THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND ITS PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING SOCIALISM IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH AFRICA

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THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY
AND ITS PROSPECTS FOR ACHIEVING
SOCIALISM IN A DEMOCRATIC SOUTH
AFRICA

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DECLARATION

I, LOLONGA LINCOLN TALI 204026164, hereby declare that the dissertation for the Master of Philosophy in South African Politics and Political Economy is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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ABSTRACT

“\textit{It should not be forgotten that this ideological contribution impacted itself in a very real way on the whole national and democratic movement. It helped transform the ANC from its early beginnings of petition politics into a revolutionary nationalist movement.}” \textbf{Joe Slovo} (in a speech delivered at the University of the Western Cape to mark the 70\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the SACP, 19 July 1991)

At the time that the late Joe Slovo, former secretary of the South African Communist Party and former Minister of Housing in the first Government of national unity, made the speech the former party had about a year of legal existence inside the country after President FW de Klerk had unbanned all previously banned political parties in February 1990. Indeed the unbanning of political parties in South Africa was preceded by cataclysmic events in both Soviet Russia and Eastern Europe. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev who was leader of the Soviet Communist Party was at the helm in Moscow. He introduced a number of policies whose main objective was to democratize Soviet society and do away with some of the undemocratic practices that were always associated with the policy of communism. Consequently, there was much talk about \textit{glasnost (openness)} and \textit{perestroika} during the period of President Gorbachev’s rule of Soviet Russia. The two policies were the main feature of his quest to modernize Soviet Russia and gradually move away from communism.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the fall of Nicolai Ceausescu in Romania and the disintegration of other East European countries like Yugoslavia signalled a death knell for East European socialism. The foregoing events also implied that the era of the Cold War between the West (led by USA, Britain, and West Germany et al) and East (led by the USSR, Poland, and East Germany et al) was over. The Cold War was a period of tremendous tension as Soviet Russia sought to spread its system of communism to Third World countries in Africa and South America. The West for its part tried to counteract by supporting forces which were opposed to communism in these countries. One can cite the example of Angola where Soviet Russia supported the \textit{Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)} led by Augustinho Neto which had adopted the system at the independence of the country in 1975. Jonas Savimbi led the \textit{Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA)} which was opposed to communism and was supported by South Africa and other Western countries which were also opposed to the system of communism. In essence the Cold War was a contest between the West and the East in gaining converts to their respective belief systems.
The collapse of communism was viewed by the West as triumph of its own belief system and the confirmation of the failure of communism.

It is against the backdrop of these foregoing events that the South African Communist Party was unbanned together with other erstwhile banned on the 2nd of February 1990. The SACP which had much influence in the ANC in the late 1950s and early 1960s and much of the time the parties were in exile was unbanned against the backdrop of the foregoing events. Of interest to observers was whether the party after it was unbanned would be able to exert the same influence it did on the ANC during the time in exile. Would the SACP take over from the ANC after the democratic transition and impose a socialist state in South Africa even if globally the trend was to move away from communism/socialism? Would the ANC itself follow a system which had been shown to lack the ability to confront the challenges of the 20th century? Some political commentators viewed the relationship between the ANC and the SACP as that of a metaphorical rider (the latter) and donkey (the former). In essence they argued that the SACP was the one determining the general trajectory of the liberation movement and its economic policies in particular.

This dissertation will show that the influence of the SACP within the Tripartite Alliance in general and the ANC government in particular swings like a pendulum. It depends on who is in charge as president of the ANC. Before and during the exile years as the ANC was led by the late Oliver Tambo, the party enjoyed relatively better influence within the former organizations. The two organizations co-operated well in many ventures like the Defiance campaign, drafting of the Freedom Charter and the establishment of Umkhonto Wesizwe in 1961. During the presidency of Nelson Mandela most SACP members were in the first democratic cabinet though they did not exert as much influence as would be desirable. The main economic policy that the ruling ANC advocated was under the umbrella of what was termed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and was not even the brainchild of the SACP but of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). In 1996 Thabo Mbeki, then deputy president to Nelson Mandela, came with the neo-liberal policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution to try and salvage the South African economy which at the time was not performing at its best.

Not only was GEAR unashamedly neo-liberal, it was also done without consultation of the SACP by its alliance partner the ANC. This engendered palpable tension within the alliance
and led to name-calling from the party which derogatively referred to all the advocates of GEAR as the ‘Class of 1996’. The tension between the SACP and the ANC continued until former President Thabo Mbeki and his ‘Class of 1996’ were ousted from office in the 2007 ANC Polokwane elective conference. After the Polokwane conference, Jacob Zuma who had been Thabo Mbeki’s deputy president in both government and the ANC, assumed power. Zuma did not deviate much from the policies that were adopted by his predecessor though the SACP had played a significant role in bringing him to power. Just like Mbeki and Mandela before him, he had a number of SACP members in his cabinet and, in his case, some of them in key cabinet posts like Ebrahim Patel (a member of the SACP) who serves as Minister of Economic Development. Though he has these staunch members of the party in his cabinet, the Zuma administration has been able to adopt a neo-liberal economic policy which it has termed: National Development Plan which has been criticized by communists as no better than GEAR.

This dissertation will show how the party sometimes struggle and sometimes wins that struggle to influence government policy.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and methodology

“Ours is a party that is committed to the destruction of the capitalist system in our country and the building of a more humane alternative, a socialist South Africa.” Malesela Maleka

The South African Communist Party (SACP) celebrated 90 years of its existence in this country on the 29th of July 2011. Ellis and Sechaba (1992: 9), in Comrades against apartheid: the ANC & SACP in Exile, argue that the esteem in which the SACP is held by many people in South Africa today may seem strange viewed in the light of a world that has been witness to the changes in the Soviet Union and East Europe in communism and socialism. Indeed one would concur with the foregoing statement that the ‘party’ (as it is occasionally referred to) enjoys relatively better support today in South Africa than its counterparts in both Russia and former Soviet republics.

To elucidate this foregoing point, some of the SACP’s top office bearers are serving in the current African National Congress led government and in other top positions within the ANC. Dr. Blade Nzimande and Jeremy Cronin, general secretary of the SACP and deputy general secretary respectively, are serving as cabinet ministers as higher education minister and deputy minister of transport. One can also add that the present Secretary General of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe, is also a chairperson of the SACP. In the context of South African politics in general and ANC politics in particular, the general secretary of the organisation is the most important person next to the president. The presence of staunch communists in both the ANC and the government is testimony not only to the relative power that the party enjoys but also to the firm alliance that the two parties, SACP and ANC, enjoy. In the 1994 elections, which signaled a death-knell for the system of apartheid and ushered in inclusive democracy in South Africa, the SACP opted not to campaign independently but to be part of the ANC, its alliance partner. The corollary of the SACP’s partnering with the ANC meant that the cabinet of the then government of national unity had some members of the SACP and the ANC’s trade union ally the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

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Joe Slovo, then general secretary of the SACP, was the first minister of Housing in the Mandela led government. Since 1994 up to the present period there have always been some active members of the SACP in the ANC led parliament. Whether they have been able to exert an influence in the ANC’s economic policies to take a socialist trajectory is a question that has to be explored.

What this treatise will point out, is that the SACP’s partnering with the ANC in elections and serving in an ANC led government has and continues to constrain the former and puts it in a quandary as it cannot promote its own programmes and policies. The reasons for the foregoing are: first the ANC occupies the role of being the senior partner in the alliance by virtue of being the ruling party. The second reason, directly related to the first, is that the party is beholden to its alliance partner, the ANC, for its presence in parliament as members of the parliamentary list prepared by the ANC. In such a situation, as this treatise asserts, the SACP cannot help but give its assent to some of the policies of its alliance partner however objectionable they may be to its basic creed. Indeed, there have been instances where the party has voiced its disquiet over the country’s economic direction but as it will be shown those objections have been generally unheeded by the ANC.

The occasion of a birthday or an anniversary is a time for reflection and soul-searching. The SACP celebrated 90 years of existence in South Africa in July of 2011. That is not a mean feat considering the fact it had to run the gauntlet of banishment and exile and that it has the dubious status of being one of the few surviving and prominent communist parties in the world. Among the laudatory pieces that were written to congratulate the party, this treatise’s attention was attracted by two authors who wrote diametrically opposed articles from the same organization. Mazibuko Jara (2011: 1), a former member of the party who now leads a coalition of leftist organizations called the Democratic Left Coalition, writing in an article for the Johannesburg based Sunday Times, argues that though the SACP can be faulted on many fronts, its ‘sterling contribution’ and ‘challenging capitalist exploitation was personified in the principled socialist morality and selflessness of Chris Hani, Joe Slovo and others’. Phillip Dexter (2011:26) another former SACP member, in an article written in The Thinker magazine, argues that after 17 years of democracy ‘there has been no visible advance towards anything remotely resembling some version of socialism in our country’. Chris Mathlako (2011: 29), writing in the same magazine as
Dexter, counters by saying that Marxism is not defunct and that it is still a ‘serious tool of analysis, methodology and guide to action for hundreds of millions of people throughout the world’. What is of interest for this treatise is when Mathlako (2011: 29) further argues that the ‘SACP is not dogmatic and ideologically hide-bound’. The validity and plausibility of this argument will be explored subsequently. At this juncture it is appropriate to outline how the treatise will tackle its subject matter. It will begin by citing how one author has approached the different phases of the SACP.

Maloka (2002) in his book, *The South African Communist Party in Exile: 1963-1990*, posits the view that the history of the SACP, established in 1921 as the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and subsequently prohibited in 1950 by the then National Party government, has generated a very rich and fascinating literature. Maloka divides the history of the SACP into four phases: the first phase 1921-1930 the CPSA battled with the reality of being a predominantly white party which had to adapt its ideology to conditions in which Blacks were largely oppressed. The second phase, 1930-1939, the party had a ‘strategic reorientation’ and gained African membership. The third phase, 1940-1950, saw a phenomenal growth in the CPSA due to the efforts of Moses Kotane, its erstwhile secretary general, who rescued it from decline. It is at this period, as Maloka (2002) argues further that, relations between the CPSA and the ANC improved and some CPSA members were elected to senior positions in the latter organization.

The fourth phase, 1950 to 1963, was the prohibition of the CPSA and its underground resurfacing in 1953 as the current SACP. One can thus deduce from the foregoing that the SACP is a veritable survivor which has been through thick and thin in South Africa’s political struggle.

This treatise has used Maloka’s outline of the phases of the SACP as a template to evince how the party has evolved from its inception as the CPSA to its current state as the SACP. The treatise, though it will also highlight the relationship between the ANC and SACP in exile and how the two parties co-operated in Umkhonto Wesizwe, will focus mainly on the period from 1990 to the present. The phenomenon of the SACP as a survivor and being supported by many people in South Africa in a world generally pursuing rugged capitalism and neo-liberalism, and with Russia having jettisoned communism, engenders curiosity about South African politics in general and the South African Communist Party in particular.
Is it still committed to the destruction of the capitalist system as its spokesperson, Malesela Maleka, quoted at the top of page one, averred on its 90th anniversary? For a considerable time in 2010 and 2011, political discourse in South Africa was dominated by calls from the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) for nationalization of mines. That would not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with the politics of the Youth League: since its inception in 1944 it has consistently been militant. However, what was startling to discover, was that among the critics of the Youth League’s calls for nationalization of mines, the SACP was the most strident and harshest.

The reasons supplied for its opposition to nationalisation notwithstanding, the fact that it had to be the ANCYL, a party more nationalist than socialist, calling for nationalisation had implications about the SACP and its current role in South African politics. Any curious observer of politics in general and South African politics in particular would indeed be perplexed as to why a communist party would object to nationalisation of mines which is commonly a basic tenet of communist parties across the world. This curious stance of the SACP regarding nationalisation of mines leads to the main thrust of the treatise.

It is the aim of this treatise to ascertain whether the SACP has managed to reconfigure the alliance composition and direction towards ‘building socialism now’. It will focus in the period spanning from 1990 to the present. The primary question the treatise seeks to pose is: Can the SACP attain a socialist project through the tripartite alliance? Some other auxiliary questions that will be addressed are: What compromises, have SACP cadres in the ruling African National Congress made in order to stay in positions of power? What is the real level of influence of the SACP in the ANC and in government? What happened to the two stage theory of revolution which SACP has long espoused and which anticipates the establishment of a socialist republic after the attainment of national liberation?
LITERATURE REVIEW

Mouton (2005) outlines the advantages of a literature review by stating that among other things: it ensures that one does not merely duplicate a previous study and also helps the researcher to discover what the most recent and authoritative theorizing about the subject is. The foregoing argument thus informs the subsequent literature review which will start by evaluating the role of the SACP within the tripartite alliance especially in the period 1990-2010. This treatise will start by tracing the roots of the relationship between the two organizations from the inception of the SACP in the early 1950s. Since the ANC and the SACP are in an alliance with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which is called a Tripartite Alliance, most literature since the advent of democracy in 1994, tends to focus on the tensions in the alliance as a whole. Maloka (2002) and Ellis and Sechaba (1992), cited earlier in this treatise, focus on the SACP in exile and the relationship that the former had with the ANC. Vladimir Shubin (2008) also concentrates on the relationship the two alliance partners had with the Soviet Union during their years of exile. He argues that the relationship between the ANC and the SACP has often been at best misunderstood, at worst deliberately distorted.

In this literature review, it will be pointed out that there is polarity in how the relationship between the SACP and the ANC and the former’s putative influence on the latter, is perceived by scholars like Everatt and Van Diepen on the one hand and politicians like Dr Blade Nzimande on the other. Whereas scholars like Everatt and Van Diepen, by virtue of being detached from the two organisations as non-members, are able to render a somewhat sober account and analysis that is not necessarily the case with Nzimande who is a Secretary-General of the SACP and is currently serving in an ANC cabinet. Nzimande’s assessment of his party’s influence in shaping economic policy within the alliance is rather circumscribed by strictures that alliance partners should not criticize each other in public. Everatt (1992: 1) contends that the theory ‘colonialism of a special type’ or internal colonialism was the ideological glue which held the African National Congress/ South African Communist Party alliance together for the next four decades.

Everatt posits the view that debates began to emerge in the Communist Party of South Africa, the predecessor of the current South African Communist Party, in the late 1940s over the relationship between class and national struggle and these debates were taken up nationally in the early 1950s as communists and non-communists sought an adequate response to the growth of
African nationalism. At the heart of these debates, as Everatt (1992) explains, lay an attempt to marry the theories of class and national struggle.

The relationship between national liberation and socialist struggle had been the subject of intense Marxist debate throughout the twentieth century. As Everatt (1992) further argues, early meetings of the Communist International (Comintern) in the 1920s were dominated by debates between Lenin (1921) and the Indian Communist Roy over the correct approach to colonial movements which were simultaneously bourgeois and anti-imperialist. Roy argued for a complete separation of working class movements from national movements, while Lenin supported temporary alliances between the two in the broader anti-imperial struggle. The second Comintern resolved to support what Lenin (1921) termed ‘national revolutionary movements’ where they did not hinder working class mobilization, but stressed the need for separate working class and national organizations.

Everatt further argues that position on the above cited debates fluctuated in subsequent congresses largely in response to the needs of the Soviet Union’s foreign policy. After accepting separation between national liberation movements and working class movements, the Cominform changed tack and argued that the national bourgeoisie in colonial situations could best attain their goals through an alliance with the working class and peasantry against imperialism. National movements would bring about national democracy - a state neither capitalist nor socialist.

