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# **ANC: People's Movement and Agent for Change**

## **Introduction**

Experience over the past six years has thrown up many challenges regarding the ANC's role as an agent for change in the current phase.

The movement has succeeded in setting South African society on a course of transformation. It has defined the main tasks of society and particularly the motive forces of change.

However, the current wide front of struggle has had the potential of dissipating focus. As such, some of the detailed actions undertaken may not clearly reflect internal consistency and a relation to the strategic objective.

While decisive progress has been made, the questions remain: have there been missed opportunities; have the constraints been fully understood and confronted; does the movement have the cadreship to carry out its objectives on all fronts?!

In this regard, the issue of maintaining and deepening the revolutionary traditions of the organisation has frequently been raised. What are these attributes? What are the conditions under which they evolved, and how do these compare to the conditions today?

## **Unique character of the ANC**

Given the nature of the struggle waged in South Africa, the kind of adversary that we faced and the links it enjoyed with powerful forces internationally: what are the ingredients that sustained the ANC and ensured its survival and organisational integrity? Can this be sustained in the current phase?

The ANC emerged as a product of a historical

moment in the evolution of resistance against colonialism, a subjective expression of an objective historical movement for change. At each stage of the development of this historical movement, the ANC's leadership and cadreship were able to adapt to the demands of the moment, mobilise the people and place the organisation at the head of popular resistance. Thus the organisation developed as a people's movement in theory and in practice, recognising that a leadership role is earned, and not decreed. In its approach to the country's problems, the ANC has striven to identify those issues that would result in sustainable solutions. In this regard, it sought to distil the essence: for instance through the policy of non-racialism, it eschewed the temptation to posit one form of racial domination as a solution to another form of such domination; and it developed, especially over the past two decades, to integrate the policy and practice of non-sexism into its approach to the NDR.

The organisational forms and practices of the ANC have always been based on democratic centralism, the balance depending on concrete conditions of struggle. This allowed for wide-ranging internal debate on the most critical questions facing society. The organisation was therefore able to evolve with changing times, with drawn-out as well as sudden acts of internal renewal and redefinition when the situation so demanded.

As a national liberation movement, the ANC developed the capacity to manage the ideological struggle within its own ranks, developing theoretical clarity on the NDR, and ensuring unity in action among all the motive forces. In the development of its cadres, the ANC discouraged dogmatic approaches,

encouraged questioning minds, and sought to maintain a continuous link between theory and practice.

Steadfastness to principle has been one of the defining characteristics of the ANC. It has shunned short-cuts to the solution of complex social issues: to pursue what it considered correct even when such ideas were not popular. It consistently sought to win over society to its point of view, evolving into a genuine vanguard of the NDR.

The ANC also learnt to identify and seize decisive moments. Thus it had to temper impatience during periods of quantitative accumulation of conditions and factors, and to impel decisive action when the combined elements of qualitative movement forward were evident.

In the process of building an international support network, the ANC interacted with a wide variety of forces united in their opposition to apartheid. This reinforced the universal character of the ANC-led struggle, and enabled the organisation to learn from what was relevant in international best practice regarding policy frameworks, methodology and revolutionary strategy and tactics.

From its foundation as "*a parliament of the African people*", the ANC developed to pursue the widest possible unity among those struggling for a better life. Over the years, it did its utmost to forge unity among South Africans irrespective of race, colour or creed; it sought to build unity across the African continent and indeed the unity of humanity as a whole against racism. In this sense, the movement matured into '*a great unifier*' for the common good.

These qualities evolved over time, and they accumulated into a capacity for internal all-round renewal. Their maturing depended also on the ability of the ANC to learn from its mistakes: often acknowledging them publicly and changing approaches after intense and thorough-going debate within the ranks.

### *Comparative analysis*

#### **Phases of resistance**

Objective conditions under which the ANC operated in the pre-1994 phase, were characterised, among others, by the following factors and tensions:

■ A powerful state with the capacity to co-opt and

intimidate whole sections of the population, and yet a people who developed the strength and militancy to stand up to brute force and enticement;

- Strong international allies ranged in support of the regime, both within the context of Cold War calculations and the state of racist ideology in developed countries, and yet a growing mass of opposition to apartheid in these countries, finally impacting on the public policies of their governments;
- An economic base that over many decades had the possibility of rapid expansion, creating limited possibilities for the advancement even of the oppressed, and yet growing pauperisation among the majority and intensified class contradictions, in an industrial society underpinned by the racial divide;
- A cohesive ruling class with a strong interest in the survival of the system, and yet increasingly wrought by internal contradictions and unable to sustain a conflict that would result in a scorched earth.

Under these conditions, the following subjective factors, among others, played themselves out:

- Especially during the period of its banning, the ANC faced a consistent danger of being divorced from its mass base, and yet this engendered the quality to patiently build structures and value them;
- Physical distance from the centre and isolation of units or individuals created the possibility of disjuncture, and yet this motivated cadres to master the policies of the movement and their application to concrete conditions;
- In many of the fronts where the cadres found themselves, principally exile, internal mass and underground structures and prison, various machinations were at play to co-opt them into an outlook that would compromise the struggle, and yet commitment to the ideals of struggle, the actions of the people in political motion and other factors kept such temptations at bay;
- Varying experiences and the difficulties of the conditions under which cadres operated always created possibilities for divisions, and yet

these were resolved through debate and mutual influence – and where these divisions derived from profound political differences that could not be resolved, a firm but gentle way was found to shed those who fundamentally disagreed with its principles or strategy without seriously impacting on the unity of the movement as a whole;

- The fact of being a liberation movement lent the ANC to internal ideological debates and quests for sectoral influence; and yet this encouraged widespread theoretical development of cadres leading to the development of a common methodology, the combination of theory and practice, and the maturing of cadres through the ranks in a manner that discouraged opportunism and careerism;
- Cadres faced the propensity to consider their individual area of work – such as international work, underground, armed units and mass mobilisation – as the most important, and yet this was tempered by means of debate and creative but sensitive integration of experiences, which resulted in balanced all-encompassing strategy and tactics.

### *Comparative analysis*

#### **Early phase of governance**

In the current phase, a number of previous objective conditions prevail, but there are qualitatively new ones, which impact on the movement and its cadres.

These are, among others:

- The democratic movement has attained elements of political power and it seeks to deepen this, but it has to do so under conditions of relative compromise such that the speed of transformation has to take into account the power of forces opposed to change;
- The state controls huge resources and has the power to regulate operations of the market to improve the lives of the poor, and yet it has to operate in such a way that at least the major actors in the market are not antagonised but are won over as partners in long-term socio-economic development;
- The attainment of democracy and new socio-economic programmes do have an impact on the

class composition of South Africa society, with, for instance, large numbers of blacks moving into the ranks of the middle strata and a widening gap between the rich and the poor – this pattern of class formation within the context of the capitalist system will have long-term effects on the outlook of society as a whole;

- Because the inherited state (being transformed) is a mammoth machinery with its own dynamics and inertia, the danger of being co-opted into its rhythm, style and idiosyncrasies looms quite large;
- The collapse of existing socialism has created an international void in terms of powerful, consistent and profound critique of the capitalist system, yet millions are uniting across the globe to challenge at least the most vulgar manifestations of the exploitative system;
- Related to the above is the skewed ownership and control of means of public discourse, a shallowness deriving from a poor understanding of the complex challenges of social transformation and pursuit of agendas which are opposed to transformation;
- Possibilities exist for national consensus around major questions facing the country, and yet if this is not properly defined, it can conceal deep-seated contradictions and encourage co-optation of the transformative agenda by the status quo ante.

Similarly, some of the previous subjective factors still prevail, but there are new qualitative ones, among others:

- Successes attained thus far are a result of profound synergy between policies and actions of the ANC on the one hand, and, on the other, the aspirations of the mass of the people who have been active participants at least during decisive moments; however we have not as yet mastered the art of mass involvement in the process of governance and social transformation;
- Since its unbanning, the movement has built itself as a mass formation, recruiting into its ranks all South Africans who support the cause of social transformation; but we have not as yet resolved the question of the balance, in this expansion, between quality and quantity in terms of membership;

- A society steeped in a competitive and self-centred mode and oriented towards individual wealth commands a huge gravitational pull which can suck in even those who seek to transform it – in terms of ideological paradigm, life-style, and notions of success, well-being and fulfilment;
- In the same vein, within the ANC, the tendency is developing in which positions in government (and the ANC itself) are seen as platforms for acquiring resources and power, and divisions based on this perspective of self-enrichment can be bitter;
- The state and government as a whole command powerful possibilities as instruments of transformation, but the very presence of cadres in these structures raises more than ever before the spectre of social distance – for instance, where the movement as a governing party relates to the people as the all-knowing, formal behemoth and where especially senior cadres in government as a rule are removed from the primary constituencies that the state is meant to serve;
- ANC cadres are developing new skills and capacity in various strategic areas at an impressive pace; and yet these cadres as well as those in various sectors of the mass movement are thinly dispersed, rarely interact as cadres of change (except, in some instances, as employer and employed), and do not have a readily accessible centre to which they can defer;

The wide front of struggle in the current phase does not only result in diffusion of ANC cadres' impact and their isolation, but also in the attendant weakness to consider one's segment of the front as the all-important one, accompanied by a narrow technocratic approach to strategic questions.

