

ANC leadership in the current phase of the National Democratic Revolution: ANC Limpopo Discussion Document:

13 August 2012

By their deeds ye shall know them—Dialego

Introduction

Once again, the membership of the ANC will be meeting in December 2012 in Mangaung to adopt a five-year program and to elect a leadership collective to ensure the implementation of the program.

This paper serves as a framework to facilitate discussions within Limpopo ANC structures on the leadership challenges in the current phase of our national democratic revolution. This discussion should assist us towards generating a common perspective in electing the ANC leadership in the forthcoming 53rd ANC national conference. This is also done with the aim of improving the existing ANC discussion documents on organizational renewal and leadership issues. This paper should also be read in connection with in conjunction with other ANC documents on these issues¹.

The paper is also intended for political education purposes. Hence, it is written in a pedagogical manner in order to deepen our understanding of revolutionary theory and practice towards and beyond the 53rd ANC elective national congress. We assume that readers know the basic history of the ANC, including its past leaders. For this reason, we do not present chronological episodes on the evolution of the ANC leadership. Instead, the paper is presented in a thematic manner to emphasize the importance of objective and subjective factors in our revolution.

Discussions on leadership in the ANC are about where we are in our revolution, which path to take and what kind of leadership we need to lead us. It is for this reason that this paper begins by (a) explaining why political leadership is important in the revolution, (b) discussing subjective organizational weaknesses, including those of leadership facing our movement in the post-1994 political environment; and (c) laying out the kind of leadership required in the current phase of our revolution.

It is not the intention of this paper to evaluate the leadership performance elected in the last 52nd ANC national conference. However, it will pose certain questions on performance of the current ANC leadership on some of the pillars of the National Democratic Revolution.

¹ See : Organisational Renewal : Building the ANC as a Movement for Transformation and a Strategic Centre of Power (2012), Leadership Renewal, Discipline and Organizational Culture (2010), Through the Eye of the Needle (2001), National General Council 2005: Discussion Document: Unity of the Movement, Tasks of the NDR and the Mobilization of the Motive Forces (2000), Challenges of Leadership in the Current Phase (1997).

Objective and Subjective Conditions and the Character of our Revolution

A revolution is about the transfer of power from one group of people to another. Such groups can take the form of classes, nations or any other form. This process of revolution is marked by a protracted struggles leading to transition from one system to another. The system change can be from one mode of production to another (e.g. transition from capitalism to socialism). Or it can be a phase in a transition *within* a particular mode of production (e.g. transition from colonial capitalism to neo-colonial capitalism). Each phase of the revolution has its own specific tasks.

The ANC's strategy and tactics has, since 1969, been anchored in the theory of the national democratic revolution – which is an anti-colonial and working-class led strategy designed to overthrow colonialism and its leading class carrier – white monopoly capital. This is only possible if the program of the revolution is the Freedom Charter.

Revolutions do not occur through supernatural forces. On the contrary, human beings make revolutions, albeit under material conditions, what is called *objective conditions*. These are conditions that are independent of individuals' wishes, but are changeable through human intervention arising out of their self-activity and capacity, including organizing and leadership, which are referred to as *subjective conditions*. Subjective conditions signify the capacities of social forces in the struggle change the objective conditions.

For example, in class terms, the existence of capitalist exploitation is an objective condition for the working class, and working class consciousness and organizations (e.g. trade unions and party) are subjective conditions, but the party itself is an objective condition in relation to its leaders. In national terms, the existence of national oppression is an objective condition for the oppressed, and their revolutionary national consciousness and organizations are amongst other subjective conditions necessary for their revolutions.

Why is organizing and leadership important in the revolution?

The existence of objective conditions, which generate suffering for the working class and nationally oppressed does not automatically lead to struggles and organizing, instead they may lead to submission to the existing social order. It is for this reason that the objective conditions of colonialism of a special type did not automatically organize people against oppression and exploitation. Organizations and leaders emerged to organize and inspire revolutionary commitments and actions from the oppressed and exploited, and designed strategies and tactics around the National Democratic Revolution and framed people's demands around the Freedom Charter.