Maria Van Diepen (Ed) (1989: 50) in the 1989 book, *The National Question in South Africa*, corroborates the arguments made by Everatt (1992) in stating that the Comintern’s resolution reveals that the support of socialists for national liberation was made conditional in the sense that national liberation was seen as being a stage towards a workers’ and peasants’ republic. It is against this historical backdrop that one has to assess the relationship between the SACP and the ANC and the role that the former played in their historic alliance after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its subsequent abandoning of communism in the early 1990s.

Thomas (2007: 51), in a paper written for the *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, argues that in the early 1990s the SACP reaffirmed its commitment to the ANC and called on all members to work toward ensuring an overwhelming electoral victory for the ANC in South Africa’s first
democratic elections of 1994. Thomas (2007) avers that the leadership has persistently argued that in order to achieve socialism, the SACP must work to ensure the continued electoral dominance of the ANC, and thus be rewarded with a plethora of seats in the national parliament and provincial legislatures. In this manner, as Thomas (2007: 251) further opines, the SACP has been well placed within the corridors of power since the end of apartheid, with the ultimate hope of influencing ANC government in policy making decisions. Sitting in government has not translated into achieving significant progress toward the goals and objectives of the SACP.

Nzimande (2006: 13), the Secretary General of the party writing in the SACP journal Bua Komanisi, argues that post-1994 the SACP agreed that the present phase of struggle was to advance, deepen, and defend the democratic breakthrough, a key bridgehead to consolidating the national democratic revolution. The party, as Nzimande (2006) further contends, was confronted with several questions like; what was the relevance of being communists in the midst of this (consolidating the NDR), why preserve an independent SACP? Was the SACP taking a free ride on the NDR, but with ‘second stage’ (establishment of a socialist republic) intentions? What would become of our non-communist allies when the country got to the second stage? Nzimande (2006) explains that it was against the backdrop of the foregoing context that the SACP at its 9th Congress in 1995 adopted the slogan: “Socialism is the future, build it now”.

However, Marais (2009: 263) avers that the adoption of the slogan in effect put to rest the two stage theory. Marais (2009) further argues that in late 1997 an alliance summit affirmed the view that ‘the present national democratic revolution struggle is not a mere platform, it is inherently valuable, and its core values will be integral to the kind of socialism both the SACP and COSATU hope to see. But that quest continues to occur under the stewardship of the ANC.

Joe Slovo writing in Liebenberg and Nel (Eds) (1994: 38) posited the view that the SACP is presently examining the impact of the changes that have taken place in some of its basic ideological concepts. For example it is clear that the thesis of colonialism of a special type needs to be examined. Legassick (2007:524) argues that since 1994 as an excuse for not leading the struggle for socialism, the leaders of the SACP maintain this is ‘the stage of the national democratic revolution’ in which the ANC must lead, and the alliance must continue. Legassick
further argues that at its special national congress in April 2005 the SACP raised the possibility of contesting elections in its own right, and has subsequently produced a document against raising the issue. Legassick (2007: 526) further argues that at its special national congress in April 2005 the SACP raised the possibility of contesting elections in its own right, and has subsequently produced a document against raising the issue.

Gumede, writing in (2007: 343), opines that the SACP, the most dominant influence in the alliance for most of the ANC’s three decades in exile, was probably even more affected by erstwhile president Thabo Mbeki’s efforts to modernize the alliance. Gumede argues that Mbeki pursued a strategy to entice the critical communists to his side, and by the time GEAR was released, Mbeki-ites were firmly in place on the SACP’s central committee. Calland (2006:144) in his book: Anatomy of South Africa: Who holds the power, avers that the influence of the two alliance partners, SACP and COSATU (emphasis added), and is a fluctuating commodity that swings wildly up and down as the stock exchange. Calland (2006: 145) argues that when the greatest policy shift in the history of the ANC was made, neither the SACP nor COSATU were informed, let alone consulted. As a result, the power and influence of the SACP and COSATU, within the alliance (emphasis added), have been fundamentally circumscribed ever since.

Russell (2009: 70) is of the view that in the eighties and after its unbanning in 1990, the SACP provided much of the liberation movement’s intellectual left. Yet the SACP’s influence had waxed and waned. Russell (2009: 70) explains that after the April 1994 election, as the ANC shifted its economic policy to the centre, the left became increasingly disgruntled. It was also increasingly marginalized. For almost a decade the SACP was able to do little but carp from the sidelines. Jacobs and Calland (2002: 19) in their book on the ideology and politics of Thabo Mbeki, assert that the influence of the SACP on government policy has declined since 1994, more markedly since the influence of the SACP on government policy has declined since 1994, more markedly since union members have left their organizations to enter parliament, government, and business. Lacking the resources or personnel to guide or influence policy has limited the influence of the party.
The literature reviewed clearly shows how the influence of the SACP within the ANC has declined since the early 1990s. It has to be stated that most of the literature concentrates on the tripartite alliance i.e. the bond between the ANC, SACP and COSATU. The literature does not deal with the topic in a systematic way.

This treatise aims not only to fill that gap in the literature about South African politics but also to present a systematic and coherent study of the alliance. Furthermore, we shall show that despite adoption of the slogan “Socialism is the future, let us build it now”, with the express purpose of eventually establishing a socialist republic, the party is hardly closer to the realization of that goal. We contend that the reason the goal of establishing a socialist republic seems distant can be ascribed to the amount of influence the party wields within the alliance.

As shown in the foregoing literature review, much work has been done by diverse authors on the alliance. We shall argue that despite the volume of work on the alliance, there are still some gaps that can be filled. As it has been shown, most work that is done renders chiefly an overview of relations that exist between the SACP, ANC and COSATU. One cannot fault either the authors or the voluminous work that has been done on the alliance. The three parties have had a long standing if not occasionally fractious relationship. Still, the relationship between the SACP and the ANC merits a special focus not least because the former is as determined as ever to establish a socialist republic in South Africa even though its erstwhile patron, Russia has long abandoned the policy.

We shall look at the process of adopting GEAR and the policies that it contained. The policy was adopted in 1996 after the abandonment of the RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme). Though the president at the time was Nelson Mandela, the person who is always held accountable for the adoption of GEAR is the then deputy president and former president Thabo Mbeki. Indeed it was him and his team of economists who discarded the RDP and opted for GEAR. Consequently, Mbeki and his cohorts earned themselves the not-so-complimentary title “1996 Class Project” from both the SACP and COSATU.
It will be shown that GEAR was adopted without the sanction of the SACP as an alliance partner and that its policies are neo-liberal and an anathema to the party. The adoption of GEAR in 1996 had implications about the role of the state in the economy, trade barriers and trade liberalization. It will also be shown that the influence of the SACP within the ANC vacillates in proportion to who is at the helm of the presidency and whether he is a ‘nationalist’ or is amenable to socialist tendencies. Proof of this assertion is borne by the fact that the removal of former president Mbeki and subsequent ascension to power of president Jacob Zuma was premised on the latter’s supposed affinity with the communists within the “broad church of the ANC”.

RESEARCH DESIGN/METHODOLOGY

A description of the methodology to be employed in this treatise will be made. It is crucial to make a distinction between ‘research design’ and ‘research methodology’. Mouton argues that researchers regularly confuse the terms; ‘research design’ and ‘research methodology’ but these are two very different aspects of a research project. Mouton (2005: 45) in his book; *How to succeed in your Master’s & Doctoral Studies*, defines a research design as a plan or blueprint of how you intend conducting the research. Simply put, according to Mouton (2005), research design is not unlike the plan for constructing a house. He further argues that after a plan for a house has been drawn by an architect the actual building starts and it generally comprises systematic, methodical and accurate execution of the design. This, according to the author’s analogy, entails various methods and tools used to perform different tasks like laying the foundation, bricklaying, plastering and so forth.

Babbie and Mouton (2009) in their book, *The Practice of Social Research*, further add that a research design focuses on the end product: what kind of study is being planned and what kind of results are aimed at. On the other hand, as Babbie and Mouton (2009) further assert, research methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures to be used. The authors contend that the point of departure in research design is the research problem or question whereas in research methodology is specific tasks (data collection/sampling) at hand.
Babbie and Mouton (2009) sum up their distinction between the two concepts by stating that the research design focuses on the logic of research (what kind of evidence is required to address the research question adequately) whilst the research methodology focuses on the individual (not linear) steps in the research process and the most ‘objective’ (unbiased) procedures to be employed. Against the backdrop of the foregoing factors, the research design to be employed in a treatise of this nature will be of qualitative nature. Babbie and Mouton (2009) posit the view that qualitative research distinguishes itself from quantitative research in terms of the following key features:

- Research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors.
- Focus is on the process rather than the outcome.
- The actor’s perspective (the “insider” or “emic” view) is emphasized.
- The primary aim is in-depth descriptions and understanding of actions and events.
- The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive) rather than attempting to generalize to some theoretical population.
- The research is often inductive in approach, resulting in the generation of new hypotheses and theories.
- The qualitative researcher is seen as the “main instrument” in the research process.

Neumann (2006), in his book; *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* differentiate between quantitative and qualitative research by arguing that qualitative research:

- Captures and discovers meaning once the researcher becomes immersed in the data.
- Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalizations, and taxonomies.
- Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual setting or researcher.
- Data are in the form of words and images from documents, observations, and transcripts.
- Theory can be causal or non-causal and is often inductive.
- Research procedures are particular, and replication is very rare.
- Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalizations from evidence and organizing data to present a coherent, consistent picture.

Since this study will be a purely theoretical study, it implies that the researcher will embark on a qualitative study which shall entail consultation of the policies of both the ANC and the SACP, academic and general books, articles in journals, newspaper articles, interviews and historical diaries. With these the researcher intends to conduct a variety of methods in order to glean information. Among some of the methods to be used would be: critical literature review, policy analysis, translation and conceptual analysis. Most of the material that the treatise will use is readily available in most university libraries and academic journals. To gain access to them will be via inter-library loan for any material that is not obtainable from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University library.

A study of this nature will inevitably have limitations of its own not least because it is qualitative and has as its main focus primary texts. The fact that it will not be interviewing some prominent individuals within the tripartite alliance implies that the study may miss some insights into the inner workings of the alliance in general and the SACP in particular. Furthermore, since the predecessor of SACP the CPSA went underground as a pre-emptive move to evade being banned implies that there is not much literature on it. Most literature about current politics in South Africa, probably because of the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union in 1989, does not dwell much on the SACP and its history. There is more focus on the ANC as the ruling party than on the SACP as a party with designs on accessing the levers of power some day in the future.
The organization of chapters will be thematic and done as follows:

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and background to the study. This chapter will introduce the topic; outline how the treatise will be organized, provide a synopsis of literature review and the research methodology to be utilized.

CHAPTER TWO: The Formation of the SACP and the role it played in the formulation of the Freedom Charter and the formation of Umkhonto Wesizwe. Here the treatise will begin with the formation of the predecessor of the SACP, the CPSA and the challenges it faced. It will then delineate the role by the SACP in the formulation of the Freedom Charter, a significant document to the ANC, and the liberation army Umkhonto Wesizwe and the relations between the two parties in exile.

CHAPTER THREE: The role played by the SACP in the CODESA negotiations. When FW de-Klerk unbanned political organizations on 2 February 1990, a space was opened to negotiate for a new South Africa. The gathering to negotiate a new South Africa was termed Convention for a Democratic South Africa. The role played by the SACP in these negotiations will be explored. It was Joe Slovo, a staunch SACP member, who came with the idea of a ‘sunset clause’. The treatise will explore that and other contributions the party may have made.

CHAPTER FOUR: Continuing political debates in the SACP on constructing socialism in the 21st century. With the current global economic crisis does the SACP believe that socialism could be a panacea to help the world in general and South Africa in particular? The role of SACP deployments in determining how the party goes on ‘building socialism now’ or administering capitalism.

After the 1994 and subsequent elections, in which the SACP has always endorsed its alliance partner, the ANC, it has invariably found itself in government. How does it hope to achieve its goal of ‘building socialism now’ when it is not the ruling party but allied to the party in power?

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion.
CHAPTER TWO

The formation of the Communist Party of South Africa

‘Workers of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains’. Karl Marx

There is general consensus that the forerunner of the South African Communist Party, the Communist Party of South Africa, was formed in July 1921. It would be apposite for the purposes of this treatise to trace the background conditions which led to the formation of this party. The discovery of minerals like gold and diamond in the then Transvaal (present-day Gauteng) and Kimberley (in Northern Cape) the middle of the 19th century attracted workers from various parts of the world especially Britain. Britain which had earlier colonised South Africa but pulled out of the country after being preoccupied by Napoleonic wars, then had a keen interest in the recently discovered mines as she reckoned that they would aid her economy which was affected by the war. It thus was no mystery that most of the workers who came to work in the gold mines in the Transvaal hailed from Britain. Some of them came from East European countries like Lithuania and were mostly Jewish in origin. Kotze (1994), writing in *The Long March: The Story of the struggle for liberation in South Africa*, asserts that early socialist movements in South Africa were comprised by British socialists who arrived in the country after the discovery of gold and diamond. These foreign migrants, as Kotze further asserts, mostly joined the South African Labour Party as their ‘political home’. The outbreak of World War One engendered a schism in the Labour Party as opinions differed whether to support the Allied forces led by Britain or not. Most of the socialist members of the Labour Party were against the war and in 1915 formed the International Socialist League.

Leatt et al (1986) posits the view that in 1921 the International Socialist League partnered with the Social Democratic Federation, the Durban Marxist Club, the Cape Communist Party and the Jewish Socialist Society, to form the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) on the basis of the 21 points of the Communist International. Kotze also confirms that the party was formed in Cape Town. The CPSA, as Leatt et al assert, had miniscule influence on African workers. Its main focus was exerting influence over white workers in order to unseat the government of General J.C. Smuts. Still, the party supported the Hertzog –Labour pact and in so doing inadvertently helped the National party to come to power in the 1924 elections. It would seem
somewhat ironic that a party which purported to champion the rights of oppressed and downtrodden workers would lend its support to a Nationalist Party determined to undermine those very rights especially for black workers. As a result of the foregoing, the 1922 strike by white miners was caused by the Chamber of Mines decision to opt for cheap black labour in lieu of the relatively expensive white labour. The white workers at the time were opposed to that decision and went on strike in order to protect their jobs. The fact that all workers, black and white, had a common enemy, the capitalist mine bosses, who sought exploitation for maximum profits hardly made an impression to the white workers who were preoccupied with defending their privileges. At any rate, the CPSA learnt its lessons from the 1922 strike and sought rapprochement with predominantly black organisations.

Kotze posits the view that at its 1924 congress, the CPSA resolved to concentrate more on African workers and to establish fraternal relations with the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation movements. The corollary of the foregoing resolution led to the CPSA having a working relationship with the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU) led by Clements Kadalie. Lodge (1985), in his book *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945*, argues that the reason the ICU was targeted was because it ‘had a massive working class membership and at that stage also had explicitly socialist goals’. The relationship between the CPSA and the ICU lasted for about two years as in 1926, according to Kotze all communists in the ICU were chucked out. Although the reasons for the expulsion of communists in the ICU are somewhat unclear, Lodge (1985:7) contends that by 1926 there were tensions between them and the trade union arising from ‘tactical and ideological differences’. Plaut and Holden (2012), in their book: *Who rules South Africa? Pulling the strings in the battle for power*, argue that the fallout between the CPSA and ICU happened when the former concerned at corruption demanded a look at the books. The CPSA, after its expulsion from the ICU, gravitated towards the African National Congress.

