which is why, in the Freedom Charter, this particular sentence on the right of everyone to “trade where they choose” etc. is subordinated to (but not eliminated by) the preceding sections in the relevant Freedom Charter clause: “The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all

South Africans, shall be restored to the people. The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole. All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people”. It is only after affirming all of this, that the Freedom Charter then correctly upholds, contextualises AND subordinates the individual right to trade, etc.

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

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

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

WHY A REVOLUTION?

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

However, since 1994, and particularly (but not only) in the decisive area of economic power, there have been strong tendencies to slide backwards into exactly that kind of rights-based, “representative”, inclusion. Thus, “transformation” of the apartheid economy (or more accurately of a capitalist economy shaped by CST) is too often reduced to “de-racialising” board-rooms, share-holdings and senior management structures through the promotion of “representative” blacks or women, without addressing the underlying systemic features of an economy that those very board-rooms, share-holdings and management structures daily promote and reproduce.

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

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

At the centre of this multi-class movement needs to be the working class. But it is a working class that must exert its hegemony through, in the first place, forging national democratic ties with the great mass of urban and rural poor, and impoverished black middle strata. But a working class hegemony over the NDR must be more ambitious than even this. Emerging strata of capital, and even established white capital must be actively mobilised into the transformational

agenda. This will not happen spontaneously, and it will seldom happen willingly. Which is why an NDR agenda, including the agenda of mobilising private capital resources, has to be driven by active working class struggle.

The mobilisation of private capital into an NDR struggle should be based on clear objectives and concrete tasks, which should include a priority on job-creating investment, skills training, appropriate and sustainable development of the forces of production, the elimination of compradorist, parasitic and other corrupt tendencies, and an active contribution to a strategic industrial policy that overcomes CST sectoral and spatial imbalances. Quite how various capitalist strata, black and white, (or, rather, the immense resources controlled by them) get to be mobilised into such an agenda will vary according to circumstance. It will range from enforcing effective strategic discipline on movement members involved in business, through increasing worker democracy on the shop-floor, state-led strategic planning, and state-provided incentives and infrastructure, effective state and also popular regulation, public private participation arrangements, to straightfor-ward compulsion and even expropriation. The tasks outlined above should constitute the strategic core and the basis for a developmentally oriented and strategically driven professional cadre in the state, in boards of parastatals, and in sections of the private sector

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

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

The NDR is not a “stage” that must first be traversed prior to a second socialist “stage”. The NDR is not a detour, or a delay, it is the most direct route to socialism in the South African reality. The NDR is also not the “postponement” of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the working class. How could it be? That class struggle is a daily reality embedded in the very nature of capitalism itself. The NDR is a strategic approach to advancing that class struggle in the material conditions of SA and the world in which we live. The prosecution of an NDR is the strategic means for maximising the size and coherence of a popular camp and for isolating and out-manoeuvring our principle strategic

opponent – monopoly capital and the imperialist forces that underpin it. The success of an NDR is, however, not guaranteed by theory and declaration. Working class and popular struggles, guided by clear strategies and tactics, and effective organisation, are the determining reality.

CHAPTER 5

THE SACP AND STATE POWER

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

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

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

The South African democratic breakthrough occurred at a time in which neo-liberal triumphalism was at its high point globally. Inevitably, neo-liberal ideas impacted upon the new state and its programmes. In particular, and at first, the active role of the state in the mainstream economy was seen to be largely confined to creating a macro-economic climate favourable to investors and capitalist-driven growth. There were also moves to “right-size” the public sector, with a particularly damaging impact that is still being felt on key developmental professions, including teachers and health-care workers.

