REPOSITIONING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY (SACP) IN THE POLITICS OF POST- APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: A CRITICAL STUDY OF SACP FROM 1990 - 2010

by

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Declaration

I, Mthembi Phillip, declare that this dissertation is my original work and that it has never been produced by any other institution. All sources used have been acknowledged in full.

Signature…………. ………   Date……………………………

Acknowledgements

Abstract

The study was about the South African Communist Party (SACP) and its entry into SA politics after 1990. The main question is whether it should contest elections independently of its Tripartite alliance partners led by ANC in democratic SA. As a democratic country it allows any party to participate in the elections. Given that space SACP can contest and triumph electorally thus assume the reins of government. For SA to become socialist, SACP has to campaign and triumph electorally for this to happen. The study followed a qualitative research paradigm. Purposeful sampling was used to collect data through in-depth interviews with information-rich respondents who have specialist knowledge about the study. Interviews and document analysis were used for data collection. For this reason, open-ended questions in the form of an interview guide were used to solicit information, perceptions and attitudes towards and about SACP. A tape recorder was used to capture information from these interviews. The recorded data was transcribed and coded into themes one by one which in turn formed part of the research portfolio. From the study findings contemporary SACP is a product of the revisionism that has come to characterise the post-Cold War. It is not surprising why the party then is not ready to contest election alone.

List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
COD	Congress of Democrats
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COMINTERN	Communist International
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DA	Democratic Alliance
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
ICU	Industrial Commercial Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISL	International Socialist League
MEC	Members of Executive Councils
MP	Members of Parliament
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NEHAWU	National Health and Allied Workers Union
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress

SA	South Africa
SACP	South African Communist party
SACPO	South African Coloured People's Organisation
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SG	Secretary General
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
UDF	United Democratic Front
UL	University of Limpopo
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
YCLSA	Young Communist League of South Africa

Dedication

To my wife Stella and my following children Bright, Angel, Petunia, Decide and Lenin for serving as a source of strength and my entire family who supported me financially and emotionally.

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia gave rise to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and inspired many people around the world to be communists. During its life USSR demonstrated that there was an alternative to capitalism (SACP 1998:52 and Sheridan 1976: 374).

In 1917 South Africa (SA) was relatively agrarian and underdeveloped. However, the discovery of diamonds and gold soon led to the rapid industrialization of the country. Consequently, most South Africans moved from rural to urban areas in search of jobs and other opportunities. This process led to the rise of sprawling formal and informal settlements in urban areas (SACP 1998: 1).

On 30 July 1921 the International Socialist League established the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) in Cape Town. It was founded by white socialist immigrants many of them British, such as Sidney Bunting, Bill Andrews and David Ivon Jones (Ellis 1991: 439).

Its policy of non-racialism led the party to form an alliance with the liberation movements in South Africa. CPSA also affiliated to the Communist International (Sheridan 1976: 398). The Party became very popular among the working class with USSR playing a pivotal role in its growth and providing it with both material assistance and ideological guidance.

CPSA formed an alliance with the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU) and other trade unions, including the Comintern and embarked on community projects like a literacy program teaching its members how to read and write. It also initiated other party schools for the working class. Given the racially charged political environment of the time and its policy of non-racialism, these earned CPSA the wrath of government of the day.

CPSA played a central role in the armed Rand Rebellion of white mineworkers in 1922. According to the Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA) (2006),

25000 white miners went on strike because the Chamber of Mines had proposed to dismiss about 2000 of them in order to increase the intake of black miners. The strike began in January and culminated in an armed revolt in March, which Prime Minister Smuts put down by the army and bombed the centre of resistance on the Reef.

CPSA was forced by the Comintern to adopt the *"Native Republic Thesis"* which stipulated that SA was a country belonging to Natives, that is, blacks. The party then began organising them with gusto. By 1928, 1600 of the party's 1750 members were black (Brooks 2008: 166). Accordingly the party also adopted a "strategic line" which held that "the most direct line of advance to socialism runs through the mass struggle for majority rule" (Ellis and Sechaba 1992).

In 1948 white South Africans elected the National Party (NP) with its apartheid ideology to power. From then onwards the government became suspicious of the CPSA` role in the political mobilization of blacks. It was also concerned with the number of communists infiltrating other non-white political organisations.

CPSA was thrown in complete disarray when the Suppression of Communism Act was passed on 20 June 1950 against all those dedicated to ending apartheid. The Act targeted CPSA in particular (Benson 1966: 135).

That year the Party disbanded before it was officially outlawed to prevent its assets being confiscated by the apartheid regime (Bunting 1998: 178). Communists were thereafter encouraged to join other progressive structures including the African National Congress (ANC) Congress of Democrats (COD), South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO).

CPSA members such as Moses Kotane and J.B. Marks joined these political organisations and played a leading role in the launch of the Defiance Campaign in the 1950s (Mokgethi 1984: 36).

In 1953 the party reconstituted itself as the South African Communist Party (SACP). Communists in various guises were instrumental in the drafting of the Freedom Charter

which was adopted at Kliptown, Soweto in 1955 by the Congress of the People, comprising mainly of ANC, COD, SAIC and SACPO (Mokgethi 1984: 46) For the National Party (NP) government the Freedom Charter was a blueprint of the SACP to overthrow the Afrikaner - led government and replace it with a black one (Brookes 1968: 328).

On 5 December 1956, police arrested 156 Congress Alliance leaders, 104 Africans, 23 Whites, 21 Indians and 8 Coloureds and charged them with high treason. The charges were based on evidence contained in speeches and statements leaders made during the Defiance Campaign (Mokgethi 1984: 65).

Africanists had for a long time criticised the collaborationist policies of ANC (David and Eerdmans 1986: 99). That criticism escalated further when the Freedom Charter became public. A group within the Youth League opposed the opening clause of the Freedom Charter in particular (O'Brien 2001:62). They argued that, by its proposal to share the land with all South Africans, the Charter conceded in advance that it did not belong to Africans. Such a concession was unthinkable. This group by now known as Africanists, consequently broke away to form the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1959 (Mbeki 1992: 85).

In December 1959 ANC decided to launch an anti - pass campaign. The campaign would commence on 21 March 1960. But PAC, resolved to seize the initiative and launch a similar campaign. Robert Sobukwe, PAC leader, then sent out instructions for this purpose but emphasized the need for strict non - violence. He later advised the Commissioner of Police that a sustained, disciplined, non-violent campaign against the pass laws would take place on that day with PAC members allowing themselves to be arrested (David and Eerdmans 1986: 99). On that day the police at Sharpeville fired into a crowd of demonstrators, killing about 67 people and wounding 186. A state of emergency was thereafter declared. PAC was subsequently banned and sent underground (David and Eerdmans 1986: 99) Similarly most ANC leaders were soon arrested and jailed and the organization itself banished. Those who escaped the clutches of the security police joined PAC cohorts in exile (Mokgethi 1984: 26).

In exile ANC and SACP cooperated though the relationship was somewhat frosty. But after the 1969 Morogoro Conference, they resolved to work together. SACP brought the experience of having worked underground for two decades to the Alliance (Thomas and Karis 1997: 37- 40).

One of the resolutions of the 1969 conference was that Marxism should provide ideological direction to the liberation struggle in SA. The conference also cemented the formal alliance between the two exiled parties. Through this the alliance the Party began to extend considerable ideological influence over ANC (Benson 1966: 15).

There were some within ANC who remained skeptical about working with the party. In particular they were concerned with the fact that Western countries would withdraw support as a result of their ties with communism. It was also during this period that both organizations began to grow in stature and increased their activity among the oppressed people (Pike 1985: 349).

A tripartite alliance comprising SACP, ANC and the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) won elections in 1994 and continue to rule SA to this day. SACP continues to play a role in the ANC - led government. In the post-apartheid period focus is more on consolidating democracy and less on communism or socialism (Davenport 1998: 37).

This study will investigate whether SACP by clinging to a discredited ideology has not rendered itself unelectable. The study will further ask whether by clinging to the coattails of the ruling party, SACP has not buried its head in the sand of SA political realism. If indeed this is the case, then can the Party still claim that it is the vanguard of the proletariat?

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This is a critical study of the SACP and how the party has and is continuing to reposition itself in the post-apartheid politics of new South Africa. It is in the nature of political

parties to mobilize and win popular support to govern. SACP is no exception to this tendency. For SA to become socialist, SACP has to campaign and triumph electorally for this to happen. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, the global political economic and environment has not been favourable to communism. SACP thus faces daunting challenges in winning favour at home and internationally. Before then however the party should stand separately from its alliance partner, ANC in particular, in order to win elections locally. Up to now, the party has not chosen to stand separately and contest elections in its own right as a distinct and autonomous political party. Whether this will come to pass or not is a matter of conjecture. Whether other parties, claiming to represent workers will rise up thereby eroding SACP electoral base, is a matter of conjecture as well.

This study has the following aim and objectives;

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.3. AIM

3.3.1. The aim of this study is to investigate how SACP has repositioned itself in SA politics between 1990 and 2010.

3.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.4.1. To interrogate the history and ideology of SACP between 1990 and 2010;

3.4.2. To determine whether SACP could successfully lead SA to a socialist socio-economic dispensation; and

3.4.3. To find out if the current international political economy will allow SACP to establish socialism in SA.

This study has the following research questions;

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1. What is the history and ideology of the South African Communist Party?

4.2. Has SACP remained faithful to its ideological doctrine?

4.3. Is SACP under the current political circumstances a vanguard party (of workers) as it claims? and

4.4. Should SACP contest elections alone?

5. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

5.1 **Ideology** is 'a well-developed and relatively consistent set of ideas … (with) … a sufficient number of adherents to have a social impact' (Kadalie 2004: 35). In this study ideology will connote a set of ideas SACP regard as its policy guide and philosophy.

5.2 **Marxist-Leninism** generally connotes a set of ideas derived from the works and philosophy of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, as well as Lenin, the famous Russian Revolutionary. There are many versions of this ideology but in this study this refers to ideas that derive from Marxism-Leninism and which SACP claims as its ideological guide.

6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the first instance, this is the first time that SACP has been subjected to such systematic academic scrutiny at the University of Limpopo since it was unbanned. By interrogating its role and place in the post-apartheid SA, the study will attempt to unravel the paradox of how SACP can become meaningful and relevant as opposed to marginal player in South African politics.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

7.1 SACP history since 1990

According to McKinley (2006: 1) CPSA ranks as both South Africa's and Africa's oldest communist political organisation. Founded in 1921 by white immigrant workers from Europe and Eastern Europe the SACP has for over 89 years played a leading role in the history of South African politics. The SACP was launched as an official political party on 29 July 1990. Its strength was difficult to estimate because many party members had been underground for years. In 1991 SACP leaders estimated that the party had 10,000 dues-paying members.