So, leadership is not just a matter of individual leaders, but of revolutionary organizations. Whilst we should be careful about falling into individualist and voluntarist understanding of revolutions and ignore the role of the masses in our conceptions of revolution, we should not underestimate the importance of individuals

in leadership. Revolutionary leadership, including individuals such as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Amilcar Cabral, Fidel Castro, Chris Hani, OR Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Joe Slovo, and Hugo Chavez with exceptional leadership qualities, is an important ingredient for the success of revolutions.

The type of leadership and forms of struggle in a specific period are defined by the objective conditions of the mode of production, although these conditions do not guarantee revolutionary leadership. For example, the structural changes in the capitalist economy in the 1940s led to the changes in the forms of struggles and types of leadership against colonialism of a special type. The radicalization of the ANC, including the ANCYL in the 1940s and the eventual adoption of the defiance campaign and the Freedom Charter in 1955 were responses to changes in the structure of the South African economy.

After the Second World War companies, particularly in the manufacturing sector required a greater number of workers and a stable labour force in the urban areas. On the other hand, subsistence agriculture in black rural areas had collapsed, leading to an increase in rural poverty, thus forcing more black people to seek employment in the cities. This in turn led to the creation of black townships and squatter camps. The repression of strikes and intensification of colonial oppression through ending the exemptions of the black middle class from racial laws such as the elimination of freehold property rights, set the conditions for further radicalization of the black middle class.

It is under these conditions that the intensification of organizing and struggles took place, which saw the 1946 mineworkers' strikes led by JB Marks who was later elected President of the ANC in the Transvaal, and bus boycotts as well as homeless people's protests led by James Mpanza in areas such as Orlando.

The turn towards armed struggle is also an instance where decisive leadership was important. The increasing radicalization of the masses in the 1950's, combined with the intensification of political repression objectively made the tactics of petitions to the imperial power, particularly in England, irrelevant. Accordingly a new leadership that was in conformity with the emerging, militant forms of struggle took over.

In all the phases of our struggle, the ANC produced different types of revolutionary leadership, which inspired the oppressed, and the exploited into revolutionary action, mobilized and organized resources, correctly framed people's demands (e.g. The Freedom Charter, 1955) and produced strategies and tactics (e.g. the 1969 Morogoro conference). In the course of its struggles the ANC produced not only revolutionary leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Liliane Ngoyi, Charlotte Maxeke, Joe Slovo and Yusuf Dadoo, but also timid and reactionary leaders who dissociated themselves from the masses during the trial of the leaders who led the defiance campaign in the 1950s.

The convening of the 1969 ANC Conference, which charted a new strategy and tactics for the movement, also marked the emergence of a new type of leadership. The 1969 ANC Conference was convened after the ANC was undergoing serious political challenges raging from uninspiring leadership, factionalism, imposition of decisions and harsh disciplinary measures by the leadership. However, courageous

ANC cadres and leaders stood up to force the ANC leadership to convene the watershed conference, which elected new leadership and adopted a well-informed strategy and tactics and militant program of action.

This shows that the material conditions are necessary but not sufficient conditions, to guarantee the emergence of revolutionary leadership. Furthermore, this also shows that the election of leadership is not a guarantee that leaders will implement the adopted revolutionary program.

Revolutionary leadership and the revolutionary program: Post-1994 experience and the current phase of the NDR

This paper argues that it is not enough to state that the ANC needs a leadership committed to the broader ANC objectives of building a non-racial, non-sexist, united, democratic and prosperous society without providing a definition of what it should lead on and have to do in the here and now towards the realization of the Freedom Charter as the revolutionary program of the ANC. We also need to go beyond moralistic leadership requirements such as that, leadership must be beyond reproach in their conduct and should act as a role model to both ANC and non-ANC members (important as these are). Our choice of leadership should be guided by the concrete tasks at hand, such concrete tasks are about devising ways to advance, and not to sabotage, the revolutionary program in the prevailing circumstances. However, it is worth re-emphasizing that the ANC leadership must embody the kind of society we seek to create.

The fundamental question in any revolution is that of state power. But state power becomes useful when it is used to carry out fundamental transformation. The national democratic revolution takes place in a context where the ANC-led national liberation movement through periodic elections, has gained state institutional control, but presides over huge and growing class, spatial, gender, and racial power inequalities, notwithstanding important socio-economic reforms undertaken since 1994. This is despite the Freedom Charter saying, “the people shall share in the country’s wealth”.