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

However, the 1994 electoral platform of the ANC-led alliance, the Reconstruction and Development Programme, had envisaged a close, integral connection between growth and development – growth had to be developmental. In practice, the new state increasingly separated these critical

pillars of the RDP, into a capitalist-led growth programme (GEAR) that would then, subsequently, provide the resources (primarily fiscal resources) to deliver, top-down, “development”. And development tended then to be conceptualised as a series of government “delivery” targets. This separation of growth and development, and the assumption that development was wholly dependent on capitalist development, has also been reinforced by the tendency to imagine that we have “two economies” in SA, rather than a persisting CST-type accumulation path that constantly reproduces under-development.

These assumptions have further impacted upon the anatomy of the new state. In the CST period, the state was always bifurcated, in one way or another, into a mainstream state and into “native affairs” on the other. Clearly racist divisions of this kind have been abolished, but it is not difficult to see in many cases the vestiges of these kinds of divisions. There are state departments and state-owned enterprises that are relatively well-resourced and efficient whose principal mandate is to service the “first economy”, i.e. the dominant sectors of the capitalist economy. On the other hand, there are state departments that are typically under-resourced and overwhelmed by mass “delivery” tasks – essentially to an impoverished black majority (Health, Social Development, Housing, Education, Safety and Security, Home Affairs, etc.), while for the bourgeoisie and professional strata private sector providers deal with many of these functions. In other cases, the bifurcation happens within Ministries themselves – Agriculture and Land Affairs – with the former department dealing with “mainstream” agriculture, and an under-resourced Land Affairs battling to get a stalled land reform programme moving to scale.

The tendency to separate growth (i.e. capitalist growth) from development has meant that the first decade since 1994 has been characterised by some significant “delivery” achievements, but it has tended to be delivery without transformation. And this has meant that well-meaning delivery is often seeking to ameliorate an expanding crisis of underdevelopment as capitalist growth retrenches, casualises and generally marginalises millions more South Africans.

In the collective analysis of the SACP, these dominant assumptions about the state and about delivery went hand in hand with tendencies to demobilise the ANC as an active movement on the ground capable of leading popular struggle to reinforce the state. Development was seen largely as a technocratic delivery function, and not as a struggle for self-emancipation by millions of ordinary South Africans. This also resulted in a tendency to build a privileged axis within the state and ruling party between leading state managers and emerging bourgeois strata with close links to the new government.

From around 2001 dominant policy in government began to shift towards a much greater emphasis on building state capacity, and towards supporting the idea of a developmental state playing an active role in the economy – particularly in driving infrastructural development and an industrial policy. Through the 1990s the SACP had consistently called for this kind of state-led strategic focus, and we had consistently opposed and mobilised against an agenda of wide-ranging privatisation. The shifts noted above, however uneven, were therefore welcomed by the SACP.

However, these shifts did not necessarily mark a decisive break with a paradigm that envisaged a dichotomy between capitalist-driven growth on the one hand, and a more or less separate and technocratic development programme, dependent on capitalist growth on the other. It is possible for two quite different strategies to be lurking behind the agreement on the need for an active developmental state:

- Are we trying to improve, through state intervention, the performance of the present neo-colonial capitalist accumulation path – by removing “constraints”, improving infrastructure, and generally lowering the cost to doing business for business?
- Or are we trying to fundamentally transform this accumulation path through the ongoing advance, deepening and defence of the national democratic revolution?

Only working class hegemony and activism on the ground and in the state will ensure that the developmental state fulfils its developmental role. But how do we take forward this struggle?

Since the democratic breakthrough of 1994 the SACP has been a “party of governance” – but not a governing party as such. Tens of thousands of South African communists have taken up the challenges of governance, as cabinet ministers, members of legislatures, provincial executives, mayors and councillors, as officials and workers throughout the public service, including the armed forces and in the safety and security institutions. The SACP expects all of its members to conduct themselves as exemplary communists in these many deployments in the state apparatus, whether as ministers, senior civil servants or public sector workers.

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

campaigns. However, priority was given to securing overwhelming ANC election victories.