In the wake of its unbanning, a debate ensued about its character and tasks in the new global and domestic realities of the early 1990s. SACP was unbanned during a thoroughly contradictory period for socialism in the world. This was when the Eastern bloc (socialist) countries were collapsing, poignantly exemplified by the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union itself.

This necessitated a debate about the type of SACP that needed to be built after 1990. There were those who felt that the party needed to remain a very small and largely symbolic entity while other cadres wanted it to focus on rebuilding ANC (SACP 2005: 1).

Fresh from its eighth national congress, SACP, according to Dale (1997:123), declared that negotiations were the 'shortest and most peaceful route to the transfer of power to the people.' Following the adoption of its two-stage theory to the 'new' conditions, the party continued to insist that as long as the 'working class propels this process' (i.e. negotiations) the process would not 'fail the working class'. It seems that the SACP leadership saw no contradiction between the negotiation strategy and (its accommodative politics) and the ability of the working class to struggle for socialism.

The other side of the debate was for maintaining the party as a small Leninist party organized in conditions of underground. The opposing argument (under the banner of

'democratic socialism') was that SACP should rebuild as a mass party, given the new conditions of legality. What emerged out of that Congress was essentially a compromise position; 'a vanguard party with mass character'. That meant rather than operate underground in a conspiratorial fashion SACP should henceforth openly recruit and accept new members. Furthermore it was challenged to build quality party cadres (SACP, 2005: 1).

The latter debate was largely resolved at the 10th Congress which adopted a programme in terms of which SACP would embark on mass mobilisation principally through the annual Red October Campaign launched in 1999 (SACP, 2010: 1).

According to the SACP Report (2010:28) membership has grown by 20,000 thus bringing total membership to 114,600 in 2011. These figures thus confirmed it as the second largest political party in South Africa (after the ANC) in terms of active paid-up members. Chapter 2 will explain this matter in more detail.

7.2 Collapse of USSR and its effect on SACP

USSR gave enormous support to the liberation struggle in SA that began first with the party which at the time was known as CPSA then ANC after World War II. Over the years, close ties strengthened, ranging from financial to military aid. The country also gave these organisations political and diplomatic support in various international fora.

Mikhail Gorbachev was Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) when the crisis, stemming largely from economic stagnation and political inertia, overwhelmed USSR in the mid-1980s. He was determined to end the Cold War whose financial and other costs were ruinous to his beloved motherland. At great cost to himself he set about to overhaul and fundamentally restructure USSR political and economic landscape. His priority was domestic reform. In order to achieve this he first had to secure an agreement with the US government which would permit him to reduce military expenditure and introduce far-reaching political reforms.

During that period it was natural for SACP to endorse Gorbachev's "glasnost" and "perestroika" policies which were endorsed with élan by the Soviet leadership as well. Unlike the communist parties of Eastern Europe, which were far more reserved in their reception of the new doctrines, SACP did not have to defend a record in government. It was in the comfortable position of being able to welcome the attractive new policies while continuing its own practice of intense secretiveness on the ground as it was still fighting against a ruthless enemy (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992: 194).

The hardest blow to the party was that the Soviet Union had given up its commitment to the armed struggle in SA. Moscow had concluded that a workers' revolution in SA was unlikely thus ties with Pretoria began to thaw at great speed. Perestroika also had the effect of bringing the Soviet Union and USA closer together.

It was against this background that in June 1989 SACP held its seventh congress in Havana, Cuba, one of the last surviving centres of Marxist orthodoxy. Many party members were privately alarmed at the course of events especially diplomatic manoeuvres concerning Namibia and Angola. The realization that international support was slipping away and that the armed struggle was failing led some to argue that the party had for too long put its faith in the armed struggle and had concentrated on recruiting relatively small number of members, especially from the ranks of Umkhonto we Sizwe in particular. But the truth of the matter was that the party had never stopped recruiting new blood inside SA (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992: 194).

The fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the failure of socialism in Africa effectively eliminated the likelihood of a socialist revolution in SA. That development and the collapse of the Soviet system itself in the late 1980s weakened SACP's international support. It weakened the appeal of the socialist ideals the party was espousing for SA much more forcefully. Party activists believed, nonetheless, that the remaining economic disparities among racial groups provided fertile ground for SACP recruitment (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992).

Having been one of the Soviet Union's most loyal and uncritical supporters, the ideological shifts in that country had great impact on the party, more so after Slovo's

conservative interpretation of communism elicited strong criticism from the new school of thought in Moscow. This resulted in a subtle shift; an acceptance of a "mixed economy'' thesis for SA (Ellis and Sechaba, 1992).

According to Pike (1985: 268) SACP had always held that its "guiding principles'' and ''fortifications" were derived from the doctrines of Marxism Leninism. The main goal of the party, he further asserted was "to bring about a socialist-communist system via the proletarian revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat" in SA.

The changing international power relations of the 1980s, according to Bond (2006: 1-13), brought forth the urgent need for policy research. That policy review was further impelled by the swiftly changing SA political landscape meaning that smart new policies and strategies were needed for negotiations and imminent election campaign. New structures and programmes had to be put in place rapidly.

The decades of the 1990s and the first years of the new millennium proved challenging to SACP at both political and ideological level. The South African liberation movements had to assume responsibility for governing in a domestic and international situation that was not always favourable to advancing, deepening and defending socialism (SACP 2007:1). Chapter 3 will elaborate on this score.

7.3 Has the South African Communist Party remained faithful to its ideological doctrine?

Since re-launching as a legal organization in 1990, the SACP has, according to Gumede (2005: 270) come under enormous pressure to remain relevant. "I have to admit, the party is battling for its soul" opined Blade Nzimande the General Secretary of SACP as the result of developments at the time. He further said that the makeover and transition had necessitated a shelving of socialism, perhaps the most significant shift in the party's history. The party also had to rid itself of the spectre of Stalinism. Unlike the more independent Italian Communist Party, SACP had followed Moscow's edicts without question. Now it had to embrace the Italian communist, Antonio Gramsci, as its ideological forbearer (Gumede, 2005: 270).

Jeremy Cronin, the Deputy General Secretary said, "we do not imagine that South Africa is about to embark on a major socialist revolution with global and national realities too stacked against us for the moment. But we in the SACP are not prepared to see ourselves as reserves on the bench, warming up occasionally on the touch- line, waiting for our time to come (Gumede 2005).

Central committee member and then National Chairperson, Gwede Mantashe, claimed that the pressures of the 1990s had forced SACP to adopt 'tactical' moves similar to the market reforms introduced by China and Cuba (Gumede 2005: 270).

From the foregoing it is clear that the Party shifted from the politics of insurrection to the politics of structural reform and organization growth (Gumede 2005: 232). In addition, the party backtracked from its strategy of government overthrow by force. Instead of revolutionary worker-led seizure of power, it helped expedite peaceful transition and advent of unencumbered multiparty democracy. Chapter 4 will provide more details on this postulate.

7. 4. Is communism/socialism possible under RSA parliamentary democracy?

Communism is by definition a classless society meaning a centralised or state-led economy (Erik, 1998: 80). For Susser (1995: 137) the state has withered away and has been replaced by the administration of all by all.

In line with doctrinaire Leninism this state of affairs comes about by the efforts of workers led by a vanguard party. Such a proletarian revolution will, according to the theory, sweep away all the vestiges of bourgeoisie domination.

Practically workers revolution is an antithesis of SA parliamentary democracy. The transformation of the country's political landscape, characterized by relatively peaceful give and take at the negotiating table, was a far cry from Leninism.

The Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) established principles such as rule of law and orderly change of government which are not in accordance with

Marxism - Leninism. The 1996 Constitution also allowed for multipartism and pluralism which are not in line with the letter and spirit of that ideology.

For a long time state – led capitalism and private ownership of the productive means were the hallmarks of SA economy. Under ANC government we have not seen a radical departure from that norm. Actually the ruling party has adopted explicit neo-liberal macroeconomic policies which once again do not accord with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. This matter will be briefly explored in Chapter 2.

7.5. Is Socialism/Communism possible under current SA political economy?

Soviet economists made various prognosis about the envisaged post - apartheid economy. According to (Callinicos, 1992: 95), post – apartheid South Africa would not be the kind of socialist orientation which the Soviet Union sponsored in Mozambique, Angola and Ethiopia in the mid - 1970s. Instead of centrally planned economy, post - apartheid SA would have a "mixed economy." (Callinicos, 1996). In fact Starushenko (1995: 132) had proposed guarantees against broad nationalization. According to him a correct "mix," would be private entrepreneurship intermingled with state sponsored activities and enterprises.

As noted above, the ANC led government has jettisoned the leftist rhetoric of struggle years. The challenges of government have not only forced the party to hobnob with the West, they have also adopted "home grown" macro-economic strategies that have an unmistakable resemblance to the notorious Washington Consensus policy precepts. Chapter 2 will shed more light on this.

7.6 FUNDAMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING THE SACP

Under the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), SACP undertook to create a climate conducive to peaceful constitutional change by eliminating violence, intimidation and destabilization. Furthermore the party undertook to promote free political participation, discussion and debate in a multi-party democracy. Under that system SA citizens would have the right to form and join political parties and hold

regular elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage. In general the basic electoral system shall be that of proportional representation with a closed party list system. Accordingly these obligations militate against the SACP ideology of using force to achieve power.

Heywood (2007: 272) defines a political party as a group of people organized for the purpose of winning government power, by electoral or other means. A political party is an institution that seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government. It usually consists of more than a single interest in society and to some degree attempts to "aggregate interests" (Starushenko, 1995: 120). According to Panton and Gill (1982: 121) a political party's intention is to seek to control the main office of government. As a result they put forward a wide spectrum of policies to cover all politically significant aspects of national life, as well as foreign affairs.

By contrast interest groups are associations formed to promote sectional interests in a political system. They differ from political parties in that they do not seek to present themselves as candidates for government. Instead they focus upon a narrower range of issues than a government does (Starushenko, 1995: 122). Pressure groups restrict their aims to those that will promote the interests of their members or further particular causes. They do not have a comprehensive political programme nor do they seek to acquire control of the main office of government. Their purpose is to influence government to adopt policies favourable to them (Panton and Gill, 1982: 121).

From the foregoing analysis the SACP is claiming to be a political party meanwhile behaving like a pressure or interest group. But Erik (1980: 69) opines that political parties in a free society are expected to relate to the democratic precepts of popular sovereignty, majority rule, equality and to such other principles of respecting public opinion and working for consensus.

Democracy is associated with popular forms of government. The term is used to distinguish dictatorships from governments resting on free and periodic election of

public officials responsible to voters who can remove them at the next election (Erik, 1980: 78).

In Political Science political parties display certain attributes which differentiate them from pressure groups. Unlike the former, pressure groups are organized associations that aim to influence the policies or actions of government (Heywood, 2007: 296).