The major policy weakness in the last 18 years has been a failure to significantly transform the colonial industrial structure and ownership of the economy. But an even bigger weakness has been the pursuance of policies that are against the Freedom Charter, such as selling monopoly industries, banks and mines to imperialism and the comprador bourgeoisie. This limited BEE has enabled a few leaders in the movement to become incorporated as political entrepreneurs representing the interests of white monopoly capital in our organizations, resulting in new class interests, which often set leaders against ordinary ANC members and the general aspirations of the people. On the other hand, the power of the working class was also challenged by the policies, especially the increase in casualization, the violation of minimum wages, and the continuing gap between blacks and whites in terms of wages and benefits, etc. These are some of the reasons, among many, that led to serious differences within the ANC and the contestation for leadership in the last 52nd national conference. **What is our assessment of the ANC leadership in leading the struggles for economic transformation in line with the 52nd national congress resolutions?**

Revolutionary leadership may be confronted with conditions that do not favour a radical advance of the revolution, such as was the case in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union. However, beating short-term tactical retreats, it is important for revolutionary leadership not to compromise in a way that borders on sabotaging the long-term objectives of the revolution. The tendency to exaggerate the extent, to which the balance of forces has been unfavorable, tends to weaken the subjective capacity of the movement and the militancy of the revolutionary forces. This basically demobilizes and demobilizes the mass democratic movement. **Has the post-Polokwane leadership done better on this?**

The *2012 draft Strategy and Tactics* document has identified the building of a developmental state, transformation of the economy, ideological struggle, social transformation, international work, mass mobilization and organization as key pillars of the NDR in the current phase. These pillars provide a useful starting point to articulate the kind of leadership required in the current phase. What follows is the elucidation of the kind of leadership to undertake these tasks in the current phase.

Leadership in Transformation of the Economy

The ANC needs a revolutionary leadership committed to radical transformation of the economy, as clearly outlined in the third, fourth and seventh clauses of the Freedom Charter:

Third Clause: The people shall share in the country's wealth, means:

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the wellbeing of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

In our view this means first and foremost, strategic nationalization of the mines, banks and monopoly industries. Our ability to lead society will depend on our ability to work together with the popular classes to meet their material interests. This is the only way to strengthen the ANC's hold of the state apparatus to ensure that it undertakes structural transformation of our society. Therefore we need bold leadership that will lead fundamental economic transformation, including changing certain Constitutional clauses that prove to be impediments towards strategic nationalization.

Fourth Clause: The land shall be shared among those who work it; means:

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers; Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

This also means that the willing buyer willing seller principle must be abolished. The state in turn must take full ownership of the land, and lease it according to the developmental priorities of our people.

Seventh Clause: The shall be work and security; which means that:

All who work shall be free to form trade unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits; Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

A lot has been achieved in reforming the conditions of employed workers. In the current phase of our revolution this means extension of bargaining coverage for workers, elimination of the apartheid wage gap in the workplace, enforcement of a national minimum wage for all workers including ensuring that all workers have paid leave, there should be banning of labour brokers, etc.

Leadership in Building a Democratic Developmental State

The downside of the ANC's ascendancy to state power has been that the contest for leaders has tended to become a struggle for access to material resources associated with being in the ANC. In certain instances, levers of the state tend to be used for narrow economic interests, including dispensing patronage and corruption, as opposed to promoting the developmental agenda of our people. This also lead to fight over the organizational leadership positions in the ANC as a way of getting access to the state for narrow economic interests. In certain parts of the country, this has also to the killing of fellow comrades. It does not mean however problems of corruption and patronage only start when the ANC got into state power. Instances of careerism, patronage and corruption, including squandering money from anti-Apartheid struggles international solidarity organizations were rife within the movement. It is indeed true that ascendancy to state power has just increased these phenomena.