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

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

- The SACP is not, and will never become, a narrowly electoralist formation;
- Our approach to elections will be guided in this phase of the struggle by our overall strategic commitment to advancing, deepening and defending the national democratic revolution – the South African road to socialism; and
- Our strategic objective in regard to state power is to secure not party political but working class hegemony over the state.

**WORKERS TO THE FRONT TO BUILD
POPULAR POWER IN THE STATE!**

**CHAPTER 6
THE SACP AND THE ECONOMY**

The South African capitalist-dominated economy preserves all of the systemic features of its formation and consolidation within a colonial and special colonial framework.

In the first place, it is an economy that still relies heavily on primary product exports – particularly from mining and agriculture. Although mining's share of export earnings has declined over the decades, in 2007 it still constituted some 30% of those earnings. This excessive reliance on primary product exports still

locks us into a dependent-developmental growth path, and it has skewed our economy in many ways.

In the first place, it means that our economic growth and development is exceedingly vulnerable to global fluctuations, a reality over which we have little control.

The manner in which the excessive reliance on primary product exports has skewed our economy is also starkly illustrated in the politics of water. More than half of our country's raw water is used by largely white-dominated commercial agriculture - some researchers suggest that half of this water is wasted because of inappropriate crop choice and poor irrigation techniques. Another quarter of all our water is used by mining and industry.

The politics of energy has similar features. For instance, the aluminium smelters in Richard Bay, Maputo (Mozambique) and that planned as the anchor project for Coega are, in effect, designed to export South African coal transformed into electricity. These private multinationals are provided long-term electricity contracts (typically 25 years) on exceedingly favourable terms. They pay, on average, four times less than a lower-income household for electricity and each smelter uses enough electricity to power a medium-sized South African city, while creating less than a thousand jobs. We have been locking ourselves into these long-term electricity supply arrangements, basically exporting electricity cheaply (in the shape of aluminium) while our own domestic electricity generation capacity is under severe strain.

South Africa's over-reliance on mineral resources has also impacted in other ways on our approach to energy. The abundant availability of cheap coal has been used to drive an industrialisation process that is extremely energy intensive. South Africa's reliance of coal-based electricity has made us amongst the worst in the world in terms of carbon emissions per capita and energy intensity. According to an International Energy Agency report, if the Kyoto Protocol is to be fully adopted, South Africa is "the most vulnerable fossil fuel exporting country in the world". Our high energy intensity could become a "competitive disadvantage".

The excessive reliance on extractive mining has also created many spatial and logistics distortions which are detrimental to long-term, balanced growth and development. Mining extracts non-renewable resources, and over many decades there have been vast infrastructural water, energy, logistics investments, and large-scale human settlement in localities -in some of which there are no easy alternative economic activities once the resource is depleted. Parts of South Africa are now characterised by stranded towns, and whole regions in crisis.

Still today, our major, high-value logistics routes run between mineral extracting enclaves (typically in the interior) and ports (most of them the former colonial ports). The iron ore of Sishen to Saldanha, the Mpumalanga coal fields to Richards Bay, and the Gauteng hinterland to Durban. Meanwhile, logistics connections to our neighbouring countries are typically poor and inefficient, while within our own country rural branch rail-lines decay and the sub-national road network is hugely under-capitalised. Millions of our people are officially designated as “stranded” in terms of mobility.

As we have seen, the mining revolution imposed capitalism on South Africa at its highest, monopoly stage. There was little organic, endogenous emergence of capitalism. This has meant that from the very beginning the commanding heights of South African capitalism were dominated by monopoly capital – in the form of overlapping mining and financial interests in particular. South Africa’s economy is one of the most concentrated (monopolised) in the world. Small mining operations are virtually non-existent, and beneficiation of mineral products undeveloped. But it is not just in the mining sector, in general throughout our economy small and medium capital is exceedingly weak. A handful of financial institutions dominate the finance sector and, as the SACP has highlighted in an ongoing financial sector campaign, they are poorly attuned to servicing the great majority of South Africans, including small and medium capital.