It is within this framework that SACP has to tackle the question of whether or not to contest elections on its own. Until this is done SACP shall remain a lobby group and not a political party in the sense described above. Chapter 3 will highlight debates within SACP on this pertinent issue. Finally the last Chapter (4) will analyse the collected data in the light of the aim and objectives of this study.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

8.1. TYPE OF RESEARCH

To achieve the purpose of this study a qualitative research method was used. This method was exploratory and attempted to give insight into the problem and determine priorities for future research (Babbie 2004: 164). According to Russell (2003: 34) the goal of exploratory research is to learn what is going on in a setting under question. The positive characteristics of qualitative research are that it focuses on process, meaning and understanding. Words or statements were used to convey what a researcher had learnt about a phenomenon. The researcher developed concepts, insights and an understanding from patterns in data analysis (White, 2005: 23).

8.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study was conducted within a qualitative paradigm as that paradigm assisted to obtain data about opinions, feelings and emotions that are difficult to learn through more conventional research methods (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 11). The qualitative approach also enabled the researcher to build a picture about informants and conduct in

their natural setting (Creswell, 2003: 112). It further allowed for subjective perspectives on the sample group. By utilizing that approach, the subjective perspectives of individuals were captured.

8.3. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

8.3.1. POPULATION

The population sample for the study refers to a group about whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions (Babbie, 1998: 109). In this study the population comprised of senior members of the South African Communist Party and Young Communist League of South Africa (YCLSA). The sample was drawn from labour unions in and around Polokwane, academics and Political Science and International Politics students and related disciplines at the University of Limpopo, Turfloop Campus.

8.3.2 SAMPLING

The study employed purposive sampling. Babbie (1998: 111) defined that sampling as "any procedure for selecting units of observation." The goal of qualitative sampling was not to produce a representative sample but rather to reflect diversity. Further samples which were the 'key informants' within the broader sample were selected to aid in obtaining in-depth data. This method was preferred to others because it allowed the researcher to obtain additional data about the topic as well as make use of chosen samples from which one can learn the most. "Key-informants" were used for the simple reason that they were "information rich" (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle 2010). The total sample used was 50 but the number was increased to reflect diversity and the exploratory nature of the study.

8.4. DATA COLLECTION

Interviews and document analysis were used for data collection. For this reason, open-ended questions in the form of an interview guide were used to solicit opinions and discover information regarding the SACP. A tape recorder was used to capture information from the interviews. The recorded information was transcribed and coded into relevant themes which in turn formed part of the portfolio.

8.5. DATA ANALYSIS

In this study data were analyzed qualitatively. A key feature of the process entailed systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, field notes and other materials that the researcher collected to present what was discovered. The collected data were analysed using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis helped in addressing the aims and objectives of the study.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The public was not forced to participate in this study. Participants were informed of the aim and how their contribution would aid the research. The researcher did not engage in activities that threatened the life and well-being of participants. All responses were strictly confidential. Honesty and integrity was displayed throughout the study. Data were treated confidentially and kept in a secure place during and after the completion of the study. Tapes and transcripts were kept separately in a secure place.

CHAPTER TWO

SACP SINCE 1990

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 focused on the background, aim and objectives of this study. The literature review and research methodology were also dealt with in Chapter One. This Chapter deals with the SACP history since 1990.

During late 1989 Mr F.W. de Klerk replaced P.W. Botha as State President and immediately signalled his intention to reform apartheid. De Klerk started releasing some veteran leaders of ANC and SACP who had been jailed since the early 1960s. In February 1990, he announced the unbanning of the ANC, Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and SACP and freed Nelson Mandela from prison (Webster, 1988: 6). Having forged a formal alliance SACP and COSATU at the behest of ANC renounced the armed struggle thereby paving the way for the negotiations.

The negotiations for a democratic South Africa began in earnest at precisely the moment when notions for alternative forms of democracy were vanishing. The collapse of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the crisis of social democracy in Western Europe transformed the international climate, delegitimising radical notions of democracy and reinforced a global economy that dictated neo-liberal solutions as the only acceptable option (Ginsburg and Webster, 1995: 7).

SACP reaffirmed its commitment to ANC and called on all its members to work toward ensuring an overwhelming electoral victory for that party in South Africa's first democratic elections of 27 April 1994. That policy was at the centre of the party's strategy of achieving socialism. SACP leaders argued that being well placed within the corridors of power will afford them the opportunity to influence the ANC government in policy-making (Ginsburg and Webster, 1995: 7-9).

Sitting in government has not, however brought the envisaged results. At times it has even compromised some of the Party's core values, for instance, the ANC's macroeconomic policy of Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). GEAR is the cornerstone of the ANC government neoliberal approach to macro-economic reform. But the policy has since placed considerable strain on ANC relations with both SACP and COSATU (Webster, 1988: 16).

2.2. Events leading to the unbanning of SACP and other anti- apartheid Organizations

In the early 1980s the apartheid government introduced reforms and a new constitution with a Tri-cameral Parliament that had separate chambers for Coloureds, Indians and whites. While urban Africans got representation in segregated local government structures under this new constitutional dispensation, most rural Blacks were consigned to homelands, some of which had already been granted nominal political independence. These reforms were designed to support and gain the collaboration of Indians and Coloureds and break the unity of the oppressed (Seekings, 2005: 5-9).

There was, however massive resistance to these reforms. In actual fact they acted as a catalyst for the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which from then on became the umbrella for a variety of grass-root organisations. UDF leaders and activists were also active in the underground structures of ANC and SACP (Seekings, 2005: 5-9).

The preferred tactic of UDF was mass consumer boycotts which forced local (white) business people to support the demands of the civics. Nationwide school-class boycotts started and spread across the country. In areas like Port Elizabeth UDF was closely linked to trade unions. States of emergency were imposed in response to mass action during that period. Often these were followed by various forms of press clampdowns, mass detentions and de facto military rule.

Rapid growth in civic and union membership helped increase political consciousness and militancy amongst the oppressed. Many of the new unions also became involved in

community and political struggles. They argued that since workers were members of the community, unions should likewise fight for their broader interests outside the work place (Lambert and Webster, 1988: 7).

At the time it became common to speak of "workerist" and 'populist' unions. Whereas "workerist" unions focused on workplace organisation and building workplace power (Lambert and Webster, 1988: 11, Pillay 2006: 29), 'populist' unions emphasised alliances with communities. Invariably many joined UDF to achieve these political goals.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) was formed in 1985 after years of "unity talks" among various unions. COSATU advocated mobilisation on the shop floor for a political vision based on non-racialism, democracy and socialism (Baskin, 1991: 15).

Baskin (1991: 91-96) writes about the tensions in the first 18 months of COSATU existence and stresses the differences between ANC and UDF as cited by Hesjedal, (2009:61). But in 1987 both UDF and COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter. By adopting the Charter, Baskin reasoned, both organisations adopted SACP as the political vanguard of the working class (1991:43). The effective banning of UDF in 1988 further entrenched COSATU as a social and political union intimately involved with township struggles. For that reason activists began to perceive themselves as having an agenda largely consistent with the interests of the Black working class (Marx, 1992: 18).

The central ideology of UDF and the 1980s 'Charterist' movement was that of national identity. Class analysis, although used rhetorically, had remained secondary to race and nation. The primary focus of UDF was strategic unity rather than ideological cohesion. Some UDF leaders recognised that greater focus on class identity could unite the class conscious unions and community organisations. This wrote Marx (1992: 4) was consistent with the increasing radicalisation of many activists seeking to gather popular resistance for a final push to state power. For ANC and SACP the immediate objective was to end the apartheid regime (ANC, 1987a, 1988b).

From 1988 trade unions were practically the only legal formations inside the country which asserted leadership of the internal struggle. The 1980s had confirmed for the regime that the popular forces could not be curbed by a reformist project of adjustments in the socio-economic realm. By now the South African Defense Force (SADF) had been defeated in Cuito Cuanavale, Angola, in March 1988 and Namibia gained independence in 1990 (Marais, 2001: 9).

F. W. de Klerk was elected President of South Africa in 1989. Soon afterwards he signaled a move towards change and a more conciliatory attitude. Leaders of industry had by this time visited the ANC headquarters in Lusaka. Mandela, though still imprisoned, had had no less than 47 meetings with the regime (Marais, 2001: 11).

There was a slackening of military support for ANC with the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time relations with the West were changing for the better. While international sanctions led to a profound negative influence on the economy, the regime realised that its days were numbered. It then sought ways and means of somehow reconciling with blacks. These moves led to the unbanning of ANC, SACP and PAC and 71 other organisations and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990 (Marx, 1992: 13).

2.3. The formation of the Tripartite Alliance

The Tri-partite Alliance is made up of ANC, SACP and Cosatu. In policy documents it is referred to as a strategic rather than an electoral alliance (SACP, 2008: 7). There is no formal pact or contract between the partners. The constitutions of these organizations make reference to the Alliance and the nature of the relationship between them. Among others ANC constitution says that dual membership is permitted (ANC 2007: 24). SACP constitution on the other hand enjoins the party to participate in and strengthen the revolutionary alliance of all classes and strata whose interests are served by the aims of the national democratic revolution (NDR) (Nzimande, 2006: 2).

According to Slovo (1988: 3) NDR refers to the liberation of Africans in general, black people in particular and the destruction of the economic and political power of the racist ruling class. Furthermore Slovo reasoned that NDR calls for the establishment of

people's power in which the working class will be the dominant force. This will then lead to an uninterrupted march towards social emancipation and total abolition of exploitation of man by man. This however does not mean that the oppressed 'people' are a single or homogeneous entity. Nonetheless the main revolutionary camp in the immediate struggle is made up of different classes and strata (overwhelmingly black) which suffer varying forms and degrees of national oppression and economic exploitation. The camp of those who benefit from, and support, national domination is also divided into classes.

SACP expects all of its members who are ANC public representatives to be exemplary communists, respecting the integrity, unity and discipline of ANC, without losing their own communist identity, principles and morality (2007: 25).

Cosatu constitution makes no reference to the Alliance. Its political programme states however that the labour union entered into a strategic alliance with both ANC and SACP "in recognition of common aims and the historic reality that no trade union, acting on its own, can liberate a country" (Cosatu, 2003: 1). In its 2011 programme, Cosatu also recognised the limitations of this alliance in practice and the contestation that takes place over the direction and characterisation of NDR (2003: 6).

The three organisations play different roles in the alliance. As leader ANC is described as a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic liberation movement that aims to "unite all the people of South Africa, Africans in particular, for the complete liberation of the country from all forms of discrimination and national oppression. Another important task is to end apartheid in all its forms and transform South Africa as rapidly as possible into a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic country based on the principles of the Freedom Charter (ANC, 2007d: 2).

As a federation of 22 industrial unions and affiliates, Cosatu is committed to a unified, democratic South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation under the leadership of a united working class. The aims of Cosatu are to fight for workers' rights, build solidarity, encourage industrial unionism and support its affiliates.

