

I believe it is desirable for the SACP to actually test, democratically, its support on the ground. We need to look at various possible formulas. For instance, multi-member constituencies as in the Irish system'.

SACP Political Bureau and ANC NEC member Chris Hani recently expressed a similar perspective: 'We (ie the ANC and the SACP) could have the same candidates at elections. It might be decided that I should contest a particular seat under the banner of the SACP. However, I am sure there will be a common programme between the ANC and SACP because of shared priorities after a democratic transformation'.

But if the SACP needs the ANC at elections, does the converse apply? Viljoen, for one, thinks not: '...almost by way of divine dispensation, the discrediting of communism as an economic, political and social system has happened worldwide. I think the ANC must have noticed that they are becoming discred-

ited internationally by being virtually the only alleged pro-democratic organisation which is still in the anachronistic stance of supporting what was a very strong Stalinist Communist Party'.

Well, the SACP can derive some comfort from the fact that (dare we say it?) 'almost by way of divine dispensation' the party's popularity on the ground in South Africa is uniquely high. Moreover, in the words of one leading market researcher, 'the pattern of cross-alliances between the ANC on the one hand, and the SACP on the other indicate that considerable voter confusion could arise if the public association between these organisations broke down'. It might run against the grain of world trends, but here in South Africa, the ANC appears to need the SACP.

What about the longer term? SACP representatives and publications consistently note that the ANC is not a socialist organisation, and that it should be an organisational home for all democratic,

patriotic elements who accept its broad programme in the present, whether they are socialists or not. So what happens in the event of a longer-term transition to socialism?

The Sowetan recently posed this question to Hani: 'Surely at some point there will be a logical split between the two, even if they remain allies?' Hani's reply was typically direct: 'Correct. Those are the dynamics of the struggle'.

Other SACP spokespersons have offered a different potential outcome, Cronin points to the Cuban example: 'Fidel Castro and the band of guerillas who launched the Cuban revolution did not necessarily start out as socialists. They were essentially patriots and democrats. At first, the Cuban communists were rather peripheral to the guerilla struggle ... After the successful seizure of power, led by Castro's July 26 Movement, a new dynamic set in. The defence of the national democratic revolution, the deepening of its patriotic and democratic content led, in a straight line, towards a socialist transition. This in turn created the conditions for a successful merger of the July 26 Movement and the party'.

According to Cronin, a similar dynamic could develop in South Africa after a democratic transformation. 'One might find the evolution of the ANC into a broad mass socialist party, within which the party merges. This is rather speculative, but it is a possibility which I would favour'.

Whether they are speaking of the longer term, or of the more immediate situation of a developing ANC as it moves towards its national congress, one thing is striking: SACP representatives show very little interest in the kind of red head count that seems most to preoccupy much of the commercial press. One senior party member comments: 'Frankly, from an SACP perspective, it's largely irrelevant if we have 5 or 35 party members on the new ANC NEC due to be elected in June next year. The alliance between our party and congress was not built on board-room manoeuvres in Lusaka, but on the ground over decades in mass struggle'.

'If the ANC is not sufficiently democratised, if it fails to lead active mass struggles, if the working class is not massively present within the structures of the ANC, then the ANC and our alliance are in serious difficulty - whether or not there is a high proportion of party members to non-party members on the incoming ANC NEC'. •

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