South Africa’s capitalist economy is dominated by the minerals, energy and finance complex. These conglomerate forces continue to exert enormous power over strategic policy – in terms of energy pricing, water policy, and macro-economic strategy. (And, it should also be added, the big banks and mining houses – typically operating in overlapping consortia – are extremely active players in seeking to shape the ANC and even directly influence the nature of our movement’s leadership).

The flip-side of South Africa’s CST primary product export over-reliance, is an over-reliance on imports particularly for capital (machinery) and other manufactured goods. During the apartheid era, and indeed since 1994, there has been an ongoing perverse cycle in which as primary commodity global prices rise the South African capitalist economy grows on the back of rising exports, this growth then sucks in capital and luxury goods imports and our balance of payments situation worsens...despite favourable prices for our exports!

Our current major state-led infrastructural development programme is tending to have the same perverse impact on our balance of payments. As construction sites boom across South Africa, so there is a major importation of

capital goods related to this construction. The infrastructure programme is also adversely impacted upon by multi-national corporations operating and producing within SA but charging us import parity prices for key inputs like cement and steel. In the latter case, for instance, the Indian multinational, Mittal Steel, is selling us steel produced from South African iron ore manufactured in former ISCOR plants that were established through public money in the previous era and then hurriedly privatised in the final years of apartheid. This is the “greater integration into the global economy” that is so often boasted about!

The present attempt to drive growth through a state-led infrastructural development programme is further constrained by another persisting CST feature of our economy – a huge skills imbalance. Formalised racial stratification has disappeared in the labour market, but the legacy of focusing on advanced technical and artisanal skills for a tiny segment of the working class is dramatically highlighted by the fact that in 2005 the average age of an artisan in South Africa was 54 years.

These CST structural features of our economy have contributed to the deepening of inequality and unemployment (currently stabilised but at crisis levels) approaching 40%. In particular, the dominance of the mineral-energy-finance complex in our economy has meant that the manufacturing sector has tended to be weak. The GEAR-based drive to greater liberalisation and integration into the global economy, without any clear industrial policy strategy, has cruelly exposed this weakness. The manufacturing sector’s profitability slumped by 30% after 1990, while the skills intensive (and less labour absorbing) service sector took over as the fastest growing part of the economy.

The consequences of these systemic realities, endemic within our capitalist accumulation path, continue to reproduce other problematic outcomes, including deepening class inequality. In 2007, productivity growth was running at around 2,5%, while profit growth was averaging 20% a year (based on the results of JSE-listed companies) or 15% a year (based on Statistics SA’s operating surplus data). But labour’s share of GDP has been falling. In 1996, labour’s share was 55%. By 2006 it had fallen to 48%.

Another key systemic feature of our CST-based economy is the predatory role of South African capitalism in our region. Bourgeois economists speak of South Africa’s “distance from markets” as if this were a pre-determined geographical fact. It is, of course, the product of a colonial history, and, indeed, of the underdevelopment of our own national market, and of the persisting neo-colonial underdevelopment of our region by global and South African capital working hand in glove with neo-colonial elites. The Southern African region with a population of over 100 million and abundant and mutually

complementary resources is potentially a thriving common market, but this potential has been throttled by centuries of colonialism, decades of apartheid destabilisation, and now by post-independence neo-colonial distortions. For the major part of the 20th century, South African capital treated our neighbouring countries largely as migrant labour reserves and as zones of mineral and energy extraction.

Still today, South African and multi-national capital extract hydro-energy from Mozambique or water from Lesotho, for instance, with little evidence of effective development in return. Unbalanced development of this kind is of no benefit to the majority of Mozambican and Lesotho citizens, or indeed to the majority of South Africans. A sustainable growth and development path for South Africa has to be closely linked to balanced and mutually beneficial development throughout our region – otherwise we will continue to suffer from “distance from markets”

All of the other major systemic features of our CST capitalist accumulation path remain deeply entrenched within our economy. These include the systemic duality in the so-called “first” and “second” economy divide, which we deal with elsewhere in this programme.