There is no pact or programme that binds the three organisations into a formal alliance. SACP and Cosatu do not have voting power in the National General Council nor the National Conference of the ANC, although they send delegations. There is however some degree of overlapping membership and leadership. For example, the last three Secretaries General of the ANC were former Secretaries General of the National Union of Mineworkers, a major Cosatu affiliate. The current Secretary General of the ANC Gwede Matashe was formerly National Chairman of SACP.

At a meeting in May 1990 the alliance elected ANC as leader and further agreed that consultation and consensus should be the basis of decision making. It was also agreed that each organization would be independent and would develop own policy positions and campaigns. The alliance would however form joint programmes on agreed issues.

After the unbanning, the main task of SACP was to rebuild its internal structures. The Tripartite Alliance and the South African government started negotiations in 1990. The regime made use of extensive violence, including the arming of vigilante groups and to weaken grass-root movements. South African capital also made their demands on the negotiations. Among others they called for a market economy, social and political stability, continuity in state institutions and restraint from radical redistributive measures (Marais, 2001: 11).

There was an expectation among many ANC, SACP and COSATU members that the state would wield considerable control over the economy and introduce comprehensive land reforms. At the same time Mandela and other ANC leaders started talking about alternative policy (i.e. market friendly) rather than ANC traditional ones (McKinley, 1997: 3).

2.4. After 27 April 1994 South Africa first democratic elections

After 1994, the Alliance was concerned with building a democratic government. In this regard they adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) resulting from inputs of grassroots activists and trade unions. The terms of the settlement, however, placed severe limitations on the ability of ANC to implement the Keynesian

RDP (Bond 2000: 7). For this reason an elite transition marked by a distinctly neo-liberal economic attitude took hold. Capital and leading liberals wooed many leaders of the Alliance to their side in what Sparks (2003: 3) called "the great u-turn".

RDP office was closed down after two years and replaced by the Growth Employment and Redistribution strategy as SA's new macro-economic programme. Cosatu and SACP reacted with fervour and have continued to do so. Intellectuals as well as the media have repeatedly predicted the split of the Alliance. But it remains solid as does the allegiance to the Freedom Charter. Under GEAR the poor working class continues to suffer many deprivations in spite of a rhetorical bias towards them. Unemployment and poor service delivery have blighted and continue to be the bane of ANC government.

2.5. Conflict over policy issues

RDP emerged as the centerpiece of ANC's electoral programme. It originated in the early 1990s from within the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) about a need for a construction accord that would tie Cosatu electoral support for the ANC to ensure the latter's commitment to a working-class programme (Von Holst, 1990:13). SACP entered the debate by supporting the proposal as a way of getting ANC to commit to economic and social transformation biased in favour of workers (Cronin 1996:8).

Although the origins of RDP lie within COSATU and the SACP desire to bind ANC to a radical programme of transformation, its adoption had as much to do with electoral politics as it did with transformation. Adoption of RDP, Gotz argues, was an electoral gambit, rather than an item of faith (2004: 4).

After the 1994 elections RDP rapidly took on the status of a mantra that dominated the discourse of development in the first two years of the new government. Its appeal lay in the fact that it was all things to all people (ANC, 1994: 1).

Whereas RDP had been drawn up inside the Alliance, it was now the task of the ANC-led government to turn this election programme into implementable policies within state

structures whose composition was largely unchanged as a result of the 'sunset clauses'. During the first two years RDP was located within the President's office under Jay Naidoo, ex-General Secretary of COSATU. Within five months RDP had been turned into an official government White Paper which reconceptualised it as a long-term strategic vision with clearly stated economic targets (ANC, 1994: 6).

In March 1996 RDP office was closed down and its programmes and other activities were moved to the Department of Finance and ultimately under Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. The government explained this change as an attempt to improve implementation by reluctant line ministries. Critics saw this move as a break with RDP and conclusive proof of a shift towards neo-liberalism.

GEAR committed government to orthodox monetary and fiscal discipline, a stable exchange rate, higher public and private investment, lower tariffs and faster export growth. It promised more efficient tax collection, rapid economic growth rate and faster job creation. It aimed to accelerate privatization and reduce market inflexibilities. It aimed to increase productivity and keep real wage increases below 0.8 per cent (Thomas, 2007: 258).

GEAR was strongly criticised by both COSATU and SACP (COSATU, 1996: 1). NUMSA General-Secretary Enoch Godongwana described it as a "reflection of the conservative consensus" in vogue internationally. He believed it was inappropriate for South Africa. Instead of GEAR, he argued that SA economy required the state to take lead in infrastructure development as a means to 'kick-start' growth and put people into jobs. If the state were to invest in infrastructure, foreign and local investors would also be attracted.

Although government said that GEAR was non-negotiable, it proposed a national social agreement "to create an environment for rapid growth and accelerate delivery of public services based on equity and universal access (COSATU, 1996: 2).

2.6 Conflicts arise between SACP members in and outside government

South Africa uses a closed party list proportional representation system to elect public officials at the national level. Individual candidates are in numerical order, indicating appropriate ranking in the party list. Based on the percentage vote achieved by each party, individuals are then selected from party lists, beginning with the number one ranked candidate and proceeding downwards until the number of seats is filled that corresponds with the percentage vote achieved by each party (Thomas, 2007: 256). Under this system, the ANC leadership has the power to decide which members will serve in government at both provincial and national levels.

Under the strategic alliance mentioned above, dozens of SACP members gained positions in government on the strength of this electoral method. Alongside regular members of parliament and members of the provincial legislatures, SACP also has members serving as provincial premiers, provincial Members of Executive Councils (MECs) and national cabinet ministers. For example, following the 2004 election, six SACP members were chosen as national cabinet ministers namely; Charles Nqakula who became Minister of Safety and Security, Sydney Mufamadi as Minister of Provincial and Local Government, Ronnie Kasrils, Minister for Intelligence Services, Essop Pahad as Minister in the Presidency and Jeff Radebe as Minister of Transport. Others were Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Minister of Public Service and Administration etc. In addition, two of the nine provincial premiers were members of SACP. Generally speaking, the number of SACP members sitting in government has been disproportionately high relative to the size of the party (Thomas, 2007: 254).

One of the greatest tensions within SACP arose between those who sit in government and those who do not. As Nyathi asserts, "the party is divided into two because ANC has handpicked intellectuals from within the party and has given them positions in parliament, others are ministers. The latter are leaders who have influence within the SACP. This division can be ascertained by speaking with almost any rank and file member (Nyathi, 2004: 6).

For those not sitting in government, there are two fundamental problems they consistently raise. The first is that SACP members elected on an ANC ticket are not accountable to the SACP for their day to day activities within the government. They simply "do as the ANC tells them", with very little consideration of the party's programme. Those not in government also want to go into government. This has the potential to divide the Party as it isolates those in government from the rest. It also impacts on the ideological cohesion of the party. In government they either adopt neutrality or publicly disown principles of SACP.

Rank and file members have been consistently raising these concerns throughout the post-apartheid period. Riba (2004: 257) comments if you look at those comrades when they are within government, they are no longer talking of the communist party, they are more now of the ANC than anything else. As a result most of them are worse capitalists than anything else. Nyathi, (2004: 2576) concurs and points out that before "they make you a minister, they tell you what a minister is and what their expectations are, and how should be your thinking. So the comrades who are considered for government position become more enthusiastic for working in government and clearly forget the principles that govern the SACP".

According to rank and file SACP members those elected to government prioritise government more than they prioritise SACP organizational work. "Whenever they are wanted they say: "no I'm overseas", or "I'm addressing business". They may also say "no I'm committed". The most disturbing thing is that even the comrades in their own structure go and sit there for 15 minutes and afterwards *vamos*. So how are we going to carry the mandate of the people if you try to satisfy everyone and forget about the people who put you in power? Others even went to the extent that they absent themselves from three consecutive Central Committee meetings. What does the constitution say about that? But then the comrade will re-emerge when there is a congress and sign a cheque for R15, 000 because the party is poor and think that you can influence the masses on the ground, even though you cut the water taps in the community" (Anonymous, 2004: 256).

Thus there appears to be a ground-swell of frustration among many rank and file comrades who feel that SACP members in government are completely unaccountable to the party. Yet SACP leaders within government say that their perspective is influencing ANC policy. For example, Cronin (2004) asserts that "in all of my ANC work I'm approaching it not with a party mandate, but with a party culture and party perspectives". Cronin suggests that while SACP members cannot put forward distinctly 'communist' positions in government, they can influence policy in a direction conducive to the party's short and medium term goals. Moreover there is certainly a degree of variability with regard to the actions of SACP members working in government. The frustrated members quoted above perhaps oversimplify the issue by tarring all their members in government with the same brush. Nonetheless, these critical voices from the rank and file demonstrate a crucial point of contestation within the party (Thomas, 2007: 257).

A second concern is the common perception that those SACP members in government are at best *not* doing enough to forward the programme of the party and at worst enthusiastically implement government policies that contradict party policy. There is general dissatisfaction with what members see as an inability of SACP members in government to advance principled socialist ideas. The critics say that they tend to stick to the 'two hats' approach when dealing with the difficulties of working for both ANC and SACP. While they are in government under the ANC banner they act as members of that party and when they are at SACP functions, they act as SACP members.

Tom Lodge (2004: 263) argues "that SACP keeps its intellectual life completely separate from the ANC when they work within the ANC they leave the SACP part of their lives behind". A comrade from Johannesburg concurs "so once they [SACP members] are in there [in government] they follow the discipline of the ANC, they have to implement what is generally agreed upon at ANC caucuses" (Sizani, 2004: 2). Working within the parliamentary structures of ANC necessarily entails adherence to strict ANC party discipline.

SACP leaders in government thus do not appear to be spending their time implementing the programme of their party. They are not publicly advocating socialist policies but merely remove their 'SACP hat' when acting as government officials. Lodge (2004: 264) notes "I don't see any serious effort by senior SACP members to challenge ANC policies in forums where they might actually have some impact in doing so".

Ronnie Kasrils (2002: 4) a former SACP Central Committee member and Minister of Intelligence Services, admits that "If you are a communist and become a member of parliament under ANC and minister appointed by the President, you cannot expect that MP or minister to simply articulate SACP policy". This observation points precisely to the frustration that many rank and file members feel. Though dozens of SACP members are in government they are incapable of articulating party positions within those sites of power.

Particularly at the Ministerial level, this problem is exacerbated by the fact that ANC often places SACP members in ministries that most directly affect the working class and poor. As scholar/activist and former member of the SACP, Dale McKinley points out that under Mandela and Mbeki, leading communist party members were placed in portfolios that are the most difficult to sell to the working class (2004). Many of these ministries were in direct conflict with the mass base of SACP on more than one occasion.

The frustration and disappointment experienced at the rank and file level culminated in three former SACP Central Committee members, who were also ANC ministers, not being re-elected to the Central Committee at the Party's Congress in 2002. Radebe and Pahad were not voted into the Central Committee at that Congress. Fraser-Moleketi did not stand for re-election and it was generally understood that the membership was not content with her performance as ANC minister (Manson 2002: 7).