Initially, according Plaut and Holden (2012:7), the CPSA focussed on working with white unions and scoffed at working with the ANC as it viewed it as being dominated by elements of the ruling class.

Leatt et al (1986: 141) asserts that the then ANC vice president Josiah Gumede after a visit to Russia in 1927 welcomed communists in the ANC as allies. Leatt et al (1986) further argues that Gumede introduced a ‘stream of radical thinking’ in the ANC and by 1930 the influence of
communists within the ANC had reached a peak. It is during its formative years that the national question posed a serious challenge for the CPSA in the early stages of its history.

Part of the challenge as this treatise suggests was that in the South African context, unlike in Russia and other European countries which were following the communist system, class was not the only variable with which local communists had to contend. Capitalism in South Africa was in close affinity with the system of entrenched racism. Consequently, black workers were oppressed not only as workers but also by virtue of their race. Besides being oppressed and exploited by the capitalist system as workers they were also oppressed by virtue of the colour of their skin. In essence, they faced a double oppression: as a race and class.

The CPSA found itself in a dilemma of choosing between the two concepts: race and class to foreground in its struggle in South Africa. For a party which sought rapprochement with predominantly black political organisations like the African National Congress, foregrounding class at the expense of race would have been somewhat erroneous. To its disadvantage, the party had no model heterogeneous society in the mould of South Africa on which it could craft the framework of a future Communist republic. Most communist countries like Russia, China and other East European countries were to all intents and purposes homogenous societies as they had one racial group: whites.

It was in 1928 that the Comintern (Third international founded by the Bolsheviks to encourage world revolution) adopted a specific resolution as a guiding objective for the CPSA. This resolution was that there should be an independent South African Native Republic as a first step towards a workers’ and peasants’ republic with equality of races; blacks, coloureds and whites. Basically, the Comintern’s resolution addressed the complex dilemma that had exercised the activists of the CPSA for some time. The foregoing resolution adopted in the 1928 Comintern laid the foundation for the later development of the CPSA’s two-stage of revolution and the concept of ‘colonialism of a special type’ which underpin the ideological basis of the alliance between the SACP and the ANC.

The treatise shall now thoroughly examine these theoretical/ideological concepts which the CPSA grappled with and which also inform the alliance between the SACP and the ANC
namely: the national question, two-stage theory of revolution and colonialism of a special type (also referred to as CST).

**The National Question**

A practical definition of the concept ‘nation’ would refer to a group of people who share common bonds in relation to race, language and culture. In the case of early 20th century South Africa the foregoing definition proved rather complex. Bunting (1998:22), in his book: *Moses Kotane-South African Revolutionary*, states that at the foundation of the CPSA the population of South Africa as revealed by a 1921 census was over six million with whites just over one million, Africans over four million, Coloureds 525 000 and Indians 164 000. It was against the backdrop of the foregoing that the 1928 Comintern formulated the ‘Native Republic’ thesis. Joseph Stalin, later to be a leader of the USSR, delivered a paper on the vexing question of what constitutes a nation. In his paper “*Marxism and the National Question*”, Joseph Stalin (1928) proposed that a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. Stalin further elaborates that a nation like every historical phenomenon is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end. He posits the opinion that not all the characteristics (that define a nation) taken separately are sufficient to define a nation. He argues that it is sufficient for a single one of the characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation.

Brian Bunting (1998: 22), in his same biography of Moses Kotane, argues that the Bolshevik Party not only proclaimed the right of nations to self-determination but it also put its policies into effect when it came to power in 1917 as Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland exercised their right to secession from Russia and became independent states. In the case of South Africa, Bunting (1998) avers that application of the Marxist theories on the national question with the country’s racially mixed population was of special significance because of the country’s racial composition. He explains that the franchise was the monopoly of whites who alone exercised effective power. The South African situation was not the same as that in the Soviet Union where
the Russian majority had to take into account the aspirations of a variety of smaller nations and national groups.

In the light of the above, as Bunting elucidates, the problem which confronted the socialist movement from the outset was how to smash the colour bar, which both by law and custom effectively prevented the black majority from exercising any democratic rights, acquiring education and skills, enjoying equal rights and opportunities and sharing equally the benefits of the country. Joe Slovo (1998), in his paper: *The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution*, concurs with Bunting that Stalin’s thesis on the national question may have had validity in the reality of a Europe in the aftermath of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the national realignments which followed. He insists that the application of Stalin’s thesis on the national question to ‘our conditions’, in other words to South African conditions.

Slovo (1998: 6) concurs with Bunting that Stalin’s thesis on the national question may have had validity in the reality of a Europe in the aftermath of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the national realignments which followed. He further insists that the application of Stalin’s thesis on the national question to “our conditions or, even, to most parts of the continent of Africa is, at best, questionable”. Slovo (1998: 6) further argues that using Stalin’s formula as a starting point implies that “we would have great difficulty to find in our continent many state entities that could be described as ‘nations’. The redeeming feature, as Slovo argues, is that the common fight against the oppressor plays an outstanding role in creating a national bond between all the diverse groups and cultures.

The last statement of Slovo’s argument implied that the working together of both black and white workers in fighting for the elimination of both racism and economic exploitation could contribute towards creating unity among the diverse population groups. It is against this backdrop, as Kotze (1994), in the book: *The Long March*, explains that the ANC adopted the basic tenets of colonialism of a special type (CST) as part of its strategy and tactics at the 1969 Morogoro Conference. Kotze (1994) further argues that the basic tenets of CST were also echoed by many supporters of the now defunct United Democratic Front (UDF). The treatise will examine the concept of colonialism of a special type.
Colonialism of a special type

In ordinary classic cases of colonialism the mother country or colonising nation exploits the colony’s resources for its own benefit. The typical colony would be administered by a resident official who acts as a representative power be it Britain, Portugal or Spain. In the case of South Africa, it was not wholly a classic colonial situation. Though the country was at various times a colony of Britain and was still so until 1961, it also had Afrikaners who had Dutch origins but had decided to make South Africa their permanent home. Whereas the Afrikaners, as the Dutch descendants preferred to call themselves, resided in South Africa they occasionally called themselves “Europeans”. In a sense they were outsiders though residents of South Africa and were technically ‘colonists’ and saw themselves different from the natives or the indigenous African population. The application of the Colour Bar policy in relation to job opportunities among black and white population groups, and subsequent legislation of the policy of discrimination underscored the complexity of the South African situation and what confronted the SACP. The concept of CST first came about in the 1950 SACP central committee report to the congress of the party and was fully enhanced in the 1962 party programme. Turok (2003) explicates this fundamental concept as it was outlined by the SACP in its national conference in 1962:

“South Africa is not only a colony but an independent state. Yet masses of our people enjoy neither independence nor freedom…

On the one hand, that of ‘White South Africa’, there are small features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stages of imperialism. There are highly developed industrial monopolies, and the emerging of industrial and finance capital. The land is farmed along capitalist lines, employing wage labour, and producing cash crops for the local and export markets.

But on the other level, that of ‘Non-White South Africa’, there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and domination by a group which does everything it can to emphasise and perpetuate its alien ‘European’ character…Non-White South Africa is a colony of White South Africa itself. It is this combination of the worst features both of imperialism and
colonialism, within a single national frontier, which determines the special nature of the South African system”.

What CPSA argued then and what SACP currently argues was that South Africa is a virtual colony in so far as the means of production, distribution and exchange remained in the hands of the white section of the population. CPSA, and by extension SACP, argued that the role blacks played in the economy was that of producing for the ruling classes: which in the case of South Africa happened to be the majority of the white people. Besides the concept of a colonialism of a special type, the CPSA believed in a two-stage theory of revolution. This two-stage theory of revolution and what it entails will be explored in the following paragraphs.

**Two-stage theory of revolution**

From the foregoing argument one can deduce that there is an affinity between the national question and the two-stage theory of revolution. Whereas in the national question, the 1928 Comintern proposed the establishment of an independent native republic, the two-stage theory is implicit in that proposal. To illustrate this assertion, a native republic would precede the establishment of a fully-fledged communist state. Accordingly, the proponents of this theory posit the view that the attainment of liberation comes about in two phases or stages. These stages are explicitly spelled out as: the first stage is a ‘national democratic revolution’, or in the case of South Africa the establishment of an independent native republic, to end apartheid and racism and it is followed by a second stage which is defined as ‘socialist’ revolution to end capitalism. The implication in the foregoing is that a national liberation movement leads the fight for liberation of a country with the communist party taking over after that liberation is won. It was with this aim in mind that the CPSA made its overtures to the ANC in the late 1920s and what it declared as the basis of the alliance between its successor, SACP, and the national liberation movement; ANC.

Through aligning itself with the latter, the SACP had the express purpose of using the nationalist movement’s mobilising power to fight for the eventual establishment of a socialist republic. To corroborate this assertion, one will cite Fanon (1963: 99) who argues that “the objective of the nationalist parties from a certain period onward is geared strictly along national lines. They mobilize the people with the slogan of independence and anything else is left to the future”.

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Indeed this was the case with the ANC in that it was preoccupied with doing away with the pernicious system of apartheid. During the late 1920s the CPSA was fighting hard for the soul of the ANC as William Mervin Gumede (2007: 11) in his book: *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC*, contends. The leftists were disappointed by the ANC’s cautious approach under the leadership of Zaccheus Mahabane and they eventually won when the latter was replaced by Josiah Gumede. Under the presidency of Josiah Gumede, as Gumede (2007: 11) explains, the CPSA and the ANC had a close co-operation and the latter was steered towards a more confrontational stance, which entailed mass action, with the white rulers. It was during Gumede’s time at the helm of the ANC and his advocacy of a non-racial alliance to fight racial segregation that the ANC-SACP alliance was born. Gumede was replaced by Pixley Seme in 1930 when conservative chiefs within the ANC were apprehensive of the communist control of the ANC. With the ascension to power of Joseph Stalin in Soviet Russia and his purging of dissenters, the purges also affected the CPSA as some members who were seen as dissenters were expelled from the party. The combination of the purges and the conservative leadership of Seme engendered a bit of a lull in the activities of the CPSA. It was also during Xuma’s presidency, as Gumede asserts, that there was co-operation between the ANC, CPSA and the South African Indian Congress to oppose pass laws. This co-operation between the ANC, CPSA and the SAIC was aptly called ‘The Doctors Pact’ as Xuma (ANC), Dadoo (CPSA) and Naicker (SAIC) were medical doctors. During the presidency of Xuma young radicals within the ANC, among them Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Anton Lembede, agitated for the formation of a ‘Youth League’ which was eventually formed in 1943. The league was at first anti-communist and its opposition to the close co-operation of Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites was that the other groups were ‘hijacking’ the African struggle. Marais (2011), in his *South Africa Pushed to the Limit: the political economy of change*, argues that the Youth League favoured a passionate brand of African nationalism which advocated the slogan ‘Africa for Africans’ which was made popular by Marcus Garvey’s followers. According to Manning Marable in his book *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (2011:19) Marcus Garvey, who was born in Jamaica, was active for the return of people of African descent to Africa in the 1920s. The Suppression of Communism Act dealt the CPSA a huge blow as it declared the party illegal. Gumede (2007) asserts that the law brought the Communist Party closer to the ANC even the very young radicals who were initially opposed to the influence of the communists within the
ANC saw the banning of the party as a threat to all parties. What the foregoing evinces is that though the CPSA would later play a pivotal role in the ANC it was certainly not welcomed at first at least by the young radicals of the latter.

The focus will now be shifted to the role played by the CPSA in the drawing up of the Freedom Charter. The idea of a ‘freedom charter’ is generally attributed to Professor Z.K. Matthews who was a lecturer at Fort Hare University and a member of the ANC. Lodge (1985) confirms this assertion by stating that at a provincial ANC congress in the Cape, Z.K. Matthews, proposed the summoning of a ‘national convention at which all groups might be represented to consider our national problems on an all-inclusive basis to draw up a Freedom Charter for the Democratic South Africa of the future’. Gumede (2007: 21) affirms the assertion by Lodge by stating that Z.K. Matthews proposed the idea of a freedom charter at the Cape ANC’s annual conference in 1955.

During the month of March 1954 the executives of the ANC, the South African Indian Congress, South African Congress of Democrats and the South African Coloured People’s Organisation met in Tongaat near Durban to discuss plans for a national convention. The meeting also decided to establish a National Action Council for the Congress of the People. A notable absence among the parties which gathered in Tongaat was the CPSA. The party had been dissolved just before the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 was implemented by the Nationalist Parliament. At the time it had been revived as the South African Communist Party and operated surreptitiously.

Turok, then a member of the SACP, acknowledges that the party had a secret meeting on the outskirts of Johannesburg where, among other things, a draft party programme including the Freedom Charter was discussed. Even in visiting people to collect their demands for the Freedom Charter, Turok (2003) confirms that ‘we were not representing the party but the Congress alliance’. Indeed the Congress alliance was an amalgamation of all the parties that had met in Tongaat in which the newly constituted SACP was absent on account of the fact that it was proscribed. Absence of the SACP in the Tongaat meeting would be but one thing and its covert influence in the drafting would quite be another. Let us examine the Freedom Charter to ascertain whether it had any communist influence whatsoever.
The Freedom Charter

The document as adopted by the Congress of the People in Kliptown and as Turok records it, was like this: The Preamble of the Freedom Charter as set out in Karis and Carter (1977) is as follows: 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 as a whole. The clauses were like this:

1. The people shall govern. Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws.

2. All national groups shall have equal rights. There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races.

3. The people shall share in the country’s wealth. 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.

4. The Land shall be shared among those who work it. 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.

5. All shall be equal before the law. The courts shall be representative of all the people.

6. All shall enjoy equal human rights. The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organize, to meet together, to publish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children.

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

8. The doors of learning and culture shall be opened. Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children.

9. There shall be houses, security and comfort. All people shall have the right to live where they choose, be decently housed, and bring up their families in comfort and security.
10. There shall be peace and friendship. South Africa shall be a fully independent state which respects the rights and sovereignty of all nations.

In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the some members of the newly reconstituted SACP had influence on the drafting of the Freedom Charter, though the party which was then operating underground was not represented. The CPSA, as Leatt et al (1986) argues, dissolved itself before the Suppression of Communism Act came into effect. Kotze (1994) confirms that in 1953 a number of CPSA members decided to revive the movement in the form of an underground party which was named: the South African Communist Party. An examination of the charter will reveal that, save for a few clauses; it was not a wholly a socialist document in the classic sense of the term. The reason for this assertion is that the clauses may at that time have been viewed as coming closer to socialism but in today’s world they would appear more social democratic than socialist. Indeed, at the time the Freedom Charter was drafted anything which was social democratic in content was viewed as leaning more to socialism this treatise argues. Marais (2011) argues that the pronouncements of the Freedom Charter were sweeping but they pointed to ‘a new order where liberal democratic rights could be combined with a welfarist socio-economic order’. What Marais implies in the foregoing argument about the Freedom Charter is that it is more of a document leaning on social democracy than pure unadulterated socialism or communism.

Some adherents of the Freedom Charter have deflected criticism of the document’s paucity of communist ideology by pointing its detractors to clause number three which states that: ‘the people shall share in the country’s wealth’. The clause further states that: ‘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’. The clause in essence evinced communist aspirations for the solution of the solution of South Africa’s skewed economy. This treatise would argue that the two foregoing clauses are so vital that they are the basis of the current campaign by the ANC Youth League for ‘economic freedom’ and what the ANC has recently called the ‘second transition’. Both organisations argue that South Africa attained political freedom through the elections of 1994 but the economy is still controlled by white people.
On the clause, Turok (2003:60) one of the drafters of the Charter and who was a member of the SACP, avers that ‘I pointed out that gold mining was a monopolistic industry and that the large manufacturing industries were based on low wages and owned by an oppressive class of bosses. I called for the ownership of the mines to be transferred to the ownership of the people and for committees of workers to run these industries. I also called for the banks to be run by the people’.