### **Main challenges in the current phase**

According to the Strategy and Tactics document,

*“Our strategy is the creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. In pursuit of this objective, we shall, at each given moment, creatively adopt tactics that advance that objective. Our fundamental point of departure is that South Africans have it in their power, as a people and as part of progressive humankind, to continually change the environment in which we operate in the interest of a better future.*

*“In this phase of transformation, we seek to expand and*

*deepen the power of democratic forces in all centres critical to the NDR, at the same time as we improve the people's quality of life. Our efforts, which are people-centred, people-driven and gender-sensitive, are founded on five basic pillars:*

- *To build and strengthen the ANC as a movement that organises and leads the people in the task of social transformation;*
- *To deepen our democracy and culture of human rights and mobilise the people to take active part in changing their lives for the better;*
- *To strengthen the hold of the democratic movement on state power, and transform the state machinery to serve the cause of social change;*
- *To pursue economic growth, development and redistribution in such a way as to improve the people's quality of life; and*
- *To work with progressive forces throughout the world to promote and defend our transformation, advance Africa's renaissance and build a new world order.”*

Arising from the above, there are a number of critical actions that need to be taken in order to raise the intervention of the ANC to a qualitatively higher level. Identified here are not the general priorities for the whole phase, but practical steps in the period leading up to National Conference in 2002/3. Each relevant Committee/Department can work out specific programmes with targets and time-frames and proper systems of accountability to the NWC/NEC.

What are these priorities in respect of ANC organisational work and the tasks of governance?

### **Immediate ‘organisational’ priorities**

**Activation of branches and members to serve as a vanguard of their communities:** ensure accountability by branches based on political activity reflected in the programme of action. Major programmes of governance should be translated into practical programmes for the ANC to mobilise for mass involvement and ensure that the programme of transformation is rooted among the masses, in line with the principle that the people are their own liberators.

**Strengthen the Tri-partite Alliance and build an active broad front for transformation:** improve

joint strategising, consultations and action among the tripartite allies; build a broad front including organs of civil society with a common broad programme for transformation; and ensure progressive leadership of campaigns and structures of civil society. In this regard, special and urgent emphasis also needs to be placed on the matter of gender equality both in terms of broad mobilisation and organisation and internal practices within our organisations and society as a whole. A similar challenge pertains to the organisation and mobilisation of the youth.

**Involve the membership in the resolution of critical questions facing the organisation:** in instances where decisive action is required to introduce new approaches, or to deal with such problems as divisions, opportunism, corruption and so on, members should be involved in finding solutions – this is critical not only in terms of democratic principles, but it is an important instrument of practical political education.

**Provide resources for, and ensure participation in, the cadre school programme:** the political school programme should now be brought to the higher level of a physical location and standing programmes, with formal recognition in the assessment of cadres, without seeking to create a political elite and recognising that branch and other practical activities are the best school for cadre development. This should be combined with strengthening the culture of debating critical questions within the ranks; as well as affording fora for senior cadres (in legislatures, the executive, the public service, civil society and the private sector) to develop perspectives broader than their areas of specialisation, and to test their own work against these broad perspectives.

**Improve ideological intervention by the ANC at all levels of discourse and formulation of policy:** rationalise and integrate the research capacity of the ANC – a Policy Institute possibly attached to the political school – all of which should help inform strategic policy determination by the ANC, as well as long-term planning. Consolidate the “ideological departments” into an NEC Committee to examine and engage on matters of social consciousness, including such issues as social mores, gender and racism. This should include conceptualisation of dynamics in the balance of forces, interpretation of strategic and tactical postures of the movement as

well as effective communication of compromises in the implementation of policy.

**The issue of material conditions of cadres should be discussed openly in general terms (and in respect of such matters as deployment and divisions):** this will lift the veil off the supposedly hidden causes of some of the ructions within our ranks and expose opportunism, tendencies towards corruption and careerism where they exist.

**Examine the challenge of “modernisation” of the ANC both as a concept and in its practical application, in a manner that sustains and deepens the revolutionary character of the movement.**

This would range from such issues as adaptation to the information society and related technological challenges such as usage of the Internet and opening of cyber-cafes within communities; to mastery of PR work and regular opinion research and application of findings.

This includes **targeted strategic recruitment so that, besides its reflection of the working class and the poor as the core motive forces, the ANC becomes the repository of “the best in society”:** including the best students, business leaders, sports-people, musicians, film-makers, academics, scientists, professionals, respected community leaders and so on – either as members or active supporters committed to the cause of social transformation. The need for dedicated teams for sectoral work also needs to be examined.

**The questions thrown up by our presence in government should also feature in this:** mastery of work in legislatures as part of instruments of transformation, oversight of government implementation of policies, mass mobilisation and accountability. In this context, the issue of the ANC's role in “*delivery*” also arises.

**On the part of progressive mass formations and the motive forces of the NDR, challenges that need to be addressed include:** how to utilise the state creatively to pursue sectoral and general interests; net-working among revolutionaries at all levels; lobbying; relations with progressive business people and the attendant problem of corruption that may arise.

Continue the process of building international alliances and strengthening our interaction and intervention as an organisation in developments on the African continent, the developing world and in developed countries.

### **Immediate 'governance' priorities**

**Improving the capacity of the state to meet its obligations to the citizens:** among the urgent challenges is to address the issue of the structuring of government to ensure integrated planning and implementation of programmes; ensure orientation at all levels towards meeting the priority objectives set out by the executive, as distinct from considering such immediate priorities as add-ons to on-going chores; continuing and targeted training and deployment in strategic areas within the state; transformation at middle management levels; revival of the campaign visibly to improve service to the people (*Batho Pele*).

**Giving a spur to the drivers of economic growth and job-creation:** take decisive steps to address the issue of allocation of public and private capital for productive purposes and launch the savings campaign in this context; resolve as a matter of urgency the blockages around promotion of SMME's; systematically implement the programme of restructuring of state assets; and complete the process towards a comprehensive industrial strategy.

**Broaden access to social services and improve their quality:** start visible implementation of the Integrated Rural Development Strategy (including a comprehensive land reform programme) and the multi-disciplinary approach to urban renewal; develop and start implementing, on a massive scale, a human resource development strategy; carry out the AIDS/HIV campaign at a new qualitative level; and develop a new social safety net approach.

**Build national identity and a new morality:** this should entail, first and foremost, encouraging a culture of mass participation, building of partnerships and spirit of voluntary service; secondly, a continuing struggle needs to be waged to redefine the meaning of self-fulfilment and achievement versus wealth-accumulation; and thirdly, develop national pride and patriotism – to ensure united action on critical national matters. In this regard, it is necessary to

examine the role of culture and national symbols and utilise them as a critical dynamic in the development of national identity.

**Improve international solidarity and contribute to building a better Africa and a better world:** this includes the integrated promotion of SA abroad in order to mobilise support for reconstruction and development; decisive interventions in areas of conflict such as the Great Lakes Region and Angola and helping prevent any expressions of instability particularly on the sub-continent; and building strategic partnerships in Africa and elsewhere.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude: two issues, which may require a fundamental shift of mind-set, deserve strong emphasis:

To succeed in meeting the objectives we set ourselves requires that central attention should be paid to building a corps of cadres capable of implementing required programmes:

In broad terms, socio-economic processes such as the national democratic revolution – which require strategic subjective interventions to shape unique social relations – differ from the ordinary capitalist system and its predecessors in that they do not rely solely on the “*animal spirits*” of voluntarism, relations of production that evolve on their own. They either stand or fall on the basis of whether a New Person has been shaped in turn to reshape the existing social relations.

Our programme is not only about transformation of material conditions, but also about engendering new social values. Failure to build a New Person, among revolutionaries themselves and, in a more diffuse manner, in broader society, will result in a critical mass of the vanguard movement being swallowed in the vortex of the arrogance of power and attendant social distance and corruption, and, ultimately, themselves being transformed by the very system they seek to change. An important challenge, among others, is to ensure a systematic intervention by the ideological centres and institutions of society, as well as women as mothers and the family as a whole in shaping social values and a new morality.



Changing South African society in a manner that decisively improves people's quality of life requires boldness in thinking that shakes up convenient comfort zones:

For instance, in dealing with matters of the allocation of capital for investments, to look at the balance between bank-based and Stock Exchange systems of raising capital; incentivised and enforced savings; assistance to SMME's; fostering of the co-operative sector and so on, should we be satisfied with merely maintaining and tinkering with the so-called "*modern sophisticated economy and infrastructure that the white man bequeathed us*" or should we search for bold and creative solutions? Related to this is the question of the size of the budget deficit and departments' capacity to spend.

The same question can be raised with regard to the issue of settlement patterns, both in the narrow context of de-racialising residential areas and building integrated development hubs; and in the broader sense of migration between urban areas and the countryside and the issue of optimal clustered locations for communities, which make meaningful, cost-effective and sustainable development possible – recognising that the current reality is a product of deliberate and ruthless planning by the architects of apartheid.