These contradictions have not been handled well by the party leadership and they are recognised as intractable by the highest echelons of the organisation. For example, SACP Central Committee member and National Union of Mineworkers Vice-President Crosby Moni (2004: 1) opined that "we have comrades who are ministers, ANC

ministers, not as SACP ministers. Let me state up front that I do not think we handled those contradictions properly. We had some comrades who were ministers and members of the Central Committee of the party who were not voted back to the Central Committee because they were given portfolios that were putting them in direct conflict with the workers. For instance an SACP Minister of Public Enterprises was privatising... We didn't expect communists to privatise. And then the Minister of Public Administration had to deal with streamlining and restructuring the public service, resulting in the loss of jobs... If you are a government minister you follow government policy irrespective of whether you like it or you do not like it".

Beyond particular SACP members in ANC government, there is a general feeling that all of those party members who reach the upper echelons of ANC leadership are agreeable to that party and serve its interests. In this sense, the ministers from the party have performed in a way that has been acceptable to the ANC's overall understanding of how the alliance should operate. As SACP members they have in fact been very 'good' ministers from the perspective of ANC leadership. To this extent some have been rewarded and allowed to keep their cabinet posts for a long time.

The desire to influence ANC and to have seats in cabinet is strong within SACP. However, the contradictions and frustrations involving the inability of these cabinet members to articulate SACP policies are also palpable. Joseph Nkosi former vice-president of COSATU and member of the SACP, describes the complexity of the issues thus "when you are a Communist Party member and you are appointed to be a minister, you must take note that you are in a difficult position. One of the dilemmas that comrades have is that it will be difficult for you to articulate a party position while you are a minister appointed by the ANC. Secondly you are in parliament not on the election list of the party but of ANC. And you cannot be articulating party policies... You are bound by the policies of ANC as it is the government currently. So you cannot have [SACP] policy in parliament" (2003: 13).

SACP strives to have influence within government by working with ANC but is unable to articulate party policy in government. This logic becomes circular, as the central

purpose of serving in government (influencing ANC) cannot be fulfilled, because fulfilling that purpose would unsettle the ANC to the extent that they would no longer allow SACP members in. This is a difficult burden for many SACP leaders to bear.

Dr Blade Nzimande, current Minister of Education and General Secretary of SACP (served as ANC MP from 1994 to 1999, explains that "sometimes there are policies you don't agree with, but as a member of government or parliament you will have to push them. Our approach as the SACP, in such instances, is that we must not individualise this and blame our comrades in government because our own policy is that we are not entries in any organization (2004: 7)."

Deputy General Secretary of SACP Cronin (2004: 3) articulates the delicacy with which members working in government must approach them. But if they do not organise themselves within ANC or attempt to influence policy in a direction that is palatable to the party, they are accused of betraying ANC programmes.

Regardless of their skill the behaviour of SACP members in ANC government is deeply problematic for the party. If they must answer first and foremost to the ANC in their daily activities, the question of accountability to SACP mandate and programmes is a legitimate one. Furthermore, there is very little to suggest that working within ANC has produced any meaningful progress toward the implementation of SACP programmes.

Scholars have argued that SACP (and COSATU) have played an increasingly subordinate role within the Alliance since the implementation of GEAR in 1996 (Adams, 2001; Habib and Taylor, 2001; McKinley, 2001; Barchiesi, 2004: 332). The role of the party currently has been described as one of "legitimating the ANC's rhetoric among left constituencies" (Barchiesi, 2004: 333). While a comprehensive discussion of the current dynamics within the Tripartite Alliance is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is generally accepted that the SACP is a relatively marginal actor.

The study is of the view that SACP cannot attain its objective of establishing socialism in SA as long as it is not in power. To do so it has to win elections and be in the forefront of government.

2.7. Should SACP stand alone?

The struggle over contesting elections alone relates directly to the split within the party; between those in government and those outside. SACP members in government are most likely to oppose the idea of running separate candidates. They are loyal members of ANC and have been handpicked to serve ANC interests. Nyathi argues that these 'communists' within government are not only explicitly opposed to the view that the party should be contesting elections independently but often work directly to obstruct and defeat that view (2004: 8). Furthermore Nyathi (2004: 9) explains arguments over this issue as one that contains an enormous power imbalance. "Those who are in government have state power. They have financial resources, they can suppress our programmes. We, outside government operate from zero budgets… The view is so strong within SACP branches, but those who are in branches are not very influential. Key people are those who are at provincial and national level, and those are the people who have been handpicked by the government. And these are the people who will never agree with this notion. They will use whatever power necessary to suppress it".

This once again reveals the divisive nature of the issue within the party and the fact that SACP members outside government do not necessarily trust their comrades serving in ANC government.

It is instructive to listen to members who openly articulate the view that that SACP should contest elections independently. The frustration, and at times anger, surrounding the futility of the party's current approach to working within ANC is palpable. Some members argue to the point of denying that the party is even present in parliament, as its members are acting under the strict authority of ANC. For instance, the late Nkosiphendule Kolisile (2004: 5) of the Gauteng legislature posited that "we are not in parliament. We cannot radically push for the adoption of SACP policies in parliament. Ours is just to lobby like an NGO from the outside".

Nyathi (2004: 256) from Johannesburg Central argued more forcefully. "In ANC, even if you are a pure communist, if they give you a cabinet post they tell you what to do

because they have their own economic policies. If we can have an independent and a strong SACP, and develop cadres within the SACP, we will be able to stand in the elections. If we are able to stand in the elections independently, the rights of the working class and the poor will be protected. But now we do not see that happening in South Africa''.

Another member voiced his frustration by claiming, "really it would be meaningless to be still calling for a socialist future, the future that will secure the interests of the people, while we are still sleeping in the same bed with the ANC" (Riba, 2004: 255). Such impatience with the party's lack of progress has led many party members to call for a comprehensive and open investigation into the possibility of contesting elections independently.

Since then the SACP's Johannesburg Central branch has advanced many views regarding SACP role within the Alliance. One such view is that the party should contest elections alone. At the SACP Gauteng Provincial Congress of July 2004, this issue was put on the table. Thereafter, SACP Provincial Council overwhelmingly resolved that the party must contest elections at all levels by fielding own independent candidates. A similar resolution was passed by the Port Elizabeth branch.

The issue was further debated at a special Party congress in April 2005. Held in Durban, the congress attracted approximately 600 delegates from across the country (SACP 2005a). Some delegates argued that in the light of the marginalisation of the left and the pro-capitalist orientation of the state, SACP should contest elections independently. Though there was much fruitful debate of this view no decision was reached on the matter afterwards.

Though the special congress was inconclusive a resolution reaffirming SACP's commitment to ANC was adopted (SACP, 2005b). A related resolution was that the Central Committee should establish a commission to investigate the party's relationship with ANC and whether SACP should consider contesting elections in its own right. The resolution further mandated SACP Central Committee to investigate opportunities,

challenges and threats to the achievement of building party power, influence and activism. This included development of strategic options with regard to participation in forthcoming elections (SACP, 2005b).

The work of the Commission included engagement with all SACP structures, the broader democratic movement and the broader South African public. In addition, the Commission engaged with fraternal parties and movements in different parts of the world (Commanisi Bua, 2006).

The findings and recommendations of the Commission were tabled for discussion at the SACP 12th congress in July 2007. Once again the matter of "independence" was left unresolved and open to further debate.

Meanwhile COSATU commissioned independent surveys among its shop stewards and general membership to assess preferred electoral options. This process suggested that, while the SACP's positions on policy matters were widely supported within COSATU, there was no major support for an independent SACP.

2.8. Advantages and disadvantages of SACP standing alone from the Tripartite Alliance

Despite the outspoken and active group who favour contesting elections independently, the majority view within SACP appears to support the status quo. There seems to be insufficient support for change, not only in the party but among the broader public. A 2004 Survey showed that 46% of the SACP structures supported a "go alone" strategy while 54% preferred the current status quo (Pillay, 2006).

Opponents of the "go alone" option view it as subversive. They argue that those advancing this view are counter revolutionary infiltrators intent on destroying SACP and the Alliance. Instead they view themselves as legitimately progressive, intent on preserving the unity of the Alliance. Against the "go alone" option they seek ways and means of restructuring the Alliance so that it can work better, especially given the

current historical conjecture. The need for cogent theorising and strategizing is thus imperative for this group.

In this regard the group contends that the "go it alone" route will result in the party holding a very small number of seats in parliament thus virtually becoming marginal and ineffective. Secondly that strategy would allow rightwing parties to gain greater influence. The Tripartite Alliance would as a result become dysfunctional. Finally though ANC would still be in power either rightwing or centrist elements would become dominant, not only within that party, by extension, in the country as well (Thomas, 2007: 257).

The first concern raised above is that under the new strategy there is no guarantee as to the number of votes the party would receive if it were to stand alone. It would depend on whether COSATU and its affiliates support the party and also on whether ANC and SACP part ways amicably. If the split was not cordial it would lead to competition and SACP may not fare well in elections.

One of the most potentially damaging possibilities for the party would be that most SACP members would simply relinquish their membership and stay with ANC. In particular, those SACP members who are currently benefiting materially from ANC (in government or elsewhere) would be reluctant to abandon that party for one contesting elections for the first time. It would pose an enormous risk for those who have been, or hope to be, elected on an ANC ticket, as their political future would be at stake (Thomas, 2007: 264).

When asked whether many SACP members would choose to stay with ANC after a split, Lodge (2004) an academic and SACP member replied "of course, 99.999 per cent". Thus, if the decision to go independent were not reached through broad consensus and supported by the vast majority of members, many would simply leave the party (Thomas, 2007: 265).

A second objection to going alone is that severing the Alliance would provide opportunities for other political forces to benefit. Party members commonly assert that

by dissolving the Alliance and reducing the power of ANC, conservative and reactionary elements within the country would be emboldened and easily wrest political power from ANC.

Mufamadi (2004: 264) claims that creating competition between ANC and SACP would not weaken the ideological enemy these parties face. Another member opined that "nothing will make the right or a conservative alliance like the DA and their friends happier than to see SACP contesting ANC. It is not in the interest of the revolution or the interest of the broader liberation movement' (Kunane, 2004: 7). Although these fears are legitimate, it would be difficult to imagine an SACP breakaway from ANC resulting in substantial electoral gains for other political parties. So far they have not proved to be a credible threat to ANC electoral support.

A third major concern about going alone is that this could effectively abandon ANC to centrist or rightwing forces within its ranks. Many within SACP view its participation in the Tripartite Alliance as a type of countervailing force, a leftwing conscience pulling ANC further to the left. Cronin (2004: 265) argues that to walk away into autonomy and actually contest ANC in elections would consolidate this group of centrist forces". ANC MP and SACP Central Committee member, Yunus Carrim (2004: 7) concurs. He claims that SACP should not relinquish ANC to "the emerging strength of more free-market strands". In general, SACP people view ANC as their organisation as much as anybody else's". SACP members who have been active within ANC would abhor the idea of abandoning the organisation. Many agree with Cronin that ANC is a crucial site of struggle and to quit it would be disastrous (Thomas, 2007: 265).