Turok (2003:60) argues further that his amendment was seconded by Billy Nair who castigated capitalism’s exploitation of the people and also, like the former, called for the industries, land, big business and the mines to be owned by all the people in the country. The clause recommended by avowedly communist individuals was accepted by the congress and as Turok (2003) points out; ‘we felt that we had struck the correct note’. In the light of the foregoing, it is clear that the some members of the newly reconstituted SACP had influence on the drafting of the Freedom Charter. The SACP, as a party operating underground at the time of the Congress of the People which led to the drafting of the Freedom Charter, had a substantive impact in those proceedings. Notwithstanding the clandestine role forced upon it by the Suppression of Communism Act at the drafting of the Freedom Charter, the SACP proved to be an integral part of the Congress of the people. The SACP’s role in the ANC was more pronounced during the years when the two organisations were in exile. In 1961 police in Sharpeville, East Rand (present day Gauteng), shot dead 69 protestors who marched in opposition to pass laws. The pass laws stipulated that all African males and females had to carry a pass which stated that they were employed by a specific employer and would be in an urban area for a specific period indicated in the said pass. In essence, the pass laws not only curtailed the free movement of Africans, but also made them temporary sojourners in the country of their birth. Consequently, passes were the bane of African people in general and African males in particular. The newly formed Pan Africanist Organisation, founded after Africanists within the ANC broke away in protest against the influence of communists in 1959, organised a march for the 21\textsuperscript{st} of March against pass laws. Police used live ammunition to disperse the protestors which resulted in several casualties as earlier stated. The response of the then National government after harsh criticism from a number of Western countries was to declare a summary banishment of the ANC and the PAC and incarceration of many of its leaders. The SACP which had been reconstituted underground in 1963 was able to be of great assistance to the ANC on how to navigate banishment and exile. In
1963 the ANC was to suffer the double whammy of having its key leaders arrested in Rivonia and had Nelson Mandela also jailed after he had avoided police arrest for some time.

It also went on to play a pivotal role in the formation of the ANC’s armed wing; Umkhonto Wesizwe. With increasing state repression and arrest and banning of activists it was increasingly evident that the ANC would not sustain its policy of non-violence for long. In the book: *Mandela: The Authorised Portrait*, Maharaj and Kathrada (eds) (2006: 102) Mandela is cited to have told one interviewer that the ANC would have to reconsider its tactics if the government reaction was to crush by force the organisation’s non-violent struggle. Mandela proposed at an ANC meeting the abandonment of the policy of non-violence and establishment of a military wing and his proposal was defeated. Cherry (2011), in her truncated history of Umkhonto Wesizwe, postulates that with the advent of the system of apartheid in 1948, the country had a decade of ‘militant yet nonviolent protest and defiance’ which was led by the ANC and its allies. Chief Albert Luthuli who is said to have chaired the meeting when Mandela made the proposal for the formation an armed wing, was one of the objectors who later relented and said an armed wing should be a separate and independent organ under the overall control of the ANC. The matter, as Maharaj and Kathrada (2006: 102) argue, was taken to the joint meeting of the executives of the ANC, Indian Congress, the Coloured People’s Congress, South African Congress of Trade Unions and the Congress of Democrats where Mandela was subsequently authorised to go ahead and form a military organisation. Cherry (2011) argues that when strategy of nonviolence did not succeed to bear fruit with the Nationalist government, the ANC had to reconsider its non-violent tactics. Cherry (2011) posits the view that the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 where 69 unarmed protestors (protesting against carrying of passes) were shot and killed by police provided the ANC with an impetus to form an armed wing. In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela (1995) posits the view that the debate on the use of violence had been going on among members of the ANC since early 1960. Mandela (1995) argues that he had first discussed the possibility of armed struggle with Walter Sisulu as far back as 1952. Quite interestingly, as Mandela (1995) avers, the SACP which had clandestinely reconstituted itself underground was also considering forming its own military wing.

Umkhonto Wesizwe (MK its acronym) was set up under the aegis of the National High Command comprising ANC and SACP leaders. Mandela argues that despite the executive
council’s prohibition of whites as members, MK was not constrained as to who could join. In that vein, as Mandela (1995) argues, he immediately recruited Joe Slovo (a member of the SACP) to be part of the High Command. Cherry (2011) points out that MK was constituted by a small group of saboteurs of all races recruited from the ANC and the SACP. Cherry (2011) further argues that the SACP was influential in MK from the beginning owing to the former’s technical skills and revolutionary theory. Williams, writing in Liebenberg et al (1994: 24), asserts that a series of explosions which rocked major centres in South Africa on the 16th of December 1961 marked the birth of Umkhonto Wesizwe. The motivation for the formation of MK was stated in a manifesto which declared: ‘the time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices: submit or fight. That time has come for South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means within our power in defence of our people, our future and our freedom’.

The SACP after the banishment of political organisations established its offices in London while the ANC settled in Tanzania and was led by the late Oliver Tambo as its acting president. Maloka (2002: 21), in his book on the history of the SACP in exile, asserts that the two organisations established a revolutionary council which had representatives from other Congress alliance partners. Oliver Tambo was the chairperson, Yusuf Dadoo of the SACP was the deputy chairperson and also Joe Slovo of the SACP was a member. The co-operation between the SACP and the ANC in the revolutionary council was to grow further as the two organisations were in exile. The ANC held its first conference in exile at Morogoro in Tanzania in 1969. It is at this conference, as Maloka (2002: 21) argues, that the ANC was solidified as an organisation and an ideological force and it also formalised the process of including other oppressed groups and organs such as the into the liberation alliance under its leadership. It has to be noted that when the ANC was formed in Bloemfontein in 1912 it had as its focus the liberation of the oppressed African people and at the time the idea of including other races in its ranks had not yet been explored. It is to the credit of the SACP that the idea of accepting members of other races was endorsed by the conference. Maloka (2002: 22) further argues that the ‘strategy and tactics’ programme which the conference adopted was informed by the SACP’s theory of a colonialism of a special type.
Ellis and Sechaba (1992: 59) argue that it was probably Joe Slovo and Joe Matthews (SACP members) who authored the document which was debated at Morogoro. The authors (1992: 59) further argue that after Morogoro the party’s influence over the alliance as a whole was enhanced by establishing it as playing a leading intellectual role. Antonio Gramsci (1971), in his book: *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, argues that ‘organic intellectuals’ are distinguished less by their profession, which may be any job or characteristic of their class, but by their function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong. An organic intellectual as the term is used by Gramsci refers to an intellectual who associates and identifies himself or herself with the people and fight with them for their aspirations. The philosophers who formed an integral part of the French Revolution in 1789 are a classic example of organic intellectuals. The SACP as true organic intellectuals were directing and shaping the ideas of the ANC. ANC structures as Ellis and Sechaba (1992) argue, by dint of the influence of the SACP were overhauled and there was infusion of new blood into the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the former. The party and the ANC had frequent meetings. Maloka (2002: 44) reaffirms that when the headquarters of the SACP were shifted from London to Luanda (Angola) and subsequently to Lusaka where meetings with the ANC were more frequent as they had exhaustive discussions on the internal situation and future co-operation.

Maloka (2002: 44) also asserts that the party and the ANC met again in 1982 and in that meeting it was concurred that they should meet at least twice a year. In the 1980s a Shubin (1999: 236) argues in his book on the ANC, the latter organisation’s leadership believed that its members should not be discouraged from discussing socialism despite its absence from the policy of the ANC. One has to recall that as a liberation movement the ANC from its inception was a vehicle for the articulation of black nationalists. Communists within the ANC who were also members of the SACP felt that socialism as an aim should be debated within the ANC. Shubin (1999: 236) cites one ANC member and also party (i.e. SACP) member Mzala who said: ‘the transition to socialism is a logical development of the present revolutionary process in our country and this proposition in my view should be raised to the level of debates within the African National Congress’. The foregoing citation attests to the extent of the influence the SACP was gaining within the ANC regarding the reorientation of the latter’s ideological outlook. The institution of regularised meetings between the ANC and the SACP in the mid-1980s caused relations between the two parties to reach a new level. With the holding of the Kabwe (Zambia) conference in
Zambia things looked auspicious for the SACP. This conference, as Maloka (2002: 47) asserts, resolved to allow non-Africans to stand for leadership positions in the ANC.

The 1969 Morogoro conference had merely accepted non-Africans as members of the ANC but they could not contest leadership positions within the latter organisation. It also was during the 1980s that the concept of a ‘tripartite alliance’ was used in reference to the ANC, SACP and the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). Later this term would be used to refer to the relationship between the ANC, SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Maloka (2002:58) argues that the SACP reached its peak when it held its seventh congress in Havana the capital city of Cuba in 1989. At this congress the party adopted a new programme which it dubbed ‘The Path to Power’. The party, at this same congress, reaffirmed the ‘colonialism of a special type’ thesis and also elaborated on the theory of the national democratic revolution especially with regard to the ‘two-stage’ theory and the role of the working class. It is evident deducting from the foregoing that the party still harboured hopes of a socialist South Africa. It needs to be stated that at the time that at the time the disintegration of Russia and other East European countries had not yet occurred.
CHAPTER THREE

The role played by the South African Communist Party in CODESA

‘If one believes a policy is unworkable, it becomes immoral to advocate it’

The above-mentioned quotation curiously came from the then National Party leader and former president of South Africa, FW de Klerk. According to Giliomee and Mbenga (2007), in their book *New History of South Africa*, FW de Klerk was speaking to a television journalist about the policy of apartheid; policy of separateness between the different racial groups of South Africa as legislated by the National Party when it assumed power in 1948. FW de Klerk, who assumed office in 1989 after his predecessor PW Botha had fallen ill (after suffering from a stroke), believed that there was not much sense and justification in continuing with apartheid. This treatise will focus on the negotiations which led to the dismantling of apartheid and the formation of the present-day South African republic. It also seeks to explore the role that the then newly unbanned South African Communist Party played in the transition to a new South Africa. The treatise will argue that it was not serendipity that caused FW de Klerk to see that apartheid could no longer work. A number of factors, chiefly in local politics (crippling sanctions and continuing unrest in South Africa’s black townships) and global politics (the fall of the Berlin Wall and abandonment of communism), led to the erstwhile president taking a momentous decision on February 2nd 1990 unbanning the then banned African National Congress, South African Communist Party and the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania. Even before FW de Klerk made his momentous speech on 2nd of February 1990, some South Africans were making overtures to the banned ANC. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007: 393) assert that from the mid-80s the then National Intelligence Service (NIS) began to talk to members of the ANC in exile, while simultaneously secret talks were held with Nelson Mandela in prison. Mandela (2005), in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*, confirms that he wrote to the then minister of Justice Kobie Coetzee to propose to him the idea of talks about talks. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007: 394) posit the view that the extent of informal talks between some government representatives and ANC leaders was known only to then President PW Botha and one or two ministers and a few NIS officials. The dismantling of the Berlin Wall, as the authors argue, heralded the end of the

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Soviet Russia’s domination of Eastern Europe and also played a role in breaking the deadlock in South Africa. Communism as a political and economic system was rapidly beginning to disintegrate and these developments presented then President FW de Klerk with an opportunity. This opportunity, as this treatise argues, was that with the collapse of communism it was convenient to negotiate with the ANC which could no longer rely on support from the Soviet Union. The National Party could convince its voters that without the support of Soviet Russia the ANC and the SACP no longer constituted a threat to stability and private ownership. Davenport (1998: 4), in his book _The Transfer of Power in South Africa_, explains that several countries of the world (mostly Third World countries like India and the independent African states) voted against South Africa in the United Nations General Assembly, cutting it off from funds, trade and weaponry and arming its opponents in exile. Davenport (1998: 4) further asserts that internally (in South Africa) unemployment was rising, internal resistance was spreading in spite of a state of emergency which had been in existence since 1986. Other factors which militated against the continuation of apartheid were the falling of formerly bastions of white supremacy Mozambique and the then Rhodesia which later attained independence and was called Zimbabwe and South West Africa (formerly administered by South Africa) was about to gain independence as Namibia. On the economic front, South Africa was fast moving towards bankruptcy and the near collapse of her economy from outside pressures was relieved by the political and economic breakdown of Eastern Europe. Hein Marais (2011), in his book: _South Africa Pushed to the Limit: the political economy of change_, asserts that a five member committee comprising the then Minister of Justice Kobie Coetzee as head, National Intelligence Service chief Neil Barnard had met with Nelson Mandela 47 times. Being moved from Robben Island prison to Pollsmor prison gave Nelson Mandela (1995) an opportunity to ponder on the possibility of negotiations. In _Long walk to Freedom_, Mandela asserts that he concluded that the time had come when the struggle could be advanced through negotiations. Mandela (1995:626), in justifying the need to embark upon negotiations further argues that if dialogue did not start soon both sides (the blacks and the whites: emphasis added) would be plunged into a dark night of oppression, violence and war. The members of an Eminent Persons Group led by former Nigerian president General Olesugun Obasanjo met the then incarcerated Nelson Mandela (1995: 628) and according to the latter they were going to talk to the cabinet after they had seen him. Whilst Mandela was engaged in these secret, as Davenport (1998) states, talks with the apartheid leaders, many
prominent South African business leaders, and clerics, opposition members of parliament, staff and students had established links with the ANC. In August 1989 President PW Botha was replaced by FW de Klerk and the National Party won elections that were held that year. De Klerk allowed public debate to open up and in October 1989 he freed political prisoners like Walter Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba and Ahmed Kathrada in October of that year. President FW de Klerk met Mandela at Tuynhuys, Cape Town, in December 1989 and the latter rejected demands that the ANC should unilaterally abandon the armed struggle and its association with the SACP and he stuck to a demand for majority rule in a non-racial state.