These questions are critical not only as a backdrop to the implementation of the movement's programmes; but also because opportunities lost at the very early stages of change can impact on the success of the whole project.

**NOTES**

# Through the eye of a needle? Choosing the best cadres to lead transformation

A National Working Committee discussion document

## **Why should we discuss this issue?**

1. As a movement for fundamental change, the ANC regularly has to elect leaders at various levels who are equal to the challenge of each phase of struggle. Such leaders should represent the motive forces of the struggle. To become an ANC leader is not an entitlement. It should not be an easy process attached merely to status. It should be informed first and foremost by the desire and commitment to serve the people, and a track record appreciated by ANC members and communities alike.
2. Those in leadership positions should unite and guide the movement to be at the head of the process of change. They should lead the movement in its mission to organise and inspire the masses to be their own liberators. They should lead the task of governance with diligence. And, together, they should reflect continuity of a revolutionary tradition and renewal which sustains the movement in the long-term.
3. How do thousands of branches throughout the country ensure that this happens in actual practice? How do we deal with individual ambition, lobbying, promotion of friends and pursuit of selfish interests? How do we ensure that electoral processes do not tear the movement apart? How do we prevent attempts to use the movement as a step-ladder towards self-enrichment?
4. Besides, the door can be left open for corrupt individuals and even enemies of change, to exploit the movement's internal democracy to sabotage the struggle and create their own ANC. Further, those who fail in positions of authority

can use all kinds of excuses to cling to power, when the time for change has come.

5. These are difficult questions. But the movement's membership has to find the answers, so we together build and sustain the ANC as an agent for change. To fully understand this challenge, let us first examine the character of challenges in this phase of struggle.

## **What are the challenges we face at this stage?**

6. According to the Strategy and Tactics document:
 

*“Our strategy is the creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. In pursuit of this objective, we shall, at each given moment, creatively adopt tactics that advance that objective. Our fundamental point of departure is that South Africans have it in their power, as a people and as part of progressive humankind, to continually change the environment in which we operate in the interest of a better future.*

*“In this phase of transformation, we seek to expand and deepen the power of democratic forces in all centres critical to the NDR, at the same time as we improve the people's quality of life. Our efforts, which are people-centred, people-driven and gender-sensitive, are founded on five basic pillars:*

  - *to build and strengthen the ANC as a movement that organises and leads the people in the task of social transformation;*
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  - *to strengthen the hold of the democratic movement on*

*state power, and transform the state machinery to serve the cause of social change;*

■ *to pursue economic growth, development and redistribution in such a way as to improve the people's quality of life; and*

■ *to work with progressive forces throughout the world to promote and defend our transformation, advance Africa's renaissance and build a new world order."*

7. Among the priorities that need immediate attention are: building active branches that give leadership to communities; strengthening the Tripartite Alliance; ensuring that the ANC leads mass organisations; and making decisive interventions in the ideological struggle.
8. At the level of government, we need to improve the capacity of the state to meet its obligation to citizens in the area of economic growth and job creation, social programmes, and dealing with crime and corruption. Further, the ANC, both inside and outside government, should play a leading role in Africa's renewal and building a better world.
9. As we carry out these tasks, we will face a concerted campaign to undermine our efforts, by those who oppose change. They will underplay the progress we are making, while exaggerating weaknesses. They will seek to discredit the ANC and its leadership. They will also try to undermine confidence in the institutions of democracy we have set up.
10. Some will even try to subvert the ANC from within. Because they know they cannot defeat the ANC frontally, they will try to create an ANC that serves their interests.

### **What kind of ANC is required to meet these challenges?**

11. **A revolutionary democratic movement:** The ANC pursues fundamental change to create a better life for all. Equality among all South Africans in choosing a government of their choice, using the country's resources to improve conditions of especially the poor, and removing racism in the ownership and distribution of wealth are among our core principles. Within its ranks, the ANC ensures the participation of

members in shaping the movement's policies and programmes.

12. **A non-racial national movement:** It is critical that our struggle brings about an end to apartheid relations in all areas of life. The ANC believes in the equal worth of all human beings. We seek to unite South Africans across racial and ethnic differences, taking into account the central role of Blacks in general and Africans in particular, given their exclusion under apartheid. We practice these principles within the organisation.
13. **A broad national democratic movement:** The ANC represents the mass of forces that pursue social transformation. Individuals belonging to different classes and strata form part of these forces, because they stand to gain from fundamental change. However, the ANC is keenly aware of the social basis of apartheid. It recognises the leading role of the working class and pays special attention to the poor.
14. **A mass movement:** The ANC seeks to bring into its ranks as many South Africans as possible who accept its principles and policies. As a legal organisation, it does not target only particular advanced political activists for recruitment. As long as one accepts its policies and takes its oath, anyone can become a member.
15. **A non-sexist movement:** Over time, the ANC has embraced the principle of gender equality as one of the central features of national liberation. This is reinforced through the equitable representation of women at all levels of the movement, and it requires the conscious implementation of affirmative action within our ranks.
16. **A leader of the democratic forces:** Because of what it stands for, and its track record in the fight against apartheid colonialism, the ANC emerged as the leader of the forces who pursue a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa. It seeks to unite all these forces and their organisations into a movement for fundamental change. Its leaders and members should win the confidence of organisations of the people.
17. **A champion of progressive internationalism:** The ANC's objectives are informed by the aspirations of the people of SA, Africa and

millions others in all parts of the world. Over the years, it has contributed to, and benefited from, struggles across the globe for a just, equitable and humane world order; and it remains committed to these ideals.

### **What informs the principles of ANC Organisational Democracy?**

18. **Elected leadership:** Leadership of the ANC is elected in conferences or, at branch level, in general members meetings. In all these instances, it is the individual members of the ANC, directly at branch level, or through their delegates, at other levels, who decide on the composition of the leadership structures.
19. **Collective leadership:** Individual leaders are elected into collectives which should work as a unit, fulfilling their mandate as dictated to by the constitution. No single person is a leader unto himself or herself, but a member of a collective which should give considered, canvassed guidance to the membership and society as a whole.
20. **Branches as basic units:** The branch is the basic and most important unit of the ANC. This is where members give leadership to communities, where they bring programmes to life and where they consider and make proposals on policies of the movement.
21. **Consultations and mandates:** Regular meetings of branches, regions and provinces, as well as national conferences provide the membership with the platform to assume collective ownership of the movement's fate. They set out the mandate that guides the leadership, and are important fora for report-backs and consultations across the movement.
22. **Criticism and self-criticism:** It is to be expected that in leading social activity, leaders and members will from time to time make mistakes. The most important thing is that these individuals and collectives should have the capacity and humility to honestly review their work critically, and correct the weaknesses.
23. **Democracy as majority rule:** Individual members and leaders will have differing opinions on how particular issues should be addressed. The strength of revolutionary organisation lies

among others in the ability to synthesise these views and emerge with the wisest possible approach. Once a decision has been taken on the basis of the majority's views, it binds everyone, including those who held a contrary view.

24. **Status of higher and lower structures:** Lower structures have the right to influence decisions of higher structures. And, within their mandate the higher structures have a responsibility to take decisions. Once these decisions have been taken, they bind all the relevant lower structures: they have to be supported and implemented.

### **What are the constitutional guidelines for elections?**

25. Every member of the ANC has the right to vote for, and be elected into, leadership positions. Like all rights, this goes along with the obligation to understand and pursue the objectives of the ANC. Further, in order to ensure that leaders are elected for their track record in serving the people, qualifications apply in relation to leadership positions: to be on the BEC a member should have been in the ANC for at least a year; for the REC it's 2 years; 3 years for the PEC and for the NEC it's 5 years.
26. In the conferences or AGM's where leaders are elected, this happens after discussion on the political and organisational environment and challenges facing the ANC. Out of these discussions emerges the political programme for the next term of office. Broadly, it is on the basis of these discussions (which start before the relevant conferences) that an appropriate leadership collective is decided upon.
27. Branch members are the electoral college for all elective positions. At branch level, this happens at an AGM where all members take part. In regional, provincial and national conferences, the delegates are mandated by the branch membership. However, each delegate has the right and latitude to influence and be influenced by delegates from other branches.
28. Because of the central role of branches and their delegates in these processes, two critical challenges face all branches. Firstly, we must all the time ensure the integrity of the membership

system, so that only genuine, bona fide members of the ANC exercise this important responsibility of deciding on policy and leadership. Secondly, where branch members delegate individuals to represent them, they must ensure that these are members capable of influencing others, and at the same time, able to weigh various arguments and acting in the best interest of the movement.

29. Delegates from branches elect Regional Executive Committees. For purposes of Provincial Executives, nominations from branches are canvassed at Regional Conferences, for regions to reach broad consensus. For purposes of National Conferences the same process also happens at Provincial Conferences.
30. This allows branches to share ideas, information and knowledge around various candidates. Through all these levels, a broad mandate is given to delegates: but each delegate has the responsibility to weigh views even at Conference itself and take decisions that, in his or her assessment, serve the best interests of the struggle.
31. At Conferences, nominations are also allowed from the floor, from individual delegates. Relevant minimums of support are set for the nominees to be included in the lists. This allows for individual delegates, regions or provinces to put forward names of those they deem capable but could not emerge through the nomination process.
32. Voting at Conferences is by secret ballot, and each delegate has one vote of equal value. In other words, delegates are not voting fodder, mechanically and unthinkingly bound to lists and subject to the whip. While delegates should be guided by the broad mandate of their branches, regions or provinces, each individual delegate is expected to exercise his or her judgement on the basis of his or her assessment of the movement's interests.