The ANC needs a leadership committed to and capable of state building, particularly the building of a developmental state, which is one of the critical tasks of the NDR in the current phase. Amongst other conditions for the building of a democratic developmental state is the relative autonomy of the state from the narrow capitalist class and personal interests of the state leadership and its cronies. The developmental state cannot emerge if the state revenue is channeled towards these narrow economic interests. The source of the state's relative autonomy will come from amongst other things; a competent and professional state bureaucracy and a state political leadership committed to the developmental needs of our country. This condition disables instrumental capture of the state for narrow economic interests by a patrimonial connected business, state bureaucratic and political elite. This means we need an ANC leadership, which is not captured by narrow business interests for narrow personal economic interests, and capable of appointing competent and professional, yet revolutionary state bureaucrats.

It does not mean however that the leadership should not have relations with business, and foster the building of developmentalist capitalist class which diversity the South African industrial structure through engaging in manufacturing of consumer and capital (i.e. machinery) goods. On the contrary, the ANC must elect a leadership capable of building a patriotic bourgeoisie, which is not an appendix of white monopoly capital.

The second condition necessary for state autonomy is mass mobilization, which enables the working class and other popular forces to mobilize against the instrumental capture of the state for narrow economic interests. This means that the ANC leadership must be a leadership that is capable of organizing popular social forces to defend and advance the revolution. Within certain structural limits, democratic mass mobilization and organization enables popular motive forces such as labour to discipline business to perform certain developmental tasks in exchange for state subsidy. Under conditions of low levels of organization and mobilization it becomes easier for the state to be instrumentally captured by narrow business interests without developmentalist outcomes. The absence of organized and mobilized 'civil society' sets conditions for instrumentalist capture of the state and rampant corruption in other African countries which have experienced high levels of poverty despite their natural resources such as oil and copper.

Leadership in Building the Organization, the Alliance and Mass Mobilization

Building organization and mass mobilization is one of the important tasks of the NDR in the current phase. Implicit in the building of the ANC as a revolutionary organization, and the Alliance, is the requirement of a unifying leadership around the revolutionary tasks of our times. The reversal of revolutions (e.g. Zimbabwe, Iran, and Nicaragua) is not just a function of external imperialist intervention and objective challenges related to the inability to deal with the socio-economic, but it also has to do with the fragmentation of the revolutionary forces, after attainment of state control. In fact, it is always the case that once a coalition of revolutionary forces attain state control, new or latent class interests emerge and there is a tendency for fragmentation over the shape and direction of the new order and what is possible under a certain set of balance of forces. One of the objective realities that generated discord within the ANC and its post-1994 ANC leadership was how to deal with white monopoly capital, and meet the needs of the people in the context of increased globalized capitalism.

In the last eighteen years the ANC leadership and some in the Alliance have tended to deal with this problem through labeling (e.g. ultra-left, workerist etc.) and abuse of state apparatuses to punish critics of the status quo and reward those who uncritically agree with the incumbent leadership. **How did the current ANC national leadership performed on this?** It is our observation that there has also been a tendency to lumping together revolutionary dissent within and outside the ANC as counter-revolutionary and the turning of almost every political difference into a disciplinary case more especially after the ANC 52nd National Congress.

In the current phase, the ANC needs a leadership that tolerates revolutionary dissent and political differences, including from its leagues. In other words, the leadership does not have to agree with or like the different views, but it must create a conducive environment for different views to be discussed and debated without fear of being disciplined. In instances, where discipline has to be enforced; leadership has to do so consistently.

Furthermore, leadership in the state must exercise state power on strategic issues in consultation with the ANC. This will also require a unifying leadership as opposed to a narrow factionalist leadership. Unifying the ANC also includes the building and strengthening of the ANC-led Alliance. This also imposes certain obligations on the Alliance partners' leadership to ensure that the ANC Alliance partners are not used to fight factionalist battles within the ANC.

All the documents of the movement have identified the negative tendencies besetting our movement. These range from (a) the use of money as a tool when lobbying for organizational positions to disruption of ANC meetings and ethnic mobilization. The 2002 ANC National General Council² argued that these subjective weaknesses, including that of leadership cannot be fully understood outside capitalist objective reality. The ANC organizes and leads under a capitalist system in which all human beings depend on the market for their reproduction, which generates competition as opposed to co-operation and solidarity amongst human beings. This competition also takes a political form within the ANC in which working class members and business

² ANC – People's Movement and Agent for Change, 2002 ANC NGC discussion document

compete over leading and influencing the ANC as a means towards employment and business opportunities in the state and co-option by white monopoly business.