It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that FW de Klerk unbanned political organizations including the SACP in February 1990. Spitz and Chaskalson (2000) in their book: *The Politics of Transition: A hidden history of South Africa’s negotiated settlement* argue that by 1990 leaders in both the then National Party and the ANC acknowledged that accommodating each other through negotiations was an imperative. The two protagonists could not defeat each other in war but each was capable of preventing each from ruling alone. Mandela was released on 11 February 1990 from Victor Verster Prison in Paarl. The exiled leaders of the ANC were allowed to return to South Africa with a promise of safe conduct. In early May 1990 the exiled leaders of the ANC led by Mandela held talks with President de Klerk’s at Groote Schuur in Cape Town to deal with release of political prisoners and the general return of exiles and the amending of security legislation. In the Pretoria Minute of August 1990, as Spitz and Chaskalson (2000: 16) argue, the ANC formally abandoned its armed struggle and fully committed itself to a negotiated settlement. There is no suggestion that before the ANC took the decisive step of abandoning the armed struggle it had consulted its alliance partner the SACP. However, as both parties had a close working relationship and co-operation it can be assumed that the SACP was apprised of that step. Joe Slovo, then general secretary of the unbanned SACP, was part of the ANC delegation. The party threw in its lot with the ANC in spite of its stated intention to be a legal, public and independent political vanguard of the working class. Johannes Rantete (1998), in his book *The African National Congress and the negotiated settlement*, argues that the prospect of legality posed serious challenges to the SACP. Rantete (1998:52) further argues that in exile the main objective of the SACP was to influence the ANC into adopting a radical liberation programme and the unbanning of both organizations coupled with the ANC’s desire to become a democratic mass based organization posed a threat to the former. The threat, this treatise argues,
was based on the fact that communism was rapidly being abandoned in many East European countries and Soviet Russia. Sheridan Johns (2007: 12), writing in the journal *African Studies Quarterly*, concurs with Rantete about the challenges that the SACP faced in the 1990s as he asserts that during the period 1990-1994 as the National Party was still in power the SACP was under suspicion and hostility from the government as it sought to establish itself as an independent and legal political party allied with the ANC and COSATU. Saunders (1995: 508) argues that just as communism was showing signs of terminal decline in the Soviet Union, the SACP was making re-entry into mainstream South African politics. The party held a rally at Soccer City in Johannesburg on the 29th of July 1990 which was attended by about 50 000 supporters where its secretary general Joe Slovo told the crowd that the party was committed to peaceful negotiations. The other purpose of the rally was to re-launch to the general public it after it had been unbanned together with other political organisations in President FW de Klerk’s 2nd of February speech. In the same rally Mandela is reported to have said that the ANC was not a ‘communist party but as a defender of democracy it has fought and will continue to fight for the right of the SACP to exist. Mandela may well have been reaffirming the heterogeneous nature and multiplicity of viewpoints within the ANC. Joe Slovo refuted government allegations that communists were using the ANC while following a ‘secret agenda’.

According to Davenport (1998: 10), in January 1991 Mandela repeated his call he had made earlier for an all-party congress to prepare for a constituent assembly. The corollary of Mandela’s proposal was the summoning of a Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) at the World Trade Centre, Kempton Park, on 20 and 21 December. The convention, as Davenport asserts, was attended by representatives of about eight mainstream political parties including the Inkatha Freedom Party, most homeland administrations but hardly any of the radical white and black political parties such as the far-right Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB) and the ultra-left Azanian People’s Organization (AZAPO) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Spitz and Chaskalson (2000) argue that the Inkatha Freedom Party led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi boycotted CODESA 1 because their demand for separate seats around the table for the party and the king of AmaZulu, King Goodwill Zwelithini, was not acceded to. An IFP delegation subsequently attended the talks and its presence affirmed the inclusive nature of the talks. The Pan Africanist Congress scoffed at Mandela’s attempts to bring together the former liberation movements in a united front by stating that; ‘a solution to the country’s
Chief Justice Michael Corbett opened proceedings and prayers from diverse religious leaders were offered. The talks were going on well until President FW de Klerk scolded the ANC for not disbanding its armed wing, Umkhonto Wesizwe. This scolding of the ANC by the former president seemed to be oblivious to the fact that Mandela had formally renounced the armed struggle the previous year. Mandela, according to Davenport, responded by stating that the president was pursuing a double agenda: negotiating in public while privately encouraging the security forces to destabilize the ANC. Mandela (1995: 715), in Long Walk to Freedom; states that he could not let De Klerk’s remarks go unchallenged his voice betrayed his anger. He responded by stating: ‘I am gravely concerned about the behaviour of Mr. De Klerk today. He has launched an attack on the ANC and in doing so he has been less than frank. Even the head of an illegitimate, discredited minority regime, as he is, has certain moral standards to uphold …He has abused his position because he hoped I would not respond. He was completely mistaken. I respond now’. Besides this open squabble between the former presidents, CODESA, as Spitz and Chaskalson (2000) assert, was able to set up five working groups which were tasked with preparing the ground for a non-racial democratic government. The working groups were constituted as follows: Working Group 1 was meant to design peace keeping structures and controlling of the security forces; Working Group 3 proposed the formation of a multiparty Transitional Executive Council (TEC) and an Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) which were meant to ensure free political participation at national, provincial, and local levels and also to liaise with the black homeland governments. Working Group 5 complemented the work of Working Group 3 as the former working group concentrated on the removal of discriminatory laws and drafting of an electoral act. Working Group 4 had the task of reincorporating the four independent homelands; Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei into the Republic of South Africa. The last of the CODESA’s working group was the Gender Advisory Committee (GAC) which showed that the leaders at the talks were paying attention to the special interests affecting women in South Africa. The major sticking points that this working group was confronted with was whether the new constitution should be unitary or federal; where transitional legislative power should be vested; how many legislative chambers should there be and how their members should be chosen; how the executive should be constituted; to what extent there should be separation of powers; the definition of regional or provincial boundaries and what route and by what majorities
these matters would be decided. The issue of by what majority the previous matters had to be
decided proved, according to Davenport (2000), to be the major sticking point. The working
group proposed that a final constitution should be adopted by a national assembly which would
continue to act as a legislature. The working group could not agree on the proportion of votes
needed in the assembly for adoption of the constitution. The two major parties in this working
group: National Party and African National Congress had opposing views on the number of votes
needed for the adoption of a new constitution. Davenport asserts that the National Party wanted a
three-quarters majority whereas the ANC wanted two thirds. The two parties reached a
compromise of 70% for the adoption of the constitution and 75% for the adoption of a bill of
rights. However, the National Party insisted on a 75% majority for constitutional changes and
equal legislative powers for the Senate. The ANC, on the other hand, argued that if the
constitution-making body deadlocked with a majority of less than 70% in favour a national
referendum should be held after six months where a simple majority would be enough to approve
the new constitution. As it is recorded by Davenport, there was no agreement reached on these
foregoing points. The two parties wanted to establish which percentage the ANC would have to
attain in an election before it would be able to force its own constitution through the assembly.
From the foregoing it becomes evidently clear that both the major parties in Working Group, the
ANC and the NP, did not trust each other. The National Party’s fear, this treatise argues, was that
the ANC would in the event of winning a majority in an election push through its own
constitution which would likely have some influence from the SACP. With the deadlock still
continuing in Working Group 2, the ANC, the SACP and COSATU proposed that the constituent
assembly should be a democratically elected single chamber whose decisions should allow no
veto power. It can be observed that the SACP was an integral part of the CODESA negotiations
through its association with the ANC. As things developed the party was to play a more pivotal
role in the negotiations as part of the ANC delegation. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007) in their
book *New History of South Africa* assert that the African National Congress walked out of the
negotiations in the middle of May 1992 when the latter could not concur with the National Party
on substantial issues. Besides the previously mentioned deadlock in Working Group 2, the
negotiations at CODESA hit a snag when the then Prime Minister of Kwazulu-Natal Chief
Mangosuthu Buthelezi declined to attend the talks. His refusal to attend was that the parties at
the talks had to meet his demand of allowing a double representation: for his own party Inkatha
and for the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007:404) assert that after the negotiations at CODESA broke off, the ANC (with its tripartite alliance partners: COSATU and the SACP) embarked on a campaign of ‘rolling mass action’. With this campaign the ANC declared that what it would not get at the negotiating table it would gain by demonstrating its popular support. A number of events ensued after the breakdown of the negotiations at CODESA. The first of these was a massacre of ANC supporters at Boipatong, in the Vaal Triangle, by raiders assumed to be Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters who were allegedly assisted by policemen. On the night of June 17 1992 about 200 men from the KwaMadala hostel in Vanderbijlpark, former Transvaal, went on a rampage in the adjacent Slovo Park squatter camp in Boipatong, killing 15 people (including women and children) and injuring many more. In reaction to the Boipatong massacre the ANC (and by implication its alliance partner: SACP) walked out of the negotiations and began to prepare for its ‘rolling mass action’. At its congress that was held in May the party adopted a policy document it termed ready to Govern in which it made an argument for the abolition of homelands. The ANC had targeted three homelands; Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and the self-governing territory of KwaZulu-Natal, which were reluctant in taking part in the CODESA negotiations. On 7 September 1992 the ANC launched a march across the capital city of the Ciskei homeland, Bisho. During the march, a group of marches led by Ronnie Kasrils (a member of both the ANC and SACP) went past the Bisho stadium and headed the town. The Ciskeian troops reacted by shooting at the marchers with the result that about twenty-eight of the marchers were fatally shot. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007: 405) argue that after the massacre the economy suffered a downward spiral and heavy diplomatic pressure was brought to bear on the ANC and the government to resume negotiations. As a consequence of the pressure brought to bear on the two parties, Mandela and De Klerk signed a Record of Understanding on 26 September 1992 which opened the way for a restart of negotiations in 1993. The Record of Understanding proposed that a Constituent Assembly should be set for a fixed period and has enough deadlock-breaking measures. It also stipulated that the elected body would act as an interim Parliament and that an interim government of national unity would rule the country. Still, the ANC and the National Party differed on the question of time frame for the government of national unity with former preferring a short period to the latter’s open-ended period.
Formal negotiations resumed in April 1993 and the name CODESA was dropped and in its stead the name Multiparty Negotiating Process was preferred. The MPNP, as Giliomee and Mbenga (2007) assert, was more streamlined and had a sense of urgency. However, as the MPNP was slowly taking from where CODESA had left a horrible incident which almost plunged the country into a race war happened. On 10 April 1993 a Polish immigrant Janus Waluz in collusion with Clive Derby-Lewis shot and killed Chris Hani. Hani at the time was a secretary general of the SACP, chief of staff of Umkhonto Wesizwe and a member of the ANC. His popularity among the black people in the townships in general and the youth in particular was surpassed only by that of Nelson Mandela. Mandela (1995), in *Long Walk to Freedom* avers that Chris’s death was a blow to him personally and to the movement. Mandela also pointed out that Hani was a soldier and patriot for whom no task was too small. He was a great hero among the youth of South Africa, a man who spoke their language and to whom they listened. If anyone could mobilize the unruly youth behind a negotiated solution, it was Chris. Giliomee and Mbenga (2007) posit the view that it was Mandela’s public appeals for calm that prevented a possible disaster. Mandela (1995: 730) recalls that in his statement he said: ‘now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for-the freedom of all of us’. The ANC was quick to act in order to prevent an outbreak of retaliatory violence by holding week-long mass rallies and demonstrations across the country. The assassination of Hani somewhat had the effect of expediting the stalled negotiations. Mandela confirms this assertion by stating that the day of June 3 1993 was a landmark in South African history. The Multi-Party Negotiation Process (MPNP), after months of negotiations, voted to set a date for the country’s first national, non-racial, one person one vote elections and that was the 27 April 1994.

As Mandela further argues it was going to be the first time in South African history that the black majority would go to the polls to elect their own leaders.

As is outlined in the foregoing page that it took the death of one SACP leader to revive the moribund negotiations, it also had to be another SACP leader in the form of its chairperson Joe Slovo to come with workable proposals for moving the talks forward. In a paper which he wrote in 1993 and titled ‘Negotiations: What room for compromise?’ Slovo, leader of the SACP, and a leading theoretician of the ANC devised strategic repositioning and proposed what was termed a
‘sunset clause’. In *Long Walk to Freedom*, Mandela (1995) asserts that just as Joe Slovo had taken the initiative concerning the suspension of the armed struggle, he again took the lead in making another controversial proposal: a government of national unity. In his paper, Slovo (1993:1) argues that the reason for negotiating was because ‘towards the end of the 80s we concluded that, as a result of its escalating crisis, the apartheid power bloc was no longer able to continue ruling in the old way and was genuinely seeking some break with the past’. Slovo (1993: 1) further asserted that the ANC led alliance was not dealing with a defeated enemy and that an early revolutionary seizure of power by the liberation movement could not be realistically posed. Against the backdrop of the foregoing factors, the SACP chairperson recommended a ‘sunset clause’ whereby a government of national unity which would comprise all the major parties would rule for five years with the condition that losers in an election would not be able to paralyse the government. In outlining his proposed ‘sunset clause’ Slovo (1993) started by outlining positions which the ANC led alliance would not consider budging and these were:

- A minority veto of any kind in the constitution making process as a whole through a minority filled second chamber.
- Entrenching a compulsory power sharing as a permanent feature of a future constitution.
- The determination by the MPNP and not the constitution making body of the permanent boundaries, powers and functions of regions and coupled whether the future South Africa should be a unitary or federal state.
- Constraining the constitution making body so much that a future democratic state would be constitutionally prevented permanently from effectively intervening to advance the process of redressing the racially imbalances in all spheres of life.

Slovo (1993: 3), in his paper, further argues that certain compromises from previously held positions could create the possibility of a major positive breakthrough in the negotiating process without permanently endangering democratic advance. It is crucial to mention that much as Joe Slovo suggested compromises he had bottom which he felt that the negotiating team should insist on. The bottom lines that he mentioned were similar though the same as the points on which the
ANC was not prepared to budge on. In enunciating the bottom-lines, Joe Slovo (1993: 2) said that the negotiating team should be granted a mandate which would look like this:

- The future constitution should be adopted by a democratically elected sovereign constitution making body which would represent all inhabitants of the country and should arrive at decisions without being hamstrung by a veto by any other body.
- The constitution making body will be required to adhere to the principles of CODESA’s Declaration of Intent and other constitutional principles which the key actors agree should be binding.
- Structures should be put in place to ensure free and fair elections.
- Time-frames should be provided for the whole process (of negotiations) as well as acceptable dead-lock breaking mechanisms in constitution-making.
- The tri-cameral parliament (which had separate houses for whites, Coloureds and Indians) should be dissolved after the election of the constitution making body. The constitution making body would be vested with ordinary legislative powers in the interim.
- The legislative instrument which makes provision for constitutional continuity and which empowers the constitution making body must not have the effect of substituting CODESA for the constitution making body in the adoption of the constitution.

The foregoing has summed up the bottom lines that Joe Slovo felt that the negotiators should insist on. In his paper, Joe Slovo distinguished between what he termed ‘quantitative and qualitative compromises’.

In defining the difference between quantitative compromises and qualitative compromises, Slovo avers that qualitative compromises imply a surrender of the whole or part of a substantive demand. Quantitative compromises allow for some flexibility within otherwise fixed parameters. The ‘sunset clause’ that he proposed was in the realm of qualitative compromises. In suggesting the compromises which are now termed the ‘sunset clause’, Joe Slovo (1993:3) argued that ‘certain retreats from previously held positions would create the possibility of a major positive
breakthrough in the negotiating process without permanently hampering real democratic advance’. Among other things Joe Slovo proposed that:

- That there should be a ‘sunset clause’ in the new constitution which would allow for a mandatory power-sharing for a fixed number of years in the period after the adoption of the constitution. The power sharing would be subject to proportional representation in the executive combined with decision-making procedures which would not paralyse its functioning.

- The constitutionally entrenched boundaries, powers and functions of the regions would be dealt with by the constitution making body.

- On general amnesty: Joe Slovo argued that there was no link between general amnesty and the release of political prisoners and that the matter should be left for the interim government of national unity to decide. The ANC and its alliance partners as part of a government of national unity would support a general amnesty.

- An approach to the restructuring of the civil service (including the South African Police and the South African Defence Force) will have to take into account existing contracts and/or provides for retirement compensation.