### **What then are the broad requirements of leadership?**

33. As a revolutionary organisation, the ANC needs revolutionary cadres and leaders. It should put in place leadership collectives that satisfy the character of the ANC defined above: a revolutionary democratic movement, a non-racial and non-sexist national movement, a broad national democratic

movement, a mass movement and a leader of the democratic forces.

34. An ANC leader should understand ANC policy and be able to apply it under all conditions in which she finds herself. This includes an appreciation, from the NDR stand-point, of the country and the world we live in, of the balance of forces, and of how continually to change this balance in favour of the motive forces of change.
35. A leader should constantly seek to improve his capacity to serve the people; he should strive to be in touch with the people all the time, listen to their views and learn from them. He should be accessible and flexible; and not arrogate to himself the status of being the source of all wisdom.
36. A leader should win the confidence of the people in her day-to-day work. Where the situation demands, she should be firm; and have the courage to explain and seek to convince others of the correctness of decisions taken by constitutional structures even if such decisions are unpopular. She should not seek to gain cheap popularity by avoiding difficult issues, making false promises or merely pandering to popular sentiment.
37. A leader should lead by example. He should be above reproach in his political and social conduct – as defined by our revolutionary morality. Through force of example, he should act as a role model to ANC members and non-members alike. Leading a life that reflects commitment to the strategic goals of the NDR includes not only being free of corrupt practices; it also means actively fighting against corruption.
38. There are no ready-made leaders. Leaders evolve out of battles for social transformation. In these battles, cadres will stumble and some will fall. But the abiding quality of leadership is to learn from mistakes, to appreciate one's weaknesses and correct them.
39. A leader should seek to influence and to be influenced by others in the collective. He should have the conviction to state his views boldly and openly within constitutional structures of the movement; and – without being disrespectful – not to cower before those in more senior positions in pursuit of patronage, nor to rely on cliques to maintain one's position.

40. An individual with qualities of leadership does not seek to gain popularity by undermining those in positions of responsibility. Where such a member has a view on how to improve things or correct mistakes, she should state those views in constitutional structures and seek to win others to her own thinking. She should assist the movement as a whole to improve its work, and not stand aside to claim perfection out of inactivity.
41. The struggle for social transformation is a complex undertaking in which at times, personal interests will conflict with the organisational interest. From time to time, conflict will manifest itself between and among members and leaders. The ultimate test of leadership includes:
  - 41.1 striving for convergence between personal interests – material, status and otherwise – and the collective interest;
  - 41.2 handling conflict in the course of ANC work by understanding its true origins and seeking to resolve it in the context of struggle and in the interest of the ANC;
  - 41.3 the ability to inspire people in good times and bad; to reinforce members' and society's confidence in the ANC and transformation; and
  - 41.4 winning genuine acceptance by the membership, not through suppression, threats or patronage, but by being principled, firm, humble and considerate.
42. With its unbanning, the ANC set out to build a mass movement, drawing members from the mass of the South African people. This also made it possible to introduce profound open democratic practices, with activists of the anti-apartheid struggle and communities in general taking part in building their movement. A culture of open mass participation helped root the ANC in all areas of the country. It improved its standing as a people's movement both in terms of its policies and programmes and in its mass composition.
43. As it developed from being a movement of cadres thoroughly processed and systematically educated in its policies, it attracted huge numbers of people many of whom developed in its ranks. Many of them were prepared to face the might of state-sponsored violence for 'the last push'. However, some individuals may have joined for the prestige associated with the changes happening at the beginning of the decade; as well as the personal opportunities that would arise when the ANC came into government.
44. Over these years, young people, women, community leaders of various hues, veterans of previous struggles, professionals and business-people found political home in the movement as it emerged from the underground. Cadres from prison, exile, underground formations and the mass movement have come together at various levels of leadership. All this has brought a dynamic political chemistry into the evolution of the organisation. It has also provided a wide and deep pool of experience within leadership.
45. In this period, and especially with the achievement of democracy, the ANC had to put together teams at various levels to develop and implement policies of a democratic governance. Without much formal training, these cadres have over the years acquitted themselves well in defining the constitutional framework, developing and implementing legislation and programmes for transformation, and building a state with the capacity to serve the people.
46. The Youth and Women's Leagues have also served as critical schools of the revolution and a source of cadres who are continually assuming leadership positions within the ANC. So have many other formations allied to the movement, including COSATU, the revolutionary student movement, civic associations, religious structures, the women's movement and some professional bodies. Further, it should be emphasised that, even if they may not be elected as a formal part of ANC leadership structures, leaders of these mass formations who are members of the ANC are also, in their own right, ANC leaders.

### **How has the base of leadership widened in the past few years?**

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### **What are the negatives challenges that have emerged in the new terrain?**

47. Entry into government meant that a great many cadres of the movement moved en masse from full-time organisational work. This was a

- necessary shift arising from the victories we had scored. However, this was not done in a planned manner. As a result, for the first few years, there were virtually no senior leaders of the ANC based at its headquarters. This had a negative impact on the task of mass organisation. While progress has been made in this regard, further work needs to be done to ensure that ANC structures operate as an organisational and political centre for everything the ANC does.
48. Because leadership in structures of the ANC affords opportunities to assume positions of authority in government, some individuals then compete for ANC leadership positions in order to get into government. Many such members view positions in government as a source of material riches for themselves. Thus resources, prestige and authority of government positions become the driving force in competition for leadership positions in the ANC.
  49. Government positions also go hand-in-hand with the possibility to issue contracts to commercial companies. Some of these companies identify ANC members that they can promote in ANC structures and into government, so that they can get contracts by hook or by crook. This is done through media networks to discredit other leaders, or even by buying membership cards to set up branches that are ANC only in name.
  50. Positions in government also mean the possibility to appoint individuals in all kinds of capacities. As such, some members make promises to friends, that once elected and ensconced in government, they would return the favour. Cliques and factions then emerge within the movement, around personal loyalties driven by corrupt intentions. Members become voting fodder to serve individuals' self-interest.
  51. Media focus on government and the ANC as a ruling party also means that individuals appointed into various positions are able to acquire a public profile in the course of their work. As such, over time, they become the visible members who would get nominated for leadership positions. This is a natural expression of confidence and helps to widen the base from which leaders are elected. However, where such practice becomes the main and only criterion, hard-working individuals who do not enjoy such profile get overlooked.
  52. Influenced by a culture alien to the ANC, a tendency has also developed to assess individuals totally outside of the political context which is the core mandate of the ANC. Artificial criteria such as acceptability to the media, eloquence specifically in English, and warped notions of "*sophistication*" are then imposed on the movement's approach.
  53. Further, false categories of "*left*" and "*right*", pro-this and anti-the-other, "*insider*" and "*outsider*" are introduced by so-called analysts with little, if any, understanding of the movement's policies, programmes and culture. These are then accepted by some of our members. This is usually whispered outside formal structures, and bandied about opportunistically in the build-up to the organisation's conferences.
  54. The process of social transformation is a difficult one, with possibilities of committing mistakes from time to time and with the speed of change not totally dependent on our will. Some individuals exploit these weaknesses by creating an impression that they could do what the ANC leadership as a whole is unable to do. Thus is born populism.
  55. Related to the above is the danger arising out of the fact that executive positions in government are by appointment. This can have the effect of stifling frank, honest and self-critical debate within the ranks of the movement. This is because some individuals may convince themselves that, by pretending to be what they are not, and being seen to agree with those in authority all the time, they would then be rewarded with appointment into senior government positions.
  56. On the other hand, others seek to court popularity by demonstrating "*independence*" from constitutional structures and senior leaders of the ANC, for its own sake. Often, this is encouraged by some media and other forces opposed to the ANC, precisely because it means independence from the mission and discipline of the movement.
  57. The tendency is also developing for discussion around leadership nominations to be reduced to mechanical deal-making among branches, regions and provinces. Thus, instead of having thorough and honest discussion about the qualities of nominees, delegates negotiate merely on the basis



of, “*if you take ours, we’ll take yours*”. This may assist in ensuring provincial and regional balances. But, taken to extremes, it can result in federalism by stealth within the movement.