Disagreement and debate surrounding the outcome of that Congress is an important component of the ongoing struggle within the SACP over the issue. How one interprets the overall mood and decisions of the party is highly subjective. Thus, advancing one particular interpretation over another becomes a crucial tactic in the battle of ideas unfolding within the party. The issue of competing elections alone is certainly of paramount importance in the party's future strategy and tactics.

2.9. SACP amends its Constitution

A special resolution was passed on 10-13 December 2009 at the University of Limpopo during SACP national congress to make sure that party functionaries serve more their mandatory 2 terms of office.

But opponents viewed that as "opportunistic" and self-serving by the current party SG. For them it signalled "the death" of a party championing communism in South Africa. Despite this pessimistic prognosis, Blade Nzimande was rather "bullish" on the growth and popularity of SACP. He forthrightly dismissed any criticism that ANC has weakened SACP. According to him SACP membership is on an upward swing and increasing all the time. The party is active amongst many communities even though this does not attract media attention. SACP membership has been increasing steadily, from 10 000 in 1991 to 140 000 in 2011. These figures prove that it is the second largest political party in South Africa. It stands to reason that it can do better if it were to contest elections independently. Failing to do so may soon lead to the party loosing members for its continued support of ANC which is failing to deliver on election promises.

2.10. Conclusion

There appears to be a profound gap between various party members' understandings of the role of SACP in the Alliance and impact ANC government. Those of SACP leadership, inextricably linked to government, tend to view the ANC as a progressive political formation. From that point of view; the ruling party is deeply influenced by SACP perspectives. There is a counterview. The latter sees ANC as a bourgeois organization which SACP cannot change.

This commitment to ANC reveals fundamental contradictions for SACP. The frustration felt by many rank and file members is palpable and demands for an autonomous party appear to be gaining momentum. Many rank and file members are not willing to live much longer with ANC.

CHAPTER THREE

SACP UNDERGOES IDEOLOGICAL REORIENTATION

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 focused on the history of SACP since 1990. It briefly reflected on the differences in the Tripartite Alliance over GEAR and conflicts within the party itself. In this Chapter we show how the party underwent ideological transformation after 1990.

From the unbanning in 1990 to the first democratic election in 1994, SACP was required to play a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, the Party needed to assure white South Africans and the international community that they did not favour a revolutionary seizure of power in order to bring about socialism. On the other hand, they needed to convince their supporters that socialism was still the desired aim of the Party and that the most prudent manner to achieve it was through a negotiated settlement and parliamentary democracy (Adams, 2001: 54).

For the party (1995) socialism is a transitional phase between capitalism (and other systems based on class oppression and exploitation) on one hand, and a fully classless, communist society on the other. In this phase there is a mixed economy in which publicly owned and other forms of socialized ownership co-exist with capitalist enterprises (Adams, 2001: 30).

Since the late 1980s and after SA's first democratic elections, SACP underwent a remarkable process of ideological reorientation and organizational reconstruction. This interplay of both external and internal variables presented the party with what Adams refers to as a conundrum (2001: 39).

A tactical response out of this conundrum Joe Slovo, then Secretary General, argued, should be informed by an understanding that socialism was not "the immediate goal" for SACP at that time. Jeremy Cronin, a Central Committee member, also emphasized this point by opining that this tactical retreat was but temporary. Neither was it a detour from

"the national democratic revolution but a most direct route to socialism (Adams, 2001: 8). Although there seemed to be some contradiction in the two positions, they were in fact reconcilable within the "internal colonialism theory" and served to reassure members that the newly unbanned Party was beginning to develop strategies for "structural reform" (Adams, 2001: 8).

The conundrum was an extraordinary theoretical challenge to the Party for it required leaders to maintain contradictory positions, one reformist and another revolutionary. Though challenging Cronin maintained that "the process of transformation must also be one of reforms and qualitative breaks" (1992: 46). Given the political circumstances of the time in practical terms the conundrum left SACP with no choice but cement ties with ANC and other Alliance partners. This formed the basis of the "structural reform" option and the decision to campaign for an overwhelming ANC victory in the first democratic national election (Adams, 1997: 237, Slovo 1990).

SACP and partners had long been committed to what came to be known as the two (2) stage strategy. Derived from Stalinist orthodoxy, this approach separated the struggle against apartheid from that against capitalism. Its ultimate political aim was to win the national liberation first and then achieve socialism.

But in the late 1980s SACP tended to stress a 'leftist' version of the two (2) stages approach. This leftist version envisaged an 'uninterrupted' process in which the struggle against apartheid would merge into that for socialism. The increasingly imminent prospect of a transfer of political power to the black majority should have made the question of what would happen once national liberation was achieved more pressing (Callinicos, 1995: 83).

At that time a political imperative of seizing power necessitated a tactical solidifying of the ANC, COSATU and SACP tripartite alliance. The question of a socialist takeover of state power receded in the minds of leaders.

The revolution in Eastern Europe and the subsequent disintegration of the USSR further threw the leftist forces into disarray. Joe Slovo succeeded in skillfully distancing SACP

from the debacle by issuing a celebrated pamphlet titled "Has Socialism Failed?" in which he denounced Stalinism. But this still left unanswered the question of what should replace the party ideology specifically now that the Soviet model had been discredited.

Initially SACP avoided explicitly embracing reformism. Instead it preferred to call itself 'the party of democratic socialism' (Business Day 12 December 1990). Slovo reassured big business that the tripartite alliance did not intend to introduce a planned economy. 'Socialism and the market are not, as it is commonly supposed, opposed to each other in principle,' he told the Board of Directors of Woolworths. 'The market is a mechanism for the realisation of value, there is nothing inherently capitalistic about it (Business Day 12 December 1990 and Weekly Mail 30 March 1990). Slovo's stance reflected a more general shift in leftist thinking. In response to right wing attacks on ANC's Freedom Charter, particularly those clauses calling for the 'nationalisation of monopoly industry', Alec Erwin, a leading COSATU intellectual and a key figure in the 'workerist' left wing of the SA labour movement, wrote 'the issue is not one of state versus private ownership. It is whether we restructure our economy so as to minimise unemployment and poverty and maximise the supply of social consumption infrastructure' (Weekly Mail 30 March 1990 as cited by Adams, 1997). This ideological shift was clearly towards social democracy.

This new ideological reorientation and economic restructuring, it was generally agreed, would involve a mixed economy and would depend on winning the consent of big capital. The 'Great Economic Debate' launched by the left-liberal Weekly Mail carried, for example, a special supplement called 'Focus on Social Democracy', with articles such as 'Still Lots to Learn from Scandinavia'. Bizarrely, the prosperous liberal democracies of northern Europe (themselves increasingly entering a serious crisis) became the model for SACP.

In the unions and the left there was increasing support for the concept of a social contract uniting the state, labour and capital around an agreed programme in which the unions would offer wage restraint in exchange for an economic strategy intended to reduce poverty and unemployment. To some extent this idea merely registered existing

reality. The strength and militancy shown by the union movement during the late 1980s prompted both big business and the regime to move away from a merely repressive response towards one based on institutionalised bargaining between the government and the main forces of 'civil society', above all capital and labour (Callinicos, 1995: 23).

The 'Laboria Minute' of September 1990, which laid out a framework for the reform of the trade union laws, represented the first fruit of this reorientation. COSATU followed this up by deciding to participate in the state's National Manpower Commission and, when mounting a general strike in November 1991 to protest at the de Klerk government's imposition of value added tax (VAT) called for the establishment of a 'macro-economic negotiating forum'. Derek Keys, de Klerk's finance minister, responded to the extent of setting up, in November 1992, the National Economic Forum, on which both the unions and big business were represented. The development of a West German style social bargaining system was formalised with the establishment in February 1995 of the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), whose role was to be that of achieving a consensus between government, employers, unions and community organisations over various economic and social issues (Callinicos, 1995: 23).

This shift towards social democracy was intended as a means of achieving some genuine social and economic change in favour of the black masses. COSATU's economic advisers contrasted two 'accumulation strategies'. The first, sometimes summed up by the slogan, 'redistribution through growth', represented the liberal economic orthodoxy accepted by the National Party and its big business allies. This involved a reduction in the economic role of the state (very substantial in apartheid South Africa) and extensive privatisation as part of a more general process of restructuring designed to make the country's manufacturing industries internationally competitive. The economic growth generated by more exports would benefit the black majority by increasing employment and therefore incomes (Gelb, 1990: 35-36). For this approach the solution to the problem of black poverty was essentially a version of Ronald Reagan's notorious trickledown effect.

Against that approach COSATU economists countered with an alternative of 'growth through redistribution'. This would seek, in Stephen Gelb's words, 'to expand both employment creation and the production of basic consumer goods. In other words, rather than separating redistribution and economic growth, the aim would be to achieve growth through the more extensive and more rapid redistribution of incomes and wealth (Gelb, 1990: 35). This objective would, however, be achieved not through 'a direct redistribution of incomes', but rather through 'the redistribution of investment'. Capital could, for example, be transferred from speculation in financial markets to the development of 'labour-intensive light industries' producing cheap consumer goods, or 'the expansion of infrastructural services, such as electricity and telephones, to the black townships in particular (Gelb, 1990: 35-36).

The result of implementing this strategy would not be a socialist economy but rather a new 'accumulation regime' - a version of capitalism in which the black majority would have more jobs, better living standards and greater economic and political power (Callinicos, 1995:66). There were however, those who argued that 'Growth through Redistribution' and the broader approach of which it was part could act as a means of achieving socialism (Harman, 1995: 67).

The pursuit of these 'structural reforms' was not without critics within the Party. As an ideological compromise, structural reform was a concept devised in the 1960s by the well-known French centrist André Gorz in order to identify an alternative to both social democratic reformism and what Saul calls 'any very precipitate plunge into full blown social revolution (1991: 5-6).

'Structural' reforms are distinguished from ordinary reforms by being part of 'an emerging project of structural transformation' and basing themselves on 'popular initiatives in such a way as to leave a residue of further empowerment. The latter would be achieved by firstly growing class consciousness and organisational capacity for the masses and secondly girding them (popular masses) for further struggles and victories (Callinicos, 1992:195).

To what extent has South Africa's new government advanced a 'project of structural transformation' and led to greater mass 'empowerment'? This question cannot be answered in this study.

But with the foregoing in mind, it is clear that SACP has shifted from the politics of insurrection to the politics of structural reform and organizational growth (Gumede, 2005: 232). The Party has backtracked from the strategy of government overthrow by force. Instead it favours peaceful participation in multiparty unencumbered democracy. The Party leadership has found itself supporting conservative economic strategies and anti-union actions.