Granted the ANC is not yet committed to overthrowing capitalism, but we need a leadership committed to dealing with the material conditions that generate antagonism within the ANC and society in general. This should include the reduction of market dependency and build solidarity amongst ANC members and society in general. The current phase of the NDR will require a leadership committed to building the values of solidarity, commitment to the people and self-sacrifice as part of the battle of ideas

Leadership in the Battle of Ideas

In order to mount an effective battle of ideas and become ideologically hegemonic as identified in the draft S&T document, the ANC needs a scientific understanding of the material world it seeks to transform. Therefore its leadership needs to have a scientific outlook on society in order to provide an informed analysis of the social world, and how to change it. Understanding what is possible and impossible under certain objective conditions requires a scientific understanding of the world. The scientific approach enables the revolutionary organizations such as the ANC to work out appropriate tactics and deciding on the key demands and tasks of the moment.

To effectively engage in the battle of ideas, the leadership collective must also be composed of leadership (not exclusively) that can also bring new theoretical and strategic insights to sharpen our revolutionary strategic direction. Furthermore, the ANC leadership must be able to ideologically defend the ANC against its opportunistic critics, including from the Alliance partners. **How has the ANC leadership elected in the 52nd national congress performed in the battle of ideas?**

Leadership and International Work

Building international relations and co-operation to wage the struggle against imperialism and for international solidarity is one of the NDR tasks of our times. The current economic crisis of profitability which has been going since the late 1960s has led to a new phase of imperialism rationalized through neo-liberal ideology and institutionally transmitted through the World Bank and IMF and militarily imposed through Pentagon-led (USA) military power. Within nation-state, Reserve Banks and government National Treasuries have served as institutional conduits through which neo-liberal economic imperialism has been carried out in imperiialized countries. The project to recover from falling profit rates has not only involved attacks on the working class in imperial countries, but has also involved the undermining of national sovereignty of the formerly colonized through amongst other things, military means and through subverting democratic electoral outcomes. Therefore, we need leadership that will consistently fight imperialism particularly here in South Africa, and the African continent as a whole. **Has the post-Polokwane leadership been consistent in the fight against imperialism in Africa?**

Quality of Leadership Collective and Qualities of Individual Leaders

To sum up, the current phase of the National Democratic Revolution requires a leadership collective that can be described as state institution builders, economic

transformers, organization builders, mass mobilizers, revolutionary internationalists, scientific strategists and thinkers, and more importantly revolutionary democrats. It is obvious that no single leader will have all these attributes; therefore we need to think of a collective that will embody all these qualities. However, each individual leader at the least should meet the requirements set out in the *Through the Eye of the Needle* document and have a scientific understanding of the world, must be committed to economic transformation, including strategic nationalization, revolutionary unity of the ANC, building revolutionary (not factional) ANC-Alliance, tolerance for revolutionary dissent and differences, and the ability to articulate ANC policies in public.

It will also be important to elect individual leaders who will not suppress each other's individual strengths, thus minimizing the strength of the leadership collective. We need to elect individual leaders who will compliment and maximize each other's strengths to advance the National Democratic Revolution in the current phase. Furthermore we also need to elect individual leaders not only in the state, but also in other sites of struggle such as the state, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and drawn from different generations of our ANC-led movement not to represent their sectoral areas of work and generations, but to enhance the ANC leadership collective in leading all sectors of society.

We also need to attach specific qualities for individuals required to occupy officials' positions in the light of responsibilities accorded to each by the Constitution. For instance, the ANC president needs to be committed to radical economic transformation, have a scientific outlook of the material world, unifying abilities and the ability to bring new theoretical and strategic insights into the movement. The Secretary General should be occupied by a person with the same qualities that of the President, but more importantly should have the capacity to mobilize and organize the motive forces behind the ANC through organizational building (including political education).

In ensuring the geographic spread and nation building, we should not fall into trap of ethnic and racial chauvinism. It should be emphasized that the ANC is not a confederation of ethnic groups with each having a proportional representation in the ANC NEC based on the population size of a particular ethnic group. Leadership in the ANC should be based on the capacity of a core of cadres capable of carrying out the tasks.

The end...