### **How do members take charge?**

58. The selection and election of leaders should reside firmly in the hands of the membership. This can only happen if there is open and frank discussion on these issues in formal structures of the movement. Quiet and secret lobbying opens the movement to opportunism and even infiltration by forces hostile to the ANC’s objectives.
59. Such discussion should be informed by the critical policy and programmatic issues that face us in each phase of struggle. To recapitulate, this stage can be characterised as one of a continuing transition and the beginnings of faster transformation. It is a stage at which we are faced with the challenge of mobilising the people to ensure that they take part in improving their lives for the better. We are also faced with the task of decisively contributing to the mobilisation of Africa and the world for focussed attention on the needs of Africa and the poor across the globe.
60. In debating the composition of leadership collectives, we should take into account such factors as the various historical experiences of movement cadres. We also have to ensure that sufficient skills are harnessed for the task of governance. The contribution of veterans of the struggle in leadership structures at various levels is also a critical element to ensure continuity and the wisdom of experience.
61. In a modernising world, and to sustain the movement in the long-term, we should systematically and consciously take more and more young people into the blast furnace of leadership responsibility. We should, broadly, also ensure race, gender and geographic balances, without reducing this to bean-counting and hair-splitting. And a correct balance must be struck between leaders in government and those in ANC and other mass formations outside government.
62. How do members come to know of cadres with such qualities beyond those who are already in public office? The overriding requirement is that members should inform themselves of

developments in their locality, in the regions, the province and at national level. In selecting cadres for branch and perhaps regional leadership, this should be much easier. Other levels will require exchange of views in inter-regional and inter-provincial meetings.

63. But it also means that leadership structures should help give guidance – be they structures of the ANC itself, or the Women and Youth Leagues. Further, the manner in which deployment is carried out should expose cadres with potential to the widest possible base of membership.

### **How ‘natural’ is the selection process?**

64. How then does selection of candidates happen? Is it a “*natural*” process where leaders emerge out of some mysterious selection, or is it a conscious act on the part of members? Should members canvass for those they support and/or should individuals promote themselves? Is there a place for lobbying in the ANC?
65. To answer these questions, let us go back to the basics. In the first instance, the ANC constitution asserts the right for individuals to stand for and be elected into formal positions of responsibility. But waving a constitution does not excuse unbecoming conduct. Thus, we need to understand and follow the constitution; but also to learn from the movement’s culture while adapting that culture to current realities.
66. Members are not discouraged from canvassing for those they support. And, technically, an individual is not prohibited from canvassing for him-/herself. But it is a matter of profound cultural practice within the ANC that individuals do not promote or canvass for themselves. Historically, this has justifiably been frowned upon as being in bad revolutionary taste. One of the main reasons for this is that when cadres of the movement do their work, this is not meant to be with an eye on leadership positions or some other personal reward; but to serve the people. When cadres are not in formal leadership positions, they should not will others to fail, but assist everyone in the interest of fundamental change.
67. Selecting candidates and ultimately electing leaders is not like the “*natural selection*” of evolution where things develop by chance. It

- must be a conscious and well-considered act on the part of each ANC member. But how should this be done? What issues should you, the member, take into account when the nomination and election process unfolds?
68. Nominations take place at constitutional structures such as branch AGM's and regional, provincial and national conferences. Individual members nominate their candidates at these meetings on the basis of an assessment of candidates' qualities and performance. However, declaration of support for a person, or of a willingness to stand, does not guarantee that one would be a candidate. You become a candidate after the proposal has been accepted by a branch or any other relevant constitutional structure.
  69. Nomination and canvassing must be done openly, and within constitutional structures of the movement. If a member wishes to nominate a candidate or to stand for a particular position, s/he must indicate this in formal structures such as branch meetings. Outside these structures, it becomes dangerous and unacceptable lobbying.
  70. In open engagement within constitutional structures, the member(s) would then motivate why they believe that a particular person would make a significant contribution to the work of the ANC at the various levels. They would also be able to indicate the new and creative things that nominees would bring to leadership collectives. If the nominees have been members of these or other collectives, it should also be shown that they have striven to improve the work of these collectives, raised issues openly and had the courage of their convictions. It does not help for individuals to keep quiet in formal structures and emerge as surprise leaders with the promise to perform better.
  71. If they believe that there are weaknesses to correct, those who nominate or wish to stand should be able to show that those weaknesses are real and not the imagination of the media or forces which want to weaken the ANC. They should also show that the weaknesses are those of individuals they seek to replace, and not a result of the objective situation in which the movement finds itself. This would help contain a litany of false promises.
  72. It is also critical that individuals whose names are advanced reflect consistency in their work to pursue the ANC's interests. Individuals who target positions of influence and leave when they lose; and then seek to come back only as leaders would have to show how this serves the interests of the movement, and whether they can be relied upon during difficult times.
  73. Inasmuch as we should avoid pretenders and opportunists, we should also ensure that leadership structures do not carry deadwood. If they are already serving in these structures, or have served in the past, leaders should be assessed on how their presence helped the movement in its work. Further, it should be clear how their presence in these structures would help ensure the balances that are required for the movement to fulfil its mission.
  74. Individuals who operate in the dead of the night, convening secret meetings and speaking poorly of other members should be exposed and isolated. When approached to be part of such groups, members should relay such information to relevant structures or individuals in whom they have confidence. But it is also critical that proper investigations are conducted, and those accused are informed. Witch-hunts should be avoided as a matter of principle.
  75. There is nothing inherently wrong with structures developing lists of candidates and canvassing for them. However, such lists should not be used to stifle discussion in branch and other constitutional forums, and prevent the nomination of other candidates. In discussions around nominees, names on the lists should not take precedence over any other nominations from members. At the conferences, delegates should be guided by lists developed by their branches, regions and provinces through democratic processes. But they are not bound to follow each and every name. Being influenced by delegates from other areas and choosing differently is not an offence.

### ***Through the eye of a needle?***

76. These guidelines indicate the broad parameters within which every member of the ANC should exercise his/her right to shape the leadership collectives of the movement and ensure that it meets its historical mandate. In one sense they

make it difficult for individuals to ascend to positions of leadership in the organisation.

77. In applying these broad principles, members need to be firm. But we should also exercise creative flexibility, knowing that no single individual is perfect. Indeed there are many who may have potential but would not meet all the requirements set out here. But it is critical that they are honest about their capacity, and show a willingness to learn.
78. There are many members of the ANC who enjoy great respect within their communities, but still have to grasp the complex matters of policy. Such individuals should be encouraged to avail themselves for leadership positions. They should however be prepared to develop themselves and to take part in relevant training sessions.
79. It is a matter of principle, revolutionary democratic practice, and a constitutional requirement that, once duly elected, the leaders should be accepted by all members as leaders of the movement as a whole at the relevant level. They should be assisted by all of us in their work. The leaders themselves are obliged to serve, and to listen to, all members, including those who may not have voted for them.
80. The most important message of these guidelines is that you, the member, should be empowered to take an active and informed part in choosing leadership at various levels; or to stand for any position for which you believe you are suitable.
81. So, it may not exactly be through the eye of a needle. But we should strive all the time to ensure that our leaders are indeed made of sterner revolutionary stuff.



# Uprooting the Demon of Racism

## Introduction

The demon of racism has to be uprooted in its totality. It brutalizes entire peoples, destroys persons, warps the process of thought and injects into human society, a foul air of tension, mutual antagonism and hatred. It demeans and dehumanizes both victim and practitioner. (Racial Problems in South Africa. Speech by ANC President OR Tambo at the Second Pan-African Youth Seminar, Dar Es Salaam, August 1961)

The ANC in its January 8, 2000 statement said that *“the challenge facing the 21st Century is the solution of the problem of the colour line. It will take our country a long time before it wipes out the apartheid legacy of racism. More than many other peoples in the world, we know the destructive impact of the ideology and practice of racism. We must intensify the struggle against racism for our evolution into a non-racial society as a central part of the historic mission of the ANC.”*

This discussion paper therefore seeks to address our understanding of racism in a universal context (Section A); its evolution and manifestations in South Africa (Section B); the struggle against racism (Section C); the challenges of building a truly non-racial society (Section D) and the immediate programme to address these challenges. (Section E).

## Section A: **RACISM – ITS ORIGINS AND MANIFESTATIONS**

### **Ideology**

Racism as a universal concept, has manifested itself as an ideology, that underpinned social, political and economic systems of oppression, exploitation and discrimination. Our starting point will therefore be to define ideology, which in its popular usage, refers

above all to the realm of ideas.

There are a number of definitions, but we will use a definition that refers to ideology as a system of beliefs that seek to explain and ultimately to change the world in accordance with such beliefs. In its content, ideology is concerned with basic philosophical principles and the bases of political power. In its philosophical aspect it seeks to explain the key problems facing society (the nature of the self, the interaction between the self and the collective, the relation of persons to the natural environment, the nature of society, and the view of history).

Political ideology is concerned with questions such as the bases of political (and economic) power and the interpretation of equality and freedom.

Ideology therefore shapes the purposes and priorities of political action, helping the ruling class in power to gain acceptance for its policies or it can mobilise human efforts behind a cause, such as social equality or freedom from oppression.

As a system of belief, it is not merely a collection of pure ideas, but include feelings, likes, dislikes, hopes, fears etc. It also finds expression in the cultural institutions of a society and in fields such as history, religion, ethics, science, philosophy, literature, art, music and poetry.

### **The ideology of Racism and its manifestations in the world**

Generally, racism refers to a system of belief that discriminates against people on the basis of certain physical attributes or origins. Popular usage also refers to situations in which people make social distinctions between members of groups, who look physically

different, speak a different language, different religions/faiths or belong to separate nations.

