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PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR DEPLOYING COMRADES FOR THE COMING ELECTIONS

OUR CONTEXT:

The ANC's victory in the 1994 Elections was a historic breakthrough in the struggle for democracy. This victory was a consequence of active support to the cause of democracy by the mass of our people and a cumulative result of decades of struggle. The victory signified a decisive departure from a colonial system that had ruled over our lives for more than three hundred years. As such, the accession of the ANC to government was not merely a change of parties in political office as in the US or the UK, for instance. It constituted a revolutionary break with the past and signified the qualitative accomplishment of a qualitative element of the National Democratic Revolution (NDR). The uphoria that preceded and followed those Elections was thus perfectly understandable.

But the balance of forces that was at play prior to those Elections dictated that the path to a full transfer of power would be a protracted battle. The attainment of the strategic objective of the NDR was to be fought for even more vigorously and strategically. The constraints of a negotiated settlement led to compromises in the negotiations which would allow the ruling clique to ease itself out of power without undue resistance. This also meant that the apartheid state machinery was left intact and resolved to continue in the old way. Its transformation too was going to be a long drawn-out-process which was going to be resisted by its protagonists. The majority of public servants, the captains of industry, senior staff in editorial rooms of most of the media shared old stereotypes and remained strategically placed to influence agenda of transformation in favour of the privileged classes. Also the network of dirty tricks of the apartheid regime was left largely intact. So the democratic movement had only achieved elements of power. But limited though this power was, it gave us immense opportunities to transform our society, albeit in a pace that would not favour us.

The new dispensation has also ushered in a new culture among the leadership of the democratic movement. Consumerism and competition for limited resources has outstripped commitment to serve the revolution and the people. Discipline has become seriously threatened. In short, the quality of our cadres has dropped drastically. Voluntarism and revolutionary militarism that has nothing to do with the revolution has become the new fashion as "leaders" try to outflank each other in the race for positions. Corruption has become endemic and development is threatened as the new elite looks at itself first rather than the people who are the fundamental bedrock of qualitative change.

In our Province, all the above factors are exaggerated by the abject poverty left behind by apartheid and its bantustans. The legacy of need tended to so raise the hopes of our people that the ANC government would bring swift improvements to their lives. This was not to be. What with the needs that far exceeded the available resources. To make matters worse, the budgetary formula does not take these backlogs into serious account. The social debt has hardly been touched and so disillusionment has replaced the euphoria. Our people still believe that the ANC is the only trustworthy political Party. But they do not have confidence in its leadership in the Province. Our failure to be visible in our communities and to communicate our successes and obstacles has been the main source for the loss of confidence. The opposition Parties are occupying that space and are using it to weaken the ANC and the democratic movement. In-fighting and open vilification of each other (by "leaders") have not helped our cause. But by and large the movement itself is still the people's choice and hope. There is no doubt that we will win again in the 1999 Elections.

CHALLENGES

The primary mission of the ANC was, and remains, to mobilise all classes and strata that objectively stand to gain from the success of the cause of social change. This implies winning to our side also those who previously benefited from the system of apartheid. To persuade them that their long term security and comfort are closely linked with the security and comfort of the rest of society. The ANC, therefore, is a broad multi-class, mass organisation uniting the motive forces on the basis of a programme for transformation. The frame-work for such a programme is the RDP.

We are challenged to transform the civil service, the judiciary, the army and the police. The state machinery has to be transformed to become efficient, effective, productive and able to deliver quality service to our people. We are challenged to transform the social and economic nature of this Province. Poverty, landlessness, homelessness, water supply, health services, education, welfare - the list is long - all these have to change.

All this points to one thing: we are challenged to be more strategic in the deployment of our cadres. We also need to be honest in doing so. We need a leadership that will inspire confidence in the ANC. A leadership that is respected by a broader spectrum than just our members. As such, we need a matured leadership of great integrity and a clear vision. They must be skilled to manage transformation and competing interests.

The people are the bedrock of fundamental change. So we need a leadership that is able to build the capacity for the community to be masters of their destiny, to be soldiers of transformation. We are challenged to find a leadership that has a clear vision of what is to be done. Of what our next step should be as we approach the 1999 Elections and the next century. A leadership that will build a strong ANC that will lead the people of this Province in the task of social and economic transformation. We need a leadership that will deepen the unity of our people and our structures, a leadership that will manage the contradictions within the society in the interest of the NDR rather than personal interests. Only such leadership will be good enough to understand the shifting sands of our context and the daunting challenges

that confront the democratic movement. We do not want a leadership that is a mere reflection of the society which we are trying to transform.

The 1994 process of compiling parliamentary lists was vulgarised democracy, to say the least. The electorate was assumed to be an informed/enlightened one and as such would nominate responsibility. This was not going to be exactly so. Apart from the unfortunate manipulations of the lists, we also saw strange names like Zola Bud, Joe Mafela, Mirriam Makeba, Noxolo Grootboom (to mention a few) appearing in the ANC list. Most of us know the bigger mess that followed the 1995 Local Government Elections. We are still smarting from all these problems.

With our experience over the last few years we should, I believe, do things better this time. We should not abrogate democratic practices. But at the same time we should not abdicate our leadership responsibilities. As we balance our act between these principles, we would, I believe, also eliminate/reduce the tensions caused by the circulation of unauthorised lists. People who continue to operate outside democratic structures can then be dealt with in terms of the ANC Constitution.

The ANC has, recently, produced a set of guidelines on who qualifies to go onto the ANC lists. But there is no practical mechanism or methodology that is being proposed. This, in my view, leaves us in the great danger of drifting back into the 1994/95 situations. These proposals are intended to enrich the ANC proposals. Not to contradict them. They are meant to guide our branches and the regions on how to go about the list process. The proposals are intended to give leadership to the deployment process. We can't leave it to chance. I do not pretend that these proposals are perfect. Far from it.

PROPOSALS

Step 1:

The List Committee requests all ANC branches to identify names that they consider to be leaders worthy of becoming ANC representatives. In doing so branches should remember that there are about 4 tiers of deployment to consider leaders for. These are: (a) Building the Organisation; (b) Provincial Government (Executive); c) Offices of the Legislature (Speakers, Whips, Chairpersons of Committees etc.) d) Parliament (taking into account all the responsibilities and areas of priority for our Province e.g. Finance, Welfare, Education,) and e) Local Government Sphere (TLC, TRC, District Councils).

Step 2:

The List Committee audits the lists from branches in terms of the Guidelines from HQ as well as the Provincial priorities and tasks. This will lead to a "master list" being produced alphabetically rather than in terms of priority/preference. This "master list" to constitute 80 % of what will become the final list.

Step 3:

A list Conference is then convened. Delegates are asked to nominate the remaining 20 % of names. At this stage the list becomes official and final.

Post Scriptum:

In line with the recent decisions of the Central Committee of COSATU, it is proposed that members of both COSATU and the SACP be encouraged to participate in this process in their ANC branches. This goes for SANCO too. The fragmented participation of the components of the Alliance in these processes, in my view, exacerbate our problems than solve them.

CONCLUSION

It is important to remember that the ANC guidelines remain our basis for compiling the list. In that context, personal interests must be subsumed by organisational and national interests. South Africa and our Province need strong leadership in these trying and tempting times. I am confident that we can offer that to our structures. The road is not going to be smooth. But we have no choice but to walk it. Let us work it together in unison and determination.

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