The foregoing are the sunset clauses that Slovo proposed to get the process of negotiations to move forward. The proposals not only helped move the stalled negotiations forward but were also instrumental in the holding of the first elections on the 27th of April 1994. The government of national unity which was established just after the historic first democratic elections is a testimony to the plausibility of the sunset clause. The proposals made by Joe Slovo should be seen in the context of what he said in the rally (of 29 July 1990) which re-launched the SACP to the public where he stated that the party was ‘committed to peaceful negotiations’. It also has to be remembered, this treatise argues, that the South African Defence Force (statutory army of the South African state) and Umkhonto Wesizwe (the armed wing of the ANC) had never achieved comprehensive defeats of each other in the field of battle as they merely engaged in skirmishes and that a compromise was necessary in order to avoid dire consequences i.e. a racial war between the black people and the ruling white minority government. Furthermore, at the time of negotiations South Africa was undergoing a period of economic hardship on account of sanctions
and disinvestment. Some Western countries like Britain and the United States had imposed punitive economic sanctions on the country because of its apartheid policies. Auto companies like Ford, General Motors had pulled out of the country and invested in other parts of the world. Re-investment in the country was contingent on it finding a peaceful solution to its problems.

That GNU, as the interim government was called, had representatives from the National Party, African National Congress and IFP. Though the ANC had won the majority of votes it had to rule with the assistance of members from other parties like the NP and IFP as well. To illustrate this more clearly the first democratic government was led by Nelson Mandela as president with two deputies: Thabo Mbeki of the ANC and FW de Klerk of the National Party. The cabinet was comprised of members from the three parties which garnered most votes in the elections i.e. ANC, NP and the IFP. This arrangement went a long way towards preventing unnecessary warfare amongst South Africa’s racial groups and also confirmed the pragmatism and workability of Slovo’s sunset clause. This treatise argues that the GNU achieved some semblance of unity and with Nelson Mandela as the first president his mission was to foster reconciliation among all people. This chapter has shown the role that the SACP played in the CODESA negotiations. What has become evidently clear is that the party played quite a significant role in the talks though the National Party was wary of its presence and supposed influence on the ANC. It would seem rather ironic that a party whose presence in the CODESA negotiations was not as a single entity but as part of the ANC delegation actually saved the very negotiations it was not invited on. The SACP, by playing the role it played in CODESA through proposing the formation of a government of national unity reaffirmed its role as an intellectual and theoretical guide for the alliance. It is a role it also played in the drafting of the Freedom Charter in 1955 as members of the newly formed party played a sterling role in the drafting of the clauses and a role it would continue to play in the ANC during the exile years. The 1969 Morogoro conference of the ANC in Tanzania accepted whites as members of the organization (though not in leadership positions) by virtue of the influence of the party. The same conference also adopted the SACP’s thesis of a colonialism of a special type as part of its discussion in the analysis of the then South African situation.
CHAPTER FOUR

Continuing debates within the SACP on socialism

‘The influence of the South African Communist Party in the government and the ANC has grown since its general secretary Blade Nzimande joined the ministerial ranks’³.

On 12th July 2012 the SACP held elective its 13th elective conference in Empageni, KwaZulu-Natal. The party which held this conference was according to press reports at the time slowly gaining influence in both the government and the ANC. So much influence was the party said to wield that, as Matlala (2012) points out: ‘even ANC ministers now make presentations on their government activities to the party’s central committee’. Quite interestingly its secretary general Dr. Blade Nzimande was reported on radio news in July 2012 to have said that the party was ‘satisfied’ with the administration of President Jacob Zuma. A curious observer of South African politics on learning about the foregoing would be compelled to ask whether the SACP or its alliance partner the ANC has changed. The purpose of this chapter is to ascertain the influence that the party might be having within the government and the ANC. The chapter in conjunction with the previous chapters seeks to address the question of the prospects that the party has in the establishment of a socialist republic in South Africa. The previous chapters have dealt with the genesis of the party, its ideological evolution, overtures to the ICU and later the ANC and subsequent influence in the latter party, the role it played in the drafting of the Freedom Charter and in exile. This chapter will focus on the influence the party has within the ANC as a governing party since 1994.

Long before the historic 1994 non-racial democratic elections one leading SACP intellectual, Joe Slovo (1989) wrote a paper which had this existential question; Has Socialism Failed? In the paper which was written in 1989 at the time of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and many East European communist governments, Joe Slovo averred that socialism was ‘undoubtedly in the throes of a crisis greater than at any time since 1917’. Slovo further argued that ‘the mounting chronicle of crimes and distortions in the history of existing socialism, its economic failures and

³ Matlala, G. ‘SACP enjoys growing influence in government’ an article in Sunday Times: July 8 2012.

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the divide which developed between socialism and democracy, have raised doubts in the minds of many former supporters of the socialist cause as to whether socialism can work at all’. Slovo’s paper (1989) was an honest and lucid appraisal of the system of socialism in general and Communist led systems in particular. He identified tendencies which he cautioned against and which he defined as: ‘finding excuses for Stalinism i.e. the bureaucratic and autocratic style associated with the former Soviet leader Joseph Stalin’, ‘the blaming of Mikhail Gorbachev’, ‘pretending as if socialist criticism of capitalism and imperialism had stopped’. In his paper, Joe Slovo (1989) argued that ‘the fault lies with us not with socialism’. Though he acknowledged the ‘damage that has been wrought to the socialist cause by distortions’, he pledged that the SACP’s programme held firmly to a ‘post-apartheid state which will guarantee all citizens the basic rights and freedoms of organization, speech, thought, press, movement, residence, conscience and religion.’ Slovo’s paper, though critical of many of the excesses and distortions associated with socialism in Eastern Europe still saw the system as a solution to the world’s and by extension South Africa’s problems. In the light of Joe Slovo’s analysis of the crisis of socialism and communism one would have expected that the SACP would approach the first non-racial democratic elections in South Africa at least cautiously. However, the party which even at CODESA was on the side of the ANC and was not independently represented had long decided to support the ANC and not contest the elections as an independent entity. The year 1994 when the ANC won elections with the support of its alliance partners: COSATU and the SACP and became the ruling party will be our point of departure. In 1996 against the backdrop of the global economic crisis and paucity of foreign direct investment, the ANC led government abandoned the policy of Reconstruction and Development (RDP) and opted for the neo-liberal policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). The treatise will also argue that during Thabo Mbeki’s presidency SACP’s influence within the ANC and government ebbed significantly as the country moved to the right with regard to economic policies. It shall also be argued that within the ANC there is a tussle between those who are staunchly African nationalists and those who espouse communism and socialism. In a sense, as Jeremy Cronin (2007) a member of the SACP is quoted to have said, the ANC ‘has to be contested as it is contested space’. The SACP which made overtures to the ANC after it abandoned its association with the ICU of Clement Kadalie was not readily accepted by some Africanists within the ANC. It is a historical fact that the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) which broke away from the ANC in
1959, cited among its reasons for walking out of the ANC, the influence of the communists within the organization. During the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, who had renounced his communist beliefs some time earlier, the nationalists in the ANC were in ascendency. Gumede (2007) asserts that Thabo Mbeki resigned from the SACP’s central committee with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980s, and, after the ANC was unbanned, he allowed his membership of the party to lapse. However, the coming into power of Jacob Zuma in the ANC after the Polokwane conference in 2007 and his becoming president of the country after the 2009 general elections, the SACP and the left within the ANC have regained significant influence within government. David P Thomas (2007), writing in the Journal of Contemporary African Studies (May 2007) argues that the SACP leadership is of the view that in order to achieve socialism the party must work to ensure electoral dominance of the ANC. Thomas (2007: 251) further asserts that by supporting the ANC in elections, the SACP is rewarded with seats in national and provincial legislatures and that places it in the corridors of power with the hope of influencing the ANC government in policy making decisions. However, reality of the matter is that the post-apartheid relationship between the SACP and the ANC is fraught with contradictions and divisions within the former party itself around those working in government and those outside of government. Those SACP members in government are generally less critical of the ANC whereas those members not in government resent their colleagues in government as they view them as not accountable to the party, but simply do all that the ANC asks of them. R.W. Johnson (2004) in his book: South Africa: The First man, The Last Nation, asserts that many prominent SACP members were put in positions to implement ANC policy decisions against which they had voted at SACP meetings and without exception they took the ANC line. Let us take a closer look at what influence the SACP had within the ANC and government after the historic first democratic elections and the Mandela presidency. Johnson (2004: 212) posits the view that the collapse of communism had robbed the ANC of its programme, though it clung for a long time to the doctrine of nationalization of industries. The first economic policy that the recently unbanned ANC had was termed the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP though generally seen as the brainchild of COSATU had the influence of the SACP which worked primarily through the former. The RDP promised jobs for all and it became the cornerstone of the ANC’s election manifesto for the first non-racial democratic elections in 1994. However, as Johnson (2004) argues, no sooner was the ANC in power than it realized that after it
had inherited the homelands debt, having written off Namibia’s debt that South Africa owed an amount of R254 billion and interests for that amount were R50 billion a year. With such a huge debt to service the new government could not afford to channel money to the RDP projects it had in mind. Against the backdrop of the foregoing the ANC government was compelled to find ways of extricating itself out of the morass. An alternative economic policy was thus presented. The adoption of the policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) was preceded by two related events which somewhat shook the markets. According to Mark Gevisser (2007) who wrote a biography of Mbeki with the title: *Thabo Mbeki: the dream deferred*, a brushfire rumour in 1996 that then President Nelson Mandela was dying and the resignation of independent banker Chris Liebenberg as finance minister and his replacement by a relatively unknown Trevor Manuel, led to the dipping of the rand. Though Trevor Manuel, as Gevisser (2007: 663) argues, was a staunch believer in fiscal security and other market friendly economic policies, the markets saw in him a black man and former revolutionary and investors panicked. Between January and May 1996 the rand had lost 30% of its value and this had a deleterious effect on South Africa’s reserves. Manuel came into contact with the policy of GEAR in February when he assumed office and the policy was spearheaded by Thabo Mbeki the previous year. Gumede (2007) in his book: *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC*, argues that GEAR was a dramatic departure from the previous policy of RDP and Mbeki and those at the centre of the ANC had to have it adopted quickly by the ANC and prevent the left from trying to dilute it. Marais confirms that GEAR was drawn up in secretive conditions and was released after perfunctory briefings of a few top ranking ANC, SACP and COSATU figures who were shown section headings. Though Mandela, who was still president in 1996, defended the policy of GEAR he also acknowledged the fact that he had no hand in its formulation.

In explaining the policy, Joel Netshitenze, an SACP member who also headed Government Communication and Information Services (GCIS), said it was a ‘structural adjustment policy, self-imposed, to stabilize the macroeconomic situation to deal with the realities of an unmanageable budget deficit, high interest rates and weak local and foreign investor confidence. It would seem rather ironic for a member of the SACP to be seen to be supporting a neo-liberal economic policy. The main thrust of GEAR as Gumede (2007: 106)) explains was: ‘greater industrial competitiveness, a tighter fiscal stance, moderation of wage increases, accelerated public investment, efficient service delivery and a major expansion of private investment are
integral aspects of the strategy. An exchange rate policy consistent with improved international competitiveness, responsible monetary policies and targeted industrial incentives characterizes the new policy environment. A strong export performance underpins the macro-economic sustainability of the growth path. Marais (2011:113) argues that at the root GEAR was an endeavor to endear South Africa to private capital by among other things:

- Reducing the deficit, limiting debt service obligations and countering inflation by restricting state expenditure.
- Liberalising financial controls and eventually removing all obstacles to the free flow of capital.
- Privatising ‘non-essential’ state enterprises and partially privatizing other state run utilities.
- Liberalising the trade regime by drastically reducing most tariffs and other forms of protection.
- Keeping the exchange stable and at a competitive level.
- Adding infrastructure to address service deficiencies and backlogs
- Seeking wage restraint from organized workers and introducing regulated flexibility into the labour market.

The clause on privatizing ‘non-essential’ state enterprises and partially privatizing other state run utilities would evidently set the government and the SACP on a collision course. Most socialist parties and the SACP is no exception, believe in the use of state assets for the benefit of society as a whole, and consequently privatization is taboo to them. Nationalisation of state owned assets constitutes a fundamental pillar in any socialist party’s basic tenets. The Freedom Charter which was drawn up in 1955 and in which the newly formed SACP played a significant role has a clause which states that ‘the people shall share in the country’s wealth. The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people. As Karis and Carter (1977) assert the Freedom Charter stipulated that the mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole’.
The drafters of the Freedom Charter with the foregoing clause made their intentions clear with regard to redistribution and nationalization. In adopting the policy of GEAR which unashamedly advocated privatisation, this treatise argues, the ANC was somewhat embarking whether wittingly or unwittingly on a radical departure from its basic document: the Freedom Charter and the policy of GEAR could be said to have shown disregard for the clause on nationalization through its advocacy of privatisation. Privatisation which the state wanted to implement as part of the policy of GEAR was aimed at South Africa’s big four state entities: defence firm Denel, telecoms utility Telkom, power utility Eskom and transport group Transnet as Gumede (2007) argues. The left wing, as Gumede (2007: 109) reserved its harshest criticism for the proposals on reduction of the budget deficit and the suggested downsizing of the public service. What was the party’s reaction to the policy of GEAR? The party’s reaction to the adoption of GEAR varied between those members who were in government and those who were not in government. For those SACP members in government by virtue of seats awarded to them by the ANC for their support in elections, GEAR created a contradictory situation for them. David P. Thomas (2007) cites the case of a party member from Gauteng who is active in both the SACP and government as arguing thus: ‘As a member of the ANC I understand GEAR and in fact I even defend it as a member of the ANC. But as a member of the SACP I do exactly the opposite, I question it. I say: to what extent is this policy advancing the interests of the working class? Thomas (2007: 255) posits the opinion that the case of supporting and opposing GEAR simultaneously illustrates potential contradictions and is conundrum for the party. Johnson (2004) argues that the left – especially COSATU and the SACP-were opposed to GEAR from the outset. Vishwas Satgar, writing in Sean Jacobs and Richard Calland (Eds) (2002): Thabo Mbeki’s World: the politics and ideology of the South African President: confirm Johnson (2004) argument in his claim that the SACP maintained a firm and principled stand against GEAR and struggled consistently alongside workers in the process. Satgar as a member of the SACP unlike Thomas (2007) does not distinguish between those members of the party who opposed GEAR as being outside government and those who had to support it as ANC members of parliament in the legislature. It could be that Satgar would like to project a semblance of unity in the party’s opposition to GEAR. Johnson (2004) highlights the quandary that the SACP found itself as he states that Mbeki adroitly entrusted key parts of GEAR’s implementation to SACP ministers like Alec Erwin ( who headed the ministry of Trade and Industry) and Jeff Radebe who was at the time
minister of Public Enterprises. Why would Mbeki who had renounced his Marxist beliefs opt for avid Marxist to punt his neo-liberal economic policies? Was it to test their loyalty or to force the SACP to stay or renounce the Tripartite Alliance? Whatever his intentions were it was during his tenure that strains in the alliance started showing. William Mervin Gumede (2007) in his book about Thabo Mbeki’s presidency: *Thabo Mbeki and the battle for the soul of the ANC*, has this to say in illustrating the strained relations in the tripartite alliance during Mbeki’s tenure:

- “Pity the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party. They are like hopeless men and women playing the Lotto, praying that each new draw will see them win the jackpot. But the tripartite alliance’s senior partner, the ANC, shows no sign of abandoning its relentless pursuit of orthodox economic policies, and Thabo Mbeki expects nothing less from COSATU and the SACP than to maintain control over the restless masses and disgruntled workers. He will tolerate token campaigns for more jobs or rhetoric against greedy capitalists, but nothing more. …COSATU and the SACP are mere shadows of their former powerful selves”.