The most socially harmful kinds of racism are those instances in which beliefs about racial differences and racial inequality are institutionalized, in other words, when they become part of a country's laws and public life in such a fashion that people with certain ascribed racial identities are treated differently from people supposed to belong to other racial groups.

During the last few centuries its main manifestation has been as a system of belief that justified the subjugation and enslavement of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Asia and Africa by countries of Western Europe starting around 1500.

Of this stage Marx wrote:

*“The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in the mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation.”*

*“The transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones, of the pigmy property of the many into the huge property of the few, the expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil, from the means of subsistence and from the means of labour, this fearful and painful expropriation of the mass of the people forms the prelude to the history of capital. It comprises a series – of forcible methods... The expropriation of the immediate producers was accomplished with merciless vandalism, and under the stimulus of passions the most infamous, the most sordid, the pettiest, the most meanly odious,”* so wrote Marx.

Such indeed was the slave trade; such indeed was the expropriation of the African peasantry? [**The Historical Injustice**. Sechaba March 1979]

As a political ideology, it was therefore a component part and a reflection of exploitative social relations between the colonizers and the colonized, a form of expression of these relations and a means for their justification and perpetuation. It encompassed actual structural relations between the colonizers and the indigenous people, as well as cultural and psychological justifications and attitudes which sought to explain these structural relations.

It applied Darwinist notions of evolution and hierarchy to human races, with white people of

European descent believing that they were at the top of the evolutionary scale.

It also used religion to morally justify this process of colonialism, with the maxim that ‘the chosen of God are those who are white.’ Martin Luther had said: “An earthly kingdom cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects.” As part of this worldwide movement, successive colonial governments and (since the Union of South Africa in 1910) white governments therefore practiced racism as an ideology – as a political programme that included conquering the indigenous peoples by force through numerous wars of dispossession, their subjugation as second class citizens and as a reservoir of cheap labour under colonial and later apartheid rule.

Institutionalized racism became an overt part of the apartheid ideology as espoused by the National Party after 1948, when they consolidated colonial power relations, and – like Nazi Germany – consciously engineered political, social and economic life around concepts of racial and ethnic identities.

South Africa was not the only modern institutionalized racist state. Australia's immigration laws until the 1970's restricted the immigration of Africans and Asians: “Keeping Australia white’ and denied the Aboriginal population certain civic rights and economic opportunities. In most former European colonies, the indigenous populous were given full political, social and economic status only after protracted anti-colonial and national liberation struggles.

Racism and ethnic oppression are essentially two sides of the same coin and manifested during twentieth century as the crime against humanity committed against the Jewish people by Nazi Germany and the genocidal killings in Rwanda and Burundi. Hence, at the historic conference Pan African Congress which brought together Africans from the African continent, the United States and the Caribbean, the call was made: The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the colour line!

### Section B: **THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT OF RACISM**

#### **Colonial conquest and subjugation**

To understand racism in South Africa, one needs to

understand the evolution of its economic basis, its class and social character.

From the first settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 and for the next two centuries, an ideology based on racial prejudice came to sustain the trading interests of Dutch and later British merchants. Inequality between blacks and whites stemmed from the pressing need of European settlers who were producing agricultural products for the world market, to exploit the labour of the indigenous population.

The indigenous peoples were commonly referred to as the 'Hottentots' and 'kaffirs'. They were described to be living a 'savage life' – wild, uncivilized, 'uncultured', 'rude', 'untamed', 'barbaric', etc. This served as a justification for the subjugation of the indigenous people and once integrated into the colonies, their second class status. At the same time, the life of Europeans was validated as 'the civilized way of life'.

At this time, indigenous people saw no need to work for others and leave their viable independent societies. Settlers were obligated to import labour from the slave markets of Asia and West Africa. But as soon as the settlers were powerful enough, they began attacking the natives, taking land and livestock by force. Those unable to escape beyond the frontier became settler slaves.

It is interesting to note that there was no inherent racism in traditional African society. During early contacts, shipwrecked Portuguese sailors were integrated into Xhosa communities. Without the means to exploit, whites were embraced as equals and when not threatened with dispossession, blacks welcomed whites.

A series of resistance wars against colonialism were waged by the indigenous people at every possible frontier. The Dutch colonists who were the first to occupy our land by force of arms, later came into conflict with a new colonial power, Great Britain. Sections of the Dutch (the Voortrekkers) continued their wars of dispossession into the inland and eventually establishing the Boer Republics in Orange Freestate and Transvaal, whilst the Cape Province and Natal were under British colonial rule.

Inequalities became much more entrenched as industrial development in South Africa began with the large scale mining of diamond and gold during the late 19th century in the Boer Republics. This process

demanding skilled artisans which were provided by white immigrants, minimum production costs and maximum profits to ensure further expansion. To further keep production costs low, they also used labour intensive methods by using unskilled (mainly black) workers. The consequence of this formula was unequal wages, higher in favour of white skilled immigrants. The white workers became protective of their relatively privileged position.

Here was a classical case of a 'labour aristocracy' (Mzala) allied with the capitalists for the return of higher wages and characterized by an intolerant attitude to the aspirations of the black workers. This relative advantage of skilled white workers, buttressed by the laws of the country, created a social structure that was colonial par excellence.

### **Colonialism of a special type**

British capitalist expansionism led to the Anglo Boer War (1899-1902), which essentially was about control over the mineral wealth of the Boer Republics. 'In 1910 Boer and Briton entered into a social contract in which the British undertook to help ease the Boer out of the Dark Ages while promising to respect his traditions. For his part, the Boer pledged not to resist the advance and domination of British capital.'

Between them, Boer and Briton agreed that they would share political power and, finally, that the indigenous African population would not be party to this contract but would be kept under the domination and at the disposal of the signatories, to be used by them in whatever manner they saw fit.' [The Historical Injustice. Sechaba March 1979]

The Act of Union marks the political watershed in the history of our country. Through its colour bar clauses it entrenched our status as a colonized and conquered people, drawing a sharp line of demarcation through the South African population. All whites, including the subordinate classes among them, were defined as members of an exclusive community, possessing certain prerogatives at the expense of the blacks. It is this institutional subordination of the blacks that stands at the core of colonialism of a special type.

Colonialism of a special type was therefore used by the liberation movement to describe the unique situation where both the colonizers and the colonized shared one country.

An entire framework of laws and racial practices gave colonialism of a special type a palpable form, and were consolidated when the National Party came to power in 1948. This included amongst others:

The **South African Natives Commission** proposed territorial segregation by which the country would be divided into black and white areas: These proposals lay behind the 1913 and 1926 Land Act.

The **Population Registration Act (1950)** which allocated all South Africans to a particular racial group, from which flowed differential privileges and prohibitions.

The **Group Areas Act (1950)** and subsequent amendments which gave the government power to proclaim residential and business areas for the sole use of particular race groups, which together with forced removals, which together with forced removals constituted one of the most blatant violations of the property rights of black people since the early years of colonial domination.

The **Separate Amenities Act (1953)** which wrote into law the principle that members of different races might not enjoy the same public amenities;

The **Bantu Education Act (1953)** which redefined the content and purpose of African schooling and vested its direct control in the Department of Native (later Bantu) Affairs, as well as laws on Coloured and Indian Education on tertiary institutions.

Other early apartheid legislation introduced sharp new curbs over the urban residential rights and rights as urban workers of the African population:

The **Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act (1953)** excluded African workers from the formal system of industrial relations;

The **Native Building Workers Act (1951)** and **Industrial Conciliation Act (1956)** extended the operation of job colours, and passes to women.

The national question therefore, expressing the contradiction between the black colonized and the white colonial state, became the dominant contradiction in South Africa. The 'national character' of the NDR was and is therefore about the resolution of the antagonistic contradictions between the oppressed majority and their oppressors; as well as the resolution of the national grievance arising from colonial relations.

### Section C: **THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM. A STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION**

To uproot racism, it was clear that the first task was the defeat of white minority rule, to be replaced by a non-racial and democratic government, based on the will of the people. The mandate of this new government would be the creation of a free, united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society.

Faced with these atrocities and the fact that their interests had been totally disregarded in the absence of a political organization of their own which could voice their grievances and aspirations, African intellectuals some of whom had come back from abroad gave a vision to the people.

This vision turned into action and took the form of awareness around rights, duties, obligations to the State and sought to promote mutual help, feeling of comradeship and a spirit of togetherness among them.

Pixley ka Isaka Seme – one of the founding fathers of the ANC – was vocal on the question of African unity. He emphasized unity that cut across, but did not replace ethnic characteristics, his central theme was that *“the demon of racialism must be buried and forgotten, it has shed among us sufficient blood: we are one people. These divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and of all our backwardness and ignorance today.”*

Even when it was tempting to adopt a narrow Africanist radical position in the 50's, the ANC was consistent in decrying the 'demon of racialism' as this view was articulated throughout the preamble of the Freedom Charter in Kliptown, 1955.

*“We the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority, unless it is based on the will of the people”* (Kliptown, 26 June 1955).

