

JACKALS AND DINOSAURS

By Dave Steward

Executive Director of the FW de Klerk Foundation

There is a saying in Afrikaans that, “as die jakkals tjank - dan weet jy, jy het raak geskiet!” (If the jackal howls, you know your shot has hit the mark!). On 26 July, there was audible yelping from SACP Secretary-General, Blade Nzimande, in response to remarks that FW de Klerk had made the previous day at his foundation’s conference on ‘National Policy at the Crossroads’. Although Nzimande had said that it “would not be worth our time” to respond to De Klerk “as he is ... an apartheid political dinosaur”, he immediately launched into a 1390-word invective in reply to De Klerk’s 172-word comment on the role of the SACP.

What did De Klerk say that spurred Nzimande into so speedy, vehement and lengthy a response?

De Klerk had said that the SACP was one of the driving forces behind the radical new direction that had emerged from the ANC’s recent Policy Conference.

“At its recent Congress it [the SACP] enthusiastically welcomed the ‘Second Phase’ as the most appropriate route to the achievement of the National Democratic Revolution. However, it does not see the NDR as the final destination of the revolutionary process. On the contrary, it views it as the beginning of a new phase when the SACP - as the self-proclaimed vanguard of the working class - will take over leadership of the revolution which will culminate in the establishment of a communist state.

“At its 2006 Congress the SACP’s ally COSATU adopted a resolution in which it declared that the only appropriate route from the NDR to the establishment of a communist state would be the installation of a dictatorship of the proletariat. Traditional ANC supporters should ask themselves what the ANC’s role would be in such a dispensation, what would become of our Constitution - and what would remain of the NPC’s vision for a future South Africa.”

Nzimande readily agreed that “the SACP unashamedly stands and is struggling for a communist society...” What really seemed to worry him was what he called De Klerk’s attempt “to implant hatred and mistrust between the ANC and the SACP” by resuscitating “another old apartheid trick that the ANC is remote-controlled by the SACP.”

In fact, De Klerk was not saying anything about the SACP that it has not said about itself. In its 2007, “The Road to Socialism”, it quotes with approval the 1928 Communist International instruction that:

“Our aim should be to transform the African National Congress into a fighting nationalist revolutionary organization”... “developing systematically the leadership of the workers and the Communist Party in this organization [we repeat: “developing systematically the leadership of the workers and the Communist Party in this organization”]” (The emphasis is the SACP’s - not mine.)

The 12th Congress resolved that “the question of state power is the central question of any revolution” and that “the strategic Medium Term Vision (MTV) of the South African Communist Party is to secure working class hegemony in the State in its diversity and in all other sites of power”.

The SACP does not believe that democratic elections are the most appropriate path to state power. It has noted, with disarming frankness, that “there is not a single example of a Communist Party, on its own, winning national elections within a capitalist society - let alone using such a breakthrough as the platform to advance a socialist transformation.”

The SACP concluded, accordingly, that it “is not, and should never become, a narrowly electoralist formation. State power is not reducible to elections and electoral victories. Working class hegemony in the state has to be built across a wide front of engagements and not just periodically at election time.”

For the SACP the road to state power clearly doesn't lie with the bourgeois concept - and the constitutional requirement - of winning free and fair elections. It lies with its traditional entryist role of "developing systematically the leadership of the workers and the Communist Party" in the ANC.

The SACP has done well in this regard. At the 2007 ANC National Conference at Polokwane, it and COSATU played a decisive role in defeating President Mbeki and in ensuring Jacob Zuma's election as president of the ANC - and subsequently as president of South Africa.

Since then the SACP has been richly rewarded. It is given 70 - 80 seats in Parliament by the ANC and occupies eight ministries. It and COSATU succeeded in derailing President Mbeki's GEAR economic policies and in promoting their own radical agenda. Their support will be crucial to President Zuma during the forthcoming ANC conference in Mangaung. As a result, the SACP exercised a major influence on the policy directions that emerged from the recent ANC Policy Conference.

Thus emboldened, the SACP is asserting more insistently the vanguard role of the working class in leading the way to the National Democratic Revolution and beyond that, to communism. And of course, the SACP regards itself - and not the ANC - as the vanguard party of the working class - and as such as the ruler of a future communist state.

In his speech, FW de Klerk asked what the role of ANC traditionalists would be in such a dispensation. It is, no doubt, a question that is also occupying the thoughts of many non-communist ANC members in the run-up to the Mangaung Conference.

However, these are issues that the SACP would prefer to conceal. SACP chairman, Gwede Mantashe, acknowledged in his address to the 13th Congress that, "we are fast losing our ability to make a positive contribution without claiming credit." He warned comrades of the importance of not "claiming to have shaped the course of things"... "as opposed to being a mature Marxist/Leninist Party that can play a vanguard role without labelling it as such".

It was because FW de Klerk drew attention to the SACP's ambitions that the jackal howled.

*NewsAlert is sent by the FW de Klerk Foundation (Registration number: 031-061-NPO)
Telephone : +27 (0)21 930 3622 | Fax: +27 (0)21 930 3898
info@fwdeklerk.org | www.fwdeklerk.org | www.cfc.org.za
P.O. Box 15785, Panorama, 7506, South Africa*