The foregoing citation succinctly sums up the influence the SACP had in the ANC and government during the presidency of Nelson Mandela. Indeed, staunch members of the party would find cause to argue against Gumede’s assertion that the party is a shadow of its former self. Opting for a neo-liberal policy by the ANC which was diametrically opposed to the basic tenets of communism which the SACP advocated should have caused the latter to be wary of ANC’s economic trajectory and concern for uplifting the lot of the poor. However, as Martin Legassick (2007) points out in his book *Towards Socialist Democracy*, just days before the adoption of the policy SACP leaders Jeremy Cronin and Raymond Suttner claimed that the centre of gravity of South African politics was well to the left. How these two prominent members of the party could have reached such a conclusion is somewhat baffling. Adoption of GEAR by the ANC led government under the auspices of Thabo Mbeki drove a wedge in the tripartite alliance so much that Mbeki in 1996 suggested that as Richard and Calland (2002) point out ‘the alliance was not cast in stone’. The implication in the foregoing citation which is attributed to former president Thabo Mbeki is that he could not care less even if the alliance were to disintegrate. It could be that he may have forgotten that the support of both COSATU and the SACP was crucial to any leader of the ANC who wanted to continue holding the reins in the ANC. Members of both organisations are invariably members of the ANC and vote in their local branches of the latter for their choices for leadership of their senior alliance partner. About that
time some members of the SACP and COSATU referred to all the drafters of GEAR and Mbeki as the ‘Class of 96’. This reference was used pejoratively to generally underscore the parties’ vehement opposition to GEAR. Patrick Bond (2004) in his book: *Talk Left Walk Right: South Africa’s Frustrated Global Reforms*, argues that talking left while oppressing the poor and the working-class meant that Mbeki’s project earned the epithet of ‘Zanufication’ within the alliance. Zanufication is a term derived from the name of the party that won elections that ushered in an independent Zimbabwe in April 1980: Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU Patriotic Front). This party, though adored by many a Zimbabwean in the early 1980s does not now enjoy the overwhelming support among some Zimbabwean citizens it used to enjoy. Bond (2004: 179) articulates the view that ZANU is engaged in radical sounding rhetoric while actively repressing human rights. The accusation that there was Zanufication within the alliance got its advocate in the person of Jeremy Cronin severely reprimanded. The battle lines were drawn between the components of the alliance as both COSATU and the SACP would engage in several marches and strikes which were meant to vent their frustration against GEAR. One of these was a mass strike which COSATU organized against privatization in 2001 which coincided with the World Conference against Racism which was going to be held in Durban. Publicly the ANC voiced its opposition to the timing of the strike not on the strike per se. However at an ANC national executive committee meeting there was allusion to an ‘ultra- left and immature leadership tendency’ at the helm of the alliance partners. The criticism was directed at the both COSATU and the SACP for their opposition to the policy of GEAR. As Jacobs and Calland (Eds) (2002: 167) explain the criticism prompted a public spat of attacks and counterattacks among leaders of COSATU and the SACP on the one hand, and certain leaders of the ANC on the other. What would seem rather odd was when in 2002 some civil society organizations announced their intention to protest against the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD); the SACP greeted such announcements as ‘infantile’ and ‘irresponsible’. One would not have expected a party which is supposedly progressive to dismiss its counterparts, who wanted to march against neo-liberal forces whose policies militate against sustainable development, as ‘infantile and irresponsible’. Nonetheless, the ANC in its criticism of the parties responsible for the protest lumped them all together in one ball of condemnation and issued a harsh statement which claimed that:
‘...loose international coalitions of ‘left’ groups opposed to neoliberalism gradually emerged. This coalition has launched an offensive against the ANC and our government accusing them of implementing an anti-popular, neoliberal programme in our country. Interestingly, a significant number of the leaders of this anti-ANC offensive in our country are foreigners. The international coalition engaged in this struggle describes itself variously as communist, socialists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicates. In our country, it is represented by important factions in the SACP and COSATU, as well as the Anti-Privatisation Forum, the local chapter of Jubilee 2000, and other groups and individuals. Together with their international allies, they have determined that the ANC and our government represent the subjective factor in the contemporary expression of the capitalist mode of production in our country...there is no substance whatsoever to this statement’.

What the foregoing statement evinces was the sense of paranoia that the ANC had as it viewed any opposition against its objectionable policies as ‘offensive against the ANC and our government’. This was not the only attack on the left forces by the ANC. Martin Plaut and Paul Holden (2012: 44) in their 2012 book: Who rules South Africa? Pulling the strings in the battle for power, describe a letter that Mbeki had written in 1994 which surfaced at the ANC’s December national conference where he accused the left forces of:

- Encouraging the SACP to publicly project itself as the ‘left conscience’ which would fight for the loyalty of the ANC in the cause of the working people, against an ANC leadership which is inclined to over-compromise with the forces of bourgeois reformism;

- Inciting the SACP to use its independent structures as a Party to carry out such a campaign while also encouraging the members of the SACP within the ANC to form themselves into an organized faction to pursue the same objective;

- Encouraging the constitution of an ultra-left political formation which would, itself, challenge the policies and revolutionary credentials of the SACP, to force the latter to intensify its offensive to ‘rectify the line’ within the ANC.

Of course the letter also made mention of COSATU as part of the campaign to have a ‘destructive influence on government’. What the letter undoubtedly portrays is the fact that there was hardly any affinity between former president Mbeki and the left forces. Plaut and Holden (2012: 45) argue that it was evident that Mbeki did not trust those he considered to be destructive influences within the movement and was determined to prevent them from having even a token
influence on government. It has been shown that during the tenure of former president Mbeki the SACP did not have the kind of influence it would have hoped to have. That being the case the puzzling question would be: did the SACP, COSATU and other left forces have valid reasons for vehemently opposing the policy of GEAR? Was the policy as bad and ineffective as it was made out to be? Legassick (2007) seems to argue that GEAR did not achieve some of its stated objectives: debt (which the policy was supposed to reduce) was in 2004 50% of the Gross Domestic Product of the country and its servicing costs were 14% of the 2003/4 budget, 13.2% of the 2004/5 budget and 12.7% of the 2005/6 budget. GEAR was advocated on the basis that the monies accrued from the sale of state entities would be released for infrastructure spending it would seem that intention was not necessarily achieved. Legassick (2007: 461) contends that the 30% stake in Telkom that was bought by Texan and Malaysian capitalists made communication costs in South Africa among the highest in the world and that is by no means to the benefit to the people. He further explains that whereas in 1994 34% of the population had telephone landlines that percentage gradually decreased to 32% in 1997 and 27% in 2002 and out 13 million households connected to fixed-line telephones after 1994 10 million of those households were disconnected. Most poor people who can afford a mobile phone opt for it instead of a fixed-line which has high rental costs. Telkom which was partly privatized cut down its workforce from 64 000 to 24 000. In the field of transportation where there were partial privatisations, the toll roads which were established were so expensive as to be unaffordable to the poor and the electricity parastatal ESKOM just like Telkom made redundant 30 000 workers in the 1990s in preparation for privatization. Nigel C. Gibson (2011) in his book: Fanonian Practices in South Africa: from Steve Biko to Abahlali Basemjondolo, confirms the points that have been raised by Legassick (2007) in his book about the failure of GEAR to live up to its expectations. Gibson (2011) claims that behind the glitz and sheen of the new South Africa lurks a quite different reality that is expressed in data collected by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. Gibson (2011: 73) cites the following statistics to bolster his argument.

- South Africa had an average GDP per capita of $9 757 in 2007 (on par with Brazil) but its Development Index ranks just below Namibia which has a GDP which is below $5 200.
• South Africa’s life expectancy is just below that of Uganda which has per capita GDP of $1,059.

• Since the end of apartheid, the proportion of people living in poverty in the country has not changed significantly.

• Many households have sunk deeper into poverty and the gap between rich and poor has widened, with the number of people living on less than $1 a day has doubled from two million in 1994 to four million in 2006.

• Over a third of children among the poorest 40% of the population suffer chronic malnutrition.

• Twenty percent of urban households have no electricity, 25% have no running water and a third have no flush toilet.

• Life expectancy dropped from 48.4 years in 2003 to 43.3 in 2005.

• South Africa is one of only a dozen nations worldwide where child mortality has risen since 1990.

These are indeed chilling statistics and they are meant to show that South Africa’s choice of neo-liberal economic policies was not necessarily benefitting the country. As the statistic show instead of the country progressing by virtue of these policies, it was regressing. It has also been shown that the SACP was at the time unable to influence ANC policy towards the direction of socialism/communism or even social democratic reforms. Gumede (2007) articulates the view that even as GEAR was failing to deliver jobs and growth, Mbeki’s strategy was to continue holding out the promise that delivery was just around the corner. In early 2006 Mbeki and his team launched a new economic strategy called Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) to improve on the weaknesses of GEAR. The introduction of this new economic strategy could have been, this treatise argues, a tacit acknowledgement that GEAR was a fiasco. With the introduction of ASGISA the then Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel said that the policy was the next stage of the challenge and that, as Gumede (2007: 113) argues, the policy was aimed at raising growth to the level of East Asian nations. ASGISA was also aimed at
spreading growth equitably in order to eradicate poverty and slash unemployment. The alliance partners, according to Gumede (2007: 113), shared the goal of creating a developmental state along the lines of successful East Asian tigers in South Africa but had different views over what policies to apply, the sequence and timing of introduction to make the vision a reality. The ANC was wedded to neo-liberal economic policies which it believed would generate growth and create employment. For their part, the SACP and COSATU desired state intervention in the economy and a system which would eradicate poverty and generate employment.

With such diverse viewpoints on the appropriate economic policy to pursue in South Africa, one would think that it is cause enough for the SACP to go it alone and contest elections as an independent party. Even at a time when relations between alliance partners in general and between the ANC and SACP in particular were severely strained, the SACP scoffed at the idea of going it alone and insisted on remaining part of the alliance.

In a special national congress that the SACP held in Durban in April 2005 the question of the party going it alone and contesting elections in their own right came up. Consequently, a commission was set up to investigate the SACP’s relationship with the ANC in the current period and into the future and the question of whether the party should consider contesting elections in its own right. The continuing tensions in the alliance at the time caused the SACP to do some introspection and ascertain whether it was still feasible and viable for it to remain in the alliance. Still the party never saw any cogent reason to go it alone instead its secretary general, Blade Nzimande (2006) stated in Bua Komanisi that ‘the SACP in our Special National Congress of July 2005 reaffirmed our commitment to a national democratic struggle, to the inextricable linkage between the NDR (national democratic revolution) and the imperative of ‘building socialism now’. The paper also stated that ‘we also reaffirmed our commitment to the ANC-led alliance, while asserting the imperative of an independent party of the working class capable of building a cadre of communists and of leading working class and popular mass-based struggles on the ground. This treatise would argue that reaffirming a commitment to the alliance and asserting the imperative of an independent party is a contradiction. The SACP was at the time conscious of the fact that its senior alliance partner the ANC was pursuing neo-liberal economic policies despite protestations from the former. By opting to take the country on a neo-liberal economic trajectory, this treatise argues, the ANC evinced that it was not influenced at all by its
alliance partner. Nzimande (2006: 31) wrote that the SACP needed to discuss and debate the following as part of the commission mandated by the special national congress:

- How do we interpret the current turmoil within the ANC and its alliance-is it a manifestation of the growing crisis and internal contradictions of the 1996 class project?
- If so, what are the underlying reasons for this crisis?
- How should the party (i.e. SACP) intervene tactically and strategically into this conjuncture?
- Should we seek to engage the widest range of ANC forces, presenting a unifying but left strategic perspective for emerging collectively from the crisis?
- Should we align ourselves with some forces within the ANC against others?
- Are the current structures of the Alliance appropriate? Is there the possibility of re-defining them, and if so, what priorities should we have?
- Should we actively back a specific presidential candidate in 2007 and 2009?
- What is the balance of effort that our cadres should devote to the Party itself, and to the ANC? Is there merit in calling on communists cadres to prioritise the struggle to rebuild a mass-based ANC in 2006? Or should we rather prioritise consolidating the SACP-while agreeing that these are not mechanical alternatives.
- What should the party’s medium to longer-term perspective be on electoral participation?