Throughout the 1950's, the ANC began seriously to sharpen the weapon of mass direct action, which took the form of boycotts, mass demonstrations of women and political strikes, through the unique form of the stay-at-home. There were peasant revolts all over the country. (**A History Of The ANC:** Francis Meli p.129)



The government's reply was to ban meetings and gatherings and the trigger happy police would open fire to young and old, wounding and killing them. The turning point of our struggle against racism took place on the 21st March 1960, with the anti-pass national stoppage of work. On this red letter day, 69 people were killed by the South African police and army in Sharpeville as they embarked on a peaceful march to the local police station. It then declared a state of emergency and banned the liberation movements.

Out of this provocative response from the racist regime, Umkhonto weSizwe (the People's Army) was formed to take a new course of struggle as was declared by the MK High Command:

*"We are striking out along a new road for the liberation of the people of this country. The government policy of force, repression and violence will no longer be met with non-violent resistance alone."*

Later, at the Rivonia trial, some of the key leaders of the ANC were sentenced to life in Robben Island (Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, R. Mhlaba, A. Kathrada, R. Bernstein, D. Goldberg, E. Motsoaledi and A. Mlangeni). Nevertheless, the ANC continued to advance its struggle against racist apartheid regime. During April 1969 at Morogoro in Tanzania, the ANC evaluated the road ahead and adopted another important historic document: Strategy and Tactics.

The politico-military aspects of the struggle were viewed in the context of historical experience and political reality which were characterized as follows:

*"The main content of the present stage of the South African revolution is the national liberation of the largest and most oppressed group, the African people... this is the mainspring and it must not be weakened. It involves a stimulation and a deepening of a national confidence, national pride and national assertiveness."* (Morogoro, 1969)

Following the period of relative lull in the internal resistance during the 60's it was the students and youth of SASO and 1976 which gave fresh impetus to the national liberation struggle. Their philosophy of Black Consciousness sought to instill a sense of pride in being Black, in Black symbols and culture and it called for the unity of the oppressed through their inclusive definition of Black that included African, Coloured and Indian.

This, together with the revival of the ANC internal underground, formed the foundations for the non-racial content of the mass struggles of the 80's.

This character of our struggle informed all activities of our revolution up to the point where the balance of forces shifted away from the regime, it became difficult for the regime to rule, 'as the people acted en masse to make the system unworkable.'" (**Strategy And Tactics**, Mafikeng 1997).

The regime finally conceded and bowed to the people's struggles and agreed to embark on negotiations with the ANC.

#### Section D: **THE CREATION OF A NON-RACIAL, DEMOCRATIC, NON-SEXIST AND UNITED SOUTH AFRICA**

On 27th April 1994, this process of negotiations ushered in the first democratic elections in the history of South Africa. The elections, together with the adoption of the Interim Constitution, the establishment of a new government led by the ANC were major landmarks in the transformation of our society. So was the work of the elected Constitutional Assembly which adopted the new Constitution based on the principles of democratic majority rule, equality and human rights.

April 1994 therefore represented the strategic defeat of the forces of white minority rule and a decisive departure from a colonial system spanning more than three decades.

This marked the end of the first phase of our struggle and ushered in the second phase which is the transformation of South Africa into a truly non-racial, united, non-sexist and democratic country, to create a new nation out of 'the belly of the beast' The final Constitution adopted in 1996, contained the framework for democratic majority rule and the platform to build this truly united and non-racial nation.

The 1993 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa ends with an epilogue entitled "**National Unity and Reconciliation**". Among other things, it says:

*"This Constitution provides a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterised by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful coexistence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective*

*of colour, race, class, belief of sex. The pursuit of national unity," it continues "the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society."*

For its part, the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has a preamble which among other things, says:

*"We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of our past... (and) believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore... adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to heal the divisions of the past.. (and) to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person."*

### **A country of two nations**

President Mbeki, two years after the adoption of the Constitution in the debate on **'Reconciliation and Nation-building'** in Parliament in May 1998, therefore raised the question: 'what is nation building and is it happening?'

He responded to this question with an unequivocal NO when he said:

*"We therefore make bold to say that South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. This enables it to argue that, except for the persistence of gender discrimination against women, all members of this nation have the possibility to exercise their right to equal opportunity, the development opportunities to which the Constitution of '93 committed our country.*

*The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation.*

*This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations."*

As we approached the second democratic elections in 1999, the ANC recognised the continued truths of these assertion and therefore in its Elections Manifesto of 1999 said; **'We must act together, in conditions of social discipline, to continue to build a South Africa of freedom, prosperity and security for all, and to solve the national problems that confront all of us, including the advancement of national unity and reconciliation. Change must go on at a faster pace!'**

### **Phase 2 – Reconstruction and Transformation**

During the long journey to achieve a truly non-racial society, South Africans have resolved that

*"the apartheid expression cannot be reformed. Like Nazism, its antecedent and sister crime against humanity, it must be overthrown and uprooted forcibly, in its totality". (Comrade Oliver Tambo)*

Following the adoption of the new Constitution, the democratic government proceeded to put in place a firm foundation of democracy through the establishment of institutions such as the Constitutional Court, Office of the Public Protector, the Commission for Gender Equality, the South African Human Rights Commission, etc to ensure that the basic rights of every citizen are protected.

Various laws have been enacted by the government to deracialize, democratize and unite South African society and to establish equality in all spheres of human endeavor. It had to start the torturous process of dismantling the apartheid state – the bantustans, separate departments, etc.

However, the road leading towards a fully united non-racial and non-sexist South Africa is a long and difficult one due to the complexity and all-pervasiveness of apartheid colonialism and its legacy of underdevelopment and the huge social deficit.

The National Democratic forces, in order to achieve its strategic objective of a truly non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and united South Africa must therefore as immediate and strategic tasks transform and deracialize the state machinery, the economy, education and human resources, culture; whilst at the same time meet basic needs, effect land redistribution and ensure a better life for especially the poor, women, youth and disabled as a necessary.

## Transforming the State

Paramount to realizing the strategic objective of our national democratic revolution and as elaborated by the RDP, is the establishment of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist state machinery (including the civil service, the judiciary, the army, the police, intelligence); that in its approach, composition and outlook share the vision of a “*new nation*” from the ashes of the racist and undemocratic South Africa. It must be the machinery that is representative and reflective of the demography of the country. It must be efficient and sensitive to the needs and aspirations of South Africans and must put them first. (*Batho Pele*) Above all, it must always be informed by the programme of redressing the imbalances caused by the apartheid state. The new ideology of non-racialism should inform the shape and substance of its daily activities.

## Economic transformation

The economic structure of the South African apartheid system was influenced by the racist ideology and vice versa. This white racial stereotype ideology was used as an “instrument of the accumulation of wealth by the white minority monopoly capitalists”. Consequently, the majority of blacks were not given access to the means and instruments of production. This situation sustained skewed power relations in favour of the white minority.

It is this kind of reality that we must transform. One of the tasks of the democratic government is therefore to deracialize income, opportunities, ownership and access to the economy, to effect redistribution in the interests of development and growth and in the interests of the historically disadvantaged. It is only under these conditions that we can be assured of a vibrant and dynamic economy.

## Opening the doors of learning to all

Institutions of learning were used as centers of racist ideology during the apartheid era in South Africa. Since 1994, we have started the process of ensuring that the doors of learning and culture are opened to all. However, much more needs to be done.

Tertiary institutions remain largely untransformed in their demography, ratios of student populations, access to research opportunities, in the numbers of women and blacks at post graduate level and occupying senior

positions in management. According to the Human Sciences Research Council, in South Africa: 21% of graduates are African (76% of the population); 68% of graduates are white (12% of the population); 4% of graduates are Coloured (9% of the population) and 7% of graduates are Indian (3% of the population).

Despite our Constitutional and legal framework cases of racism in schools are still emerging, six years after our democratic elections and schools integration. White parents still resist black children coming to what they term “*ons skole*”. The reconstruction process of the new education system is no easy matter, it needs support from all sectors of society, with the aim of creating a ‘new person’.

Our policies and strategies should be targetted towards creating the ‘best person’ and also focus in making education accessible to the majority of those who are in the periphery of the economy so that they are not condemned to the status of being better labourers – whilst those coming from affluent backgrounds enjoy the best opportunities.

Our objective must be to develop technical, technological and scientific culture compatible with the requirements for progress. The critical assimilation of humankind’s achievements in the field of art, science and literature should be ‘Ours is to produce the best person for the future’.

## Land, Poverty and Race

In order to deal with the crushing poverty to which millions have been relegated, government must intensify its programme to provide food security and basic nutrition to those in dire need. This has to be based on proper tracking, improvement in efficiency and integration with community development.

A central pillar of colonialism of a special type was the skewed distribution of land. As part of the programme to deracialise our society, land reform processes (redistribution and security of tenure, etc) which seek to address this imbalance in ownership, have been introduced.

However, this process has been very slow, and the land hunger of our rural masses and abuse of farmworkers are producing a potentially explosive situation, unless we speed up change in this sector. The process of land redistribution have been slow, because of reasons of capacity, because of resistance from some

of the current land owners who use various methods to stall the process. This include unrealistically high prices or refusal to sell, which makes it difficult for government to access such land on a massive scale, particularly agricultural land.