One of the primary means through which we have sought to transform our economy has been through the concept and practice of ‘deracialisation’ and gender equality. Deracialisation and gender equality are absolutely necessary at all levels of society if we are to overcome our inherited CST realities.

However, in practice deracialisation has translated more into narrow and elitist black economic empowerment, because such deracialisation discourse has been devoid of class content. Deracialisation without a simultaneous thorough (structural) transformation of the economic form of CST has not only been narrow but has essentially produced an already co-opted, highly parasitic and compradorial black elite, subject to the hegemony of the white capitalist class. Even affirmative action, necessary as it is, has mainly benefited the black managerial elite and hardly making any difference to the economic hardships and exploitation of the working class.

Gender equality in the economy has also been co-opted by the narrow BEE strategy, thus translating into promotion of women into positions of power (a necessary objective), without a simultaneous concerted strategy to confront patriarchy in society, the mobilization of working class women and an all-rounded gender transformation strategy premised on the class realities of the overwhelming majority of women in society. Gender equity has as a result

translated to nothing much beyond promotion of an elite group of women into senior positions.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

This brief overview of the main features of our persisting capitalist accumulation path underlines the importance of a strategic national democratic approach to economic policy and active transformation – piecemeal reforms, ad hoc sectoral initiatives, disconnected projects may ameliorate some crises, but they often squander resources in the long run and deepen the crisis.

These systemic CST features of our economic accumulation path also underline the inadequacy of a “social democratic”, essentially, redistributive approach to overcoming the crisis of underdevelopment. Redistribution out of the same untransformed accumulation path, however well-meaning, is a cruel delusion. The dependent-development CST accumulation path into which our economy remains locked has to be radically transformed.

Amongst other things this means:

- Ensuring a more balanced growth and development strategy through rolling back the domination of the mineral-energy-finance monopoly capitalist complex. The strategic importance of overcoming this private monopoly domination, which lies at the heart of many distortions in our economy and society, underlines the wisdom of the Freedom Charter’s call to ensure that the wealth of our country is shared, and particularly that “the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole”. In the spirit of the Freedom Charter, the SACP supports a multi-pronged strategy that ensures that we increasingly socialise these commanding heights of our economy through a wide range of interventions;
- Developing an effective, state-led industrial policy that focuses, in particular, on ensuring that the labour-intensive manufacturing sector is built into a much more vibrant and dynamic sector of the economy. This industrial policy should link actively with and support our major infrastructure development;
- Well-resourced and strategically directed education and training to overcome the massive skills distortions in our society;
- A much more strategic and sustainable approach to natural resources. The depletion of natural resources and the damage to our environment need to be actively factored into our growth and developmental statistics. Energy, water, fishery and agricultural land-use policies need to be sustainable and developmental. Short-term, export-led competitiveness led by monopoly capital cannot be allowed to trump development and sustainability.

- This also means that our spatial development and transport and logistics policies must pay strategic attention to the vulnerability (to oil price spikes in particular) of long-distance hauls. A much greater emphasis on local economic development is imperative, not least in regard to national food security.
- The SACP's campaigns around building sustainable livelihoods, households, and communities have especial relevance in a global and national setting in which the formal, capitalist economy is now never likely to provide for anything approaching full employment. Expanded public works programmes, a broad network of cooperatives supported by government and especially local government, and a developmental social security net are also all important components of ensuring sustainability for the majority of our people.
- The balanced development and effective industrial policy integration of our entire Southern African region is also critical.

None of these measures can be achieved without an active democratic developmental state buttressed by a mobilised national democratic movement in which the working class increasingly plays a hegemonic role.

**WORKERS TO THE FRONT TO BUILD
WORKER HEGEMONY IN THE ECONOMY!**