The foregoing questions though meant as part of an ongoing discussion within the SACP did show concern on the party as it had declining influence within the ANC. Though the questions show the concern of the SACP about the way the economy was moving, the party still remained in the alliance and the option of contesting as an independent party was not adopted. In the 2007 Polokwane congress it supported the election of Jacob Zuma as president of the ANC and the country. We shall explore about two of the questions for the purposes of arguing certain points. These questions are: the backing of a specific presidential candidate in 2007 and 2009 and the party’s medium to long term perspective on electoral participation.
The year 2007 was going to be the ANC’s national conference in Polokwane the province of Limpopo and 2009 was the year that national elections were to be held. Some explanation leading to these two events is mandatory. When President Thabo Mbeki took over from President Nelson Mandela when the latter retired after his term ended, his deputy was Jacob Zuma. In essence Mbeki was president of the ANC and the country and Zuma was his deputy for both the ANC and the country. When the ANC won the first non-racial elections in 1994 Jacob Zuma was part of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature as a Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Economic Affairs. During this time he befriended a businessman Shabir Shaik who was also a member of the ANC. Shaik according to press reports assisted Jacob Zuma in a number of ways: with money for the washing of his car, supporting some of his children with their education. In 1994 the South African Ministry of Defence wanted to buy some high tech military equipment from Germany as it wanted to upgrade army equipment. As press reports put it Shaik was one of the bidders who were granted tenders for the purchase of the German frigates. The manner of his getting the tender was discovered to be because of his links with Zuma. As a matter of fact it was alleged that Zuma may have used his influence to get Shaik the tender. Shabir Shaik was subsequently arrested and was charged for corruption. When the judge in the trial found him guilty the media was already accusing Zuma of corruption. In 2005 when Shaik was found guilty and was about to be sentenced, President Mbeki took the unusual step of dismissing Zuma as deputy president of the country. Mbeki was led to believe that the judge Hillary Squires who convicted Shaik had said that there was ‘a generally corrupt relationship between the deputy president and Shabir Shaik’. It later transpired that the judge had never uttered such words and it was only the media which erroneously attributed such words to him. It was too late as Zuma had already been shown the door. The dismissal of Zuma from the cabinet added to the tensions that already existed within the tripartite alliance. There was later tension between president Mbeki and his former deputy. The ANC was subsequently riven into factions supporting Mbeki on the one hand and Zuma on the other and these were aptly named Zuma faction and Mbeki faction. Plaut and Holden (2012) assert that at the height of the Zuma/Mbeki battle even intelligence services were arrayed by one side against the other. A certain report, according to Plaut and Holden (2012: 139) from the intelligence services alleged that Zuma’s presidential ambitions were supported by certain individuals in South Africa and the rest of the African continent. The Browse Mole report, as this document came to be called, alleged that
Jacob Zuma had travelled to Libya at least three times and met senior Libyan figures after he was introduced to them by the secretary general of the SACP Blade Nzimande. The mention and involvement of Nzimande in the Mbeki/Zuma saga implied that the SACP had taken sides and it was on the side of Zuma. Susan Booysen (2011) in her book *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power* argues that in the battle for the leadership of the ANC the SACP was backing Jacob Zuma as potential guarantor of its continuous hold on the position of ANC secretary general. The position of ANC secretary general was and is still held by Gwede Mantashe who was at the time a chairperson of the SACP. After the July 2012 SACP congress held in Empangeni, Gwede Mantashe quit his post as chairperson of the SACP to concentrate on his duty as secretary of the ANC. At the Polokwane conference in Limpopo in 2007 Zuma edged out Mbeki as leader of the ANC. Marais (2011) argues that COSATU and the SACP reckoned that Zuma would enable them to pry the ANC from Mbeki’s grip and strengthen their waning influence on the transition. Booysen (2011) in *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power* concurs with Marais (2011) by arguing that the rise of Zuma provided COSATU and SACP with the vehicle to mobilise for influence. A year later in September 2008, according to Chikane (2012) the ‘NEC (of the ANC) decided to recall Mbeki as president of the country’. Daniel et al (2011) argue that the intent of the Zuma presidency, according to COSATU and the SACP, both of which played vital roles in bringing about its political ascendency, was to create a government that would be less remote, more responsive and closer to the people, and which would, above all, implement a shift in economic policy that would create more jobs and be more pro-poor. The Zuma government in 2010 adopted a new economic policy which seemed to be a shift from the much maligned GEAR that was associated with Mbeki and his class of 96. This policy, which was called the New Growth Path though it is not clear how much influence the SACP has had in its conceptualization and formulation. The policy proposes a new growth model which has the aim of decent work as a long term goal which can come about through short term participation by the unemployed in created opportunities for work that will help in developing their skills and discipline for promised decent work sometime in the future. The opportunities the policy proposes include short-term contract jobs provided through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), and new lower paying jobs targeted at youth to be created through subsidies provided to the private sector, as well as Community Works Programmes (CWP) through which state funds will provide low-paying work.
opportunities for a hundred days a year per person for the unemployed members of targeted communities. With the ascension of Jacob Zuma to power the SACP got closer to government than it had before. Stanley Uys and Paul Trewhela (2009) writing in the online publication Politicsweb in asked the question: is South Africa headed for a left wing, state-controlled economy, because the orthodox market oriented economy that Thabo Mbeki set in stone in previous government has failed to reduce black poverty? This question was asked by the authors after no less than eight members and former members of the SACP were appointed as part of President Jacob Zuma’s cabinet. The authors (2009) also highlighted the fact that the economic ministries were ‘grouped under active or one-time communists, so that transformation of the economy can begin’. Blade Nzimande, the SACP general secretary was appointed by President Jacob Zuma in his cabinet as minister of higher education. Nzimande’s appointment to Cabinet got the party criticism from its alliance partner; COSATU and other affiliates of the trade union federation. According to Mkokeli (2011) SACP was criticized for being stuck on Zuma and having a disproportionate influence on the ANC and the government. Besides Blade Nzimande other SACP members in government are Jeremy Cronin, deputy secretary general of the SACP, Jeff Radebe Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development, and Rob Davies Minister of Trade and Industry. Below will be a table (which is designed by the author from information gleaned from politicsweb.co.za) to show the active members of the SACP and those who are former members of the party who are in President Jacob Zuma’s cabinet:
**Figure A. List of SACP members who are in President Jacob Zuma’s cabinet since 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>POSITION IN SACP</th>
<th>POSITION IN THE CABINET</th>
<th>POSSIBILITY OF INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC POLICY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Minister Pravin Gordhan</td>
<td>Worked in the SACP underground</td>
<td>Minister of Finance</td>
<td>High possibility: as he deals with a key ministry which determines the economic trajectory of the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Minister Ebrahim Patel</td>
<td>Ardent socialist according to politicsweb</td>
<td>Minister of Economic Development</td>
<td>Very high. His department formulates policies for the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Finance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Minister Rob Davies</td>
<td>Member of the Central Committee of the SACP</td>
<td>Minister of Trade and Industry</td>
<td>High. Though he depends for policy on Patel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Blade Nzimande</td>
<td>Secretary General of the SACP</td>
<td>Minister of Higher Education</td>
<td>Not much in terms of economic policy but very much in terms of higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Yunus Carim</td>
<td>Member of the</td>
<td>Minister of Co-</td>
<td>Not much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central Committee of the SACP and the Politburo</td>
<td>operative Government &amp; Traditional Affairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6. | Jeremy Cronin | Deputy Secretary General of the SACP | *Deputy Minister of Transport
* = has been moved to the Department of Correctional Services as deputy minister | Not much |
| 7. | Jeff Radebe | Member of the Central Committee of the SACP | Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development | Not much |
| 8. | Siphiwe Nyanda | Member of the SACP | +Minister of Communications
+= Minister Nyanda has since been dismissed by President Zuma | Not much |
| 9. | #Gwede Mantashe
#= has never been a member of the cabinet | Former chairperson and member of the SACP | No position in cabinet but Secretary General of the ANC | Though not in Cabinet, Mantashe occupies an influential position as ministers are accountable to the ANC and it is the ANC which decides policy |
The influence of these ministers in government economic policy can be said to be somewhat noticeable as the economic trajectory is not as rightward as it was during the time of the predecessor of President Zuma, Thabo Mbeki. President Zuma’s government established a National Planning Committee in 2009 which comprised a variety of individuals from the private sector, government and academic sector whose task is to seek a workable economic solution to address unemployment, inequality and poverty. To that end the NPC released a diagnostic report the previous year and a National Development Plan in the middle of this year.

Some ministers who are members of the SACP have not done well in President Zuma’s cabinet. This assertion is borne by the fact that the Ministry of Transport of which Jeremy Cronin was a deputy minister came with the idea of e-tolls which would have caused motorists to pay a lot of money. The e-tolls which were installed in the Gauteng province were opposed by COSATU as it felt that they would affect consumers severely. Ironically, Blade Nzimande, secretary general of the SACP and part of the cabinet, pledged to march with COSATU in opposition to the e-tolls. The irony is, as this treatise argues, in the fact that he is part of the very government that passed the e-toll legislation and he could well have opposed the legislation within the cabinet instead of marching. Another fact that has to be highlighted is the fact that the department under whose auspices the e-tolls were was co-led by a member of the SACP, Jeremy Cronin. Jeremy Cronin has subsequently been shifted from the ministry of transport to correctional services. The critics of the party also pointed out that the party was then a ‘shell’ because the most senior leader is busy with government matters. The writer of the article argued that Nzimande’s cabinet work ‘puts him at the centre of government policy discussions, and contributing from within, he may be in a better position than his COSATU counterpart, Zwelinzima Vavi’. The article went on to state that under the leadership of Nzimande the department of higher education was implementing a resolution of the alliance to provide free education up to final year of university. One can see that with the administration of Zuma the SACP has steadily gained influence and seems to be contributing in policy discussions. However, what seemed rather odd was Nzimande’s argument as quoted in the article that the SACP was a ‘political party not an NGO we are interested in power, we are interested in government’. That statement would beg the
question as to why the party cannot go it alone and contest elections as an independent political party.

The SACP just before its 13th national elective conference in July 2012 held at eMpageni in KwaZulu-Natal released a discussion document it titled: The South African Road to Socialism: ‘Advance and deepen working class Power and Hegemony in all key sites of the struggle’. The plan as the SACP stated was a draft political programme of the party covering the period from 2012 to 2017. In essence the programme constituted the Five year plan of the party. In chapter two of the document which addresses the need for socialism the document states: Never before in history has the need for a different, a humane world based on the socialist value of putting social needs before private profits been more desperately required. It has to be noted that the discussion document came against the backdrop of the continuing global economic crisis. With that background in mind the party unashamedly advocated the pursuit of socialism as an alternative to capitalism which it saw as in crisis. The document stated that: Today, a single world economy is dominated by a tiny minority of exceedingly powerful transnational corporations, buttressed by imperialist state power. This was a critique of capitalism and it went on to show the impact of capitalism on the destruction of the environment. The question of the party contesting elections as an independent party also cropped up but no resolution was taken in the conference about it. Regarding the national democratic revolution the document stated that: The NDR is not a “stage” in which capitalism has to be “completed” (or merely “managed according to its own internal logic”). The NDR is a struggle to overcome deep seated and persistent racialist poverty and inequality in society. What the foregoing citation evinces is that though the SACP is still linked with the ANC which pursues neo-liberal economic policies it still harbours the hope of establishing a socialist republic in the country. It argues that the ‘NDR requires a strong state’. This would seem to justify the continued insistence of the SACP to work within the ANC rather than contesting elections as an independent party.

This chapter has shown that with the coming to power of President Jacob Zuma to power, the SACP has steadily gained influence in determining the direction of government’s economic policy. Unlike Mbeki, who was a trained economist and had renounced communism and socialism, President Zuma’s economic ideology is not that much clear. It would be argued that the fact the president has not been adamant in repudiating communism and socialism, has given
the SACP an opportunity to advance its policies. This treatise argues that the establishment of the NPC and its release of a diagnostic plan and the National Development Plan have implied a gradual move away from the neo-liberal policy of GEAR. Slowly but surely President Zuma’s administration is gravitating towards social democratic policies. This treatise argues that the shift is due to no small part to the role and influence of the SACP members in government and in cabinet. Though some ministers who are also members of the SACP are not in the economic cluster, their influence in advocating an equitable and just society based on Marxist principles which they espouse cannot be doubted.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

‘The SACP is now reduced to the role of mollifying increasingly desperate and restless poor and working people who bear the brunt of post-apartheid capitalism.’ Mazibuko K. Jara

At the beginning of September 2012 a conference of socialist and communist organizations was held in Cape Town. The conference, which also included civic organizations, was held against the backdrop of the continuing global financial crisis affecting primarily West European countries like Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece. One of the aims of the conference was to explore alternative economic models which could alleviate the plight of the poor in the face of the continuing crisis of capitalism. It would seem that with the system of capitalism undergoing this current crisis, some West European countries like Greece are considering reverting to socialism as an alternative to addressing pressing social needs. Just before the conference in Cape Town, the SACP had earlier released its draft political programme for 2012-2017 which was titled ‘The South African Road to Socialism’ in preparation for its elective congress which was held in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in July. In the draft programme the SACP, expressing criticism of the current global financial crisis, averred that: ‘never before in history has the need for a different, a humane world based on the socialist value of putting social needs before private profits been more desperately required’.4

The aim of this chapter is to provide a summation and bring to a conclusion the thesis about the SACP and the prospects of establishing a socialist republic in South Africa from the Freedom Charter to the present. The first chapter introduced the topic and traced the genesis of the party whereas succeeding chapters outlined its role in the formulation of the Freedom Charter, formation of the ANC’s liberation army: Umkhonto Wesizwe, the role the party played within the ANC during the exile years, CODESA and in post-apartheid South Africa. This dissertation has shown that from the outset when the party forged closer links with the ANC in the early part of the twentieth century it had the express purpose of establishing a socialist republic in South Africa. The ANC, according to the two stage theory of revolution the party espoused, would lead

the first stage of attaining national liberation and subsequently the party would assume the reins of power and establish a socialist republic.

As is shown in this dissertation, the collapse of Soviet Russia and East European communism in 1989 necessitated a reappraisal of the SACP’s priorities as it also could not rely on funding and financial support from Soviet Russia. The party has not repudiated its belief on the efficacy of socialism as an alternative economic system to capitalism but has acknowledged that excesses of former USSR leader Joseph Stalin and the lack of democracy in most communist ruled states is blight to the system. After the unbanning of erstwhile banned political parties in 1990, the party though operating as an independent entity was part of the ANC negotiating team at the CODESA talks. It might be a matter of conjecture as to how the negotiations could have panned out had Joe Slovo, a secretary general of the SACP, not proposed what have been termed ‘sunset clauses’ to break the deadlock. In the ensuing negotiations the SACP did not contest as a single party it conveniently supported its alliance partner the ANC.

Since the first democratic government in 1994 the party has invariably had members of its own as part of either the cabinet or as ordinary members of parliament like the current secretary of the Young Communist league (an autonomous youth body of the SACP) Buti Manamela. Being part of government as an ANC parliamentarian, this dissertation has argued, has hampered the party from advancing its own programme. The ANC is a party of people with diverse opinions ranging from capitalists, African nationalists, gender activists, social democrats and communists. The SACP with its aim of establishing a socialist republic in South Africa has had to contest space with these diverse groups for influence. In its quest to influence the ANC and subsequently change the country into a socialist republic, the SACP has been affected by both endogenous and exogenous factors. Those factors have been amply outlined in this dissertation.

With the current global conjuncture and the recent conference of communist and socialist organizations in Cape Town, it would seem that the SACP’s dream of attaining a socialist republic in South Africa could be realizable. However, this dissertation will argue in its conclusion that three factors militate against the party’s purpose of attaining a socialist republic in South Africa and they are: its continued refusal to contest elections alone as an independent party, the demise of communism in Soviet Russia and the current global financial crisis. Each of these factors will be explored further.
Aligning itself with the ANC as part of government could be tactically correct for the SACP but strategically wrong in terms of it achieving its objectives. Nzimande (2005: 20) in a discussion paper for the Central Committee of the party, asserted that with some of its members in cabinet and in provincial legislatures the SACP was ‘partly at least in power’. This dissertation has argued that the SACP may be ‘partly at least in power’ it has found its task of establishing a socialist republic onerous because it is beholden to the ANC for the votes that have got it into power. In essence as part of an alliance with the ANC and with the latter being the senior partner the SACP has been compelled to conform by the policies of its senior alliance partner. Some SACP members who are also part of cabinet have had little or no impact in influencing the rightward trajectory of the government’s economic policies since 1996. Indeed the party has consistently objected to the neo-liberal economic policies of the state it is part of. At best its objections have been conveniently ignored and at worst they have fuelled tensions between it and its senior alliance partner. Still the party does not see the wisdom of contesting elections as an independent party. Though the prospect of contesting elections as an independent party has come up in its congresses a resolution has never been taken to follow it through. Since the SACP does not enjoy popular mass support like the ANC might imply that the party could not get as many votes as the latter were it to go it alone.

The demise of communism in Soviet Russia and several East European countries has indirectly affected the SACP. Whereas in the early 1980s most people particularly in Africa and the rest of the Third World countries were enchanted with the ideology of communism and socialism, the reality is now different. Some African countries like Tanzania and Zambia which experimented with socialist ideas at the attainment of their independence had to abandon their economic policies and be subject to the austere structural adjustment measures of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. This was after their economies were in crisis and they could no longer rely on support from Soviet Russia. When the first democratic elections were held in 1994 it was always going to be difficult for the party to convince voters to vote for the establishment of a socialist republic with the collapse of the Soviet Union still fresh in their minds. About two countries in the world still cling to the Soviet model of communism and they
are Cuba and the People’s Republic of China though the latter’s economic policy is not pure unadulterated communism.

The current global financial crisis has indeed shown some of the disadvantages of the system of capitalism. The party in its 2012 document: *The South African Road to Socialism: Draft Political Programme 2012-2017* argues that ‘the global capitalist system as we know it is approaching a series of systemic, perhaps conclusive limitations’. The dissertation will argue that the current global financial crisis, though it shows the vices of capitalism, does not necessarily imply the virtues of socialism. World history has shown that capitalism has a way of regenerating itself. In the early 1930s the system of capitalism underwent its worst crisis when the United States of America was affected by the Great Depression. The Great Depression caused a ripple effect as it affected most European countries whose economies had been badly affected by the First World War especially Germany. The economies of these nations recovered without them experimenting with socialism. Germany now, ironically, is the largest economy in Europe and has been bailing out some of the countries which have been affected by the current global financial crisis.

Nzimande (2005) argued that ‘domestic, but above all the global, balance of forces is such that the realization of a socialist South Africa is, in all probability, still a considerable distance away. But the difficulty of achieving a socialist South Africa does not make capitalism any more attractive or any less exploitative’. The foregoing shows that the SACP is in a quandary as it can perceive that the establishment of a socialist republic is a long way off but it is still aligned with a party that pursues neo-liberal policies which the former still finds not ‘attractive’.
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