Structural reforms have also led the ANC-led government to pursue free market policies oriented towards "redistribution through growth". In this vein Eddie Webster conceded that 'the government of national unity has accepted the macro-economic constraints of the liberal international economic order'(Callinicos, 1996: 27).

3.2. Adoption of policies that contradict the Marxist-Leninist doctrine

State – led capitalism and private ownership of the productive means have been the hallmarks of SA economy for a long time. Under ANC government we have not seen a radical departure from this norm. Actually the ruling party has adopted explicit neo-liberal macroeconomic policies which do not accord with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

This is reflected in the macroeconomic policy of growth, employment and redistribution (GEAR). Among others Kotze (2000: 11) and Taylor (2001: 82) point out that GEAR was drafted and implemented by the ANC government without consulting its alliance partners, namely the South African Communist party (SACP) and COSATU.

The policy was released after a very short discussion within the ANC National Executive Committee and without consulting the head of the ANC Policy Department (Michie and Padayachee, 1998: 626).

Furthermore Hirsch (2005: 97) and Kotze (2000: 11) point out that GEAR was drafted by a small technical group consisting of officials from the South African Reserve Bank, the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the World Bank and three state departments as well as academics. The policy's intention was to provide SA with an understandable and well-integrated macroeconomic plan (Terreblanche, 2003: 114). GEAR held the optimistic view that 1.3 million jobs would be created provided labour unions were not reluctant to work together to reform the labour market and moderate wages. Additional jobs would be created via infrastructure expansion in the public sector (Terreblanche 2003: 115). The ANC's macroeconomic policy saw redistribution as a by-product of growth, not as a fundamental part of its development strategy (Taylor, 2001: 82). Former Finance Minister Trevor Manuel and Alec Erwin, former Minister of Public Enterprises, were given the duty of presenting and defending GEAR in public (Lodge 2002: 246). Former President Nelson Mandela was at a 1997 COSATU conference tasked principally with answering and dealing with all GEAR-related attacks from unions and SACP. The Deputy Secretary General of COSATU, Tom Ehrenreich, argued that GEAR was an economic policy that advantaged foreign and local capital more than the working group (Lodge, 2002: 26). Secretary General, Blade Nzimande fulminated and categorically stated that SACP was totally opposed to GEAR (Lodge 2002: 163).

Be that as it may, Buhlungu, etc., (2007) averred that SACP leadership's refusal to recognise the reality of class struggle in South Africa and its reformist perspective of the capitalist state continues to promote the false idea that somehow the ANC led government can be reformed (from within) to represent and favour working class interests. It therefore sees the Tripartite Alliance and the organs of state as vehicles of reform from within. For this reason SACP has routinely deployed its cadres in strategic ANC-led government positions since that party came to power in 1994. These strategic positions include cabinet portfolios, members of parliament, premiers and chairs of portfolio committees. Many SACP deployees have as a result become the most vociferous defenders of neo-liberal capitalist policies. For example Jeremy Cronin, a Deputy Minister of Transport and SACP Deputy Secretary General, has variously defended the Gauteng e-toll road system which many critics allege will impact severely

upon the working class (Buhlungu, etc., 2007). But the ANC government has not become biased in favour of the working class as SACP had hoped.

The general conduct of SACP members in government confirms Lenin's observation that a bourgeois state tends to transform those who work within its framework. In other words communists who work in such governments are transformed instead of the opposite. Instead of working for it, Lenin urged workers to "smash the bourgeois state" and replace it with workers' organs as the first concrete step towards socialism.

Paradoxically the current SACP leaders are doing the opposite; the bourgeoisie state has transformed them. This development has become a challenge to ordinary SACP members. They need to ask fundamental questions about their party and how far they are in their strategic quest of "Socialism is the future, build it now!" In this vein Frans Baleni, a Communist Party member and a mineworkers' union organiser, has averred that members are not very sure about the future of the Party as they are in a neo-liberal in government, "what is actually our role"?, he frustratingly asked (Adams 1997: 237). Average working class living standards are worse now than they were under apartheid. Democratic South Africa has now become the most unequal society in the world.

The truth is that while SACP persists with its socialist rhetoric, it does very little in practice that distinguishes it from the bourgeois ANC. For all Blade Nzimande's critical rhetoric about corruption and tenderpreneurship within ANC government, what has SACP done to challenge it? Probably nothing. In fact the SACP leadership supported Jacob Zuma for another Presidential term in 2012. In the eyes of many Zuma epitomises the plundering of state resources for the enrichment of the black political elite. We can only conclude that the SACP is not "a political party that is interested in power to advance the interests of the workers and the poor" (Daniel, et. al, 2005).

Instead it is lending credence and providing voluminous support to the ANC's neo-liberal capitalist project. In doing so it too nurtures the middle-class material aspirations instead of workers' welfare (Daniel, et. al, 2005).

3.3. Conclusion

South Africa has experienced high levels of unemployment, inequality and extreme poverty since ANC's accession to power. Since then the ruling party has gradually shifted to the right and came up with GEAR. That macroeconomic policy was in line with neoliberal ethos that favour the privatisation of state assets and labour market flexibility.

As a result the ANC led government has failed to adequately address and systematically reverse the socio-economic inequalities created by apartheid. On the other hand, SACP underwent a remarkable process of ideological reorientation which does not accord with the Marxist-Leninist doctrine to resolve socio-economic inequalities created by apartheid.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 analysed the SACP ideological reorientation which led the party to adopt policies that contradict the Marxist-Leninist doctrine upon which it was found.

This chapter presents interview findings from (1) SACP, (2) YCLSA), (3) labour unions in and around Polokwane, (4) academics and students from UL Turf loop Campus.

The transcriptions were made from a voice recorder afterwards were then analysed. Through this process, relevant themes were identified. The interview data collected was reviewed to establish whether the research objectives were met or not. Research questions were also matched to the questionnaire to organise answers and provide a synopsis of participants' views to research questions on the questionnaire. The collected data were further organized into themes and thematic concepts with relationships among them being closely examined.

4.1.1. Results

4.1.2. Biographical information

A total of fifty (50) participants took part in the study. Of the fifty participants, thirteen (13) were females and thirty seven (37) male.

Twenty one (21) of the fifty participants (belong to the age group 21) twenty one to (25) twenty five years, fourteen (14) were between 26-30 years, nine (9) were in the age group between 31- 40 and five (5) were between 41- 48 years.

Of the fifty participants, thirty three (33) have tertiary education (either a diploma or degree/s) while seventeen (17) had completed secondary school (grade twelve (12).

Thirty two (32) are senior members of SACP and YCLSA, six (6) of them belong to a labour union. There were six (6) students of Political Science/International Politics and two (2) staff members of UL Politics Dept. Four (4) lecturers came from the Depts of Sociology and Media Studies, respectively.

Four (4) themes emerged from the questionnaire and interviews, namely; (1) SACP ideology, (1.1) factors responsible for ideological changes, (1.2) international political economy, (1.3) Has the SACP remained faithful to its ideological doctrine? (2) Education (3) Unchanged living conditions under the economy of ANC – led government, (4) Is SACP a Workers' vanguard party? "Retrenchments" and (5) should SACP contest elections alone? Emerged themes are discussed below.

1. SACP ideology

Some 40% of all participants felt that the ideology of SACP is communism while 60% felt and perceived it differently. Of the 60%, 20% said it is socialism, while another 20% perceived the party as classless and the remaining 20% said it was Marxist-Leninist.

SACP participants said that the "ideology of the party is to create a socialist state wherein all the people will be equal and the wealth of the country is shared by its citizens". They further said that SACP is a vanguard party of socialism that employs the Marxist- Leninist tools of analysis. It is a political party of the working class that has an interest in all aspects of power, including state power. The final aim of socialism is a communist and classless society.

One participant said that communism derives from a Latin word for "common". As envisioned by Marx and Engels socialism is a prelude to communism. The latter is a scientific ideology. Like any other branch of science it has got its own ways, procedures, methods, designs, orientations and domains of implementation. The ideology is not necessarily against property per se but it is against private property in particular.

1.1 Factors responsible for ideological changes

Most academic respondents explained that factors responsible for ideological changes are those like the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s. At that time USSR had given up its commitment to and support for the armed struggle in South Africa.

Given that SACP has been one of the Soviet Union's most loyal and uncritical supporters, its sudden collapse had great impact on the party.

Furthermore the collapse of Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the crisis of social democracy in Western Europe transformed the international climate, delegitimising workers' revolutionary seizure of power. This view embraced western democracy and reinforced a global economy that dictated neo-liberal solutions as the only option for economic progress.

As a result there is no longer a "bipolar world. There is one world that is driven by capitalist institutions as the World Bank and IMF", those respondents contended. These institutions are not favourable to the Marxist Leninist doctrine and refuse to fund communist states. Thus it is very difficult for socialism/communism to flourish.

On the other hand, YCLSA opined that "money is also a factor responsible for ideological changes amongst many political parties and political leaders. Comrades are no longer behaving like communists when they have capital. Once they accumulate wealth they forget the poor and think only of themselves. Most of them are worse capitalists than anything else".

According to union participants "senior party members elected to government prioritise government more than they prioritise SACP organisational work. They are no longer talking of the communist party they are now more ANC than anything else".

Academics asserted that there is a low level of intellectualism among SACP members. They further claimed that socialism will not work in SA.

1.2 International Political Economy

Some 76% of respondents felt that the current international political economy will not allow SACP to lead government in SA.

One student respondent argued that international political economy is driven by capitalism therefore sponsors and investors will run away from SA if SACP were to govern.

On the other hand, some academics believed that South Africa is a sovereign state. "It is voters who decide which party has to run the government". They further said that the onus rests with the people of South Africa to decide.

SACP admitted that the current international political economy is dominated by the capitalist mode of production. History suggests that the collapse of the Soviet Union contributed to the triumph of capitalism. Thus international political economic forces, being not favourable to socialism, will attempt to frustrate the triumph of socialism and the Party in SA. "I don't see any developed country such as USA allowing SACP leading a successful government in SA as they do not prefer anything that contradicts capitalism". The international political economy views socialism and communism as "stumbling blocks", one of them stated.

1.3. Has the SACP remained faithful to its ideological doctrine?

While a little over half of the respondents (i.e. 52%) felt that SACP has not remained faithful to its ideological doctrine, some 48% felt otherwise. Those who agreed argued that for all practical purposes those people who are called communist in fact own farms and other means of production and government tenders. This means there are no communists either in the party or in SA generally. Some claim to be communist because they are poor but once they get into government and business they change to become capitalist.

One YCLSA respondent asserted that "they use this party to fill their stomach and they are no longer about the emancipation of SA people. The leadership is fighting for positions and does not address the grievances of the masses on the ground". But from an organisational point of view, YCLSA respondents claim that SACP has remained faithful but it is when its members join government that they become "corrupted".