The Security of Tenure Act which have been enacted to protect the rights of farmworkers, has yet to be effectively implemented and monitored. One of the priorities of the democratic forces, will therefore be to ensure that the implementation of land and agrarian reform programmes are intensified to provide affected rural communities with a decent living, to encourage agricultural production and in the context of an integrated rural development strategy.

A major constraint to women's efforts to overcome poverty has been the lack of rights and access to land, we must ensure that land reform programmes specifically reach out to women, and take their needs – such as information, training and resources into account. (**Resolutions of the Mafikeng Conference, 1997**).

More overtly than most sectors, the farming communities remain cesspits of racism and exploitation. Daily, workers rights are undermined with regard to pay, tenure, leave, education and other basic human rights.

Whether it is the worker who is forced to eat faeces by his boss, or the 79 year old retired worker who is evicted from a farm, a farmworker who is painted with a metallic paint on instruction from his boss, or one who is driven over by an annoyed boss – the examples of abuses are endless.

The SACP in its submission to the Human Rights Commission hearings on racism in the Media (April 2000) therefore asserted that 75% of the poor in South Africa are black and almost 20% fall in the category 'ultra – poor'. Addressing racism therefore means fundamentally changing the quality of lives of the black majority and Africans in particular. As was observed in the Mafeking Conference "*social change cannot await the transformation of the state machinery and other instruments of power*".

### **Racism and gender**

Colonialism and apartheid sought to reinforce patriarchal relations, manifested in male dominance and the subservient position of women in all racial and social strata of our society, with African women

in rural areas being at the bottom of the heap.

Women therefore took their rightful place in the struggle alongside the other motive forces and was due to such struggles that the liberation movement integrated in its vision, the building of a non-sexist South Africa. Certain fundamentals of the theory of women's oppression in South Africa emerged characterized by:

- The recognition that black women are oppressed as part of the black majority, as women and as workers, suffering from triple oppression;
- The recognition that it is necessary for women to organize as women and within the liberation movement to overcome gender oppression;
- The recognition of the struggle for gender equality is an integral part of the national liberation struggle.

The present situation provides an enabling legal framework for women to advance their rights in a free and secure society. Much has been done with the establishment of the Gender Commission and the Office on the Status of Women.

However African women continue to constitute the majority of the poor, and mainly in rural areas. They are found in the lowest paid jobs in the formal employment sectors, amongst the unemployed, the micro enterprises and in the rural parts of our land. They continue to bear the brunt of poverty, heading single family households with the lowest levels of income if any at all, illiterate and facing the scourge of HIV/ Aids with the primary burden of caring for Aids orphans.

The ANC needs to ensure the implementation and monitoring of 1997 Mafikeng resolutions on the empowerment and equality of women – in the organisation and in society.

### **Racism and youth**

Black youth in apartheid South Africa were deprived of their youthfulness. They were forced to bear the brunt of poverty, inferior education, lack of adequate recreation facilities and repression from the state.

The challenge of the youth is the creation of the new nation from the ashes of a divided South Africa. To successfully achieve this mission, the youth must learn about our past and our vision for the future.

Further, they must project the future based on the

present. The accumulation of ideas and knowledge contained in the culture of the liberation struggle and by society will ensure forward movement in this regard.

It is this knowledge of the past and present in relation with the future that will build a strong youth so that they are able to withstand all counter-revolutionary programs of the reactionary forces that seek to undermine our democracy.

The youth as the future and flowers of the nation must equip and empower themselves with various skills, science, technology, literature and in many forms. They should take up the challenges that relate to participation in the family of nations as well as domestically building a vibrant society.

### **Culture**

Culture is a historical phenomenon, its development is determined by the succession of socio-economic formations and it is therefore directly or indirectly the product of the activities of the masses.

In any racist and class society, culture assumes a racist class character, both as to its ideological content and practical aims. History teaches us that when violence is used to dominate people, it is above all used to destroy and paralyze its cultural life.

This was also the case with the racist theory of apartheid, created, applied and developed on the basis of the economic and political domination of the people of South Africa.

Apartheid colonialism through violence and other means attempted to liquidate and deny the culture of the black majority. This was only partially successful, for even during the heydays of apartheid the oppressed masses clung tenaciously to part of their culture and developed it, even under adverse conditions.

Part of building a non-racial society is the conscious and ongoing development of a national culture, building on our history and recognizing the diversity of our people. Through this process, we must constantly promote political and moral awareness of the people as well as patriotism, the spirit of sacrifice and devotion.

Whatever the ideological or idealistic characteristics of cultural expressions, culture is an essential element

of the history of a people, culture is the product of this history just as the flower is a product of a plant. (Cabral).

### **Social movements and political organisations**

Our social formations and movements, in fact civil society as a whole tended to mirror the divisions of the past. In this sphere too we should seek to build truly non-racial organisations.

The trade union movement in our country remains divided racially in part, because job reservation defined the type of work that different races could engage and enforced separate organization according to grades. The new labour law dispensation provide for the emergence of truly non-racial trade unions and working class movements. The deracialisation of the working class and the development of a working class consciousness has still to emerge in the country especially within the white working class.

Political organizations, outside of the liberation fold, have constructed a discourse based on 'equal opportunity' which denies that the playing field is not level. Any attempts therefore at introducing corrective measures to deal with apartheid's legacy is being met with outcries of 'reverse racism'.

Another dimension has been the tendency to try and explain the national contradiction (sometimes even within our own ranks) as no longer between the historically disadvantaged black majority (African, Coloured, Indian) and whites, but rather to refer to this contradiction as between the African majority and other national minorities (whites, Coloureds and Indians).

Affirmative action in particular is regarded as undermining the advancement of "minorities".

This kind of analysis has led to a situation where many Coloured people believe that once again, they are caught in the middle between black and white. "We used to be too black, now we are too white" and where many Indian people have chosen to exclude themselves from political engagement, seen particularly in the low registration figures in predominantly Indian areas.

## **Media**

The media in South Africa, too reflected the divisions of the past based on race. Since 1994 there has been a tendency for sections of the media to position itself above their social responsibility to inform and to reflect the broad diversity of views in our society. Any criticism leveled against this tendency is interpreted as a challenge to press freedom.

They, like the opposition, see themselves as the protectors of South Africa's liberty against 'the natural inclination of a predominantly black government to dictatorship and corruption.'

In this regard, we should motivate for the acceptance of the recommendations contained in the ANC submission to the HRC "*Hearings on Racism in the Media.*"

## **Strategic observations**

While racism clearly remains a fundamental problem of South African society, recent events (particularly the Human Rights Commission investigation into racism in the media) pointed to the absence of a common national discourse and reference point amongst South Africans.

It points to the absence of a common understanding of the history of racist ideology, its socio-cultural, socio-economic and psychological manifestations and therefore how this legacy affects our society today.

While racism continues to bedevil all areas of South African society, one form that this takes is the active denial of race (in all its manifestations) as an issue in our society today.

Another form is to acknowledge racism as a problem, and then argue that whites, as a minority, are its victims. The black majority, it is argued, practice racism against whites. This racial inversion is often employed by powerful sectors throughout our society to resist real transformation of the power relations that underpinned apartheid.

Eradicating racism therefore necessitates a two-pronged strategy. While defining the actual and subliminal forms of racism in contemporary South African society, it is necessary at the same time to understand resistance to addressing racism as well as their capacity to undermine attempts to eradicate racism.

Legal remedies to deracialise our society (such as the Equality Act or the transformation programmes of the RDP) need to be accompanied by a strong, public education and cultural programme that animates public opinion in accordance with non-racist, human-rights and multi-cultural thinking and practice.

## **Section E:**

### **IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES FACING THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES**

The ANC as a vanguard organization of the forces for national democracy, will have to pay attention to this as an important and strategic task of the NDR in the current phase. It will have to unleash all its organizational machinery, both in practice and in theory to lead the process of deracialisation of South Africa.

The first part of this process is to intensify the political discourse on racism at a branch level and amongst all sectors of our society.

Secondly, we need to build and work for the development of a common and national vision (or national consensus) on the path towards the creation of a truly democratic, non-racial, non-sexist, united and prosperous country and nation.

This vision should ensure the contribution of all South Africans – black and white – to creating a better life for all and for the common development of their country.

We should develop a micro-plan of action that focuses on the implementation of the resolutions on the National question as adopted in the Mafikeng Conference in 1997.

We should identify key tasks and challenges in preparation for both National and International Conferences on Racism organized for August this year and early in 2001.

We should encourage the African Renaissance Institute and other similar institutions to include issues of racism as part of their agenda and establish forums with other civil society organizations to continue the debate and campaigns against racism.

This discourse should deepen understanding amongst all South Africans, of our history, the nature

and manifestations of racism, its social effects and relationship with religion and culture with the aim of building consciousness on the need for all of us to work together towards uprooting the demon of racism and setting an example to the world.

## **Conclusion**

The struggle for freedom still remains incomplete as long as the legacy of apartheid remains. This task therefore demands that we achieve the greatest unity of the masses of our people, inspired by the new patriotism, to continue to intensify the fight against racism for our evolution into a non-racial society.

Forward to the African century!













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