Academics suggested that it is difficult for SACP to remain faithful to the ideology because it operates in a capitalist environment. The Party is in alliance with ANC and thereby implementing capitalist policies. Practically it has been swallowed by that party. Labour union respondents agreed that "SACP has betrayed its ideology".

Some 66% of respondents felt that communism and socialism are impossible under SA parliamentary democracy. They felt that SA parliament is driven by the capitalist policies which are against socialism and communism, thus that institution should rightfully be construed as the enemy of SACP.

They further maintained that though ANC has captured political power, economic power is still in the hands of the white minority. But under socialism and if SACP were to triumph electorally it could change laws protecting minority rights and private property.

2. Education

Though 86% of respondents claim that education would be free under SACP rule, some 14% of them were sceptical. Curiously the latter include YCLSA, an affiliate of SACP. They assert that "SACP members in government are at best not doing enough to forward the programme of the party and at worst enthusiastically implement government policies that contradict party policies. They assert that "though dozens of them are in government they are incapable of articulating party positions within those sites of power".

They further said that there is a general dissatisfaction with what members see as an inability of SACP members in government to advance principled socialist ideas even to protect students who on financial grounds are excluded from tertiary institutions.

3. Unchanged living conditions under the economy of ANC – led government

Some 86% respondents maintained that most black people did not benefit much from the economy of ANC – led government. A democratic South Africa has instead become the most unequal society in the world. "Average working class living standards are worse now than they were under apartheid. The truth is that while SACP persists with its socialist rhetoric, it does very little in practice that distinguishes it from the bourgeois ANC. South Africa has experienced high levels of unemployment, inequality and extreme poverty since ANC's accession to power. The ruling party has shifted to the right and came up with GEAR which is in line with neoliberal ethos that favour the privatisation of state assets and labour market flexibility"

Under GEAR the poor working class continues to suffer much deprivation inspite of a rhetorical bias towards them. Unemployment and poor service delivery have blighted and continue to be the bane of ANC government. GEAR constrains growth, employment and redistribution. That macroeconomic framework is "analytically flawed, empirically unsupportable, historically unsuitable for this country and has led to disappointment and failure in transforming the inherited patterns of inequality".

4. Retrenchments - Is SACP a workers' vanguard party?

SACP respondents asserted that South Africa experienced jobless growth and major layoffs in both the public and private sector. In the gold mining industry alone there were approximately 20 000 retrenchments in 2010, for example. This and the growing poverty as well as the inadequate safety net are SA's greatest social challenges at present. There are signs that growing poverty is creating dissatisfaction at grass-roots level in the Tripartite Alliance.

Some academics argued that SACP should insist on compromising the living standards and pay lower wages in order to employ more people.

YCLSA respondents criticised SACP for failing to protect workers from being retrenched. They also claim that there is no serious effort by the party to challenge ANC policies leading to these retrenchments.

For their part most student participants argued that "to sustain and implement socialism and communism is very difficult as these two ideologies never worked in any country because they are not implementable. This is the reason why the Soviet Union collapsed". They therefore do not believe that SACP could create sustainable jobs in SA if elected into power.

Indeed the Party cannot claim that it is the vanguard of the proletariat. SACP is a product of the revisionism that followed the upheavals in the Soviet block and the apartheid state in the period 1989 to 1993.The Party should no longer be understood according to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy or the two-stage revolutionary theory that sustained it during its exile period between 1950 - 1990.

5. Should SACP contest elections alone?

68% of respondents said that SACP should not contest elections alone while 32% disagreed and insisted that the party should do so. According to one academic such a move "will certainly be of paramount importance to the party's future strategy and tactics, it will assist the party to be independent from the ANC".

Student respondents opined however that SACP may not fare well in elections and will hold only a handful of seats in Parliament thus virtually becoming marginal and ineffective. "So far the party has not proved to be a credible threat to ANC electoral support. The reason is that SA people do not believed in ideologies. They believe in practical implementation of service delivery programs".

Labour union respondents maintained that it is very difficult to differentiate between ANC and SACP as the latter senior leaders are serving in the former as well. In doing so SACP appears to be swallowed by ANC. "The only way to do away with this

confusion is for SACP to test its electoral support and contest elections alone" Until this is done SACP shall remain a lobby group and not a political party.

Those who disagreed argued that SACP is an independent organisation "connected by an umbilical cord to the Tripartite Alliance which we will never allow the party to contest elections alone".

Other SACP respondents claimed that their party "is not ready to go to elections alone" due to the fact that the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) has not completed its task yet". In other words they claim that the material conditions prevailing in SA are not yet favourable for SACP to take such a risk.

In spite of an active and outspoken group who favour contesting elections independently, the majority view within SACP, YCLSA and unions appears to support the status quo. There seems to be insufficient support for change, not only in the party but among some academics as well.

6. Limitations of the study

The sample consisted of 50 people in Limpopo though with one or two serving at national leadership level of both organisations. None of them holds any official position and just like academic participants in this study, none have any significant influence either in national or provincial party affairs.

Interviewed provincial SACP and YCLSA members serving in provincial leadership have limited influence and likewise do not speak authoritatively about the policy and direction party/YCLSA is taking in Limpopo.

Some student respondents are members of the party and YCLSA serving in branches of either organisation but none is holding any prominent position. They do not speak authoritatively about the policies of those organisations.

The sample of 50 people is quite small and is not adequately representative of the approximately 145 000 strong SACP members.

7. Conclusion

The Chapter discussed the findings of field research, starting with respondents' brief biographical information. The interview data collected was reviewed to establish whether the research objectives were met or not. Thereafter research questions were also matched to the questionnaire.

In summary the study has met its objectives;

- Analysis of a brief history and ideology of SACP between 1990 and 2010.

According to the findings a majority of respondents concurred that though SACP is founded on an ideology whose aim is to create a socialist state, that it employs Marxist-Leninist tools of analysis, that it has interest in all aspects of power, including state power, in post-apartheid SA however the party has "betrayed its ideology". Factors responsible for ideological changes are multifaceted and include among others; (1) the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s which also gave rise to the end of a "bipolar world". Thereafter emerged but one world driven by capitalist institutions as the World Bank and IMF. These institutions are not favourable to the Marxist Leninist doctrine and refuse to fund communist states. Thus it is very difficult for socialism/communism to flourish.

On the other hand the findings revealed that (2) "money is also a factor responsible for ideological changes. Comrades are no longer behaving like communists when they have capital. Once they accumulate wealth they forget the poor and think only of themselves. Most of them are worse capitalists than anything else".

In addition the study discovered that senior party members elected to government prioritise government more than they prioritise SACP organisational work. They are no longer talking of the communist party they are now more ANC than anything else". (3) The study discovered that 52% of respondents felt that SACP has not remained faithful to its ideological doctrine. The findings revealed that communists own farms and other

means of production and government tenders. Furthermore the leadership is fighting for positions and does not address the grievances of the masses on the ground".

86% of respondents maintained that most black people have not benefitted much from the economy of ANC – led government. Democratic South Africa has instead become the most unequal society in the world. "Average working class living standards are worse now than they were under apartheid. The truth is that while SACP persists with its socialist rhetoric, it does very little in practice that distinguishes it from the bourgeois ANC.

- **Can SACP successfully lead SA to socialism?**

According to the findings for SACP to attain power in the post-apartheid SA, it has to abandon the revolutionary route espoused by the ideology and reposition itself to contest parliamentary elections. In other words for SA to become socialist, SACP has to campaign and triumph electorally for this to happen. Such a move has far reaching ramifications for the party's future strategy and tactics. It raises the question of whether the party should be independent of its Tripartite Alliance partners or not.

On this score there are those who claim that SACP "is not ready to go to elections alone". The reason for this, they claim, is that the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) has not completed its task yet. In other words the material conditions prevailing in SA are not yet favourable for the SACP to take such a risk.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that there is an active and outspoken group who favour contesting elections independently. But the majority's view within SACP, YCLSA and unions appears to support the status quo. There is insufficient support for change, not only in the party but among interviewed academics as well.

Employment and attendant issues were used as a yardstick to unravel the issue of whether SACP is a workers' vanguard party or not. The findings revealed that SACP has lost its vanguard role since unbanning. It should no longer be understood according

to the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy or two-stage revolutionary theory that sustained it during the exile years.

The findings revealed that SA experienced jobless growth and major layoffs in both the public and private sector and that during that time SACP made no serious effort to challenge ANC policies leading to those retrenchments. For that reason the Party cannot claim that it is the vanguard of the proletariat.

In addition, the study has discovered that though ANC has captured political power, economic power is still in the hands of the white minority. This, however, could change if SACP were to triumph electorally and replace existing laws with those not protecting minority rights and private property.

Will the forces of international political economy allow SACP to establish socialism in South Africa?

According to 76% of respondents the current international political economy will not allow SACP to lead government in SA. The study discovered that international political economy is driven by capitalism whose sponsors and investors will run away from SA if SACP were to triumph electorally.

With the demise of the Soviet Union capitalism triumphed and international political economic forces, being not favourable to socialism, will attempt to frustrate the triumph of socialism and the Party in SA. USA and allies will not allow SACP to lead a successful government in SA as they do not prefer anything that contradicts capitalism. The international political economy views socialism and communism as stumbling blocks.

On the other hand, there is a view in the findings which reasoned that it is not up to the international political economic forces but to South Africans to decide which party should be in power. "It is voters who decide which party has to run the government", they contend.

8. Implications of the findings to the Study

The findings suggest that for future research the sample size must be increased to be adequately representative of the research object. They further suggest that the sample must consist of respondents who hold senior positions in their organisations. Usually such leaders have significant influence in national or provincial organisations and speak authoritatively about the policy and direction of the organisation they lead.

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Annexure: Proposed Interview Guide

Interview Guide

My name is Phillip Mthembi. I am an MA (Political Science) student from the University of Limpopo,Turflloop Campus. I am carrying out research towards completion of my studies. The research is about South African Communist Party. My work is purely academic. The aim of this questionnaire is to assist in gathering information on the above mentioned topic.

Interview Details

i. Date:

ii. Place:

Demographic Information

1. Sex ………………………………

 1.1. Age ………………………………

1.2. Name of institution/ Union/ organization…………………………………

 1.4. Highest qualifications ……………… [High School or College/ University]

1.5. Profession… ……………………………………………………………

2.1. Do you think that if SACP can be elected to government it would create sustainable jobs in South Africa?

2.2. If SACP were to win elections, education would be free in South Africa?

2.3. Should SACP contest elections alone?

2.4. In your opinion people from different classes benefit equally in the economy of ANC – led government?

2.5. What is the ideology of the South African Communist Party?

2.6. Has the South African Communist Party remained faithful to its ideological doctrine?

2.7. What are the factors responsible for ideological changes, if any?

2.8. In your opinion is socialism possible in South Africa?

2.9. Will the current International political economy allow a socialist SACP to lead government in South Africa?

2.10. Is communism and socialism possible under SA parliamentary democracy?

2.11. Do you think SACP would retrench the workers if it can be in government?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION