



The establishment of a radical worker's party in South Africa

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I dedicate this dissertation to comrades who have passed away but who left an indelible mark on my own political and intellectual development. They were activists and revolutionaries of the highest calibre committed to the building of a revolutionary party of the working class politically and organisationally independent of all other parties and class influences. The contribution of comrades Andrew 'Jumbo' Phiri, Kenny 'Majozi' Msoki, Pearl Khanyile, Michael Blake and Kevin John French will forever remain in the memory of the working people.

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Abstract

This dissertation is about the establishment of a Workers' Party in South Africa today. The aims, reasons and motivation for the study is to explain and outline why a Workers' Party independent of nationalism (an ideology and movement promoting the interest of a particular nation) has not materialised previously and why the conditions are conducive for it to do so now.

The dissertation starts with an outline in Chapter one of the analytical framework which includes the motivation, the problem statement, the aims and methodology of the study. From this we develop our central theoretical statement, our research approach and explain the significance of the study and its contribution to the topic. In Chapter two I try to outline the characteristic features of political parties by looking at the theoretical questions with special attention to the development, history and conceptualisation of political parties. This includes focussing especially on the organisational and ideological elements which assists us in understanding the main features of political parties. In Chapter three I look at the historical, organisational and ideological genesis of Workers' Parties using a Marxist paradigm. I explain the meaning and distinctive characteristics of this paradigm and deal with the character of class society, the capitalist crisis, the evolution and development of consciousness of the working class and the question of reform and revolution. This is followed by an examination of the organisational question and a discussion on the international nature of class struggle. The dissertation also reflects on the ideological divided between Bolshevism and all other 'neo-Marxist' views and traces the evolution of the Communist Movement from the First Communist International to the post-Stalinist Social Democratic Euro-Communist organisations.

In Chapter four the dissertation examines the historical development of Workers Parties in South Africa with special reference to theoretical standpoint of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and explain that their capitulation to nationalism has its basis in the theoretical and ideological foundations of Stalinism. This chapter includes examining and exploring the underlying theoretical questions such as 'Colonialism of a Special Type', 'national liberation' theory, the character of 'national democracy' and the strategy of a 'negotiated path to power'.

This will also include an examination of the call by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) for the formation of a Workers' Party in South Africa in the 1980's.

Chapter five deals with the post-Apartheid period and examines the development of the politics of the ANC and analyse its evolution from a party of liberation to a fully fledged capitalist party. Here I will reflect on the economic crisis of post-Apartheid South Africa and deal with the political evolution of the African National Congress (ANC) from the Nelson Mandela presidency to the election of Cyril Ramaphosa at the ANC National Congress in December 2017. The chapter will also deal with the crisis of the SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) who have been instrumental in tying the working class to the bourgeois nationalist programme of the ANC. It will conclude with a look at the working class fight back and the tragedy of the Marikana massacre which it is argued is a turning point in the class struggle.

Chapter six looks at the evolution of the idea of establishing a Workers' Party in South Africa and examines whether political formations like the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) or the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) represent the embryonic features of a Workers' Party in South Africa today. It then deals in detail with the 'NUMSA Moment', its historical genesis and resolutions which lead up to the formation of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party (SRWP). The dissertation then reflects on the philosophy, objectives, principles, programme, formal organisation and strategy and tactics of the SRWP.

In the concluding Chapter the dissertation will reflect on the key observations of the study and try to explain the connections between all the chapters so as to provided a coherent understanding of the argument and its connection with the objectives of the research. It will explain how and why the 'NUMSA Moment' and the formation of the SRWP has materialised and is the most important political development in leftwing politics since the advent of democracy.

KEYWORDS

Capitalism

Colonialism

Communism

Democracy

Imperialism

Marxism

Leninism

Socialism

Stalinism

Workers' Party

ABREVIATIONS

AMCU	Association of Construction and Mineworkers Union
ANC	African National Congress
APF	Anti-Privatisation Forum
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CCAWUSA	Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa
CCF	Concerned Citizens Forum
CEC	Central Executive Committee
COB	Brazilian Workers Centre
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COMINTERN	Third Communist International
COPE	Congress of the People
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPSA	Communist Party of South Africa
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CST	Colonialism of a Special Type
CWI	Committee for a Workers International
DA	Democratic Alliance
DLF	Democratic Left Front
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
DSM	Democratic Socialist Movement
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
FAWU	Food and Allied Workers' Union
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IDoM	In Defense of Marxism

ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISL	International Socialist League
KCTU	Korean Confederation of Trade Unions
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
LPM	Landless People's Movement
MF's	Movement for Socialism
MWP	Mass Workers Party
MWT	Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC
NDP	National Development Plan
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NEHAWU	National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NFA	National Framework Agreement on the Restructuring of State Assets
NGDS	National Growth and Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOB's	National Office Bearers'
NP	Nationalist Party
NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUM	New Unity Movement
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
NWC	National Working Committee
OUTA	Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse
PAC	Pan African Congress
POPCRU	Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
RMG	Revolutionary Marxist Group
RSDLP	Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party
SACOD	South African Congress of Democrats
SACP	South African Communist Party

SACPO	South African Coloured People's Organisation
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SAFTU	South African Federation of Trade Unions
SAHO	South Africa History Online
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
SALP	South African Labour Party
SNC	Special National Congress
SONA	State of the Nation Address
SPD	German Social Democratic Party
SRWP	Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left
UDF	United Democratic Front
UF	United Front
WASP	Workers and Socialist Party
WILSA	Workers International League of South Africa
WIVP	Workers International Vanguard Party
WOSA	Workers Organisation for Socialist Action
WPSA	Workers Party of South Africa
ZANC	Zuma African National Congress

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CHAPTER 1 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A RADICAL WORKERS' PARTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

1.1 Motivation

The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was formed in 1921, banned in 1950 and reconstituted as the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1953. The SACP participated in formulating the economic clauses of the Freedom Charter (Turok, 2008:22) and developed the theory of 'Colonialism of a Special type' (CST) (Turok, 2008:24) which according to Martin Legassick (2007:401) is a two stage theory of revolution: "first the struggle for national liberation and then the struggle for socialism". In the negotiated settlement agreed to in the 1990's it was the SACP that proposed a breakthrough with their suggestion of the 'sunset clauses' which provided for joint rule for the first period of democracy (Legassick, 2007: 433). The SACP in the main serves as a loyal servant and active participant in the African National Congress (ANC) led Tri-Partite Alliance and 'Popular Front' government (Drew, 1996:5). All in all the SACP is not an independent and revolutionary working class socialist political party and as we will demonstrate, capitulated to nationalism.

Other ostensible leftwing organisations like the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) claimed to be socialist but did not call for the formation of a Worker's Party in the country. They adapted to a greater or lesser extent to nationalism. It was only the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in the early 1980's and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) in 1993 which raised the issue of a Workers' Party which did not materialise (Hamilton, 2018:11).

The adoption in 1996 of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy by the ANC government confirmed that the ANC was in the process of transition into a fully fledged capitalist party (Bond, 2005:15). While critical of the GEAR policy the COSATU/SACP's political response was contradictory and it fell to civil society organisations to organise opposition (Khanya College, 2005: 77). The opposition to the GEAR policy later found expression in internal struggles within the ANC (Bond, 2005:21) and differences between COSATU, the SACP and the ANC intensified over

the interpretation and relations with Capital, the capitalistic developmental programme and the ideological goals of socialism (Khanya College, 2005:77). The SACP and COSATU were in the forefront of an 'opposition of the disaffected', as it coalesced around a beleaguered deputy president Jacob Zuma who led a coup de' etat at the ANC Polokwane Conference which removed Thabo Mbeki as president of the ANC and the country (Lehulere, 2017c:2). The change in nomenclature however did not result in the expected policy shifts from GEAR to a more socialist focus and many leftists became disgruntled. The Mangaung Conference of the ANC in 2012 adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) which was based on neoliberal economics (Bond, 2016:3), confirming for the leftwing that the Alliance partners, the SACP and COSATU had abandoned the struggle for socialism (Khan, 2018a:4). The political crisis of leadership of the working class led to the formation of the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) as alternative political voices of the working class and poor (Jooma & Khan, 2017:2). The most significant development in working class organisation has been the expulsion of NUMSA in 2014 with its three hundred and seventy three thousand (373 000) members from COSATU. Already in December 2013 NUMSA's Special National Congress (SNC) called for the formation of a United Front (UF), on COSATU to break from the Tri-Partite Alliance and a creation of a Movement for Socialism (MFs) leading to the formation of an alternative and radical Workers' Party in South Africa (NUMSA 10th Congress, 2016:7).

The objective crisis of capitalism as reflected in growing unemployment, inequality and poverty levels, the failure to resolve the crisis of the 2007/8 financial meltdown, combined with a deep social and political crisis in the society gave rise to substantive subjective developments, such as the Marikana massacre, the NUMSA split from COSATU, the student '#Feesmustfall movement', the mass '#Zuma must Go Campaign' and finally his removal from power by Cyril Ramaphosa (Khan, 2018b:4). As we witnessed in the election of the 8th May 2019, the ANC is a shadow of its previous self (Appolis, 2019:2). The main feature of the post-election capitalist government of the ANC has been the fact that it rules with the consent of the working class who have voted it into power in every election since 1994 (Appolis, 2019:1). However what is striking is that the margin of support for the ANC has been declining and the ANC is a party with a minority support in the country (Appolis, 2019:1). The reasons for this are

many, but what stands out is the deep despair of the black working class who is facing growing unemployment, poverty and misery in a country wracked by high levels of corruption.

Cyril Ramaphosa's ANC is an ANC deeply divided between the old Zuma supporters who remain in important positions in the party and those who promise to clean up the ANC from corruption and restore it to its former glory days. They are striving to return the ANC 'back to Mbekism', but under less favourable economic circumstances (Khan, 2018b:2). While there is much talk about strengthening the state apparatus to deal with corruption, in real terms nothing has as yet been done to deal with those implicated in its own ranks. In the meantime the condition of the working class and poor deteriorates everyday as unemployment levels increase and prices rise, as Patrick Craven (2019:1) states "The real state of crises of the nation is not captured in the State President's address, nor is the condition of the working class and poor who suffer increasing poverty, hunger and inequality seriously addressed. Conservative economic policies such as austerity, privatisation and even the weakening of labour regulations is on the cards and will soon be widely applied as outlined in the State of the Nation Address."

As the leading working class political formation the SACP does not provide leadership to the proletariat and poor as it is ensconced in the 'Popular Front' government led by Cyril Ramaphosa. In the absence of an organised leadership that it trusts, the working class continues to fight back (Appolis, 2018:2). The 'NUMSA moment', which reflects the ideological and political break of NUMSA from the politics of the Tri-Partite Alliance, has the potential to become the basis for the formation of an alternative leadership of the working class. With the formation of South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) and now the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) the struggles of the working class may increasingly be refracted through these alternative political formations. Already the seven hundred thousand (700 000) member SAFTU is the second biggest trade union federation in South Africa and the SRWP is attracting wide scale support throughout the country. This is confirmed by the gathering of over one thousand delegates at the Inaugural Congress of the party held from the 4th to 6th April 2019 at Birchwood Conference Centre in Johannesburg. The party having entered the electoral terrain for the first time on the 8th May 2019 did not do as well as expected and received a mere twenty four thousand four hundred and thirty nine (24 439) votes

(Appolis, 2019:1). The reasons for its poor showing are varied, and in no way reflects its potential to lead the working class in the future. In its own words “the real work in party building starts after the election” (Khan, 2019a:2).

1.2 Problem Statement

South Africa was formed through colonial conquest, where “colonialism resulted in racism, slavery, attempted genocide, the expropriation of the land of indigenous people and the exploitation of their labour as forced labour” (Legassick, 2007:441). Full blooded capitalism used the pre-existing structures of colonialism and racism to develop a system based on the exploitation of cheap black labour (Legassick, 2007:441). Twenty five years of democratic rule in South Africa has not changed this. The race/class divide that characterises South African society remains largely in place, even though the Apartheid laws have been removed. Twenty five years after 1994, South Africa is still ruled by largely white and foreign financial, mining, industrial, manufacturing and commercial interests who dominate the economy (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c: 4). The condition of the black working class and poor remains dismal. This is demonstrated by the litany of social ills in working class black communities where “millions of South Africans are hungry and poor, cannot find work and suffer the effects of extreme inequality in society... Millions of black children do not have a future as their education is very inferior, millions more do not have decent houses, do not eat regularly let alone eat healthy food, struggle to get clothes, suffer a backward public transport system when they travel and are regularly sick and die early from curable diseases” (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:4). The South African working class responds to their conditions through spontaneous and episodic struggles, service delivery protests and strikes for better living and working conditions. The political deal entered in the early 1990’s and consummated in the democratic dispensation of 1994, is breaking at the seams. This is the reason we have a huge political crisis which finds expression not only as a crisis of the ruling party and ruling class but also as a crisis of leadership of the working class. The crisis of capitalism as Marx and Lenin explained, and as we will outline from a Marxist-Leninist theoretical perspective, leads society to an impasse and the question is, ‘Which way forward for society’?

The ANC and its government cannot provide solutions as the “foundational and historical ideological orientation of the ANC as expressed through its leadership was one of incorporation and accession: in other words, a class politics driven by the ultimate desire to be part of existing economic power through accessing political-institutional power” (Mckinley, 2017:2). This has also created the conditions for “an enabling environment of patronage, corruption and factional politics” (McKinley, 2015:3). While the national bourgeois sought accommodation to the existing ruling classes and imperialism, South Africa’s economic woes continued to deepen as the full impact of the world economic crisis on developing countries was increasingly being felt. Neoliberal economic policies pursued by the ANC government created conditions where the “majority of the people do not have decent jobs, a living wage, rights, democracy and equality” (RMG, 2011:24). Post-apartheid capitalism has left a trail of inequality, hunger, poverty and misery, and “our country is drifting into a living hell for the majority” (RMG, 2011:24).

The adoption of GEAR by the ANC government in 1996 profoundly reshaped the political economy of South Africa and also the struggles of poor and working class communities (Mckinley, 2017:39). The adoption of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme in South Africa confirmed the ANC’s adoption of a capitalist neoliberalism which was the implementation of a strictly monetarist, liberalising and trickle-down growth framework in which the adoption of market-orientated policies would yield the desired outcomes of job creation, investment, growth, reduced poverty and general inequality (Mckinley, 2017:39).

While the ANC tries to argue that the dark days of being in a deep pit of corruption and mismanagement under the Zuma Presidency is over, this is not true, as many of the Zuma acolytes remain leading figures in the party and the ANC remains a party deeply divided. The vote at ANC Nasrec Conference in December 2017 was so close that it could easily have gone against Ramaphosha and this with the support of the Mpumalanga based D.D. Mabuza faction. The President is caught between the needs to restructure capitalism along an anti-corruption path while at the same time having his deputy heavily compromised by factional and even mafia type allegations of murder in his home province of Mpumalanga (Khan, 2018b:13). The new General Secretary of the Party is Ace Magashule, who was a leader of the Premier League which supported

the Zuma Presidency and is allegedly implicated in various nefarious and corrupt activities as detailed in Louis-Myburg's book 'Gangster State, Unravelling Ace Magashule's Web of Capture' (2019). The ANC has lost support in many of the urban centres of the country as seen in the loss of power in the major Metros of Tswane, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town in the Local Government Elections of 2016. Hamilton (2016:3) in reflecting on the local government elections of 2016 notes "voting patterns indicate that the ANC has been largely reduced to a rural party receiving only 34% in the urban areas".

South Africa is the protest capital of the world (Izwe Labasabenzi, 2017:2). Protests take place daily, and for the first time since the 1990's there were up to a hundred thousand people (100 000) people on the streets of South Africa calling for President Jacob Zuma to resign. Growing levels of tension and conflict manifested in local and community protests have increased by almost "150% from the period 2005-2008 to the period from 2009-2012 when they averaged 309 per year" (McKinley, 2015:4). This crisis reflects itself most starkly as a crisis of the South African Labour Movement as seen in the Marikana massacre (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3). The failure of the traditional organisations of the working class, COSATU and the SACP, to offer any meaningful responses to the crisis of neo-liberalism saw the emergence of community based social movements as the epicentre of social solidarity (McKinley, 2015:3). These community organisations and social movements do not represent a homogenous political entity thus making "the possibilities of forging common, national level political and socio-economic struggles of communities for radical change hugely difficult" (McKinley, 2015:5).

For the first time since the mid-1990's the question of a Workers' Party is being raised again (Hamilton, 2016:1). The SACP with its two stage theory of revolution, first the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and then the Socialist Revolution (or in some interpretations the organic growth from the NDR to socialism) and the other main radical organisations, the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), the Pan African Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), all failed to form an independent Workers' Party and adapted to a greater or lesser extent to nationalism (RMG, 2011:26). It was only the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) in

1982 and NUMSA who raised the issue of the Workers' Party at the COSATU Congress in 1993.

The emergence of the Democratic Left Front (DLF), Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) indicates a growing frustration of the working class with the ANC and its search for an alternative political path. The conditions for the establishment of a radical Workers' Party in South Africa are all present today: a deep economic and social crisis, the fight-back of the working class against a drop in its living and working conditions and the break-up of the Tri-Partite Alliance and finally and most importantly a conscious programme to build such a party by the biggest trade union in Africa, NUMSA. According to (Southall & Webster, 2010:133) there has been a low tolerance for political opposition parties in post-colonial Africa. However in South Africa the relatively large industrial working class, strong Civil Society organisations and an independent trade union movement with a political culture of shop floor democracy makes it far more possible (Southall & Webster, 2010:135).

Workers' Parties have their own history and have in the main been inspired and influenced by the development of Marxism. The Russian revolution and its degeneration into Stalinism has been a critical factor in influencing revolutionary movements internationally. In the study of Workers' Parties in the epoch of Imperialism, it is only a Leninist Party that can make an authentic claim to be revolutionary Workers' Parties. The combination of three major factors, the capitulation of the SACP to nationalism, the multi-faceted crisis in South Africa and the presence of a conscious alternative in the form of the 'NUMSA Moment' make this the one serious opportunity to build such a party in South Africa today. The question which can only be answered tendentially is whether the SRWP can fulfill the role of a revolutionary Workers' Party in South Africa today and how it will influence the political landscape of the country?

1.3 Aims and Methodology

1.3.1 Aims and Objectives:

The aim of the study is to show how and why the crisis of South African capitalism has resulted in the growth of new radical political formations which have led to the

establishment of a new Workers' Party in opposition to the ANC and SACP. The objective of this study is to discuss:

- What is the conceptual and theoretical basis of political parties?
- What is the historical, theoretical and philosophical basis for the establishment of Workers' Parties?
- What is the history of Worker Party tendencies in South Africa?
- Which political environmental factors are contributing to the establishment of the Workers' Party in South Africa?
- What is the meaning of the 'NUMSA Moment' and how has it developed?
- The launch of the SRWP and how as a Workers' Party, it will influence South African politics.

1.3.2 Central Theoretical Statement

The study of radical politics in South Africa is a study of the relationship between Nationalism and Socialism, and it is this relationship of subordination of socialist parties to nationalist ones that has historically prevented the flourishing of a revolutionary socialist politics and the building of an independent Workers' Party. The idea of a Workers' Party falls within the radical, more specifically Marxist paradigm and the dissertation will use this as a reference point.

In the post-Colonial period and for a number of decades the Apartheid-Capitalist system (which was based on the exploitation of cheap black labour, as is still the case today) with its migrant labour and homeland system and its range of racist legislation and practices, including the political disenfranchisement of the black majority, served the interest of white capital (RMG, 2011:25). The system of racial oppression guaranteed high profit levels and relative political stability. However by the late 1960's South African capitalism was experiencing a crisis of over-accumulation as a result of the excessive production of consumer goods locally and the inability of local producers to export profitably (Legassick, 2007:444). By the mid-1980's, "Against the revolutionary upsurge of the black masses ...the capitalist ruling class in South Africa saw the acute danger of continuing rule in the old way" (Legassick, 2007:429). According to Legassick (2007:430) the collapse of Stalinism in 1989-91 "transformed the balance of forces on a

world scale”, and signalled to the Apartheid regime under the leadership of President F.W. De Klerk, that they should take the initiative and within a few years a deal was brokered. The negotiated settlement created a society with a democratic constitution which included the right to private property and a capitalist economy (RMG, 2011:26). In return for the right to share in the capitalist largesse the ANC leadership “would have to salvage South African capitalism” and “the political/ideological project of nation-building became paramount” (Legassick, 2007:433). To realise this, the ANC had to tame its radical base, dissolve the United Democratic Front (UDF) together with its civic and youth structures and ditch the ‘nationalisation’ clause of the Freedom Charter (RMG, 2011:22). This they justified by their two-stage theory of revolution where the first stage was to be a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and the second stage socialism (WILSA, 1982:1). In class terms the transition was not so much from Apartheid to democracy but from the impending threat of revolution to a restoration of stable bourgeois rule” (RMG, 2011:26). This was a ‘democratic counter-revolution’; in the name of democracy the revolution was diverted (RMG, 2011:26).

The ANC has lost its anti-Apartheid radicalism and has been transformed into a bourgeois nationalist party and now runs an administration on behalf of the capitalist class (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3). The further adoption of GEAR in 1996 and the overall embrace of neoliberal policies by the ANC government was a significant milestone in the evolution of the ANC into a bourgeois party (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3). These policies have created deeper inequality, hunger and poverty in the society and have resulted in a fight back by the working class and poor. The economy is in deep waters and escalating high prices and unemployment will exacerbate the terrible living standards of the working class and poor even further. This is a recipe for the intensification of the social protest movement of the poor under conditions where South Africa is already the ‘protest capital of the world’ (Izwe Labasabenzi, 2017:2).

There is a clear shift to the left in South African politics as the ANC and its Alliance is in a deep crisis. The SACP as the party of the working class has largely abandoned its historical role as leader of the working class struggle for socialism, and COSATU as a trade union federation has lost membership and many of its affiliates have split into competing trade unions and federations (Khan, 2018b:16). Economic, social and

political factors are creating an environment that is conducive to the establishment of a Workers' Party in South Africa (NUMSA 10th Congress, 2016:6).

The advent of imperialism in the 1870's and 1880's changed the character of capitalism from progressive free competition capitalism to monopoly capitalism (Lenin, 1977:642). According to the Internationalist Group (2014:1), standard bourgeois definitions of Imperialism would include "the principle or policy of empire; the advocacy of holding political dominion or control over dependent territories" (Oxford English Dictionary), "state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas" (Encyclopedia Britannica), or more generally "a policy or practice by which a country increases its power by gaining control over other areas of the world" (Merriam-Webster). By these definitions, there was Greek and Roman imperialism in the ancient world, and British, Spanish, Dutch and French imperialism from the dawn of their respective colonial empires in the 16th and 17th centuries (Internationalist Group, 2014:2). In his pamphlet, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin defines capitalist imperialism as follows:

"(1) The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation, on the basis of this 'finance capital,' of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities, acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves; and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed" (Lenin, 1977:700).

The central point of Lenin's work is that imperialism is not just a policy, which the rulers could change – as Karl Kautsky argued – but rather the stage of monopoly capitalism, in which the dominance of finance capital *requires* imperialist practices (Internationalist Group, 2014:2). Kautsky's definition served to justify his utopian-reformist, pacifist program of pressuring the rulers to adopt peaceful "non-imperialist" policies. Lenin's analysis laid bare that the only road to peace was to overthrow the imperialist system.

This also opened the era of the proletarian revolution internationally and the need for ideologically distinct and well organised revolutionary parties of the working class to lead the struggle for power and socialism (Seymour, 1977:2). In response to a deep economic, social and political crisis various leftwing opposition movements such as the DLF, WASP and the EFF have sprung up, but none of them meet the criteria of a Leninist Workers' Party. The struggle for a radical alternative politics is now refracted through the 'NUMSA moment' (NUMSA 10th Congress, 2016:6). The 'NUMSA Moment' has given birth to the SRWP which is a Marxist-Leninist Party based on Marxist principles and Leninist organisational methods. What is important is to assess its programme and indicate its future trajectory as a revolutionary party.

1.3.3 Methodology

1.3.3.1 Literature Study

This dissertation is primarily a literature study of the South African social formation focussing on political organizations, their history, programmes and policies. The core literature deals with the main theoretical themes on radical politics. Primary sources are political actors such as Joe Slovo 'No Middle Road', Neville Alexander's 'One Azania, One Nation: The National Question in South Africa' (London, Zed Books, 1979), Thoughts on the New South Africa (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2013), Martin Legassick's 'Towards Socialist Democracy' (University of KwaZulu Natal Press, 2007) and Ben Turok 'The Evolution of ANC Economic Policy', Cape Town, New Agenda publishers, 2008). I will also use leading political analysts like Roger Southall and John Daniel's 'Zunami', (Johannesburg, Jacana Media, 2009), Patrick Bond 'Talk Left Walk Right' (UKZN Press, 2004), Sakhela Buhlungu et al 'Trade Unions & Party Politics' (HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2010) Baruch Hirson 'Revolutions in my Life', (Witwatersrand University Press, 1995) Allison Drew 'South Africa's Radical Tradition, a documentary history' (UCT Press, 1996). I will also look at the writings of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels on their critique of capitalism and their writings on revolutionary programme and strategy. This will include amongst other texts 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party', 'Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League', 'The Class Struggles in France' and 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific'. I will also be looking at V.I. Lenin's "What is to be done?", 'The April Thesis' and 'State and Revolution' amongst his other works. Leon Trotsky's 'Permanent Revolution, Results and

Prospects' and his other writings on China, Germany and Spain will inform the programmatic discussions. I will also be examining the selected writings of both Antonio Gramsci and Rosa Luxembourg as it relates to the question of a Workers' Party. Paul le Blanc's 'From Marx to Gramsci' and John Molyneux's 'Lenin for Today' will also be used extensively to reflect on the historical, organizational and programmatic questions of the Workers' Party. Other literature on the party will include Allan Ball and Guy Peters on 'Modern Politics and Government', Giovanni Sartori 'Parties and party systems' and Andrew Heywood 'Political Ideologies'.

I will also use party and organisational documents of the ANC, SACP, COSATU, various Social Movements and leftwing organizations (including unpublished papers). These will include 'African Communist', 'Sechaba' and the Strategy and Tactics and Conference documents of various organizations. I will also be examining the NUMSA 2013 Special National Congress Resolutions and the 2016 National Congress resolutions, as well as the South African Federation of Trade Unions Launching Congress Steering Committee Report of 2017. The internet record of South Africa History Online, Searchlight South Africa and the personal collection of Dr. Dale McKinley who has kindly offered me access online, will also be used. This will also extend to the use of websites of the various political organizations, parties, social movements and trade unions, more particularly, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) website, the Khanya College website, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) website and the Workers International Vanguard Party (WIVP) website.

1.4 Research Approach

1.4.1 Qualitative Study

The design of the study will be a qualitative study which is essentially exploratory in nature and which can be "used to gain new insight into phenomenon, to explain concepts, constructs and paradigms and to develop hypotheses with regard to specific phenomenon" (Denscombe, 2004:10). The qualitative method is used to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons, opinions and motivation of phenomenon and it also provides insight into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses. I will try in this research to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research material by a literature study of all the various political contributions and trends and tendencies in the

political movement; to describe, analyse and interpret the past as well as add to the existing body of knowledge on the topic. This will fall within the epistemological tradition which explains the meaning of things in their logical progression and interlinking between concepts. The research is current history and I will be dealing with real life situations where the aim is to find causal relationships in phenomenon and construct a meaning through this (Denscombe, 2004:15).

1.4.2 Deductive Method

The deductive method is where the researcher works from more general information to more specific information. It is a “top down” approach that starts with a broad spectrum of information (on radical theory) and works its way down to a specific conclusion (the establishment of a Worker’s Party) (Bajpai & Singh, 2008:8). The approach I will use in this dissertation will concentrate on uncovering that which is true and which can be used as a basis for the explanation of the new. I will use deductive arguments which will show that a conclusion follows a set of premises, that it is sound if it is valid and its premises are true. The deductive way of reasoning is relevant to qualitative studies in exceptional circumstances (Bajpai & Singh, 2008:6).

1.4.3 Data Collection Instruments

The study will focus on the establishment of a Workers’ Party in South Africa and the various political, trade union and civic organisations which relate to it. As this is a qualitative study I have interviewed leading members of the various organizations (I am acquainted with them from my historical involvement in leftwing politics), to acquire current and past information and confirm the political direction and strategic orientation and trajectory of such organisations. I have also interviewed Ronnie Kasrils (ex-ANC combatant and ex-SACP member) and Kevin French (ex-ANC member and critic of the ANC/SACP Alliance) who provide an insight into the history of the ANC and SACP. The method for collecting the data was semi or unstructured interviews which allows the researcher and the interviewee much more room for expressing knowledge because of its flexibility. Such an interview gives space for rambling and results in rich detailed answers. The interview questions will be compiled from the literature review and the theoretical analysis (Mouton, 2001:177).

1.5 Significance and Contribution to the Study

A dissertation search done on the LexisNexis info pro Zimmerman's research guide indicates that no academic studies have been done on this topic. Only a few noted studies have been done on the SACP (Johns, 1965 and Habib, 1991), and a few other radical movements (Tafira, 2013). The establishment of a Workers' Party in the post-Apartheid period has not received much attention in academic circles. The research is thus novel and will assist in understanding the restructuring of the South African Labour Movement, culminating in the establishment of a Workers' Party in South Africa. This study is especially relevant because it is a study of current history, which means that its outline, features and history will be determined as it unfolds.

1.6 Chapter Lay Out

1.6.1 Chapter 2: Conceptualisation of Political Parties

This chapter will deal with the historical formation and conceptualisation of Political Parties and party systems, the organisational question which includes the structure of political parties, the functions of political parties, the typology of parties and party systems and the question of ideology and its meaning. The dissertation will also look at whether ideology is still a valid political concept in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

1.6.2 Chapter 3: Workers' Parties: Historical, Organisational and Ideological genesis

This chapter will reflect on the historical development of Workers' Parties, the social and economic basis of the development of Workers' Parties under capitalism, their structure and function, the changes that have taken place from 'Mass' working class formations to 'Cadre' based revolutionary vanguard Leninist parties. We will also examine the degeneration of these parties into bureaucratic Stalinist parties and the growth in response to this of Euro-Communist and parliamentary parties. Lastly, the latest phenomenon which is 'Socialism of the Twentieth Century' which is a mixture of 'soft' reformist leftwing ideologies which combine a neo-Marxism with more left-populist ideas, will be dealt with.

1.6.3 Chapter 4: The Historical development of a Workers' Party in South Africa

In this chapter I will deal with the politics of the SACP and how it has succumbed to nationalism in the process abandoning its historical role. This will involve an analysis of the CPSEA's adoption of the Black Republic thesis in 1928, its subsequent theory of CST, the 'Four Nations' thesis and its particular understanding of 'National Liberation'. The chapter will also obliquely focus on the other leading liberation movements and their contribution to the establishment of a Workers' Party in South Africa. I will reflect on FOSATU and its call for a Workers' Party in the 1980's, as well as the NUMSA call for a Workers' Party in 1993. In the post Apartheid period I will examine the radical grassroots Social Movements and its relation to the question of the formation of a Workers' Party.

1.6.4 Chapter 5: The Crisis of Capitalism and the Leadership of the Proletariat

This chapter will deal with the objective and subjective conditions which create the conditions for the establishment of a Workers' Party in South Africa. I will briefly explain what is meant by the capitalist crisis and go on to explain how it has had a severe impact on the South African economy, particularly affecting the living and working conditions of the working class. At the same time the ruling political party has tobogganed from crisis to crisis dragging the organised leadership of the working class in the form of the powerful trade union movement COSATU and the SACP with it into the morass. My focus will thus be on the crisis in the ANC and its government, the semi-collapse of the SACP as the vanguard party of the working class, the near implosion of COSATU as the leading workers' federation and the spontaneous struggles that engulf the country. The Marikana revolt of mine workers is a qualitative turning point in South African history and is the catalyst for the political split in the trade union movement and the creation of an alternative Workers' Party in South Africa.

1.6.5 Chapter 6: From the 'NUMSA Moment' to the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP).

In this chapter I will look at the development of leftwing responses to the capitalist crisis and focus on the DLF, WASP and the EFF. I will explain why they do not fulfil the

criteria to be Worker Parties. I will then examine the NUMSA Special National Congress resolutions of 2013 and the NUMSA Congress resolutions of 2016 which proposed the formation of a United Front, the call to COSATU to break from the Tri-Partite Alliance which led to the formation of SAFTU and the formation of a Movement for Socialism which has created a revolutionary Leninist vanguard party called the SRWP. I will also discuss the politics of the SRWP which includes its draft Constitution as well as its fundamental principles. The SRWP was officially launched at the beginning of April 2019 and has participated in the 2019 national and provincial government elections. It did not do as well as expected, failing to gain a single seat in parliament. This, it will be argued is not a reflection on the future development of the party as it is a new party, barely one year old with rudimentary organisational presence on the ground. Participating in the elections was a conscious tactical decision to bring the party into the public arena, particularly as the party had not consolidated a Communist cadre. The real test for the SRWP is whether it will be able to implement its policies, develop an effective educational programme, build party structures across the country and lead the struggle of the working class on the ground.

I will look at some of these policies of the SRWP as well as some of the leftwing critics of the party. This will allow me to demonstrate why I believe that the SRWP has both theoretically and practically taken up the space as the leading leftwing organisation in the country. In doing so I will show that the formation of the SRWP is a critical moment and turning point in leftwing politics in South Africa.

1.6.6 Chapter 7: Conclusion

A radical Workers' Party in the form of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) was launched at Birchwood Hotel in Johannesburg on the 4th to the 6th April 2019. The Party also registered and participated in the national and provincial elections held on the 8th May 2019.

I will attempt in this concluding chapter to draw the different strands of argument and answer the questions I set out to deal with. I will summarize the conclusions on the various aspects that I will have dealt with in the dissertation, looking specifically at the factors that have given rise to the establishment of a Workers' Party in the country and

how the 'NUMSA Moment' and the formation of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party is a response to this. I will also analyse critically how the formation of a Workers' Party has and will continue to influence South African politics.

CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES

2.1 Introduction

The role of this discussion on the conceptualisation of political parties is to lay a basis and foundation for the rest of the dissertation where I will critically examine the historical formation of leftwing revolutionary parties in South Africa and reflect particularly on the formation of the Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party. In this chapter I will examine what political parties are and explain how they are different to other interest groups. In doing so I will examine theoretical aspects of parties; their historical origins, how we understand them, their organisational features as well as their functions, roles, interests and their structure. I will also look at the ideological features of parties and how they play a central role in determining the character of parties. This will assist in developing both a 'typology' of parties and especially of Workers Parties, as well as laying the basis for the further analysis of Workers Parties in South Africa.

2.2 The Origin of Parties

2.2.1 Theoretical Points of departure

There are many different views on what is meant by politics. According to Andrew Heywood (2007:4) "Politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live". This takes place in society characterised by diversity and scarcity "which are an inevitable feature of the human condition" (Heywood, 2007:3). While some like Heywood see 'politics' as a "systematic organisation of hatreds" others regard it as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources and the practice of deception and manipulation (Heywood, 2007:4).

The word politics is derived from *polis*, the independent city states of Ancient Greece each which had their own form of government. Politics thus referred to the affairs of the *polis*, the affairs of state. David Easton (Easton et al, 1991:275) characterised the study of politics as "a study of the way decisions for a society are made and considered binding most of the time by most of the people". Political scientists he argued are different from anthropologists and sociologists as they are interested in the actions and

institutions in society in which authoritative decisions are made and the consequences they may have (Easton et al, 1991:275).

Many theorists see politics as a study of government (Heywood, 2007:5). This view of politics is rather restrictive as politics is associated with 'policy' rather than a system of social organisation. Heywood (2007:6) contends that to portray politics as state-bound activity is to ignore the importance of international and global influences such as transnational technology and multinational corporations. The focus on nation-states has shifted and the task of managing complex societies is no longer the activities of governments but a wide range of public and private sector bodies where "government is being replaced by 'governance'" (Heywood, 2007:6). One must draw the distinction between 'the political' as the *public* sphere and the non-political as the *private* sphere, which represents the division between the state and civil society. Politics he argues is the "art of the possible" and is a means of resolving conflict through compromise, conciliation and negotiation, rather than through the use of force (Heywood, 2007:9).

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels argued that "politics is concentrated economics" (Lenin, 1977a:21). The economic system determines other features of a society, including its political structure, "the economic structure of society [is] the real foundation on which rise moral, legal and political superstructures and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond" (Lenin, 1977a:22). While the base of society is economic, it is in the political sphere that change takes place. Political parties embody the theory which guides the working class to take power (Marx & Engels, 1978:473). The central institution of capitalist society and the main target of politics is the state "the State is nothing more than a machine for the oppression of one class by another" (Marx & Engels, 1978:475). In his early writings Marx emphasised the gap between civil society and the state as a reflection of the alienated essence of man. However later he developed a view of the state as an instrument of class domination "Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another" (McClellan, 1978:60). The ideal state for the Marxist is no state at all, since any government (whether a democracy or a dictatorship) is a vehicle for maintaining class antagonism. The state exists, therefore, because class antagonism exists. Once class antagonism is eradicated, the conditions for the existence of political power will disappear and politics as we know it will no longer exist; what we will have is an

“association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” (Marx & Engels, 1978:491).

This Marxist view of politics have come under scrutiny from various academic and non-academic circles because of its supposed ‘reductionism’ i.e. everything is reduced to economics and that the political sphere is a far more complicated area which requires its own independent investigation. Neo-Marxists like Nicos Poulantzas have argued that the classical Marxist view is ‘instrumentalist’ and what is needed is an appreciation of the relative autonomy of the different spheres of thought and investigation (Kolakowski, 1978:475).

2.2.2 The History and Development of Political Parties

There are many different views on where, how and why political parties originate. Maurice Duverger stressed the role of the “legislature as hothouses for nascent parties... (and) these early “electoral committees” were the first political parties” (Lawson, 1976:5). Political scientists like Kenneth Janda contend that parties are formed under conditions of stress when divisions and schisms break up existing parties and create new ones. Others like La Palombara and Weiner likened the birth of parties to ‘system wide’ crisis; a crisis of legitimacy when the governmental system and its rules for selecting leaders are challenged, a crisis of participation (Lawson, 1976:71).

An important contribution to the study of the formation of parties comes from the work of the Italian political theorist Giovanni Sartori. According to Sartori (2005:3) many parties start as factions within legislative bodies, the faction (*facere*) is a “political group bent on disruptive and harmful acts” and as differences grow within a party they develop an identity of their own and then an independent party may come into existence. The term ‘Party’ is derived from the verb *partire*, which means to part and therefore starts off as a divisive analytical construct, the *sect*. In the seventeenth century as the term ‘Party’ took on political connotations the ‘sect’ was disappearing and narrowly became associated with religion.

Sartori (2005:5) noted that the term party developed from the industrial revolution as an *objective term*; a “Party is a body of men united, for promoting their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they all agreed” (Sartori,

2005:8). He also argued that “[t]he rise of political parties is indubitably one of the principal distinguishing marks of modern government” (Lawson, 1976:102). It is with the development of pluralism in society that parties became acceptable “Parties came to be accepted subconsciously...with the realisation that diversity and dissent are not necessarily incompatible with, or disruptive of the political order” (Sartori, 2005:12). He also noted that party pluralism was preceded by constitutional pluralism – the division of power and the checks-and-balances doctrine. When all these strands pull together we have what is called party-systems as a structural requirement of the political system.

2.2.3 Conceptualisation of Political Parties

From its origins in the 19th century, political parties were originally civil society organisations. Interest groups and political parties carried out similar functions and shared a common interest which was to organize and articulate the social interests of individual citizens, social groups or other social organizations. Interest groups are characterized by specific organizational and functional characteristics and specific patterns of relationships with other actors in the political system (Heywood, 2007:272). Their missions, objectives, programmes, activities and areas of interest are usually limited to specific issues or concerns of particular social groups, not the more general design and functions of representation of parties. Interest groups can be distinguished from political parties in that they do not involve themselves in political competition for parliamentary seats.

According to Heywood (2007:272) political parties are different to other groups not only as they aim to exercise power by winning political office but also because they are organised bodies with a formal card-carrying membership, they have a broad issue focus addressing the different elements of government, they have a shared political preference and a general ideological identity. Western European parties emerged as an organised expression of social and political conflict. Liberal, Conservative, Radical and Social Democratic organisations tried to reaffirm their positions in and through party organisations. Through participation in elections, representation in parliaments and participation in democratically elected governments, they sought to implement social and political reforms.

To understand political parties one has to understand the relationship between organisation and power/authority. Robert Michels while recognising the emancipating potential of organisation argued that organisation promotes a bureaucracy and therefore elitism. This process acquired the status of a Law, the 'Iron Law of Oligarchy'. He argued that organisation was indispensable for democracy; it would be the "weapon of the weak in their struggle with the strong" (Michels, 1962:61). However it was inevitable from the sheer number of tasks involved in running a successful political party that a strong bureaucracy would arise and it was through this that the "perpetual subjugation of the weak is guaranteed" (Michels, 1962:62). Power 'is always conservative' and the product of organisation is always an elite, an oligarchy which perpetuates itself (Michels, 1961:333).

Duverger has written extensively on the question of power in political parties and his focus has been on a *cultural* explanation as well as what he calls an *intensification* of power that comes with the growth of organisation. In his study of working class and socialist parties he realised that it was through common action arising from their cultural experience that the "masses have been liberated not by numbers but by discipline" (Duverger, 1959:170). For Duverger this is an essential element which arises from nature and a mental attitude which is intrinsic to the working class; disciplined behaviour is part of working class culture. Organisation was the only power working class had in the early twentieth century Europe and the formation of working class parties was a practical and rational response to oppression.

Duverger also contends that power in political parties intensifies as the organisation grows and develops. The power of political parties grows as they become mass organisations and "obedience become automatic" (Duverger, 1959:176). The party shapes the responses of its members as it tells them what they want to hear while it subtly nudges them to respond the way the party leadership wants them to, "the mass is slowly orientated, directed, and transformed...It can no longer distinguish between what is its own and what is whispered to it" (Duverger, 1959:177).

Ebrahim Fakier & Tom Lodge (2015:17) argue that political parties are organisations of a group of people with shared interests and similar aims which seek to influence and control institutions of government and public policy and the distribution of public

resources in society. They exercise influence in society through the media and other social structures. They aim to exercise power and authority in government, or in the opposition, by getting elected to office. The main aim of political parties is the acquisition of power in the public sphere. If they do not succeed in this they lobby as an opposition. Parties also play key societal roles such as “aggregating and articulating interests in society, recruiting leaders, presenting election candidates and developing competing policy proposals (Fakir & Lodge, 2015:18). Parties also “aggregate and articulate problems raised by members, socialises voters and generates political values” (Fakir & Lodge, 2015: 18). Parties are thus institutional vehicles for representing citizens, for expressing their concerns and interests and making policies and policy alternatives in order to solve societies’ problems. In democratic societies they ensure the oversight of administration and demand accountability.

Political parties are more than civil society formations or associations and are organisations of groups of people for the acquisition of political power. In Marxist terms “every class struggle is a political struggle” which has to be organized (Probsting, 2014:3). Political power “cannot be seized, organized, and operated except through a political party” (Probsting, 2014:23). This means that the working class cannot accomplish its revolution without having a political program and an independent political party of its own. Political parties play key societal roles and in the working class movement they unify the different struggles found in trade unions, co-operatives, factory councils, educational work, elections, etc.

2.3 Organisational Features of a Political Party

2.3.1 Functions of Political Parties

The function of political parties is that of unifying, simplifying and stabilising the political process (Ball & Peters, 2000:97). In most political systems parties can bring together sectional interests, overcome geographical distances and provide coherence to sometimes divisive government structures (Ball & Peters, 2000:97). Political parties provide a link between government and people as they educate, instruct and activate the electorate (Ball & Peters, 2000:99). They use the mass media and local organisation to maintain contact with the citizenry and make them aware of and help them accept various policies. Political parties mobilize and involve the population in

politics and they also perform the important function of recruiting and training political leaders (Ball & Peters, 2000:99).

Political parties present ideas and issues; they articulate alternative value goals for the society. All political parties have philosophical bases no matter how blurred their actual practice is from their stated goals. The more coherent the philosophical base is the more ideological driven is a party. Ideology is an important part of the life of a party and plays a central part in the formulation of party theory (Ball & Peters, 2000:100).

Parties are also key institutions in elections and government. Parties play a critical function in taking public office; they are 'office-seeking' as the "life of the parties revolves about the present possession of power or the bid for power" (Ball & Peters, 2000:102). According to Yanai (1999) parties are 'vote-seeking' entities which *organise and mobilize support* for their candidates and for their policies. Parties play a role in getting people to vote and this makes parties institutions of popular appeal who gain electoral support for the purpose of office-taking. Parties play a crucial role as representatives and a "legitimizing link between citizens and the state" (Ball & Peters, 2000:102). Parties are important for effective political competition, that "to talk, today, about democracy, is to talk about a system of competitive political parties" (Ball & Peters, 2000:106). In essence parties have a relationship with consolidated democracy and the advance of democracy in many respects depends on the effectiveness of parties.

2.3.2 Party Structures

2.3.2.1 Types of Party Structures

The structure of political parties relate closely to the functions and the methods that political parties employ to realise their aim of capturing or retaining political power (Ball & Peters, 2000:103). The structures of parties that operate in a democratic dispensation are different to parties that have to operate in clandestine conditions brought about by totalitarian or an undemocratic political environment. Duverger advanced a fourfold classification of party structures, the caucus, the branch, the cell and the militia (Ball & Peters, 2000:104).

The *caucus or committee* is characterised by its small membership and concentrates on electoral activity largely remaining dormant between elections. Duverger cites the French Radical Party and the British Labour Party before 1918 as two examples of this type of party (Ball & Peters, 2000:104). The *branch* party arose from the growth of European socialist parties after the extension of the franchise to the working class. The branch party is a mass party seeking to enrol the maximum number of members and it generally has a centralised structure with the basic units distributed geographically according to constituency arrangements (Ball & Peters, 2000:104). The third type of party is the *cell* structure which was invented by revolutionary socialist parties. The cell structure is essentially conspiratorial with no contact between individual units to prevent detection and infiltration by state authorities. The last type of party is the *militia* structure which takes on the hierarchical character of an army. The militia form of organisation is adopted by revolutionary parties to mimic a military system with hierarchical control over party members (Ball & Peters, 2000:106).

Worker parties can be organised along any of the four types of party structures. The caucus party is an elitist party form which excludes the mass and aims to rule on the basis of the superiority of its ideas. While this was the form that the British Labour Party took in its early years (before 1918) it changed into a branch party based on a centralised structure where delegates are elected via branches. The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) is a classic example of a branch party that had to resort to a cell structure when it was banned in the early 1950's. The militia system is hierarchical structure organised along military lines and is not a common form of organisation; a good example is the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa which is organised with Julius Malema as the 'Commander in Chief'.

2.3.2.2 Factors that determine Party Structures

The factors influencing party structures are separate but interrelated. Historical, Socio-economic and Ideological factors are the main determinants of party structures. *Socio-Economic* factors refer to the level of economic development, the political culture that prevails in an area, the social influences of religion and cultural practices which all play a role in determining party structures. The level of economic development and its effect

is clearly seen in the markedly different responses to campaigns in urban and rural settings (Ball & Peters, 2000:107). Political and other factors like religion are also important as political culture determines the types of parties that emerge, for example in Northern Ireland the Catholic/Protestant divide plays a huge role in the different types of party structures that emerged.

Historical factors are also important in determining party structures. Parties are creations of modern political processes (Ball & Peters, 2000:108) and their formation presupposes a degree of urbanisation and development of mass communication. Backward countries with large swathes of rural areas and poor mass communication would require different party structures to those in the urban areas.

The *ideological* framework of a party is also important. Unlike other European and Eastern European countries like Britain, France, and Russia, American parties are primarily electoral machines laying little emphasis on ideology (Ball & Peters, 2000:109). The ideological orientation of a party is a subjective factor which is determined by the participants themselves and is not determined purely by conditions they find themselves in. The socio-economic and historical factors are objective determinants that largely fall outside the direct control of the actors. They create the environment in which political parties function while the ideological framework is largely determined by the parties themselves.

2.4 Parties and Party Systems – a classification

2.4.1 Typology of Parties

Some theorists have tried to establish a typology of parties “typology refers to the systematic classification of parties by a particular set of characteristics” (Lawson, 1976:16). Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond (2003:1) refer to three criteria which makes a systematic classification possible: The first is the nature of the *formal organisation* of a party where some parties are organisationally thin on the ground while others develop large mass-memberships. Some parties develop networks of personal interaction and exchange while others are open and universalistic in membership appeal. Some rely on modern techniques of communication and ignore primary, face-to-

face channels of communication. The second criterion involves the nature of the party's *programmatic* commitments. Some parties have well-articulated ideologies rooted in political philosophy while others do not have a well-defined ideological or programmatic commitment. The third criterion involves the *strategy and behavioural norms* of the party, specifically, whether the party is tolerant and pluralistic or proto-hegemonic in its objectives and behavioural style: some parties are fully committed to democratic rules-of-the-game, are tolerant and respectful towards their opponents, and are pluralistic in their views of polity and society; others are semi-loyal to democratic norms and institutions, or are explicitly anti-system.

Parties in real life situations have a habit of not fitting themselves into models and those that attempt to fit them into the models often find themselves adapting the reality of the party into their own model. The type of parties is influenced by certain factors; party membership, the character of leadership, party statutes, how 'issue-driven' parties are, their ability to communicate and the approach of a party to power.

To develop a typology of a party we must examine the factors that influence this. Heywood (2007:273) argues that the important factors to consider are the following: cadre and mass parties, representative and integrative parties, constitutional and revolutionary parties and left-wing and right-wing parties. The most common distinction is between cadre parties and mass parties. According to Heywood (2007:273) cadre parties are characterised by a politically active elite with quasi-military discipline that offer leadership to the masses. The term cadre is used to refer to trained and professional party members who are expected to exhibit a high level of commitment and ideological conviction. Mass parties on the other hand place heavy emphasis on broadening membership and a wide electoral base. The first mass based parties arose as socialist parties, such as the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the British Labour Party, which were formed specifically to mobilize working class support. Such parties place an emphasis on recruitment and organisation rather than ideology and political conviction. The membership does not actively participate in the organisation but are rather supporters of the principles and goals of such parties. Mass parties according to Otto Kercheimer are 'catch-all parties', 'de-ideologised' socialist parties like the modern day SPD and British Labour Party emphasise leadership and unity rather than ideology.

According to Heywood (2007:274), Sigmund Neumann (1956) drew the distinction between parties of representation and parties of integration. *Representative* parties see their task as the securing of votes in elections, reflecting public opinion instead of shaping it. Representative parties are pragmatic parties which use a 'catch-all strategy' and use market research rather than popular mobilization to win support. *Integrative* parties on the other hand adopt proactive, rather than reactive, political strategies (Heywood, 2007:274). They mobilize in order to educate and inspire the masses rather than merely respond to their concerns. Both cadre and mass parties fall into the criteria of being integrative as they set out to 'win over' the electorate to their belief system.

The third factor is the distinction between constitutional parties and revolutionary parties. *Constitutional* parties recognize the rights and entitlements of other parties operating within a framework of rules and constraints (Heywood, 2007:274). They recognize the division between the party and the state and that the state institutions are formally independent and politically neutral. They above all emphasize the rules of electoral competition. *Revolutionary* parties on the other hand are anti-system and anti-constitutional parties, belonging either to the left-wing or right-wing. These parties aim to seize power and overthrow the existing constitutional structure using quasi-legalism to promote their program. Such parties are often proscribed and banned and when they have come to power they become 'ruling' or regime parties, often suppressing opponents and establishing one-party systems (Heywood, 2007:275). The distinction between party and state disappears and in its place there arises a 'party-state' apparatus (Heywood, 2007:275).

The fourth element is the distinction in ideological orientation, between left-wing and right-wing parties. *Left-wing* parties (progressive, socialist, communist) are characterised by a commitment to change, either for social reform or a total transformation of the economy. These parties draw their support base from the poor and disadvantaged. *Right-wing* parties (conservative, fascist) generally uphold the social system and base themselves on stabilising the existing system. Their supporters are generally business people and the middle classes.

While it may be important to develop a typology of a Workers' Party, I would argue that its features are largely of a mixed character making it difficult to affix a particular 'typology' to the party. Workers' Parties are either *mass based parties* or *cadre parties* depending on their aims. The Leninist Party is a cadre based party that aims to become a mass based workers party. While this appears contradictory it reflects both the need for ideological clarity and firmness on the one hand and the ability to organise and recruit the mass of workers to the party to fight for change on the other. The Workers' Party is both integrative and tries under certain conditions to become a representative party. It aims on the one hand to educate and inspire the masses and on the other hand to seek representation through elections to parliament. While a Workers' Party may register with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and therefore abide by the constitution of the country its real purpose is to strive for revolutionary change. Ideologically the Workers' Party is a leftwing party whose main aim is to restructure society fundamentally. This does in most cases mean the fight to overthrow the ruling class and establish a different society on new foundations.

2.5 Ideological Orientation of Political Parties

2.5.1 What is Political Ideology?

The term ideology was coined in 1796 by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy who referred to it as a new 'science of ideas' that set out to uncover the origins of conscious thought and ideas (Heywood, 2007:44). According to scholars there are three approaches to ideology; the scientific, pejorative and value-neutral approach. De Tracy argued for a scientific approach to ideology 'distinct from prejudice' which was "a study of the process of forming ideas" (Baradat, 1997:6). Freedan (2003:4) argues that ideology aims to "establish ideals of thought and action on an empirically verifiable base" and ideology is a "phenomenon worthy of study in its own right rather than merely as an 'epiphenomenon'".

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels developed a second theory, a pejorative approach, which saw ideology as a "fabrication used by a particular group of people to justify themselves" (Baradat, 2003:7). Ideology was thus a false representation of reality as it concealed the real 'class' relations in society and ideas merely propagated class rule

and protected the class system of exploitation. For Marx the dominant political ideas were the ideas of the ruling class, and ideology is a false consciousness, a false set of ideas which can only be corrected by an objective and scientific analysis of society. Social theorists Mannheim and Habermas concurred that political ideology was nothing more than an expression of the interests of a particular class (Heywood, 2007:44).

Frederick Watkins in his book *The Age of Ideology* suggested that ideology comes from political extremes and will therefore always be opposed to the status quo (Baradat, 1997:7). The ideas emanating from this are invariably “militant, revolutionary and violent” (Baradat, 1997:7). Ideology arises from a rationalist tradition and was therefore anathema to Conservatism. While the attempt to create a value-free approach to ideology sounds ideal, the fact is that ideas are value-laden. According to Karl Popper they are “an instrument of social control to ensure compliance and subordination” (Heywood, 2007:44)

2.5.2 ‘Right’ and ‘Left’ Ideologies

Lenin writing in the Marxist tradition argues that there are two fundamental ideologies in modern capitalist society, bourgeois ideology and socialist ideology. He argued that “there is no middle course for mankind has not created a ‘third’ ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms, there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology” (Lenin, 1977a:121). Ideas are not random constructs but are central in the struggle for social change. Ideology is a critical element in decision making and it facilitates the choices one makes.

‘Right’ ideologies are characterised by the adherence to individual rights and liberties as in Liberalism, which is the oldest of the contemporary political ideologies (Stadler, 1991:265). Libertarianism where individuals own their own lives and view the state with ‘great suspicion’ is another of the main rightwing political ideologies. Nationalism is a virulent ideology which often masquerades in the South as a ‘left’ ideology, but is essentially rightwing in character.

The central value of Socialism is equality and it often rests on a sense of outrage that oppression, poverty, ignorance and degradation continues to exist despite the

availability of rational means to overcome these problems (Stadler, 1987:272). For Karl Marx and Frederick Engels ideology was 'false consciousness'; they saw ideology as a "fabrication used by a particular group of people to justify themselves" (Baradat, 1997:7). Ideology was thus a false representation of reality as it concealed the real 'class' relations in society and ideas merely propagated class rule and protected the class system of exploitation. For Marx the dominant political ideas were the ideas of the ruling class, and ideology is a false consciousness, a false set of ideas which can only be corrected by an objective and scientific analysis of society.

2.6 Conclusion

We have dealt with the origin of parties and explained their theoretical genesis. We have also outlined the history and development of political parties and discussed their organisational features and their function. This allowed us to do a classification of political parties which allowed us to understand what is meant by a 'typology' of parties. This 'typology' would include an understanding of the ideological orientation of political parties which provides an insight into the character of these parties. In the next chapter we will deal with the historical, organisational and ideological orientation of Workers' Parties, which will provide insight into the nature and character of a new radical Workers' Party in South Africa.

Chapter 3 Workers' Parties: Historical, Organisational and Ideological Genesis

3.1 Introduction

Having dealt with the conceptualisation and characteristic features of political parties in the previous chapter I will now look at the historical development of Workers' Parties. I will examine the historical, theoretical, ideological and organisational development of Workers' Parties which will provide insight into the character of such parties. It will be shown how they have developed over time and changed due to changing economic and political developments in capitalism itself. A Marxist paradigm will be used to explain the development of Workers Parties and demonstrate the materialist basis on which this development has taken place. I will trace the development of the class struggle, discuss the difference between the economic struggle and the political struggle, the relationship of spontaneity to consciousness and the historical divide between reform and revolution. I will also look at the questions of political and organisational independence of Workers Parties, the organisational principles of democratic centralism and the difference between mass parties and vanguard parties. I will then examine the question of Stalinism and its relationship to Leninism, the development of 'new' Workers Parties and the development of alternative socialist ideas in the post-Stalinist period. This will assist in understanding and explaining the fundamental theoretical foundations on which the SRWP is being built.

The period of study of Workers' Parties spans nearly one hundred and seventy years and is marked by significant shifts in the character of these parties; from broad mass workers' parties of the whole class to vanguard parties and later bureaucratic top down authoritarian structures. These parties are either radical Socialist parties which end up as Social Democratic parties, revolutionary vanguard parties which lead the fight for revolutionary changes in society or ostensible revolutionary parties which become Stalinist bureaucratic and authoritarian structures. These developments will assist to map a 'typology' of a Workers' Party. It will also assist in understanding the main source and inspiration for the formation of the 'new' radical Workers' Party in South Africa.

3.2 The Workers' Party and the Class Struggle

3.2.1 The Marxist Paradigm

The Workers' Party is a radical left-wing formation which represents and organises the interests of the working class in society and falls squarely within a Marxist paradigm as “an organisation, its political ideas, theories, strategies and tactics can only be coherently understood, and analysed, within the framework of its own goals and theoretical paradigm” (Habib, 1991:8). According to Seymour, (1977:2) Marxism “is the natural, inevitable political expression of the modern labour movement”, and is the “ideology of the workers movement”. The theoretical paradigm must “identify with the goals and theoretical heritage of the organisation” (Habib, 1991:9). The Marxist paradigm, the way that people perceive and analyse reality, has certainly influenced the course of modern history. Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Frederick Engels (1820-1895) together developed an approach to reality which they called “scientific socialism”, which at the end of the 19th century came to be known as Marxism. More than being activists and observers, they were highly educated scholars and intellectuals who were conversant with almost all realms of human inquiry – ranging from philosophy and literature to the natural sciences, but especially the social sciences: including what is now divided up in modern academia as history, economics, sociology, anthropology and political science (Le Blanc, 1996:2). According to Le Blanc (1996:4) “They created a distinctive and expansive synthesis which blended classical German philosophy (Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach), classical political economy predominant in England (Adam Smith, David Ricardo) and French political thought (the thinkers of the Enlightenment, the ideologues of the French revolution, the post-Revolution-plebeian-radicals such as Babeuf, pioneering historians such as Michelet, utopians such as Saint-Simon, Owen and Fourier)”.

The philosophy of Marxism is *dialectical materialism*, a combination of Hegel's dialectic and the materialism of Feuerbach. The dialectical method is to comprehend processes as “complex, interacting, developing totality that evolves through the contradictory interaction of its component parts” (Le Blanc, 1996:6). This philosophical approach is also *humanistic* (Le Blanc, 1996:6). The application of this dialectical method to history is called the *materialist conception of history* or *historical materialism*. This is an integral and harmonious scientific theory which demonstrates that historically the

economic productive forces lies at the heart of how one system of social life developed into another higher system; how capitalism, for instance, grew out of feudalism. Just as man's knowledge reflects nature (which exists independently of him), "so man's *social knowledge* (i.e. his various views and doctrines) reflects the *economic system* of society" (Marx & Engels, 1978:165). Technological developments and economic productivity help to shape broader historical development. Political institutions themselves are a superstructure on the economic foundation (Lenin, 1977a: 46). Marx's economic theory is the *labour theory of value*, where the value of every commodity is determined by the quantity of socially necessary labour time spent on its production. Marx however saw this economic relation as a *relation between people* and the secret to capitalist profit was the extraction of *surplus value* from the labour of the working class (Lenin, 1977a: 47).

The synthesis which Marx and Engels developed was not simply meant to advance human knowledge in the abstract. They saw human misery all around them and were thus fired-up by what Marx called "the categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a degraded, enslaved, neglected, contemptible being" (Marx & Engels, 1978:469). The development of industrial capitalism in England and the French revolution created capitalism which laid the foundation for socialism, the condition where "Man, at last the master of his own form of social organisation, becomes at the same time the lord over nature, master of himself - free" (Marx & Engels, 1978:469). It was to fall to Marx to uncover the laws governing capitalist development and show which social force was capable of becoming the creator of a new society, to show that the struggle of classes was the basis and the driving force of all development (Lenin, 1977a:47). Marx and Engels were convinced that the modern working class would "carry through the world emancipating act", on the foundation of "scientific socialism, the theoretical expression of the proletarian movement...to bring to the consciousness of the new oppressed class the conditions and nature of the act which is its destiny to accomplish" (Marx & Engels, 1978:471). For Marx, people have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and the only way to overcome the resistance of the ruling class was to constitute the power capable of sweeping away the old and creating the new, and to enlighten and organise those forces for the struggle. This power is the independent organisation of the proletariat which becomes enlightened and educated by waging its class struggle (Lenin, 1977:48).

Marx insisted that the “emancipation of the working class can only come from the workers themselves” (Marx & Engels, 1978:472) which freedom would represent the liberation of society as a whole from the problems of capitalism. At the heart lies the programme of a party which contains its aims, an independent political party of the working class which will seek “to win the battle of democracy” (Le Blanc, 1996:7). The aim of building the party was to ensure the success of the proletarian revolution, which was “the central pivot of his thought” (Le Blanc, 1996:5). The coming to political power of the working class will transform the economy to create a society which is radically more free and democratic (Le Blanc, 1996:5).

Marxism at the end of the 19th century was ‘objectified’, “mechanically simplified where the philosophy of practice was reduced to soulless fatalism” (Fischer, 1972:24). Antonio Gramsci, the renowned Italian Marxist put it succinctly: “history was seen as an automatic slot-machine – you put in five liras’ worth of industrial capitalism, and five liras’ worth of socialism would drop out at the other end” (Fischer, 1972:24). The task of socialists was reduced to fighting for the reform of the system of capitalism. It was the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin) who successfully revived the notion of Marxism as the *philosophy of practice*, as historical necessity, which does not operate independently from men but embraces the experience and decisions of men (Fischer, 1972:27). Lenin as the major theorist of Bolshevism was a man of action, the agitator and propagandist, the leader of an active political party who understood that the task was to “organise the class struggle of the proletariat and to lead this struggle, the ultimate aim of which is the conquest of political power by the proletariat and the organisation of a socialist society” (Fischer, 1972:27).

3.2.2 The Materialist basis of the Workers Party

The materialist conception of history is the basis for the theory of the labour movement. Marx and Engels were not the first to develop and advance a vision of a classless society. As they themselves noted, earlier thinkers had developed “in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, utopian pictures of ideal social conditions; in the eighteenth, actual communistic theories...it was not simply class privileges that were to be abolished, but class distinctions themselves” (Marx & Engels, 1978:69).

According to Marx and Engels, the two dominant classes in capitalist society are the bourgeois and the proletariat. Engels in the preface to the 1888 edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* explained “By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour. By proletariat, the class of modern wage-labourers, who having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live” (Marx & Engels, 1978:473). As the capitalist economy develops, the general population undergoes a process of proletarianisation where intermediary classes increasingly disappear and the rank and occupational categories of the working class are expanded. These labourers, who sell their labour power in a piecemeal way, are a commodity, which like every other item of commerce are exposed to the vicissitudes of competition and the fluctuation of the market; the main aim is to “increase the amount of surplus value for the employer” (Marx & Engels, 1978:475). There is a natural tendency for the capitalist to maximize profits, to keep wages low, to keep the workday long, to increase the pace of work, and a natural tendency for the worker to resist this. The advance of industry creates the conditions for the revolutionary combination of labourers, their common association, and “What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave diggers” (Marx & Engels, 1978:483).

According to Marx and Engels (1978:484) there develops an irreconcilable antagonism between workers and capitalists “an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight” in which the gains of one class can only be secured at the expense of the other. There is a “more or less veiled civil war, raging within society” which would break out “into open revolution, where the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat” (Marx & Engels, 1978:477). Thus as capitalism grows stronger, dominating and centralising the state, it at the same time prepares the conditions for its own demise as the “proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority” which “cannot raise itself up, without the whole super incumbent strata of official society being sprung in the air” (Marx & Engels, 1978:148). This must ultimately end “either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes” (Marx & Engels, 1978:477). The working class would then take power, “take their conditions of existence...under their own control” (Marx & Engels, 1978:169). The new proletarian state would for the first time establish true forms of majority rule, establishing

social ownership and control of society's economic resources. The technology and social organisation would under a new communist society be utilized to meet human needs; class divisions and antagonisms would give way to a society of abundance and freedom in which each individual would be enabled to develop to the highest of his or her abilities (Le Blanc, 1996:45).

3.2.2.1 Marx's proletariat in the 21st Century

According to Molyneux (2017:23) there are various neo-Marxist theories that attempt to prove that Marx's proletariat has been/is disappearing (identifying the working class with the so-called 'Fordist' era of capitalism, factory workers, dockers, miners etc). The working class signifies the class of people who live exclusively or almost exclusively by the sale of their labour power and it includes, therefore, blue collar and white collar workers, teachers and nurses as well as factory workers and fire-fighters, administrative staff along with office cleaners, shop workers and bus drivers (Molyneux, 2017:23).

There have been dramatic changes to the character and composition of the working class in the last 25 years. A look at salaried employees (not strictly the working class) tells a compelling story. In 1993 the figure for salaried employees was 985 million out of a world population of approximately 5.526 billion, or about 18%. By 2013 the number of waged/salaried employees had grown to 1,575 billion out of a total of 7.086 billion or just over 22% (Molyneux, 2017:26). Today the working class in advanced capitalist countries like the United States and Germany constitute 70% or more of the population (Molyneux, 2017:23). The growth of wage labour has been predominantly in the developing world rising from 640 million in 1993 to 1,165 million in 2013. The Chinese proletariat on its own is by far the biggest national proletariat that has ever existed and is 50 to 100 times larger than the entire international proletariat in Marx's day. The trend is clear. There is a significant rise in the growth of the global proletariat and the strength of its potential social and political power is reflected in its increasing concentration in the big cities, "The evidence overwhelmingly shows that the concentration of the working class, that 'worker-capital dialectic' has grown much stronger and bigger than in his day" (Molyneux, 2017:24) .

3.2.2.2. The Proletariat is a Homogenous but Multi-Layered Class

In Marx's words the revolutionary action of the working class is "the independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority" (Molyneux, 2017:28). Some theorists like Hardt and Negri argue that the 'working class' is a very narrow concept "The concept of the working class has come to be used as an exclusive concept...to refer only to industrial workers, separating them from workers in agriculture, services and other sectors...[or] to all waged workers, separating them from the poor, unpaid domestic labourers, and all others" (Molyneux, 2017:29). They prefer using the term, 'the multitude'. Molyneux (2017:29) argues that this is an unscientific characterisation as that the concept of working class does not refer only to industrial workers, but also to "bus drivers, refuse collectors, office cleaners, hospital workers and supermarket cashiers". Trade unions, which organise the economic resistance of the working class, organise not only industrial workers, but also white collar and service workers.

In Marxist terms the working class is not only the employed but also includes the unemployed. For Marx the unemployed is a creation of capitalism, a reserve army of labour which keeps the employed workers in check and the value of labour depressed. In the period of capitalist neoliberalism unemployment has taken on a more structured and permanent character. According to some theorists and activists the privatisation, de-regulation and casualisation of labour has led to the demise of the organised working class and the growth of the subaltern lower classes, the unemployed, the impoverished and the poor in general. Molyneux (2017:30) refutes this notion and argues that the unemployed is not a different class or group of people. Under capitalism the levels of pay and general living conditions are different for different sections of the working class, and "skilled workers (were) generally paid more than unskilled workers, white collar more than blue collar, those with full-time jobs more than those on part-time, employed workers more than unemployed, workers in the advanced countries more than workers or peasants in the global south" (Molyneux, 2017:30). Income differentials or differences in the conditions of living in the working class are not fundamental, but the exploitative nature of the relationship to capital is. Even relatively well-paid workers are exploited by capital and surplus value is extracted from their labour, and their relation to capital is an antagonistic one (Molyneux, 2017:30).

What we need to grasp according to Molyneux (2017:30) is that the different strata of the working class have different “potential economic and political power” in society. The significance of this is the appreciation of the difference in the social weight each strata has in capitalist society. The strike action of the industrial proletariat for instance can bring the entire economy to a standstill, while the lower and more oppressed sectors, like the unemployed youth, may be the first to revolt. These differences have a strategic importance to class struggle. The task though is to bring these different strands of struggle together, to unite the struggles of the different strata of the class into a single assault on capitalism (Khan, 2013:3).

3.2.3 The Capitalist Crisis

For Marxists, economics is not a separate and pure theory. It is ‘political economy’; it is part and parcel of the class struggle (Molyneux, 2017:26). Capitalism is a chaotic system of production beyond the control of humanity and it is doomed to plunge society into ever greater crises.

3.2.3.1 The Cyclical Crisis

The purpose of production under capitalism is profit and not consumption as it was in all previous societies. It is in the purchase of a particular commodity, labour power and its application in the production process that this labour-power is converted into actual labour which is absorbed in the newly produced commodity. The capitalists pay wages for this labour-power which is equivalent to what sustains the labourer, the cost of which is covered by value produced for only part of the workday. The rest of the value produced in the workday is free to the capitalist, constituting what Marx called surplus value (Le Blanc, 1996: 25). Out of this surplus-value comes the profits of the capitalists and it is the accumulation of capital that lies at the heart of the system “Capital is self-expanding value, accumulation” (Le Blanc, 1996:25). Capitalists continually attempt to increase profits by increasing the absolute and relative surplus value that workers produce - that is, by lengthening the working day or increasing productivity, thus producing more surplus value with the same level of wages.

However, it is the competition between capitalists that force them to become more skilful and audacious as Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto put it “The bourgeois cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production and with them the whole relations of society...” (Marx & Engels, 1978:478). The development and application of technology, due to investment, also allows them to sell their commodities at a cheaper price, reducing the amount of human labour required, and thus making goods cheaper and easier to produce by reducing wage costs. Capitalism tends to increase the use of machines and technology in production. The paradox about the increasing use of technology, however, is that as less and less labour becomes necessary, two things happen: the machines, which replace waged labour, cannot consume, therefore the “effective demand” in the market – i.e. the ability for workers to buy - is further reduced; meanwhile, since it is only human labour that creates value, as machines replace workers the capacity to make profit is actually reduced over the long term (Le Blanc, 1996:25).

Karl Marx explained the dynamic by understanding that the value of a commodity has two main components: (a) constant capital (that is the machinery and the raw materials used in the production of the commodity; (b) variable capital – the labour power that produced the commodity. The progressing reproduction of capital on an extended scale leads to a change in the organic composition of capital, i.e. in the relationship between constant capital (machinery, raw material etc.) and variable capital (labour). The share of constant capital which transmits value but doesn't create new value is increasing, while the share of variable capital which creates new value gets relatively smaller. With the decreasing share of variable capital, the source for the creation of new value and hence the source for surplus value decreases too. The machinery and the raw materials do not create new value; their values are merely preserved in the value of the commodity. Labour power creates new value because labour power is exploited in such a way that part of the labour rendered is not paid. This unpaid labour constitutes the basis of surplus value, which is the source of profits. There can be no profits without surplus-value and no surplus value without unpaid labour. The attempts to replace living labour power by machines undermine the very basis of profits under capitalism (Le Blanc, 1996:26). This Marx called the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, which he regarded as the fundamental law to explain capitalist crisis “This is in every

respect the most important law of modern political economy, and the most essential for understanding the most difficult relations. It is the most important law from the historical standpoint. It is a law which, despite its simplicity, has never before been grasped and, even less, consciously articulated” (Le Blanc, 1996: 26).

This gives rise to other ramifications of the accumulation process. One of these is the periodic tendency to over-produce - to clog the market with more than can be purchased by consumers, resulting in a cut-back in production, lay-offs, shrinking markets, factory closures, unemployment etc (Le Blanc, 1996:26). A capitalist crisis of overproduction does not mean that there are too many goods produced that people need. It means that more goods are produced than can profitably be sold, even if the unsalable goods are desperately needed. This is an expression of the contradiction between the productive forces and capitalism’s relations of production, which Marx and Engels first called attention to in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848: “For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put the existence of the entire bourgeois society on trial, each time more threateningly. In these crises, a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed.” (Marx & Engels, 1978:478)

The crises of the capitalist economy, whether resulting from over-production or the falling rate of profit “are not ‘derangements’ in the usual sense of the word. They are ‘derangements’ without which the capitalist economy could not develop at all” (Le Blanc, 1996:26). Crises in the capitalist system do not mean that this is the collapse of the system, but rather that the stronger and more efficient capitalists can further transform the system and secure greater domination (Le Blanc, 1996:26).

3.2.3.2 The Epoch of Capitalist Decay

Writing some 50 years after the first publication of volume one of *Capital*, Lenin was in a position to study capitalism in greater detail analysing and examining numerous repetitions of the capitalist cycle. His principal conclusion was that the cumulative effect

of these repetitions had brought about a qualitative change in capitalism (Lenin, 1977a:645). From being a mode of production in which competition between capitals was a driving force which ensured an overall increase both in productivity and in society's total product, it had become one in which the dominance of monopolies produced a tendency to restrict further development. Lenin following Luxemburg and Bukharin recognised that capitalism had changed qualitatively into Imperialism, where "(1) the concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this "finance capital", of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital as distinguished from the export of commodities acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves, and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed (Lenin, 1977a:700). While clearly recognising and delineating the immense power of monopoly capitalism, Lenin (1977a:708) emphasised that "it inevitably engenders a tendency to stagnation and decay" and he called it "parasitic or decaying capitalism." Since monopoly prices are established even temporarily, the "motive cause of technical and, consequently, of all other progress disappears to a certain extent and, further, the economic possibility arises of deliberately retarding technical progress" (Lenin, 1977a:709). Thus, just as free trade created its own negation in the form of monopoly, so monopoly not only represented the most advanced elements within capitalism but also tended to negate the driving force, competition with other capitals, which promoted capitalism's economic progress. As soon as a powerful firm can corner the market in raw materials and safeguard its profits by monopoly pricing, it is no longer under the same pressure to find more efficient methods of production.

For Lenin (1977a:708) "The epoch of capitalist imperialism is one of ripe and overripe capitalism that faces collapse and is ripe to make way for socialism." Imperialism's extended lifespan had reproduced not only inequality, poverty and environmental damage, but also a more highly integrated global economy, and a still greater contradiction between the highly socialised system of production and ever more narrowly concentrated private ownership. This was the highest and final stage of capitalism: "It is clear why imperialism is moribund capitalism, capitalism in transition to socialism: monopoly, which grows out of capitalism, is already dying capitalism, the

beginning of its transition to socialism. The tremendous “socialisation of labour by imperialism (what its apologists, the bourgeois economists, call “interlocking”) produces the same result” (Le Blanc, 1996:28).

One of the most important characteristics of Monopoly Capitalism is the rapidly advancing monopolisation process at a global level. This process of advanced monopolisation has become known as capitalist globalisation (Le Blanc, 1996:28). Thus, in the last 25 years, there has been a massive increase in mergers and acquisitions in the banking and industrial sectors. Today, these firms, together with their affiliates, control two thirds of world trade. The monopolies are driven to greater internationalisation by falling profit rates in their home markets, and such a high mass of capital accumulation that national markets alone are too small for them. This is because the huge investments in the ever bigger production facilities required by competition themselves require an ever bigger market in which to realise profits (Le Blanc, 1996:29). Globalisation and world trade has also allowed capitalism to temporarily continue expanding. But the world market has finite limits; expansion cannot continue forever, and capitalism comes up against the limits of the nation state (Le Blanc, 1996:39).

Nonetheless, the success of the bourgeoisie in raising the rate of exploitation has not overcome the problem of declining growth rates or rates of profit in the productive core of the economy. On the contrary, the tendency towards speculation and the flight to unproductive financial investments has increased in the period of globalisation. This process is strengthened through the worldwide opening of markets, including financial markets, to imperialist capital. Between 1980 and the beginning of this century, the value of foreign holdings trebled, in many countries, from an average of 36 per cent of GDP to 100 per cent. The flight into speculation has in the meantime achieved such astronomical values that the term “casino capitalism” has come into common use. Correspondingly, the importance of speculative money capital within capital as a whole has grown.

In the past few decades, the main solution for the ruling class has been credit. Credit can allow a greater amount of consumption to take place, for the capitalists to artificially expand the market in the short term at the expense of creating a bigger crisis in the future. This current crisis is so deep precisely because the credit boom that preceded it

laid down the foundations for an even worse crisis, as debt must be paid off eventually. The availability of credit only stretches the market beyond its natural limits, thus it can only postpone an inevitable crisis.

3.2.3.3 Neoliberalism is a political project

The term neoliberalism is often used to refer to a theory, a set of ideas, a political strategy or a historical period. This dissertation will use the term neoliberalism to mean a “political project” carried out by the corporate capitalist class to curb the power of labour as they felt threatened both politically and economically towards the end of the 1960’s and 1970’s (Harvey, 2016:1). The ruling class was facing a big crisis in the mid-1970’s and they were aware that they had to wage a struggle on various fronts, the ideological front, the political front and above all they had to curb the power of labour by whatever means possible. On the ideological front various think tanks, like the Manhattan Institute, the Heritage Foundation and the Ohlin Foundation amongst others were established to popularise the ideas of Freiderich Hayek and Milton Friedman and supply-side economics (Harvey, 2016:1). The idea was for these ideas to become dominant in society, influence the press and dominate the university space. With respect to Labour, they aimed to make domestic labour competitive with global labour and they took “capital to where the low-wage labour forces were” (Harvey, 2016:2). For this to work they had to reduce tariffs and ‘empower finance capital’, privatize and deregulate and deindustrialize through automation and robotization (Harvey, 2016:2). This was both an ideological assault and an economic assault, put in place bit by bit, to crush labour.

In response to the increasing crises developing in capitalist society the neoliberal project was to introduce structural adjustment programmes which reduced drastically the living conditions of people “The population of Mexico suffered something like a 25 percent loss of its standard of living in the four years after 1982 as a result of the structural adjustment politics of the IMF” (Harvey, 2016:3). Neoliberalism has shifted the locus of struggles from the industrial sphere and created large-scale resistance movement around the question of the quality of daily life. While these struggles are class issues they are not so in a classical sense (Harvey, 2016;3).

3.2.3.4 Capitalism at an impasse

When Marxists say that capitalism has reached an impasse they are not saying that it cannot recover. Capitalism will always find its way out of the deepest of crises. The question is that it is taking society deeper and deeper into the morass where the working class and poor bear the brunt of this crisis. What stands out about the crisis is that the world order is becoming “increasingly unstable and unsustainable” (Molyneux, 2017:11). The instability consists of increasing inequality, the increasing likelihood of economic crisis and increasing geo-political rivalry leading to war (Molyneux, 2017:11). The unsustainability is all the above “plus climate change as the key component of a wider environmental crisis” (Molyneux, 2017:11).

The second critical issue for Marxism is that historical materialism has nothing in common with fatalism, crisis-mongering (Khan, 2002:4). Our fate is not predetermined by economic laws, nor are men and women merely puppets of blind “historical forces”, as Engels in a letter to Joseph Bloch clarifies “According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms the proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.” For Marxism, while the economic situation is the basis, the various elements of the superstructure “political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views...also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many ways preponderate in determining their *form*” (Marx & Engels, 1978:760). Thus Marxism does not eliminate the subjective factor – the conscious activity of men and women, shaping their own destiny. Trotsky writing in 1928 in response to Bukharin’s draft programme for the Stalinized Comintern-based on the assertion of a “Third Period” of terminal capitalist crisis puts the question of the Party at the centre of his analysis: “As soon as the objective prerequisites have matured, the key to the whole historical process passes into the hands of the subjective factor, that is the party. Opportunism which consciously or unconsciously thrives upon the inspiration of the past epoch always tends to underestimate the role of the subjective factor that is the importance of the party and a revolutionary leadership...” (Trotsky, 1974:64).

Capitalism has also created the class capable of replacing it: the modern proletariat. The working class's central role in production, its organization through the productive process, and the inevitability of collective class struggle made it not only the gravedigger of capitalism; it also pointed to the possibility of organizing production on a collective and non-exploitive basis. While capitalism has laid the basis for socialism, it survives by destroying the material and human achievements that it allowed to develop. The working class bears the brunt of the capitalist crises, in the form of retrenchments, wage freezes, high prices, and generally worsening conditions. The working class has been stirring across all continents; struggles against privatization, lack of service delivery, high prices, and unemployment find their expression in ongoing strikes, massive protests, workers taking to the streets and large scale demonstrations. The objective economic crises of capitalism create the basis for the subjective social crisis in society which ultimately is reflected in a *crisis of leadership of the proletariat*.

3.2.4 Economic Struggle to Political Struggle

Communist society would only be possible once the workers were able to take power (Fischer, 1972:71). There are definite "stages of development" of the workers struggle, which begins with "the contest...carried on by individual labourers, then by the working people of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them" (Marx & Engels, 1978:479). At first workers would sabotage or destroy machinery which Lenin (1977a; 111) called "primitive revolts (which) expressed the awakening consciousness" of the working class. Marx and Engels (1978:477) observed that "at this stage the labourers still form an incoherent mass", scattered and in competition with each other. With the development of industry the working class grows in number and workers begin to understand the need to unite, "the workers...begin to form combinations (Trade Unions) against the bourgeoisie" (Lenin, 1977a:112); they club together in order to keep up the rate of wages, combine their individual energies into a cohesive force, to fight for their common interests (Le Blanc, 1996:47). Whatever gains the workers make is threatened and undermined by the capitalist's investment in technology which increases the productivity of labour and throws some workers into the reserve army of labour.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci (representing the revolutionary tradition of Marxism) all agreed that trade unions were not only an essential component of the developing class struggle, but were 'Schools of Communism' (Le Blanc, 1996:48). In order to effectively defend workers interests Marx felt they had to do more than concentrate on wages, hours, and working conditions of their members, to shift from them being "exclusively bent upon the local and immediate struggles with capital...fully (understand) their power of acting against the system of wage slavery itself" (Marx & Engels, 1976:79).

It was in the sphere of politics that men become more or less conscious of the economic contradictions and fight out the issues. Trade Union and industrial struggles were merely a prelude to real *class conflict*" (Le Blanc, 1996:15) with industrial strikes as the "first skirmishes", the school of war of the workingmen in which they prepare themselves for the great struggles. Marx and Engels insisted that the political and ideological superstructure was not a 'mere superstructure' and they rejected the notion that "politics is only the froth of history" (Slaughter, 1960:3). In his 1847 book *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx had described how in their struggle, first in trade unions, and then also by constituting "a large political party under the name of Chartists", the English workers had developed from an amorphous, fragmented "class *in itself*" into a nationally cohesive, combative "class *for itself*" (Le Blanc, 1996:15). Through their observation of the Chartist Movement in England in the period 1842 to 1848 they learnt that it was only through "The union of Socialism and Chartism ... that the working class (will) be the true intellectual leader of England" (Marx & Engels, 1978:763). In the Marxist view, politics is the sphere in which *class* interests are fought out. The Italian Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci reflecting on the limitations of the economic struggle and the need for a political party, argued that the party was different to the *trade union*, and fulfilled a political role which the trade union could not. It is "unrealistic to think that the trade union possesses in itself the ability to overcome capitalism" as its task was to "realize in the interest of the proletariat the maximum price for labour-power" (Le Blanc, 1996:295). Leon Trotsky emphasised the programmatic limitations of a trade union, "trade unions do not offer, and in line with their task, composition and manner of recruiting membership, cannot offer a finished revolutionary program; in consequence they cannot replace the *party*" (Le Blanc, 1996:50).

In 1848 Marx and Engels drew up the *Communist Manifesto* where they outlined how the battle over wages and larger social issues culminate eventually into “a movement of the *class* to gain its ends” (Marx & Engels, 1978:513). It is the contact between workers which centralise the numerous local struggles...into one national struggle between classes” (Marx & Engels, 1978:477) and “every struggle of class against class is a political struggle” (Marx, 1976:49). The organisation of the proletariat into a class “and consequently into a political party” is continuously upset and disturbed by the competition between workers, but in spite of this the unity of workers “ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier” forcing the capitalists to give “legislative recognition of particular interests of the workers, by taking advantage of the divisions among the bourgeoisie itself” (Marx & Engels, 1978:469). For Marx and Engels while other classes disintegrate and fall into the working class it is the “proletariat alone (that) is a really revolutionary class” because it is the “special and essential product” of capitalism (Marx & Engels, 1978:482). The proletariat is also the first historical movement that is the movement of the majority of society in the interest of the majority and “its emancipation is the emancipation of the whole of society” (Marx & Engels, 1978:484).

For real revolutionary struggle a more advanced forms of organisation and therefore theory of a much wider and deeper character was required, a “theoretical appraisal of all the social forces at work in a given period, including the class and the party itself” (Slaughter, 1960:7). This meant the need for a political party which subordinated all partial struggles to the construction of a leadership firmly linked to the working class and devoted to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

3.2.5 Class and Political Independence of the Workers’ Party

In the struggle for the socialist revolution the working class is its own liberator “the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves” (Marx & Engels, 1978:532). In the *Address to the Communist League* in 1850, Marx and Engels insisted on the organisational and political independence of the working class “Against the collective power of the propertied classes, the working class cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes” (Marx & Engels, 1978:516). This was not just a tactical consideration but a matter of principle (Trotsky 1971:165). Marx and Engels

participated actively in the formation of the International Workingmen's Association or *First International* in 1864 where they propagated the formation of a centralised party with centralised activity and a central body which would have authority over its constituent elements (Kolakowski, 1978:12). They opposed unity with bourgeois organisations and insisted that the working class enter only into temporary alliances to further the immediate aims of the struggle. They opposed all forms of programmatic concessions to achieve political ends.

Fighting for the class independence of the proletariat also means breaking the ideological fetters which chain it to the ruling class. These comprehensive chains included ideological manipulation by the capitalist media, schools, universities and religious institutions as “the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class” (Marx & Engels, 1978: 483). For Marx, class independence could only be achieved via the relentless class struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie and their followers in all spheres; in the economic sphere (for higher wages, against unemployment, against price rises, etc.), the political sphere (for democratic rights, against national oppression, etc.) and the theoretical-ideological sphere (against the ideas of the reformists, centrists, nationalists, Islamists, etc.) (Slaughter, 1960:11). This requires collective scientific work and systematic propaganda activity of the Workers Party.

3.2.6 Class and Class Consciousness

Marxist social theory is different from the ‘value-freedom’ of sociology because it is a revolutionary theory of action to change society. Marxism thus appears as the opposite of bourgeois thought, “the dialectical negation of the highest development in bourgeois thought” (Slaughter, 1971:14). Marx saw “the working class as the agent of revolutionary change” (Slaughter, 1971:10) on condition it acquired a socialist consciousness and developed the unity necessary for social revolution. The working class had to appreciate “the full historical implications of its role in production and its capacity for abolishing class society” (Slaughter, 1971:11). The working class has to grasp not only the class struggle of the proletariat but “the whole theory of historical materialism, the understanding of social development as a unified process, with

revolutionary consciousness seizing hold of the meaning of the contradictions at the base of society in order to overthrow it" (Slaughter, 1971:9).

In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels (1978:483) dealt with the relation between the Communists who "are the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others" and the workers. According to Marx and Engels, these "theoreticians of the proletarian class" are the advanced guard is because they "have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement" (Marx & Engels, 1978:485). In spite of their theoretical and political/strategic advantage, "The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties." This is because they "have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole" (Marx & Engels, 1978:483). What distinguishes the Communists from the other parties is that in the national struggles of different countries they bring forward the common interests of the entire working class and promote the common interests of the movement (Marx & Engels, 1978:486); they attempt to develop "a historical view of the working class and of the theory of Marxism, in their mutual interrelations" which produces a theory of class consciousness (Slaughter, 1971:12).

While Marx and Engels themselves made great contributions in the field of the development of class consciousness, this has been enriched in the twentieth century by the work of Lenin and Trotsky. Lenin following Marx and Engels pondered on the relation between spontaneity and consciousness, between theory (a summation of the experience of the working class in history) and practice (including the actual consciousness of the working class as they find themselves under capitalism) (Le Blanc, 1996:49). The working class under capitalism is an oppressed 'class in itself' and it needs the intervention of the party (theory and practice) to raise it to the level of a 'class for itself'. For Lenin the weakness of the Second International was the failure to recognise that the majority of the working class cannot achieve socialist consciousness on their own due to their condition of oppression, "... the idea ...of the Second International, that the majority of the exploited toilers can achieve complete clarity of socialist consciousness ...is also idealisation of capitalism and of bourgeois democracy, as well as deception of the workers" (Lenin, 1977a:108). It was only in the actual

process of an acute class struggle, which involves an all-rounded appreciation of the struggle, an appreciation that only a political party could provide, “that the masses of the toilers and exploited can be educated, trained and organised...they can get rid of the selfishness, disunity, vices and weaknesses engendered by private property; only then will they be converted into a free union of free workers” (Lenin, 1977a:109).

One of the most important and disputed, as well as misunderstood elements of Lenin’s theory of the party is the role it plays in bringing political class consciousness to the working class. Lenin disagreed with those revolutionaries who believed that socialist consciousness develops ‘spontaneously’ from the experience of the working class. Lenin explained that socialist consciousness and the class struggle arise side by side, not one out of the other and that socialist consciousness cannot arise spontaneously from the class struggle: “Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle...to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and the government, the sphere of the interrelations between all classes” (Lenin, 1977a: 108). This body of theory could not come from the working class but only from the outside, from the bourgeois intelligentsia.

The critics of Lenin believed that he accorded the intelligentsia the role of leading the working class. This is false on two accounts. In the first place Lenin’s assertion that socialism and the class struggle arose ‘side by side’ and not one out of the other, was a *historically correct observation* and had nothing to do with placing the role of the intellectual above that of the advanced worker. The ideas of socialism arose from the radical bourgeois enlightenment period which predated the working class movement (Seymour, 1977a:12). Secondly, Lenin was an opponent of the bourgeois intelligentsia as a class and he stressed over and over again that intellectuals must not dominate a Marxist organization and only those ‘intellectuals’ should be admitted to membership who break with the petty-bourgeois class and habits and subordinate themselves to the proletarian cause. “Lenin was not inconsistent when he combined his insistence on the decisive importance of intellectuals in the development of revolutionary theory with an implacable struggle against every manifestation of revisionism and intellectual light-mindedness in theory” (Seymour, 1977:13). Lenin was not elitist and confirmed the central role of workers in the elaboration of socialist theory, “This does not mean, of

course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, “however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings” (Lenin, 1977a:112).

Trotsky in his *History of the Russian Revolution* (1997:19) contended that it was only in the study of political processes in the masses that one could understand the relation between party and class, “The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction but with a sharp feeling of unhappiness with their position in society and their hatred of the old regime” (Trotsky, 1997:18). It is only the leading elements of the class that go into a revolution with a political program which itself has still to be tested by events and which the masses must still approve of. The process of revolution is “the gradual comprehension by the class of the problems arising from the social crisis, an active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations” (Trotsky, 1997:18). Trotsky fully understood that the building of a revolutionary party is a complex and a contradictory process as the class itself is not homogeneous: “Its different sections arrive at class consciousness by different paths and at different times” (Trotsky, 1971:165). The working class would assume an independent role only at the moment when it was transformed from a “social class *in itself* it becomes a political class *for itself*” (Trotsky, 1971:163). This cannot take place otherwise than through the mechanism of a party: “The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious” (Trotsky, 1971:163). For Trotsky the crisis of leadership of the proletariat is fundamental to the crisis of society: “The historical crisis of mankind can be reduced to the crisis of leadership of the proletariat” (Trotsky, 1971:163). In the *Transitional Program* written in 1938 as the programme of the Fourth International, he synthesised the experience of the Russian Revolution and the First Four Congresses of the Third Communist International into a programme of demands which stem from the immediate conditions and consciousness of the working class and lead to a socialist consciousness and condition (Trotsky, 1977:110). This transitional method and programme remains central to Marxist perspectives on the class struggle today.

3.2.7 Reform and Revolution

The question of the party is inextricably tied to the question of revolution. From the mid 1830's and through the 1840's Marx and Engels developed a perspective of social revolution which dominated their thought. Marx and Engels stressed that a qualitatively new social order can only be brought into being through a social revolution. The revolution is necessary, they wrote, "not only because the *ruling* class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew" (Marx & Engels, 1978:152). The first step in the communist social revolution was the conquest of political power by the proletariat: "Every class which is aiming at domination...must first conquer political power" (Marx & Engels, 1978:155). The Paris Commune of 1871 provided a most important lesson for Marx and Engels. Through this brief experience of worker's rule they realised that the working class could not merely take over the capitalist state and use it for its own purpose, but must 'smash it' and create its own 'proletarian dictatorship', a new state built on the embers of the old representing the rule of the workers themselves. Power had to be 'snatched' from the bourgeoisie as no ruling class in history has ever voluntarily given up power. Marx and Engels had no principled objection to the use of revolutionary violence as "Violence is the midwife of a society pregnant with the birth of a new one" (Marx & Engels, 1978: 145). The use of force is a strategic question of proletarian insurrection by an organised mass working class movement.

As a theory of social emancipation and a guide to struggle, the Marxist doctrine came up with huge and varied ideological and political opposition and "had to fight for every step forward in the course of its life" (Lenin, 1977a:49). In the 1890's Rosa Luxemburg waged a struggle in the German SPD against Bernstein's revisionism which asserted that "ethical persuasion would be more important than class struggle in the transition from capitalism to socialism" (Le Blanc, 1996:10). Reformists held that "Social-Democracy must change from a party of social revolution into a democratic party of social reforms" (Lenin, 1977a:96). For many socialist leaders reformism was a product of a "historic lag or regression" (Seymour, 1977:12) and a phase that would pass. Rosa Luxemburg was the first to recognise that the existence of a privileged 'labour aristocracy' arose from the crumbs of Imperialist control of the world economy. This

privileged position was to be protected by the 'labour bureaucracy' primarily in the trade union movement but also in the political parties. Lenin later recognised that this had become an international phenomenon and opportunism "has become completely merged with bourgeois policy in the form of 'social-chauvinism'" (Seymour, 1977:51). This prognosis was confirmed when war broke out in 1914 and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) voted for war credits. The Second International collapsed as a body as many socialists adopted the chauvinist position to 'defend the fatherland', and it was only the left-wing led by Lenin, Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht who fought to "change the Imperialist war into a Civil war" (Kolakowski, 1978:260).

The Workers' Party is both a product of and has been shaped by the class struggle. The Workers' Party developed when the narrow economic struggles of workers led to the realisation that the class needed political representation and that this could only take place through a Workers' Party. The building of a Workers' Party is a conscious process and this is reflected by the combination of the contradictory elements of ideological thought and the class struggle. In order to represent the revolutionary interests of the working class, a Workers' Party has to protect and defend the ideological and political independence of the party. This means fighting against all forms of opportunism, particularly those who want to steer the party in a reformist direction. This fight affects the character of the Workers' Party and in the next section I will be looking at this question in detail.

3.3 The Organisational Question

3.3.1 The Mass Party

Marx and Engels participated actively in the formation of the International Workingmen's Association or *First International* in 1864 where they propagated the formation of a centralised party with centralised activity and a central body which would have authority over its constituent elements (Kolakowski, 1978:12). The First International was an ideological centre rather than an organisation of the workers movement (Kolakowski, 1978:4). Marxist doctrine as a recognisable school of thought was rigidly codified and ruled out the advocacy of rival solutions to theoretical and tactical problems (Kolawkowski, 1978:1).

The period of the *Second International* (1889-1914) was called the golden age of Marxism, as it represented the extraordinary rapid growth of both the European labour movement and the Marxist current within it. Except for the British trade unions (which supported the liberal bourgeoisie) the parties of the Second International were mass socialist parties with millions of supporters throughout Europe. The Second International was not a uniform, centralised organisation but a loose federation of parties and trade unions, working separately though united by their belief in socialism. This International was the embodiment of Marx's dream of "a marriage between socialist theory and the worker's movement, between the class struggle and the scientific analysis of processes" (Kolawkowski, 1978:4). The Second International as an assemblage of parties representing the masses was known as the 'Kautskyite party of the whole class' (Seymour, 1977:10). This Kautskyite party did not mean the recruitment of the entire proletarian population to the party, but "all tendencies regarding themselves as socialists could be in a unitary party" (Seymour, 1977:11). Revolutionary Social Democrats united with non-Marxist reformists and "in every country there exists vis à vis the bourgeois parties, only **one** socialist party, as there exists only **one** proletariat" (Seymour, 1977:12). Lenin characterised these mass parties, like the British Labour Party as 'bourgeois workers parties'; a party with a working class base but a political program that serves the interests of the capitalist class (Seymour, 1977:12).

The idea of a broad Workers' Party found resurgence in the mid-1930's as socialists called for the creation of mass worker parties in coalition with capitalist parties to deal with the Nazi danger. This policy was known as the 'Popular Front'. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the resultant 'regression in class consciousness' (Seymour, 1977:2) of large sections of the working class, the call for broad working class parties became more common. These parties would be broad worker parties, uniting various political groups and tendencies around a common programme. Some socialists saw it as a tactical call so that they could intervene with their socialist ideas in a mass arena.

3.3.2 The Vanguard Party

The Third International (Communist) was formed out of the successful Russian Revolution. In 1900, the second generation of Russian Marxists (Lenin, Martov)

coalesced with the founding fathers (Plekhanov, Axelrod, Zasulich) around the paper *Iskra* which became the organising centre of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). Lenin at this point was a revolutionary social democrat who subscribed to the orthodox Kautskyan doctrine of the “party of the whole class,” or “one class – one party” (Seymour, 1977:11). Before World War 1 Lenin never challenged this principle and emphasised the *exclusiveness* of a faction to the *inclusiveness* of a social democratic party, “In our Party Bolshevism is represented by the Bolshevik *section*. But a section is not a party. A party can contain a whole gamut of opinions and shades of opinion...In the German party, side by side with the revolutionary wing of Kautsky exists the ultra-revisionist wing of Bernstein” (Seymour, 1977:12). While in practice Lenin strove to create a disciplined, programmatically homogenous revolutionary vanguard, he did not break in principle with the Kautsky doctrine of “the party of the whole class” until after the outbreak of the war in 1914.

The Second Congress of the RSDLP held in London in July-August 1903 resulted in a split between the Lenin “hards” (Bolshevik-Majority) and the Martov “softs” (Menshevik-minority) over the question of the composition of the central bodies of the party and the first paragraph of the rules which defined membership (Woods & Grant, 2000:40). In real terms the differences between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were not at all clear in 1903, and the two tendencies only crystallised subsequently, under the impact of events leading to a final break in 1912. In the 1903 split, Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg were highly critical of Lenin’s ‘ultra-centralism’. Rosa Luxemburg’s differences with Lenin were more clearly defined and dealt with both the tasks and perspectives of the Russian movement as well as the organisational nature of social democracy in general (Seymour, 1977:20). Luxemburg’s great fear was the opportunist role that the Russian social-democratic intelligentsia would play in the forthcoming revolution and that Lenin’s fight for centralism would result in a *bourgeois* radical party, which would suppress the working class *after* overthrowing the tsarist regime. She thus advocated a broad, loose social-democratic movement as a curb on radical bourgeois demagogues (Seymour, 1977:20). Lenin rejected the charge of ‘substitutionism’ as ‘putschism’ or ‘Blanquism’, a charge that had no basis as it referred to *military engagements* with the enemy without the involvement of the masses. Lenin was vociferous in his response to Luxemburg arguing that his views were merely

“elementary principles of any conceivable system of Party organisation” (Woods and Grant, 2000:41).

Lenin was intransigently opposed to the circle–clique feature of the Russian Social Democratic party and insisted on a centralised, disciplined party, a party of ‘professional revolutionaries’ who would combat the bourgeois and their political police on a full-time basis. The working class was not merely the grave diggers of capitalism but “the only independent and decisive force” and that “classes and social movements have to be welded together as *forces* by consciously grasping their situation and the organisation needed to overthrow the classes standing in their way” (Slaughter, 1960:4). After the experience of the 1917 revolution Trotsky renounced his previous position and agreed with Lenin’s organisational principles: “I did not fully realise what an intense and imperious centralism the revolutionary party would need to lead millions of people in a war against the old order” (Seymour, 1977:19).

There is a direct link between Lenin’s characterisation of the late 19th and early 20th century as the ‘Epoch of Imperialism’ and “the need for a new politically and ideologically distinct political party which cohered the best revolutionary elements under a common program and banner” (Seymour, 1977:2). In understanding the social roots of class collaboration Lenin drew upon the writings of Engels who attributed this to the super-profits that the English capitalists derived from England’s monopoly of industrial production and colonies, a part of which they used to grant significant economic and political concessions to a “small, privileged, protected minority” of workers, a labour aristocracy, who in turn became the social base for the conservatism of the English trade unions and parties. With the advent of Imperialism the epoch of social revolution had opened and the working class, its consciousness and its organisation became “decisive forces in history, not just the *result* of history” (Slaughter, 1960:6). He therefore saw the necessity to split the workers movement into two antagonistic parties, the one revolutionary and the other reformist. He had understood better than most the terrific dislocation that the economic crisis and the resultant war had caused and “his whole effort was to assert the *dominance* of the role of the proletariat in determining the course of history” (Slaughter, 1960:5).

3.3.3 Democratic Centralism

It is false to speak in terms of an 'organisational model' of a Workers' Party (Molyneux, 2017:174). No such 'model' exists and organisational forms develop under definite conditions. For instance the methods of conducting political work clandestinely and in the open are very different, and demand different forms of organisation. Distinct from the organisational model is the organising principle of a Workers' Party, which is democratic centralism. Democratic centralism was not a Leninist invention as is commonly assumed but found expression first in the Communist League. Democratic centralism means "full freedom in internal discussion, complete discipline and unity in action" (Seymour, 1977:9). The elements of this policy are 'democracy' and 'centralism', two contradictory elements which apply in unequal proportion to each other to meet the needs of the movement. Democratic centralism implies full discussion and debate in the organisation (even to the point of factions being formed on certain questions) and once a decision is taken it binds all members to it unless they are able to convince the party about the correctness of their view.

A basic principle of democratic centralism is a strong party centre whose authority is universally and unquestioningly recognized for all leading party comrades in the period between congresses and where the higher party bodies are elected by the lower and all instructions of the higher bodies are categorically and necessarily binding on the lower (Hessel, 1983:74). In fact every political party and every form of workers organisations (including trade unions) includes elements of democracy and elements of centralism. Without democracy there are unlikely to be any members or membership dues. Without any centralism there is no organisation. The point of any organisation is to get people to act together (Molyneux, 2017:173).

As a result of the isolation and later degeneration of the Russian Revolution the principle of democratic centralism was undermined by a process of authoritarian decree, bureaucratic centralism, where the decisions of the Central Committee and the General Secretary of the Communist Party was forced down the throats of the party members and no democratic debate or decision making was tolerated. The Stalinist pattern of the monolithic party, autocratically dominated from above by an uncontrolled and irremovable bureaucracy, is the very antithesis of the genuine Leninist system of

organisation (Cannon, 1972:16). Stalinism destroyed the democratic ethos of Bolshevism and Leninism to rule over the Socialist International, later dissolving it in the name of detente' with the Capitalist West.

In defending the idea of democratic centralism Lenin in 1918 argued that "how different democratic centralism is from bureaucratic centralism...(democratic centralism) in no way excludes autonomy; on the contrary, it presupposes the fullest freedom of various localities and even of various communes of the state in developing multifarious forms of state, social and economic life...Centralism understood in a truly democratic sense, presupposes the possibility, created for the first time in history, of a full and unhampered development not only of specific local features, but also of local inventiveness, local initiative, of diverse ways, methods and means of progress to the common goal..." (Legassick, 2007:556). The Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) of the ANC explains the distinction between democratic centralism and bureaucratic centralism "the right of members to struggle in a concerted way to promote definite ideas, perspectives and policies within the framework of the revolutionary aims of the movement...In contrast to this...bureaucratic centralism grossly exaggerates command from the top, combining this with the stifling of free discussion through the ranks and the erosion of the voting powers and other democratic rights of members" (Legassick, 2007:557).

3.3.4 The question of 'vanguardism'

In response to the bureaucratism of Stalinism, many theorists and even some socialists have thrown the baby out with the bathwater, arguing that Leninism was responsible for Stalinism and this found expression in what they call the foibles of 'vanguardism'. According to Legassick (2007:548) since the demise of the Soviet Union 'vanguardism' has fallen into disfavour. This view is expressed by liberal-leftists, whose criticism come largely from academic quarters (Glazer) who disagree with the "replacement of South Africa's new parliamentary democracy with the chimerical democracy of soviets" and also the SACP (Joe Slovo) who argues that the idea of a vanguard had "been degraded in practice...the shifting of the party's vanguard role from the working class to society as a whole...(from there) it's a short step to a constitutionally entrenched one-party system" (Legassick, 2007:548). Other socialists like John Saul believe that what is

needed is something that is “more than a coalition and less than a party” and Mckinley believes that “the idea is a nostalgic one” (Legassick, 2007:556).

For Marxists the “question stands not organisationally in the first place, but politically. The political line is and must be the determining factor” (Cannon, 1972:10). What some of the critics have in common is an adaptation to a greater or lesser degree to bourgeois democracy. They reject the Leninist notion that revolution means the smashing of the bourgeois state and the need for a “combat organisation which leads a determined struggle for power” (Cannon, 1972:14). A Bolshevik type party which leads a struggle for power requires not only internal democracy but “imperious centralism and an iron discipline in action” (Cannon, 1972:14). Such a Leninist Party does not differ significantly from the views of Trevor Ngwane when he argues that “All human organisation develops a leadership...Ideally a workers’ party must be led by workers. They must be ‘openly and regularly elected...and subject to recall’” (Legassick, 2007:552). A Leninist Party is in terms of its class composition, a Workers’ Party “it requires a proletarian composition conforming to its proletarian program” (Cannon, 1972: 14). It cannot be led by “dilettantes whose real interests and real lives are in another and alien world” and requires an “active, professional leadership, composed of individuals democratically selected and democratically controlled, who devote their entire lives to the party...” (Cannon, 1972:15). The criticism of ‘vanguardism’ may be appropriate for Stalinist and other ‘sect’ like parties but not Leninist Parties practising democratic centralism.

3.4 International Nature of the class struggle

Marx and Engels were convinced that the struggle of the working class was an international struggle: “the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all the countries in which modern society exists” (Marx & Engels, 1978-515). They participated and advised the labour movement in every country in which they could establish contact. Their internationalism meant that not only did they combat national chauvinism but they learnt from the experiences of other countries which they treated “critically and tested independently” (Lenin, 1977a:110). Later Trotsky in his fight with Stalinist nationalism (socialism in one country) insisted that internationalism was at the heart of Bolshevism, as “The international development

of capitalism has predetermined the international character of the proletarian revolution...the problem of the socialist revolution has completely and decisively assumed a world character” (Trotsky, 1976:7). From its beginning a Workers’ Party must be an *international formation*. This principle is rooted in the nature of capitalism and of the working class which are both international in nature.

3.5 The Ideological Divide

There are various developments in the Communist Movement since the Russian Revolution. They have to a greater or lesser extent influenced this movement across the world, including in South Africa. The main ones we will touch on are Stalinism, Euro-Communism, Syndicalism, Populism and Twenty-First Century Marxism. Each of these in their own way found expression in the development of the Socialist movement in South Africa as will become apparent in the next chapter.

3.5.1 From Bolshevism to Stalinism

The highest point for the Marxist movement was the establishment of the Third Communist International (Comintern) after the successful October revolution led by the Bolshevik Party in Russia. The Comintern through its First Four Congresses codified the Bolshevik experience adding to the strategic and organisational perspectives of Marxism. However the isolation of the revolution under conditions of frightful material and cultural backwardness caused the bureaucratic degeneration of the Revolution (Trotsky, 1972:3). The divide in the Marxist-Leninist theoretical framework between Stalinism and Trotskyism, represented “two distinct and separate theoretical traditions professing adherence to the theoretical corpus of Bolshevism” (Habib, 1991:16). Stalinism represented and justified the bureaucratisation, authoritarianism and single party politics of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China. Trotskyism on the other hand exposed Stalinism as the harbinger of political counter-revolution by a bureaucratic caste which rested on the workers state and did not represent and is not a continuation of the theoretical traditions of Marx and Lenin (Probsting, 2016:5). The Left Opposition under the leadership of Leon Trotsky fought hard to defend the tradition of workers democracy and internationalism but were defeated politically and in the case of Trotsky finally murdered by a Stalinist agent. Trotsky and the Left Opposition who

fought for the regeneration of the Third International realised that it could no longer be saved when the German Communist party capitulated to fascism without a fight. They formed the Fourth Communist International in 1938. Throughout these struggles Trotsky debunked the Stalinist claim that it was a continuation and extension of Leninism (Trotsky, 1972:245). The Stalinists destroyed every last vestige of Lenin's Bolshevik Party including physically eliminating most of its leadership by 1928 (Trotsky, 1972:245). In order to consolidate its power Stalinism had to bury Leninism.

Trotsky spent the better part of two decades uncovering and exposing the anti-Marxist character of Stalinism, particularly its theory of 'socialism in one country', 'two stage theory' of revolution and 'Popular Front' conceptions of organisation which found expression in the international communist movement. With the death of Lenin, the bureaucracy, under its most outspoken representative, Stalin, turned against world revolution and propounded the anti-Marxist theory of 'socialism in one country' (Legassick, 2007:138). This meant socialism in Russia and the fight to reform capitalism in those countries which Stalinism regarded not ready for the socialist revolution. Détente with Imperialism literally meant peaceful co-existence with the West and separate spheres of influence (Le Blanc, 1996:255). The struggle for socialism in areas deemed to be under control of the West was discouraged and often openly betrayed.

Fundamentally Stalinism was the opposite of the Leninist theory of the uninterrupted revolution and therefore also of the theory of permanent revolution developed first by Marx and Engels in their *Address to the Communist League* "while the democratic petty-bourgeois wants to bring the revolution to an end as quickly as possible...it is in our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent until all the more or less propertied classes have been driven from their ruling positions, until the proletariat has conquered state power and ...at least the decisive forces of production are concentrated in the hands of the workers" (Marx & Engels, 1978:505). Leon Trotsky in 1904-06 in his study of the peculiarity of Russian conditions outlined that while the foremost tasks of the revolution in backward countries were those of bourgeois revolution, the revolutionary process could not stop there as the national bourgeois were a cowardly and parasitic class tied in various ways to the old ruling class, and the working class had to strive for domination by taking state power and begin the process of socialist construction (Roberts, 2007:97). He later developed the theory to explain

that the socialist revolution was an ongoing process of transformation where “Each stage of transformation stems directly from the preceding one...Revolutions in economy, technique, science, the family, morals and everyday life develop in complex reciprocal action and do not allow society to achieve equilibrium” and finally that the revolution was an international one which “begins on national foundations-but it cannot be completed within those foundations...The international revolution constitutes a permanent process, despite temporary declines and ebbs” (Legassick, 2007:80).

The chief method employed by the Stalinists has been the emasculation of any independent action and organisation of the working class. In practice it meant the adoption of: A two – stage theory of revolution: the countries of the world are divided into those which are mature for socialism and those which are not. Those countries not deemed to be ripe for socialism (these varied depending on the particular requirements of the bureaucracy at the time) first had to struggle for bourgeois democracy as a separate stage (WILSA, 1982:11).

The Peoples’ Front: those countries unfortunate enough to be classified as immature by the bureaucracy would in their struggle for national democracy unite all the oppressed classes (petit-bourgeoisie, peasant and workers) under the progressive bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is seen as the natural leaders of the democratic struggle and “In their struggle for national democracy all the oppressed classes (petit-bourgeoisie, peasant and workers) should unite under the progressive bourgeoisie; this bourgeoisie is seen as the natural leaders of the democratic struggle” (WILSA, 1982:11).

These policies directly affected the building of Workers’ Parties in those areas of the world which were deemed not ready for the socialist revolution. In most countries the Communist Parties were dissolved into larger nationalist parties in the name of the struggle for national independence and the democratic revolution. In China (1925-27), Indonesia (1965) the Nationalists turned on their communist allies and it resulted in the decapitation of revolutionary movement and the mass murder of hundreds of revolutionary communists (Seymour, 1977:4).

3.5.2 Worker Parties and anti-Capitalist Movements in the post-Stalinist period

After the Second World War a number of European intellectuals, disillusioned by both the reformism of the Second International and the bureaucratic practices of Stalinism developed different interpretations of Marxism which they hoped would restore and enhance its critical and revolutionary edge (Le Blanc, 1996:12). This eclectic school of “Western Marxism” included amongst others Karl Korsch in Germany, Louis Althusser in France and Herbert Marcuse and his Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt (Le Blanc, 1996:12). This school of university based ‘Marxism’ was characterised by a combination of philosophical idealism and structuralism, and had very little direct influence in the labour movement. Two broad strands that did influence the labour movement were Euro-Communism and syndicalism.

The Euro-communists had given up on any conception of revolution and their strategy was “the achievement of a parliamentary majority who would provide communists with the supreme power to gradually usher in reforms that will lead to socialism (Habib, 1991:100). This view of the bourgeois parliamentary system reduced the class struggle to “relations between political parties, or rather leaderships of political parties” (Mandel, 1979:197). It emasculated the working class of its power and promoted the elitist conception that ‘political chiefs’ determine the course of history rather than the masses themselves (Mandel, 1979:197).

With the crisis of the Welfare state in the 1970’s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1980’s, the historic parties of the working class, Social Democracy and Stalinism, experience a crisis which resulted in their near total collapse and a dramatic political shift to the right. Social Democratic parties increasingly experienced an “embourgeoisification of its composition and leadership” (Probsting, 2016:20) and a precipitous decline in membership and electoral support. The situation in the German SPD was telling as its membership declined and its electoral support fell from 40.9% in 1998 to 23.0% in 2009 and 25.7% in 2013 (Probsting, 2016:19). The Stalinist and ex-Stalinist parties faced a somewhat different fate, but they too were in crisis. The Italian *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista*, the German *de Linke*, the French *Front de Gauche* (FdG) and the Spanish *Izquierda Unida* had abandoned any link to socialism and had become fully Social Democratic Parties participating as coalition partners to

capitalist parties. In South Africa the SACP became part of government and has at some point had five ministers and three deputy ministers in the coalition cabinet. The *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) in Brazil emerged in the 1980s as a militant left-reformist workers' party but acquiesced to neo-liberalism by pursuing austerity programmes and was removed from power in 2015.

The Syndicalist trend was strongest in the Italian 'Workers Autonomy' organisation (Autonomia Operaia). According to Schechter (2007:205) Hardt and Negri in their famous book *Empire* lamented the disappearance of the working class in the "post-Autonomia world of global capitalism" and ironically in face of the collapse of the state socialist model argued that "the world has never been closer to revolution" (Schechter, 2007:205). The imperialist nation state has given way to an international form of global governance which has "reached the objective outer limit of its expansion in the struggle between oppressive political power and the productive desire of the multitude" (Schechter, 2007:205). This multitude was no longer organised along classical lines and this challenged the "organisational form of parties by the reality of movements and networks" (Schechter, 2007:170).

Later post-modernist theorists like Lefebvre, Foucault and Deleuze replaced the focus on power mechanisms in modern society and argued that "the path to change is multiple, intersecting and diverging" (Schechter, 2007:204). They were more interested in "the problem of conformism and oppressive integration with regard to individual human nature" (Schechter, 2007:203) thereby denying the centrality of class and party.

It did not take long for the illusions of neoliberalism to shatter as the crisis of capitalist accumulation grew. The crisis of neoliberalism resulted in mass revolts and the surge of new left-wing Populist Parties in Latin America (Probsting, 2016:23). In 1998, Hugo Chavez won the presidential election in Venezuela after he transformed his underground organization MBR-200 into an open political party (*Movimiento V [Quinta] República*, MVR). In Spain the 'We Can' party (*Podemos*) was founded in 2014 after years of mass protests and social polarization in the country. *Podemos* despite its brief existence has already become the second largest political party in Spain in terms of membership with nearly four hundred thousand (400,000) members.

The re-emergence of worker parties in different countries represents the recognition that the crisis in capitalist society cannot be changed fundamentally without independent political representation of the working class. Some of these 'New Worker Parties' are the *Democratic Labor Party* (DLP) in South Korea, the *Partido de los Trabajadores* in Bolivia, Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) in Greece and the *Bloco de Esquerda* (B.E.) in Portugal. In Korea, the DLP is strongly tied to the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). Founded in 2000, the DLP won 10 seats in the 2004 parliamentary election. The Bolivian *Partido de los Trabajadores* was created in 2013 with the support of the Bolivian Workers Centre (COB) trade union federation, in particular that of the Union Federation of Bolivian Mine Workers (FSTMB) (Probsting, 2016:23). SYRIZA in Greece has been a somewhat different phenomenon since its emergence in 2004 as a coalition of *Synaspismós* (a "Euro-communist" split from the Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE)) and several smaller left-reformist organizations. While for a number of years it remained a party with meagre support, it experienced an electoral breakthrough in 2012, becoming the second largest party in parliament after garnering more than 16% of the vote. In the next elections (January 2015), SYRIZA was victorious winning 36.3% of the vote. It gained such mass support because of its anti-austerity programme and its denunciation of the corrupt "old political class" (Probsting, 2016:24).

In 1996 Heinz Dietrich, a professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University in Mexico theorized what he called 'Socialism of the 21st Century' which he claimed superseded Marxism and everything that went before. He claimed to have inspired the Bolivarian revolution and influenced the adoption of the ideas of 'Socialism of the 21st Century' by Hugo Chavez. His main contention was that both free-market industrial capitalism and twentieth-century socialism had failed to solve urgent problems of humanity (Woods, 2008:16). The theory of 'Socialism of the 21st Century' draws on indigenous traditions of communal governance and the attempt to establish a "qualitatively different system" was to be a gradual process that did not employ violence but instead utilized participative democracy to secure power and promote international cooperation.

Similarly, the search for a plurality of 'Marxisms' has been put forward by the South African 'Marxists' Vishwas Satgar and Michelle Williams. For them both the classical

traditions of Marxism – communist and Trotskyist - have failed to deal with the complexities of Marxism “especially with reference to democracy” (Williams & Satgar, 2013:4). They have stuck to concepts of ‘revolution’ and vanguard democracy in which the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, together with the Party, play the leading role in society (Williams & Satgar, 2013:4). They are in search of a Marxism that “do not seek a coherent ideological blueprint...it is open, searching, dialectical, humanist, utopian and inspirational” (Williams & Satgar, 2013:3).

The mass spontaneous responses from the working class and oppressed has eschewed the search for an alternative politics and alternative forms of organisation. This new politics and political forms has ironically not produced anything new, but rather has been a regurgitation of the arguments of the reformists in the socialist movement. In their quest for a new path they abandoned all the basic elements of the class struggle such as a clear ideological divided between the contending classes, a search for reforms within the capitalist economy and the rejection of the party and revolution: “they keep capitalist state apparatus in place, the army, police, legal authority and public administration” (Probsting, 2014:39). Not only do they make a fetish of capitalist ideological constructs such as ‘democracy’ they do not understand that “the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*...(and) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the *abolition of all classes* and to a *classless society*” (Lenin, 1977:261).

3.6 Conclusion: Towards a ‘typology’ of a Workers’ Party

Is the revolutionary party still necessary? The lessons of history attest to the need for a revolutionary Workers’ Party. Leon Trotsky writing after the experience of the failed European revolutions of the early 20th century argued that the “principal lesson of the last decade” was that “without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer” (Trotsky, 1993:65). The lessons of France 1968 and the more recent experience of the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 and the growing polarisation in Europe currently demonstrate the need for political organisation, particularly a battle-hardened revolutionary party of the size and experience of the Bolsheviks in the February or June days of the Russian revolution. Gramsci brilliantly argued that “in reality one can ‘scientifically’ foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of the struggle” (Le Blanc, 1996:282). The

fate of humanity rests on the ability to come to appreciate these moments and history teaches us that only a revolutionary Bolshevik type party skilled in the art of political warfare against the class enemy is able to do so.

Unlike the bourgeoisie, the working class is not a propertied class and therefore does not have its own social institutions expressing its own social consciousness *within* capitalism. It is only the Workers' Party that can educate militants, lead the workers, draw the lessons and generalize them into programmatic conclusions and prepare the working class to fulfil its historical tasks; in short, the revolutionary Workers' Party is a *sine quo non* for the proletarian class struggle. The dissertation has argued quite forcefully that the organisation of a Workers' Party is an essential and necessary weapon in the class struggle and that "political power cannot be seized, organized, and operated except through a political party..." (Probsting, 2014:6). The party is the "conscious expression of the historic process" (Seymour, 1997:4). The party is also a "*combat organization*" and "the iron cohort of the proletarian revolution" (Probsting, 2014:6).

Building a Workers' Party is not only about building an organisational structure but understanding the philosophical and theoretical basis of a party. The unity of theory and practice, what is known as praxis, is essential for the *modus operandi* of a party. It prepares a collective of working class militants who are ideologically hardened to conduct the class struggle. For this to be achieved the members must not "only *agree* with the goals of their party but also *fight* for them by all means the organization considers necessary" (Probsting, 2014:34).

For Workers' Parties the programme of the party is fundamental. The programme is based on ideological clarity and integral theory "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (Lenin, 1977:98). The program refers to both the analysis of capitalist society as well as an outline of its general socialist goals. In a more narrow way the programme refers to the demands that arise from the immediate conditions and consciousness of broad layers of the working class and leads to a socialist consciousness. The programme is a set of demands which addresses the concrete and practical question of an orientation to educate the class, the basis "for common conceptions (on) which we can act" (Probsting, 2014:37). Without the

programme the working class would be lost as it would have to improvise its tools or find improvised tools that contradict one another (Probsting, 2014:37).

The elaboration of a programme is but the starting point of party activity. The difficulty is translating a 'theoretical' proposition into practical understanding and acceptance by the working class (Probsting, 2014:38). One of the key activities of the revolutionary party is the systematic spreading of its goals and methods of struggle. This is usually done by means of propaganda and agitation through the organization's newspaper, leaflets and public speeches (Probsting, 2014:38). There can be no successful revolution without tirelessly working in and amongst the working class to win over its leading elements and through them the mass of workers. There are numerous approaches and tactics in building the Workers' Party. One of the main tactics of the Workers' Party has been the tactic of the United Front which proposes for unity in struggle of the working class on the immediate issues affecting them irrespective of party political affiliation. The application of tactics however depends on the concrete circumstances of each party and these tactics can include *individual recruitment*, the *formation of party-affiliated organizations*, *recruitment in mass movements*, *splits and fusions* and *entryism* (Probsting, 2014:41).

Is the transformation of a Leninist Party into a Stalinist Party inevitable? The rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy can only be understood as a product of the interaction of two major *objective* social factors – the weakness and exhaustion of the Russian proletariat and the isolation of the Russian revolution (Molyneux, 2017:217). The Russian economy emerged from the Civil War utterly devastated and the vanguard of the proletariat had fought in the Red Army and many had been killed. Other leading elements had gone into administration and by 1921 the working class was a mere shadow of itself, weak and dishevelled from sheer physical and political exhaustion. The party and state bureaucracy grew from this and Lenin soon became aware of these dangers and started the struggle against it. He proposed various reforms to the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate (Rabkrin) which had been established in 1920 to fight bureaucratism, he suggested enlarging the Central Committee to include more workers, called on Trotsky to join him in fighting the bureaucracy and finally called for the removal of Stalin as General Secretary (Molyneux, 2017:220). All these measures came to naught as the only way the revolution could be saved was through the victory of the revolution elsewhere. The decisive defeat of the German revolution in 1923 was

the final nail in the coffin. The Stalinist policy of 'Socialism in One Country' represented the consolidation of the power of this bureaucracy and this was soon followed by the systematic dismantling of Lenin's Bolshevik Party, culminating as it were in its victory by the 'show trials' in the mid-1930's. Stalinism and Bolshevism were not only divergent but diametrically opposed to each other (Molyneux, 2017:235). The political and organisational monstrosity that Stalinism became was built on the grave of Bolshevism!

Molyneux (2017:19) correctly I think argues that in the 21st Century the development of Stalinism would be more remote. The reasons are that Stalinism was the product of economic backwardness and isolation of the revolution. The immense global development of the forces of production and a huge accumulation of wealth in the 21st century has created conditions where a successful revolution would begin on a much higher economic foundation than in Russia. Secondly the working class internationally and in every country is larger and stronger force than it was in Russia 1918-21. Thirdly as Molyneux (2017:19) clarifies "The globalised character of the world economy, its integrated and dependent nature means that the revolution would spread far more effectively and quickly than in the early twentieth century". Lastly the forms of communication are far more effective today and for all intents and purposes the 'revolution is televised' through live-streaming and internet connection. This will make information more accessible and "proletarian democracy as the lifeblood of socialism" far easier to defend (Molyneux, 2017;20).

This dissertation has outlined why the Leninist Party is the only type of party that can lead the working class to victory. Twenty First Century Socialism and the search for 'new' forms of 'Marxisms' are but new forms of revisionism and deviate from the classical Workers' Parties both in their ideological and organisational orientation. In the next chapter I will examine the evolution of Workers' Parties in South Africa, looking at the formation of the CPSA and SACP and particularly at how the degeneration of the SACP has directly influenced and laid the basis for a new radical Workers' Party in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A WORKERS' PARTY IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters I provided a conceptual framework of what parties are, their character, history and function and dealt with their organisational and ideological orientation. The dissertation then dealt specifically with the development of Workers' Parties, explaining their historical, organisational and ideological genesis. The previous chapter concluded by developing a 'typology' of a Workers' Party pointing out that working class parties are about programme and organisation and that the Leninist Party, which is a programmatically exclusive party for revolutionary change, remains the most influential revolutionary vehicle in the period of Capitalist Imperialism.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the historical, organisational and ideological development of the Communist Movement in South Africa and how the politics of this movement shapes the formation and political physiognomy of a new radical Workers' Party. The study of liberation politics in South Africa is the study of the race/class dialectic and the relationship between nationalism and socialism. The path of development this relation took provides an insight into the historical absence of an independent and revolutionary Workers' Party in South Africa.

While the 'call' made in the 1980's by the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) for the formation of a Workers' Party is important, our main focus will be on the politics of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) formed in 1921, later re-founded in 1953 as the South African Communist Party (SACP). We will examine the politics of the SACP and demonstrate how it failed to promote a revolutionary perspective and capitulated to nationalism. It is by becoming a left appendage of the ANC through the Tri-partite Alliance that the SACP has completely degenerated, thereby creating the subjective conditions for the formation of a new Workers' Party in South Africa. The dissertation will also not delve into the contribution of the more obscure organisations like the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA), Workers International League of South Africa (WILSA) and the Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) on this question. They were small 'propaganda groups' who

espoused revolutionary ideas and promoted the building of an independent Workers' Party in South Africa, but made little progress in this regard.

4.2 Workers' Parties in South Africa

4.2.1 The Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA)

As an organised tendency, South African socialism traces its roots to the white labour movement of the early twentieth century; the all-white South African Labour Party (SALP) which was affiliated to the Second Communist International (Drew, 1996:16). The split between white labour and the socialist movement did not take place as a result of the SALP's adoption of segregationist policies in 1912, but over the question of support for their own capitalist government policies in World War 1 (Drew, 1996:16). The International Socialist League (ISL) was formed in 1915, and while it pronounced itself in favour of international working class solidarity, it still looked to white labour as the working class vanguard. A minority in the ISL, led by T.W. Thibedi and S.P. Bunting argued for the organisation of black workers and the principle of labour solidarity regardless of colour or creed (Drew, 1996:16).

The CPSA was formed in 1921 "on the basis of their common acceptance of the 21 points of the Third Communist International (Comintern)" (Drew, 1996:17). The CPSA participated in the 1922 all-white Rand Revolt which was a white mine workers strike led by industrial unions against modifications to the colour bar. The crushing of the Rand Revolt caused disillusionment in Communist ranks and two significant strands of socialist thought emerged: T.W. Thibedi and S.P. Bunting argued for the importance of work in black organisations like the black Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) while W. H. Andrews and others continued to see white labour as the working class vanguard (Drew, 1996:19). This dilemma faced by the CPSA, between class and colour, would run through and influence the entire future of South African leftwing politics.

By the late 1920's most Communists were disillusioned by the passivity and bureaucracy in white trade unions and Jimmy La Guma and Nikolai Bukharin, a leader of the Communist International, formulated the 'Native Republic Thesis' for South Africa. This Comintern resolution posited that "the main task of the revolution in South Africa

was to overthrow the rule of the British and Boer imperialists, to set up a democratic independent native republic (which would give white workers and others non-exploiting whites certain 'minority rights'), as a stage towards the final overthrow of capitalism in South Africa" (WILSA, 1982:12). The thesis stressed the centrality of the anti-Imperialist nationalist struggle for self-determination against British Imperialism which was defined not by its capitalist features, but by its colonial character. It further held that in the face of an absent black bourgeoisie, a land-hungry peasantry was the moving force of the South African revolution. The immediate struggle was against foreign and racial domination and the agrarian question was at the heart of the South African struggle. According to Drew (1996:20) this "laid the parameters for the national question" in South Africa for years to come.

Underlying the thinking was the belief in a two-stage theory of revolution, the first stage a struggle for national emancipation and democracy and the second stage socialism. This formula was imposed by the Comintern on all third world countries it deemed not yet ready for socialist revolution. This caused huge differences in the ranks of the CPSA and leading figures like T.W. Thibedi and S. P. Bunting rejected this understanding of the relationship between the national and socialist struggle. They argued that separating the national and socialist struggle in time and space was "...anti-white and anti-internationalist" (Drew, 1996:21), reminiscent of Marcus Garvey's "Black Republic" and "Africa for the Africans" slogans which the CPSA had long rejected as racist (Drew, 1996:22). The Native Republic thesis was premised on a peasant-based colonial model, which had severe limitations as it assumed that the African people of varying Bantu-speaking people constituted a homogenous, undifferentiated peasantry (Drew, 1996:21). This model was inappropriate as it did not understand the conditions that prevailed in the economy and society in the late 1920's and it was an artificial superimposition of the classic colonial model on a post-colonial racial capitalist society (Drew, 1996:21). The thesis polarised the national and class struggle and did not address itself to the large proportion of proletarianised reserve dwellers whose "livelihood depended on migrant wage labour" (Drew, 1996:21). In the ensuing political debates the Thibedi/Bunting group was defeated and the CPSA officially endorsed the thesis in 1929. This opened the door to formalising "the party's alliance with the African nationalist organisations" (Drew, 1996:21). Having adopted the 'Native Republic thesis' the CPSA had shifted its emphasis to the national rather than the social struggle and

this meant changing its relationship with the pre-eminent nationalist organisation, the ANC.

The ANC had since its inception been the organised expression of a section of the African petit-bourgeoisie; at first organised through the leadership of rural based chiefs and later an urban middle class (WILSA, 1982:6). Whereas the founding fathers of the ANC were an amalgam of a land owning tribal royalty, the newly educated Native petit-bourgeoisie organised in the Congress Youth League (CYL) were part of a generation which had been forcibly torn out the “idiocy of rural life” and were no longer prepared to “submit respectfully” (WILSA, 1982:7). These youth leaguers were dismissive of the conservative politics of their elders “....The Congress senior leadership reflects the dying order of the pseudo-liberalism, of appeasement and compromises. The Youth League reflects the new spirit of a self-conscious Africa, striving to break age-old oppression and liberate the national forces of progress” (WILSA, 1982:7). The CYL openly professed a philosophy of African Nationalism “The political philosophy which we profess is that of African nationalism. This, inter alia, impliesthat they (Africans) suffer an alien and foreign oppression. Africa is the black man’s continent, the African peoples are groaning under a foreign oppressor, because their country has been colonised by foreign powers and its resources and their labour are being exploited not for their benefit but for the benefit of the conquerors and exploiters” (WILSA, 1982:8). The CYL rejected a class analysis as a foreign invention and confirmed “that we are oppressed not as a class but as a people, as a Nation. Such wholesale importation of methods and tactics which might have succeeded in other countries, like Europe, where conditions were different, might harm the cause of our people’s freedom, unless we are quick in building a militant mass liberation movement”. (WILSA, 1982:9).

It is this nationalism which the CPSA had adapted to in its adoption of the ‘Native Republic thesis’, and it is this nationalism that they had to integrate in their theory and practice if they were to be relevant political factor in the national and class struggle (WILSA, 1982:13). In spite of this both the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) and the ANC kept the party at arm’s length and for the most part of the 1930’s and the early 1940’s the party remained isolated from the mainstream of black politics (Lodge, 1985:29). It was only in the growing popular struggles of the mid to late 1940’s that the party activists and the ANC started working closer together. Just before its

banning in 1950 the CPSA's central committee specifically discussed the problem of the Party's relationship with the nationalist movement in its annual report for the previous year (Lodge, 1985:29). The report argued the case for working with and through the national movement "the national organisations can develop into powerful mass movements only to the extent that their contents and aims are determined by the interests of workers and peasants" (Lodge, 1985:30). The CPSA had decided that the path to the socialist revolution lay through the nationalist movement, and from 1950 the communists were to devote their energy to influencing the course of the nationalist movement.

4.2.2 The South African Communist Party (SACP)

4.2.2.1 The SACP adopts a multi-class approach

When the CPSA was banned in 1950 under the Suppression of Communism Act, its cadres located themselves in the ANC and allied organisations, like the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO), the South African Indian Congress (SAIC) and the South African Congress of Democrats (SACOD). The party while officially disbanded re-organised and reconstituted itself in the underground in 1953 as the South African Communist Party (SACP) (Lodge, 1985:34).

Re-emerging in the underground as the SACP was not easy as it required a serious reassessment of its political and organisational tactics. The communists had to contend with a changing political situation with a repressive state and a radicalised ANC. It was also in this period that its basic strategic outline was adopted, the theory of "Colonialism of a Special Type' (CST) and the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) (Lodge, 1985:34). In the context of South Africa the SACP argued that its first task was the struggle for National Liberation of the oppressed people and then the fight for socialism could begin.

The struggle for National Liberation also meant a multi-class approach "the party defined its strategic task as being the establishment of an alliance with the ANC – the principal and largest national liberation organisation in the country" (Habib, 1991:65). This strategic alliance was outlined in *The Road to South African Freedom* (1962) which

confirmed that the middle class nationalist leadership of the ANC was the premier organisation “The Communist Party unreservedly supports and participates in the struggle for national liberation (*headed by the African National Congress*) in alliance with the South African Indian Congress, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, the Coloured People’s Congress and other patriotic groups of democrats, women, peasants and youth” (Habib, 1991:64). The party was clear that it was the ANC that was to lead the liberation struggle and that the party was to play a secondary role (Habib, 1991:65). The 1989 programme of the party, *The Path to Power*, reiterated this relationship “The African National Congress is the spearhead of the national democratic revolution...The SACP plays its role both as an independent organisation and as part of the revolutionary alliance headed by the African National Congress. There is no contradiction between the multi-class leadership role of the ANC and the working class vanguard role of the party” (Habib, 1991:65).

The question of leadership in the class struggle was raised by Marx and Engels (1978:501) in their *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* where they argued for the full political and organisational independence of the working class “...when the democratic petty bourgeois are everywhere oppressed, they preach in general unity and reconciliation with the proletariat...they strive for a large opposition party which will embrace all shades of opinion in the democratic party, that is, they strive to entangle the workers in a party organisation in which general social democratic phrases predominate, behind which their special interests are concealed ...Such a union would turn out solely to their advantage and altogether to the disadvantage of the proletariat.” This position of working class independence from the national bourgeois was confirmed by Lenin in the “*Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and the Colonial Question*” where he argued that “the Communist International must enter into temporary alliance with the bourgeois democracy in colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstance uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form” (Hessel, 1983:77).

The SACP in spite of its protestations of being a Marxist-Leninist party had a different trajectory “In their struggle for national democracy all the oppressed classes (petit-bourgeoisie, peasant and workers) should unite under the progressive bourgeoisie; this

bourgeoisie is seen as the natural leaders of the democratic struggle” (WILSA, 1982:12). The class independent politics of the SACP was directly subsumed under the general liberation struggle and the party’s independent role existed merely in form and not in content (Habib, 1991:66). Throughout the three decades in exile the party abrogated its leadership role to the ANC. Habib (1991:67) notes that even after the party was un-banned in 1990 its cadres continued to operate and engage in political work through the structures of the ANC.

The dominance of ANC politics and policies was further seen in the unqualified endorsement of the Freedom Charter. Most theorists agree that the Freedom Charter is not a socialist programme, nor does it qualify as a transitional programme to socialist revolution (Habib, 1991:72). It is a classical Social Democratic minimum programme of reforms to open capitalism to the black bourgeoisie and make capitalism more palatable for the poor (WILSA, 1982:21).

4.2.2.2 The Ideological Nexus

4.2.2.2.1 Stalinism

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European ‘socialist’ societies in the late 1980’s, the SACP was forced to re-examine its basic theoretical postulates. Joe Slovo argued that Stalinism was “socialism without democracy” (Habib, 1991:94) where “the bureaucratic-authoritarian style of leadership (of parties both in and out of power) denuded the party of most of its democratic content and concentrated power in the hands of a tiny, self-perpetuating elite” (Habib, 1991:94). This analysis of Stalinism concentrated on the activities of elites and did not attempt to locate it within the “conflict of material interest between the different social forces in Soviet society” (Habib, 1991:95). The Russian revolution took place in the country which Lenin called “the weakest link in the Imperialist chain” (Lenin, 1977a:645). But being the “weakest link” meant that Russia was economically backward and the successful revolution inherited this backwardness which was the basis for the growth of a bureaucracy. Trotsky (1972:112) argued that *the basis of bureaucratic rule is the poverty of society in the objects of consumption*” thus locating the phenomenon of Stalinism not as an organisational problem but within the context of scarcity. He goes on to explain that this

parasitic growth on a workers state “become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism” (Trotsky,1972:113). While this is not the place to discuss the eventual demise of Stalinism in the late 1980’s, Trotsky’s warning was prophetic.

With the death of Lenin, the bureaucracy, under its most outspoken representative, Stalin, turned against world revolution and propounded the anti-Marxist theory of ‘Socialism in One Country’. This literally meant the decapitation of revolutionary movements in other parts of the world and the handing over of revolutionaries to capitalist death squads (WILSA, 1982:10). The chief method employed by the Stalinists has been the emasculation of any independent action of the working class. In practice it meant the adoption of the Stalinist two-stage theory of revolution and support for unity with the democratic bourgeoisie in a Popular Front (WILSA, 1982:10).

The SACP was theoretically and organisationally tied to the apron strings of Stalinism and therefore could not fulfil its duty to lead the democratic revolution by its own methods, the class struggle, “The proletarian party must solve the national question by its own methods. The historic weapon of national liberation is the class struggle” (Habib,1991:75). The SACP abrogated its leadership role and was thus unable to unite the vanguard of the class in the struggle for political power. In doing this it compromised the Party as the political and organisational weapon of the working class.

4.2.2.2 Colonialism of a Special Type

The SACP’s position that South Africa was a colony can be traced to a discussion of the Central Committee meeting of the CPSA in 1950 (Habib,1991:45). The theory of a “Colony of a Special Type” (CST) was formally adopted in 1962 in the new programme *The Road to South African Freedom*. The theory outlined that “South Africa’s social and economic structure and the relationships which it generates are perhaps unique. It is not a colony, yet it has, in regard to the overwhelming majority of its people, most of the features of the classical colonial structures: conquest and domination by an alien people, a system of discrimination and exploitation based on race and techniques of indirect rule. These and more are the traditional trappings of the classical colonial framework. Whilst at one level, it is an “independent” national state, at another level, it

is a country subjugated by a minority race. What makes the structure unique and adds to its complexity is that the exploiting nation is not, as in the typical imperialist relationship, situated in a geographically distinct mother country, but is settled within its borders. What is more, the roots of the dominant nation have been impelled in our country for more than three centuries of presence” (WILSA, 1982:17).

The theory of CST emphasises the oppression of different classes and the need for unity between them “the special character of colonialism in South Africa has strangled the development of a class of African capitalists... (and)...the interests of the African commercial class lie wholly in joining the workers and rural people for the overthrow of white supremacy” (Habib, 1991:46). This special form of oppression had forged a sense of national unity and a national consciousness which united all black classes in the struggle against white rule, and it was a direct product of national oppression experienced by black people in South Africa “...the nature of exploitation manifests itself first and foremost in the context of the place he (black worker) occupies in the racial equation, in the specific way production relations manifest themselves under internal colonialism” (Habib, 1991:46). The basis of national unity is the “nationalist feeling of the Africans, the feeling of being Africans, irrespective of tribal connection, social status, educational attainment or economic class” (WILSA, 1982:9).

4.2.2.2.3 Critical Reflections on ‘Colonialism of a Special type’

Leading SACP theoretician Joe Slovo in his famous analysis of the CST raised his own concerns about the CST, questioning its scientific basis: “If then the overwhelmingly dominant mode of production within this unitary state (i.e. South Africa) is capitalist, is it ANALYTICALLY correct or useful to talk of “two South Africa’s” defined, at a certain level, in national rather than class terms?” (WILSA, 1982:17). The dilemma Joe Slovo raised but failed to answer, was a reflection of the conundrum arising from the fact that South Africa was a single capitalist formation which possessed all the general features of capitalism as a world – wide mode of production, “Its social and economic structure is not unique, but in fact corresponds in all basic aspects to the “social and economic structure” of the majority of the countries in the world” (WILSA, 1982:18). This is, of course, not to deny that South Africa, as a capitalist social formation did not possess certain specific features and national peculiarities.

Stephen Gelb criticised the Internal Colonialism theory as an economic reductionist theory which employed a formalistic use of the base-superstructure model (Habib, 1991:51). It located classes within the economic base while identifying race at a political and ideological level. By suggesting that the “material contradiction is abstract, (they) explicitly push class as an analytical dimension into the background” (Habib, 1991:51). They emphasised race in all regions of society and therefore made the dominant contradiction the one between the white colonial bloc and the black colonised majority (Habib, 1991:51). Gelb agreed with the conclusion of the renowned analyst Harold Wolpe that “there is a close convergence between internal colonialism and conventional race relations theory...” (Habib, 1991:52). He also agreed with the position espoused by the feminist writer Iris Young that “colonialism of a special type” is a dual system theory which is guilty of treating race and class as two distinct systems of social relations (Habib, 1991:52). In doing this it prioritised race relations as it sees it as more concrete and closer to the world of immediate experience.

Neville Alexander criticised CST as a two–nation theory which “remained imprisoned within the confines of pluralist thesis” and mystified the conception of race (No Sizwe, 1979:53). Its weakness was that it equated “race” with “national group” which is a false analogy as the term “national group” applies only to fully fledged nations or groups striving towards nationhood through the creation of a separate state and “In the South African situation, neither the oppressor nor the oppressed racial groups constituted fully fledged nations, nor did they desire separate statehood” (Habib, 1991:53). The logical conclusion of the CST thesis would be the call to partition the country along racial lines which even the theorists who formulated it would not have seriously considered.

The CST imagines that the resolution to the national oppression of black people in general would open the road to the growth of a black bourgeoisie who would then be able to fulfil its historical role. This theory is false because it is premised on the notions of free competition capitalism where the national bourgeois of Europe were able to play a progressive role in building capitalist forces of production. However the national bourgeois of backward countries enter the historical scene late when Monopoly Capitalist relations dominate and they are tied in a million ways to it. Their role is reduced to subordinate lackeys of Monopoly Capital and the relationship is largely a parasitic one (WILSA, 1982:118). The history of neo-colonialism is the history of

economic and political parasitism by the national bourgeois who occupy a comprador status in relation to Imperialism.

4.2.2.2.4 The Struggle for National Liberation

The SACP argued that the struggle for National Liberation is dominant because of the peculiar nature of South Africa, viz. Internal Colonialism, i.e. the white oppressor nation has colonised the African, Coloured and Indian oppressed nations (diluted occasionally in the official literature as national groups and nationalities) (WILSA, 1982:15). The difference between classic colonialism and internal colonialism is that in South Africa both the oppressor and the oppressed nations occupy the same geographical area. Flowing from this the struggle is clearly and unequivocally defined as one of national democracy "...the immediate and imperative interests of all sections of the South African people demand the carrying out...(of)...a national democratic revolution which will overthrow the colonialist state of white supremacy and establish an independent state of national democracy in South Africa" (Habib, 1991:47). The main aim is the national liberation of the African people where the state would implement the demands of the Freedom Charter. This would be a non-capitalist path of development that will culminate in the realisation of a socialist future (Habib, 1991:47). This struggle for national liberation consisted of a broad alliance of the three oppressed nations under the leadership of the African people because it is the largest and most exploited group and the working class has a special role in this national democratic struggle.

In spite of the various criticisms of the party programme the SACP remained committed to it for three decades. It was in its new programme, *The Path to Power* adopted in 1989 that the party attempted to emphasise class relations within its formulation, "Within South Africa, bourgeois domination and capitalist relations of production, which emerge within the context of colonialism, have been developed and maintained since 1910 through a specific variant of bourgeois rule – colonialism of a special type. It is a variant of capitalist rule in which the essential features of colonial domination in the imperialist epoch are maintained and even intensified." (SACP, 1989:48). This formulation is different to the 1962 formulation in that it stresses class factors and recognises the existence of a single social system rather than a "two nation" thesis. However as Habib (1991:48) notes it reiterates its view that "in all essential respects the colonial status of

the black majority has remained in place” and it still views the relationship between South Africa’s ruling class and oppressed majority as an Imperial-Colonial one.

4.2.2.2.5 Critical reflections on National Democracy

As various theorists have outlined above, the theory of CST rests on weak and unscientific foundations. This brings into question the theory of ‘National Democracy’ since it rests on the presumptions outlined in the CST. The theory of national democracy outlines that South Africa should first strive to become nationally liberated establishing a formally independent state and it is only after this has been accomplished that the transition to socialism would occur. This would take place through two separate and distinct processes; first a national democratic revolution would bring into existence a national democratic state and then the second stage would be a socialist revolution establishing a socialist state (WILSA, 1982:16). The more sophisticated proponents of this theory try to argue that the two are linked through the formation of a developmental state which would mean that one stage leads into the other. What they fail to explain is how the transition from a capitalist society into a socialist society could take place in an evolutionary way.

Under conditions of free competition capitalism the struggle for the nation state was the struggle for unfettered capitalist development and the concomitant political freedoms which went with it. In the era of Imperialism the struggle for national liberation is meaningless without the right of the oppressed nation to political independence (WILSA, 1982:16). The question arises, from whom must South Africa become politically independent? From whom should it secede?

The two-stage theory is premised on a particular conception of the formation of mass consciousness (Habib, 1991:55). The SACP held that the colonial character of South African society meant that a national consciousness of the masses based on racial oppression would dominate over a sense of class consciousness “the black working class would be able to demonstrate only a national democratic consciousness prior to the destruction of apartheid” (Habib, 1991:55). This view according to Habib (1991:55) represented a mechanistic view of the development of consciousness which did not take account of the development of the productive forces and a real proletariat created

by capitalist development. This does not mean that black workers are not conditioned by racial questions, but as Ruth First noted race and class intertwine in shifting ways "...the national and class struggle are not part of some natural order of succession, but take place conterminously. This is so because workers are exploited as workers and also as members of a nationally oppressed group..." (Habib,1991:56). The SACP's conception of mass consciousness is unscientific because it was abstracted from the peculiarities of South African reality (Habib, 1991:56). The formation of consciousness takes place from "all-rounded life in capitalist society... (and)...the the growth of consciousness of the proletariat transforms this class struggle" (Habib, 1991:56). So with regard to the cultural, language, etc. aspect of the South African revolution, the social revolution will appear to have a national form, but only in the sense that the new non-racial proletarian state would have to bury the corpse of white racism. The systematic counteracting of generations of white domination by the new proletarian state will impart to it a black imprint, but "this does not imply confining the content of the struggle to a racist conception of inter-racial struggle" (WILSA, 1982:19).

The two-stage theory of revolution was the classical Social Democratic conception of revolution in the late 19th and early 20th century, where the programme of fighting for improvements in the system (reforms) was divided off from the fight for revolution which was postponed to sometime in the future (Roberts, 2007:95). Marx and Engels argued that the advanced countries of the world mirrored the future development of backward countries (Roberts, 2007:95). This meant for socialists that revolutions in their countries would mechanically follow in the footsteps of revolutions in Europe, where capitalist revolutions in the means of production and bourgeois democracy laid the foundation for future class struggles of the working class and socialism. The experience of the Russian revolution showed that this theory was outdated and false (WILSA, 1982:1). The national bourgeois in the backward countries enter the historical scene when the entire world economy is already controlled by Monopoly Capitalism. The national bourgeois is too weak, small and cowardly, tied in a million ways to the imperialist bourgeoisie to complete the bourgeois democratic tasks as had their brothers in the advanced countries. The peasantry while the largest class in agrarian based societies is a divided class incapable of playing a leading role in a revolution. It can be revolutionary but it follows the lead of either the ruling class or the working class. The working class though relatively small in economically backward countries is the only class that has the social

power to unite the oppressed classes in a struggle for power. It is the only class that has the interest and capacity to effect a permanent uninterrupted revolution (WILSA, 1982:16).

Leon Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution (demonstrated in the Russian Revolution and subsequent revolutions in third world countries) posits the view that the complete and genuine solution of the tasks of the democratic revolution is possible only through working class revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat (Roberts, 2007:99). Permanent revolution means that once in power, the workers would be compelled to take radical measures against bourgeois property relations. The seizure of power would mark not the completion, but the initiation of the revolutionary process of transformation of the social relations (Roberts, 2007:99). The democratic revolution in Trotsky's words 'grows over directly' into the socialist revolution, which in turn can only be completed except on an international scale.

4.2.2.3 SACP endorses the Capitalist Path

4.2.2.3.1 The SACP and Euro-communism

Since its unbanning the SACP struck out on a new political path embarking on a substantial theoretical and policy revision which they argued would assist in severing its link with Stalinism. This new political direction is a commitment to inner-party democracy, political pluralism, the "parliamentary road to socialism' and a redefinition of the nature of the socialist economy (Habib, 1991:94). The adoption of the 'parliamentary road to socialism' followed the European Communist parties which have since the Second World War "long participated in the democratic contest for parliamentary majorities" (Habib, 1991:98). This strategic shift meant a change from a revolutionary approach to an acceptance that "the state is an impartial arbiter above the selfish contention of classes" (Habib, 1991:99). The Marxist edict that the bourgeois state is the repressive arm of the bourgeoisie and that the "executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the bourgeoisie" (Marx & Engels, 1978:473) had been replaced by the view that the state is neutral and an arbiter between the classes.

The kernel of the Euro-communist strategy is the achievement of a parliamentary majority who would provide communists with the supreme power to gradually usher in reforms that will lead to socialism (Habib, 1991:100). This view of the bourgeois parliamentary system reduces the class struggle to “relations between political parties, or rather leaderships of political parties” (Mandel, 1979:197). It emasculates the working class of its power and promotes the elitist conception that ‘political chiefs’ determine the course of history rather than the masses themselves.

The SACP vision of a “socialist economy” is characterised by a mixture of “plan” and “market” where the “market” will be subservient to the “plan” (Habib, 1991:102). This vision of market mechanisms as an integral part of socialist economy comes from the experiences of the failures of ‘command economics’ in the Stalinist states. The Soviet experience indicates that command planning (which the SACP equates to “central planning”) while achieving structural changes in society causes stagnation in productivity and living standards (Habib, 1991:102). The SACP while criticising the Soviet experience does not understand the central role the Stalinist bureaucracy played in distorting the central plan, destroying democratic working class institutions and using the workers state as its own fiefdom.

The establishment of a planned economy is based on the overthrow of the ruling class and the construction of a new state power of the working class. The SACP hoped to arrive at socialism through democratising the capitalist state and building a mixed economy; part plan, part market. These new perspectives of the SACP represented a reformist project incapable of realising a socialist order they set as their task (Habib, 1991:106). It is a utopian justification for abandoning the struggle for socialism.

4.2.2.3.2 The SACP adopts the Negotiated Path to Power

The strategic approach of the SACP changed over time to accommodate changes in the balance of forces within the South African social formation. In the early 1960’s before large scale manufacturing had set in the emphasis was on rural-based guerrilla warfare. In the late 1970’s as the class struggle in the urban areas intensified and occupied central stage, the strategy shifted to urban guerrilla attacks which would lead to armed insurrection involving a people’s war (Habib, 1991:77). When the organisation was

unbanned in the early 1990's and the prospects for a successful insurrection diminished, this perspective gave way to discussion around a 'negotiated path to power'. In the context of a changing balance of forces both regionally and internationally, this was understandable. However the approach of the SACP was not directed to formulate tactics that would advance the struggle for socialism but rather focussed on the central role of the ANC where "...at Groote Schuur it was the ANC that met with the government ... (which would)...lead to the resolution of the country's political problems... (to) restructure the country on a non-racial and democratic lines. This signalled the end of the apartheid system" (Habib, 1991:82). The SACP stifled debate around this question arguing that the local, regional and international scene had changed and that the balance of forces had shifted decisively against socialism. This was certainly not the application of the Gramscian 'war of position' as some made it out to be, a holding of the fort till conditions become more favourable, but a total capitulation to share in the largesse that the 'new' South Africa promised. The SACP's hope for the democratic revolution had evaporated even though they recognised that the negotiated settlement could not meet the minimum demands of the black proletariat.

One of the great ironies of South African communism was that it fell to the SACP and its leading theoretician Joe Slovo to provide the breakthrough in the stalemate between the ANC and the Apartheid regime through their contribution to the now famous 'Sunset Clause' (termination of portions of a law after a specific date, unless further laws are made to extend it). Following the collapse of Codesa 2 in 1992, the De Klerk government had been pushing for a two-phase transition, with an appointed transitional government with a rotating presidency. The ANC pushed instead for a transition in a single stage to majority rule. The ANC compromised with the National Party's demands by agreeing to the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) which would include all parties which obtained over 5% of the vote in democratic elections for the first five years (RMG.2011:27). This meant that the National Party was sure to be included. The term 'sunset clause' was used for this compromise as it allowed the gradual phasing out of white rule rather than one dramatic handover of power, and it was this that set the negotiation process back on track.

4.2.2.4 The Organisational Question

Theoretically SACP modelled its organisational structure on the Leninist conception of democratic centralism. Under illegal conditions the basic structure was the branch, but due to repressive measures of the Apartheid state this was organised in the form of the “cell”. These cells were tightly controlled, based on strict selection of members that had to go through a thorough screening process (Habib, 1991:28). The underground nature of this work meant it was concealed from the public eye, and there was a strict division between ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’ activities. Those involved in these cells would seldom be active in public organisations of the community or political formations. Cells or Units in a particular region fell under the control of regional committees which in turn were constituted and appointed by the Central Committee (Habib, 1991:29). The Central Committee is the highest body of the organisation between Congresses which takes place once in five years. A Political Bureau is elected by the Central Committee to take charge of the daily running of the organisation (Habib, 1991:29) and this structure closely resembled that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

After it was unbanned the SACP established open Branches, Regional Internal Leadership Groups and a National Internal Leadership Group which were open public structures which co-existed with its underground structures. This was in preparation for an open, vanguard organisation which was established in December 1991 (Habib, 1991:31). While it has been transformed into an open, legal political party it continues to base itself on democratic centralism in which “All members shall have the maximum opportunity permitted by existing conditions to take part in the discussions and formulation of party policy and the right to participate in the election and selection of all higher organs” and where “All decisions taken by higher organs are absolutely binding on all lower organs and individual members. The minority is always subordinate to the majority” (Habib, 1991:30).

While the SACP claims adherence to democratic centralism it has in practice been opposed to all forms of inner-party democracy. Its definition of democratic centralism is Leninist but its practice is Stalinist. Democratic centralism is replaced by bureaucratic centralism. This is outlined in its party programme, the *Road to South African Freedom* where the SACP defined democratic centralism as “demanding strict discipline, the

subordination of minority to the majority and of lower Party organs to higher organs, *and the prohibition of all factions within the Party*" (Habib, 1991:39 – his emphasis). This prohibition of factions went against the history of the Bolshevik party which for most of its history allowed factions and difference of opinion and allowed its membership to determine the direction of party policy. Trotsky in defending Leninist centralism emphasised its democratic character "freedom of criticism and intellectual struggle was an irrevocable content of party democracy...the history of Bolshevism is a history of the struggle of factions" (Trotsky, 1974:94). Both the Stalinists and the bourgeois critics of Leninism point to the decision by the Leninist Central Committee to ban factions in 1921. What they do not acknowledge was that this was a temporary infraction of the democratic principle under conditions of Civil War. Stalinism made the banning of factions a permanent feature in order to stifle opposition and the SACP followed suit.

Habib (1991:39) correctly points out that the practice of the SACP has been far from democratic "the party has committed unjustifiable acts against members critical of party policy". Habib (1991:39) notes that in 1937 P Richter, M Richter, L Bach and SP Bunting were all charged with counter-revolutionary activity and when the first two appealed their expulsions in the Soviet Union they were executed. For over fifty years the SACP remained silent on this and only in 1989 did they rehabilitate these members posthumously. In the late 1970's critical leftwing thinkers organised as the Marxist Workers Tendency of the ANC (MWT) were expelled due to pressure exerted on the ANC leadership by the SACP. More recently critical thinkers like Dale McKinley and Vishwas Satgar who dared question the party line have been expelled. It is also strongly imputed that NUMSA's expulsion from COSATU was engineered by the SACP (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:2).

The SACP has also been highly antagonistic to socialist pluralism and has fought vigorously against any kind of working class organisation that arises outside the Congress framework. The trade union FOSATU was condemned and viciously attacked for daring to propose an alternative working class party "...the existence and achievements of the Communist Party are well known to everybody....Dare FOSATU ignore this?...And dare it ignore the disruptive and divisive effect its "workers movement" may have on the premier force in the country, the African National Congress" (Habib, 1991:41). Even the ex-general secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima

Vavi was hauled over the coals for participating in a workshop with Social Movements and the NGO fraternity. Similarly the SACP has been instrumental in fomenting divisions in COSATU and leading the attack on NUMSA. The SACP has a substitutionist understanding of leadership as it sees itself as the only force that has the right to lead the black working class struggle. This contradicts the Marxist spirit of working class leadership and its understanding that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself (McClellan, 1978:198).

4.2.3 The Federation of South African Trade Unions and ‘Workerism-Syndicalism’

The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was formed in 1979 from various trade unions which united around the ideas of worker control, democracy and strong shop-floor organisation. At its founding Congress FOSATU had a membership of 45 000 and espoused the principle of non-racialism, worker independence, international worker solidarity and trade union unity (Habib, 1991:32). Politically FOSATU was influenced by a broad diffuse group of academics who supported the views of Rosa Luxemburg and particularly her critique of Lenin’s form of organisation and the anti-Stalinism of the New Left in Europe (Habib, 1991:32). This group developed a syndicalist/“workerist” critique of dominant Congress politics which found expression in the distinction they drew between “liberation politics” and “transformation politics” (Habib, 1991:32). The struggle according to the leading theorist Alec Irwin was an “amalgam of populism and nation building” (Habib, 1991:32), and did not take account of changes in liberation politics which “is subject to new pressures...(where)...Economic growth and political reform are weakening the cement of populism” (Habib, 1991:33). According to Erwin liberation politics “was no longer liberation politics but rather a process of negotiation” and was in danger of co-option (Habib, 1991:33).

The emphasis in FOSATU was on an independent working class politics which was expressed by the General Secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster “...workers should strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even while they are part of the popular wide struggle. This organisation is necessary to protect and further worker interests and to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will in the end have no option but to turn against their worker supporters” (Foster, 1982:24). While Foster called for the creation of an effective organisational base for the working

class he did not provide clarity on the nature and form of that organisation (Habib, 1991:33). For many activists and for the SACP, this call by FOSATU was in preparation for the formation of a mass-based workers party. This was confirmed by Moses Mayekiso, a worker leader in the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) argued that it would be formed soon (Habib, 1991:34).

The SACP poured vitriol on this movement and categorised it as a form of opportunism in the workers movement, if not counter-revolutionary. The FOSATU mass-workers party did not materialise due to a number of factors, primarily its syndicalist orientation. The country in the mid-1980's was in the throes of worker-community-student uprisings and in spite of this the official line from FOSATU was to concentrate on shop floor trade union struggles. The membership of FOSATU lived in the townships and this abstention from community struggles made workers turn to the UDF/ANC alliance for political leadership. Their shop-floor orientation and emphasis on the economic concerns of workers ("workerism") led to the dominance of the ANC-SACP in community struggles and their leadership of the incipient mass movement that was developing in the country. The formation of COSATU further weakened the "workerists" politically and by 1987 the pro-populist/nationalists in the trade union movement pushed for the adoption of the Freedom Charter by COSATU. The adoption of the Charter represented the final denouement of the "workerists" who soon joined the Congress Alliance.

4.3 Conclusion

The various working class based political tendencies which fought in the anti-Apartheid struggle abdicated their political duty to forge a revolutionary Workers' Party in South Africa. This was as a result of the false theoretical and practical political conclusions they arrived at in accommodating themselves to the dominant nationalist groups in the country. As I have demonstrated this process started with the CPSA adopting the 'Native Republic thesis' in 1929. This was the precursor to the theory of 'Colonialism of a Special type' which became the loadstar of the politics of the SACP in the 1960's, 70's and 80's. Through its adoption of a multi-class approach giving political leadership to the ANC, the SACP had abrogated its leadership of the working class struggle. Its adoption of the two-stage theory of revolution and the People's Front meant that it was no longer fighting for a socialist revolution but the establishment of a National

Democratic State. In giving up leadership of the black working class to the ANC and fighting for the implementation of the NDR, the SACP in effect abandoned the struggle for socialism. This was confirmed in its participation in a capitalist GNU and later government of the ANC. It was the SACP which contributed to breaking the logjam between the Nationalist Party (NP) and the ANC in their formulation of the 'sunset clauses' which established the GNU and laid the basis for a democratic non-racial capitalist government. Leading SACP members have served in every ANC cabinet since 1994 and justify this by arguing that they are building a developmental state as part of the NDR. To all intents and purpose this is sheer sophistry and in spite of their protestations they have in all essentials abandoned the struggle for socialism.

FOSATU was centrally placed to build a Workers' Party in South Africa in the 1980's. However its 'workerist/syndicalism' prevented it from developing a political leadership of the working class. As the class struggle intensified in the mid-1980's FOSATU found itself isolated from the escalating struggle and when it joined other unions to form the huge COSATU it lost its footing politically and eventually capitulated to the nationalists. A few leading members of FOSATU found themselves in the cabinet of the ANC government and have become millionaires through their political affiliation.

Twenty years after formal democracy all the issues which dominated the discourse and the debates on the Workers' Party resurfaced. In many ways this is the regurgitation of the old debates within a new context of non-racial democracy. The post-Apartheid neo-colonial, neo-liberal regime is in severe crisis; economic, social and political. With the crisis of legitimacy of the ANC, the political demise of the SACP and the internal conflicts and divisions in COSATU, a political vacuum exists on the left. Various social forces and political formations have developed in response to this: the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and most importantly the political initiatives coming out of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). The next chapter will deal with the nature of the economic, social and political crisis in South Africa and the response of the working class to this. This will allow the detailed examination of the 'NUMSA Moment' in chapter 6 which I will argue attempts to resolve the question of the crisis of leadership of the proletariat.

CHAPTER 5 THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I dealt with the Communist Party and analysed its shortcomings as a revolutionary proletarian party. It was established that the underlying reason for this was its capitulation to the multi-class 'Popular Front' character of liberation politics which subordinated the interests of the working class to nationalist interests. In this chapter the focus will be on the objective and subjective factors which create the conditions for the deep crisis in South African capitalism and lays the basis for the establishment of a new radical Workers' Party in South Africa. The world capitalist system has been in a systemic crisis, a cyclical crisis since 2007/8 and what Marxist call an epochal crisis of the system since the advent of Imperialism in the 1870's. Since 2007/8 the crisis of the 'neoliberal' form of capitalism has intensified as seen in the high levels of unemployment, large scale hunger and poverty and growing inequality in society, which continues to this day.

The political crisis in the society is a multi-faceted one. The crisis of the ruling class is intimately bound up with the crisis of the ruling party. I will examine the rise and decline of the ANC as a political party, which in turn is a question of its legitimacy and support in society. I will look at both COSATU and the SACP and show how their capitulation to the politics of nationalism has created a crisis of *leadership of the proletariat*. This has led to a split in COSATU which has eschewed the force (the 'NUMSA Moment') that has become the main lever to the establishment of an alternative Workers Party in South Africa today.

5.2 The Economic Crisis, a crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality

"The crisis consists of precisely the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear" – Gramsci (Le blanc,1996:297).

5.2.1 White Monopoly Capitalism

While there has been much debate regarding the existence of the political characterisation ‘white monopoly capital’ in liberation literature recently, I think it is purely a ‘factional’ game which does not accord with the material development of capitalism in South Africa. The law of uneven and combined development posits unevenness as the most general feature of all development and, in particular, capitalist development. In this regard, the rate of capitalist development was different in Britain as compared to South Africa (WILSA, 1982:18). So while Britain and Europe in general had entered the period of Imperialism, South Africa and the colonies lagged behind, showing only isolated capitalist features “While the process of proletarianisation was only about to begin in South Africa, it had long ago been completed in Britain. While bourgeois democracy as the best political shell for capitalism had long ago been achieved in Britain, South Africa did not have a unitary state, let alone a consistent political norm” (WILSA, 1982:18). By the end of the nineteenth century Imperial Britain “brought backward South Africa under the general domain of Monopoly Capitalism” (WILSA, 1982:18). In theoretical terms the “unevenness of development between South Africa and Britain sought out its counterpart – combined development” (WILSA, 1982:18).

Over the past 100 years of monopoly capitalist rule, first the colonial state and then, from 1910, the racist capitalist state assisted in the further expansion of the monopoly capitalist national bourgeoisie from mining into other sector of the economy (RMG, 2011:20). To facilitate overall capitalist development, the state developed infrastructure and systems of transport and communication, also preparing the emergence and consolidation of an Afrikaans-speaking bourgeoisie, that also became increasingly monopoly capitalist “Effective economic domination in South Africa is thus exercised by an alliance **of local White monopoly interests in mining, industry and agriculture, together with foreign imperialists and representatives of state monopoly capitalism**” (Malikane, 2017:5 – his emphasis). While this capitalist interest conflict with each other, and they compete to take control of larger sections of the economy “they find common ground in the perpetuation of the colonial-type subjugation of the non-White population” (Malikane, 2017:5).

These Monopoly Capitalists are the real power as they **“own and control the mines, the banks and finance houses, and most of the farms and major industries”** (Malikane, 2017:5 – his emphasis). According to Workers World Media Productions (WWMP, 2005:12) “In the early 1980s, the top 20 companies in South Africa owned 61% of total assets and 39% of total assets were owned by companies associated with just three top firms, i.e. Old Mutual, Anglo-American and Sanlam. In agriculture, at the same time, 2.7% of all enterprises controlled 50% of total turnover; 6.3% employed 54% of the workforce; and 6% had 85% of all fixed assets.” As a result of sanctions and the withdrawal of foreign corporations, economic power was further concentrated in the hand of the ruling South African monopoly capitalist class; between 1981 and 1986 the control of total assets in the hands of the top eight corporations increased by 10% (WWMP, 2005:12). In 1998, five main conglomerate groupings accounted for 54.7% of the capitalisation of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. In 2002, the four biggest banks represented about 80% of the total banking sector (WWMP, 2005:12).

An example of the ownership and influence of White Monopoly Capital is the Remgro Public Investment Company which has interests in all the major industries and enterprises in the South African economy. In the food and beverage industry they have a 25,8% shareholding in Unilever South Africa, a 30,65% shareholding in the Distell Group who specialise in the production of wines and spirits, and a 77,5% shareholding in RCL Foods which includes Rainbow Chickens and Foodcorp amongst others. They have interests in the banking sector with a shareholding of 28,2% in RMB Holdings and a 13,5% shareholding in FirstRand. They own a 42% share in the Mediclinic Group which provides high-quality hospital services in South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Switzerland. In the Industrial and Manufacturing sector they have a 50% shareholding in Air Products South Africa (APSA), a 34,9% holding in Kagiso Tiso Holdings (KTH), a black economic controlled company, a 24,9% shareholding in Total South Africa, a 37,7% holding in PGSI which is an investment company holding a 90% stake in the PG Group and 100% shareholding in Wispeco Holding, a manufacturer and distributor of extruded aluminium used in the building industry. In the Insurance industry they have a 30,3% shareholding in RMI Holdings which has an interest in Discovery Limited, MMI Holdings and OUTsurance. In Infrastructure they have a 23% shareholding in Grinrod, a 50,9% in CIV Holdings, a 25% shareholding in SEACOM and a 45,4% shareholding in the Kagiso Infrastructure Empowerment Fund (KIEF). They

also interests in Media and Sport through a shareholding of 32,4% in Sabido Investments, a media company with investments in ETV and YFM amongst others (Wikipedia).

Remgro Investment Company is only the ninth (9th) biggest investment company in South Africa. From this example we can see that White Monopoly Capital is the real power in the society and has its tentacles in every area of the economy. What is as important as its shareholding is the diverse influence it has in every area of the economy.

5.2.2 Apartheid to Democracy

According to Saul & Bond (2014:146) ending the Apartheid regime was one of the greatest human achievements of the past century. The writer Thandika Mkandawire aptly described this process as a 'choiceless democracy' where "the transition agreement between the racists and the ANC was full of unfortunate compromises" (Saul & Bond, 2014:146). The self-imposition of economic and developmental policies at the behest of financial markets and the Western Washington/Geneva multilateral institutions prevented genuine national determinations (Saul & Bond, 2014:145). Gillian Hart (2013:6) captured the contradictory character of this change from Apartheid to Democracy as a process of "*de-nationalisation* and *re-nationalisation*." De-nationalisation represents the re-imposition of the hegemony of corporate capital which was able to reconnect to the global economy after the long dry season of Apartheid isolation facilitated through strategically placed forces within the ANC. Re-nationalisation refers to the attempts to structure the new nation through Nelson Mandela's concept of the rainbow nation and the NDR as an accommodation of inequalities of post-Apartheid capitalism as a transitory phenomenon. This would eventually to be superseded by the ever receding second phase (socialism) (Hart, 2013:5).

The overall embrace of capitalist neoliberal orthodoxy (hereafter referred to as neoliberalism) was set in the transitional years. The high level of conflict in areas like Natal between the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC aligned United Democratic Front (UDF) and general state repression against political opponents, the

involvement of the International Monetary Fund and its 'competitive' international economic policies and the collapse of really existing 'socialism' in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, created the perfect conditions for this to be effected with very little opposition. Five months before the 1994 elections the 'Transitional Executive Committee' (TEC) comprising a few leading ANC cadre and the ruling Nationalist Party took control of the South African government (Saul & Bond, 2014:148). As the racist laws were being removed from the statute books the TEC signed a \$850 million loan from the IMF ostensibly for drought relief when the drought had ended 18 months before this (Saul & Bond, 2014:148). This tied the future ANC government to a range of corporate-friendly macroeconomic policies. Ronnie Kasrils, ex-Minister in both the Mandela and Mbeki Cabinets acknowledged that this was a major error, a 'Faustian pact' with Imperialism "We took an IMF loan on the eve of our first democratic election and had already imperceptibly succumbed to the guile and subtle threats of the corporate world which had been chipping away at revolutionary resolve for some years...We walked into that in the misguided belief that there was no other option (Mckinley, 2017:26). There were other options open to implement a more radical programme particularly as South Africa had a bargaining chip in the form of important mineral resources. The ANC he argues had however lost the plot and faith "in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles" (Saul & Bond, 2014:149). In May 1994 the ANC had won an overwhelming victory at the polls and formed the majority party in a 'Government of National Unity' (GNU), a power sharing coalition established in the name of 'reconciliation. Many thought the GNU would be an unstable government but the reliability of the ANC as a capitalist party became apparent very early, as the Nationalist Party (NP) under new leader Marthinus van Schalkwyk dropped out of the coalition in 1996 and dissolved as a party and joined the ANC. The economic policy agreements forged during the 1990's meant that a transition from the Apartheid 'securocrats' to transitional-Apartheid 'econocrats' had by 1996 successfully taken place (Saul & Bond, 2014:149). F.W. de Klerk also comfortably retired from public office in mid-1996 as a neo-liberal economic policy and an elite transition had been effected.

5.2.3 From RDP to GEAR

The ANC electoral victory in 1994 created widespread expectation amongst the black population that the ANC would begin to make important and drastic changes to the lives of black people (Mckinley, 2017:29). This expectation flowed not only from what was broadly seen as the political defeat of the Apartheid regime, but also from the “mildly redistributive developmental plan in the form of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP)” (Mckinley, 2017:29). The RDP was successfully adopted as the ANC’s electoral programme in the 1994 elections. According to Mckinley (2017:34) the six basic principles of the RDP was seen as the “natural inheritor of the Freedom Charter”. While it was a multi-class programme the RDP also contained the developmental aspirations of organised workers (Mckinley, 2017:34). It was a ‘people’s programme’ which provided an “integrated, coherent and viable social economic policy framework (that) seeks to mobilize all our people and our country’s resources towards the final eradication of apartheid and the building of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future” (Mckinley, 2017:34).

The year 1996 was a watershed moment for both the ANC and the country as a whole. In early 1996 the government signed a National Framework Agreement on the Restructuring of State Assets (NFA) with the major trade union federations and placed the labour movement in the position of ‘co-determining the “restructuring of state assets” with government on a neoliberal framework (McKinley, 2017:36). This was followed by an announcement by the ANC-dominated Cabinet that they were unilaterally shutting down the RDP ministry. There had been no meaningful internal ANC Alliance discussion or any public debate beforehand (Mckinley, 2017:38). After tinkering with a National Growth and Development Strategy (NGDS) the ANC-led government unveiled a new macro-economic policy framework in June 1996, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme. This was a ‘non-negotiable’ programme and was meant as “the practical means to implement the RDP” (Mckinley, 2017: 38). Even the SACP leadership welcomed GEAR and stated that they “fully backed the objectives of this ...strategy” (Mckinley, 2017:38). According to Mckinley (2017:39) the GEAR policy was based on the existing structures of ownership and production and was characterised by a fiscal policy that seeks ‘deficit reduction’ through manipulating existing budgetary ‘constraints’ (tax breaks for capitalists), a tight monetary policy (high

interest rates/inflation targeting), 'liberalisation' of financial and exchange controls (speculative 'quickie' investments), 'regulated flexibility' in the labour market (increased exploitation), export-led growth strategy (cheap imports and deindustrialisation) and privatisation (trickle-down economics). This represented the formal embrace of a capitalist neo-liberalism by the ANC.

Twenty five years later GEAR remains the bedrock of the country's development path. It also remains the cause of huge disquiet in the society and the basis for intense class struggle. According to Saul and Bond (2014:154) the targets that GEAR set merely served the interests of big capital and not the poor. It also trapped the economy into what has become an enduring 'low growth trajectory'. Between the period 1996-2000 business was the only party to benefit as inflation was reduced from 9 percent to 5.5 percent, the current account was no longer in deficit as projected and the fiscal deficit was below 2 percent of GDP. Saul and Bond (2014:154) point out the main targets of GEAR were not reached; growth was actually negative in per capita terms using GDP as a measure, unemployment figures rose from 16 percent in 1995 to 30 percent in 2002 and redistribution favoured big corporations as company taxes were reduced from 48 percent in 1994 to 30 percent in 1999. The much heralded Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy that had been started by the Apartheid government in the mid-1980's did not benefit the majority of black people but was geared to forge the growth of an elite black bourgeois class (Mckinley, 2017:43). As this aspirant black bourgeois class was very small they were now handpicked by the ANC as this 'guaranteed' that they would be politically loyal and accessible to the organisation for future financial backing (Mckinley, 2017:43).

5.2.4 The Economic and Social consequences of GEAR

According to reports compiled by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) there are only six countries in the world with levels of unemployment higher than South Africa. Between 1994 and 2016 unemployment had increased from 20 percent to 26,5 percent. A million jobs were lost due to the financial crisis of 2007/8, on the back of deindustrialisation in favour of Chinese imports and a mineral export led GDP growth without concomitant job creation (SAFTU, 2017:2). This, together with new job entrants has led to a greater level of unemployment as a consequence. According to the

statistician general's 2017 figures there has been a net loss of 113 000 jobs between the first quarter and second quarter of the year (SAFTU, 2017:2). The rate of unemployment in 2017 was 27, 7 percent which is the highest level it has been in 14 years (SAFTU, 2017:2). These figures do not take account of those who were available to work but did not look for work in the period under review, what is known as the 'expanded definition of unemployment', the roughly 3.1 million people which increases the unemployment rate to 36,6 percent (SAFTU, 2017:2). These figures keep getting worse and the figures for 2018 show that 9,5 million people (36,7% of working-age population) are unemployed, 3,3 million under the age of 24 years are not in employment, education or training (Arendse, 2018:1).

It is startling that a country as rich as South Africa is the most unequal country in the world, this according to the Gini Index, published by the World Bank (SAFTU, 2017:45). Figures from Stats SA's show that in 2015, 30.4 million South Africans lived below the upper poverty line of R992 per person per month, which is three million more than in 2011. These indices show that one in three South Africans live on less than R797 per month, or half the country's 2015 mean annual household income of R19 120, with more women affected than men, and children and the elderly hardest hit, while racial inequalities continue to define poverty as largely a black African problem (SAFTU, 2017:3). The report also shows that in the same period there was an increase of extreme food poverty to 25, 2 percent in 2015, up from 21, 4 percent in 2011. The NDP goal to reduce the percentage of citizens in the lowest poverty category from 39 percent to zero has failed abysmally (SAFTU, 2017:3). Levels of household indebtedness rose to 76, 9 percent in 2015, up from 21, 4 percent in 2011 (SAFTU, 2017:3). At the same time emphasising the extreme levels of inequality is the shocking statistic that the average pay of executives in the country's top 100 companies is R17,97 million a year, which amounts to R69 000 per day! (SAFTU, 2017:3). According to Arendse (2018:1) the situation is only getting worse, as the statistics for 2018 show that 30,4 million people live in poverty on R992.00 or less per month, the richest 1% of the population owns 71% of wealth while the poorest 60% own only 7%.

Through various social programmes like 'Operation Masakhane', 'Let's build together', the government tried to create the impression that it was community and poor friendly. These programmes failed hopelessly as service charges increased astronomically and

by 2002 “service charges on water and electricity consumed 30 percent of the income of those households earning less than 70 dollars per month (approximately R1050.00) (Saul & Bond, 2014:157). The largest cut-offs took place in the supply of fixed telephone lines where an estimated 10 million people lost services between 1994-2001 (Saul & Bond, 2014:157). Even the much vaunted free basic water policy by the ‘progressive’ Minister of Water Affairs (Ronnie Kasrils) was not successfully implemented as it was either sabotaged at local municipal level or it was delivered in a tokenistic way (Saul & Bond, 2014:157). The public health service is in a state of serious crisis due to underfunding and corruption, infectious diseases like tuberculosis, cholera, malaria and Aids have become rife “all far more prevalent than during Apartheid” (Saul & Bond, 2014:162).

The commercialisation and privatisation of state resources has grown through what the government calls ‘insufficient state capacity’ and large scale looting of the public enterprises (Saul & Bond, 2014:163). This has affected the four main sectors of the economy namely telecommunications, transport, electricity and water. In 1996, 30 percent of state-owned Telkom was sold to a Houston-Kuala Lumpur Alliance which resulted in the dramatic increase in the cost of local calls and the subsequent disconnection of the vast majority of new lines. In the field of transportation partial privatization has occurred and the impasse over ‘toll roads’ and ‘toll fees’ has resulted in large scale boycott organised by Organisation Undoing Tax Abuse (OUTA). In the electrical sector Eskom was scheduled for 30 percent privatisation in 2004. This however was aborted after COSATU threatened mass scale protests. Currently all the SOE’s are in severe crisis of near bankruptcy and the Ramaphosa government’s plan is to break up and according to the trade unions, privatise these. At the SONA on the 7th February 2019 President Ramaphosa announced the slow unbundling of ESKOM. This will increase costs of electricity dramatically for the poor especially and there is bound to be a huge struggle against what is seen as a stepping stone towards the privatisation of ESKOM.

The ecological degeneration in water and soil resources, the increase in greenhouse gas contributing to global warming, fisheries, industrial toxins, genetic modification and the early manifestation of Acid Mine Drainage have all dramatically increased in the post-Apartheid period as the *Environmental Outlook* report of 2006 noted (Saul & Bond,

2014:168). Water scarcity and water table pollution makes the situation of privatised water so much more difficult for communities to deal with.

While the economic and social consequences of GEAR have been overwhelmingly devastating it is important to note that there have been some important improvements during this period. State fiscal support for the social wage increased a little as recipients of existing apartheid programmes were broadened to include all South Africans (Saul & Bond, 2014:159). The reason for this as Professor Susan Booysen explains, is that the social grants form a crucial part of the ANC's 'political regeneration', as "the ANC in-government is the dispenser, the patron that ensures social grants and other benefits" (Saul & Bonds, 2014:159). Gender relations have improved slightly, however when the gender component intersects the class question, the patriarchal modes of extraction are still largely the same "In 2011, 44.4 percent of women earned below R2000/month, compared to just 30.5 percent of men. The average African women earn R23/hour compared to R91.5/hour for white males" (Saul & Bond, 2014:161). The most severe blight on South Africa's ailing health system was the HIV/Aids denialist policy of the Mbeki regime. Up to a "million people (died) early because of the Aids" (Saul & Bond, 2014:163) and by the year 2000 up to five million people were HIV positive. This situation improved dramatically when the Zuma regime changed its emphasis and provided free anti-retroviral drugs to people at all hospitals and clinics in the country.

5.3 The Political Crisis in South Africa

5.3.1 Introduction

The most notable feature of late 20th century South African politics was the 'democratic breakthrough' when on the 2nd February 1990 President F.W. de Klerk announced the release of Nelson Mandela from prison and the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and all related allied organisations which opened the door to a negotiated end to Apartheid and the overwhelming victory for the ANC in the first democratic election in 1994 (Mckinley, 2017:18). The majority of South Africans believed this victory would change their lives; for many this represented an opportunity for the ANC to take an anti-capitalist path or at the very least adopt a radically redistributive politics and socio-economic path (Mckinley, 2017:29). According to Mckinley (2017:29) instead of this we found that "the endgames

of the ANC and corporate capital was converging” through various interactions culminating in the CODESA negotiations from 1990 to 1994. The masses hoped for radical change and they had faith in the leadership of the ANC which had come out of exile and from prison. This optimism was buoyed by the adoption of the ‘Reconstruction and Development Programme’ (RDP), the ANC’s electoral manifesto in 1994. The programme was barely implemented when it was replaced by the ‘Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme’ (GEAR) in 1996. While theoretically GEAR was meant to implement the RDP, the emphasis had changed from redistribution to growth as the “number one priority of socio-economic policy (which) would ‘contribute to development’” (Mckinley, 2017:38). GEAR was a swing to the right in terms of economic policy and served to confirm the ANC’s formal embrace of a capitalist neoliberalism (Mckinley, 2017:38).

Under President Thabo Mbeki there was a dramatic increase in tensions in the Tripartite Alliance and this culminated in a veritable coup de ‘etat at the ANC’s Polokwane Conference in 2017. Jacob Zuma unseated Thabo Mbeki as the president of the ANC with the support of a discontented group of oppositional forces who each had their own problems with the Mbeki government and saw in Zuma the possibility of changing the course of the ANC. The post-Polokwane period was meant to usher in a radical turn to the left in the political trajectory of the ANC but it did not occur and many of Zuma’s staunchest allies like Julius Malema of the ANCYL, Zwelinzima Vavi of COSATU and Blade Nzimande of the SACP fell out with the Zuma leadership over time.

The ANC government under the leadership of Jacob Zuma stands accused of high levels of corruption having facilitated the economic and financial interests of a particular faction in society (and more specifically a particular family, the Gupta family who are in partnership with his son Duduzane). The then public protector, advocate Thuli Madonsela called for the establishment of a judicial enquiry around ‘State Capture’. The ‘Zondo Commission’ has placed the once highly respected and acclaimed liberation movement, the ANC, under the spotlight and through the ‘Gupta leaks’, the VBS scandal and BOSASA/PIC revelations, the gross mismanagement and looting of state enterprises is coming out. It is all these factors put together that is creating the conditions for a sea change in South African politics. The disillusionment of the masses in the ANC/Tri-Partite Alliance has already been demonstrated by the dramatic

decrease in support for them in the 2016 local government elections, and more recently in the 2019 elections.

The ANC is no longer the united force it once was. The breakaway of COPE to its right, the EFF to its left, the expulsion of NUMSA from COSATU and the deep seated 'factionalism' in the party, has not only weakened its support base but has created conditions for the emergence of oppositional forces, particularly to the left of the ANC. The marginal victory of Cyril Ramaphosa over Nkosazana Dhlamini-Zuma at the December 2017 ANC Conference is a reflection of these deep-seated factional differences; in fact the composition of the top six of the organisation is a 'factional' compromise which seems to pull more apart as time goes on. This is an extremely fragile arrangement as some of the leading figures in both factions are implicated in benefitting from 'State Capture'; we have already witnessed the resignation of the Minister of Finance, Nhlanhla Nene who lied to the country regarding his having met with the Gupta clan. The fractious relationship in the party can only deepen as more revelations of looting of the public purse are exposed. This makes the political relationship in the ANC unstable and deepens the crisis in the society. The 'thuma mina' effect of renewal and clean governance as promised by Ramaphosa, is more a reflection of the search for renewal in the society and support for the person of Ramaphosa, who is seen as an honest person, rather than support for the ANC.

The economic, political and social crisis in society is reflected most starkly in the intensification of the class struggle, graphically illustrated in the Marikana massacre and mine workers strike movement. The Marikana massacre is a turning point in South African politics, not unlike the Sharpeville massacre and the Soweto 1976 uprising (Khan, 2019a:16). Not only was the mine workers strike about economic issues but it brought into question the entire cheap labour system and most immediately the character of the political deal made in 1994. It also represented a rupture between the black working class and the political leadership of the Tri-Partite Alliance (Khan, 2019a:16).

Leftwing politics in South Africa is never going to be the same again. This is graphically demonstrated by the emergence of the alternative South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU) which is already the second largest trade union federation in the

country and leftwing opposition forces like the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the party catalysed by NUMSA, namely the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) (Khan, 2018b:2).

5.3.2 The ANC, from a Party of Liberation to the Party of Big Capital

5.3.2.1 “ Neoliberalism of a Special Type and the Black Bourgeois Oligarchy” (Lehulere, 2012:1).

According to Oupa Lehulere (2012:2) the Mbeki leadership represented the bringing together of two currents of the liberation movement. These were the ex-Nationalist-Communists coming out of the ANC and the SACP, on the one hand, and the ex-Euro-Communists coming out of the labour movement from FOSATU. Both these currents reacted to the collapse of Stalinism in 1989 with a sharp turn to the right, and began to craft a developmental path that was based on a ‘vision’ of harnessing neoliberalism ...to the development of Africa in general and South Africa in particular (Lehulere, 2012:2). GEAR in 1996 and NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) in 2001 linked the need for a strong capitalist class, capital accumulation and skilled professionals to a strong state and democratic governance.

The Mbeki leadership placed the creation of a black capitalist oligarchy at the center of its strategy (Lehulere, 2012:2). For the Mbeki leadership the project of Africa’s renewal could not be carried by small capital and less so by an ‘amorphous’ working class: what was needed was a strong capitalist class, a class of big black capitalists. During the Mbeki period we thus saw the emergence of a small, powerful and very rich group of black capitalists created through state intervention, from above. This also opened a Pandora’s Box of legalised corruption as a group that had nothing was parachuted into the ranks of the big bourgeoisie in a very short space of time (Lehulere, 2012:2).

The introduction of GEAR and NEPAD meant the liberalization of the continental economy which resulted in masses of people from various parts of the continent migrating to South Africa for jobs and trade as they followed the movement of wealth. Gillian Hart notes in *Disabling Globalisation* (Luckett & Munshi, 2017:15) that this also

caused a change in power relations within the Tri-Partite alliance. COSATU as a force in the Tripartite Alliance lost much of its power through privatization and labour casualisation which resulted in rising unemployment, deindustrialization and the decline in real wages (Luckett & Munshi, 2017:15).

Mbeki's neoliberalism of a special type severely affected the black working class, the black middle class and the aspirant black bourgeoisie. In the case of the working class neoliberalism meant "large-scale unemployment, declining wages, impoverishment, and the collapse of social infrastructure became the lot of the working class" (Lehulere, 2012:2). The black middle class had pinned its hope on the fact that democracy would open up opportunities for its progress "if not of the production of wealth, then certainly of its consumption" and that 'its time to eat' (Lehulere, 2012:3). GEAR represented a major threat to these aspirations, with its regime of 'high interest rates'. High interest rates meant a squeeze on their disposable income and the capacity to spend as they wished. Then there were those who felt that they belonged to the big black bourgeoisie, but who felt excluded for personal or factional reasons from this group; they felt unjustly accused of being corrupt instead of being seen, like the others, to be honestly involved in the primitive accumulation of capital like everybody else. For the latter two groups the real discourse was one of hatred: hatred of Mbeki; hatred of 'white capital'; hatred (and envy) of rich people; hatred of the media; hatred of women; hatred of intellectuals; hatred of debate; hatred of people of different sexual orientations; hatred of foreigners, in particular of African descent (Lehulere, 2012:4). Indeed, this was the classic response of a petty-bourgeoisie under siege from capitalism in crisis. The petty bourgeois and aspirant black bourgeois are classes in transition and in competition with those they regard as blocking their way to the top. Their response is reflective of their class position; a class that is in-between other classes and vacillates in their responses, which is often very subjective.

The attempts by Mbeki and his leading group to neutralise the potential power of this constituency within the party was to prove futile: what Mbeki could do within the state he could not do within the party. In the party the petty-bourgeoisie and the working class were king, and the class recomposition of the ANC was definitely not on the horizon. Mbeki's defeat at Polokwane was therefore highly possible, as Lehulere (2012:4) put it, it was "written in the ANC stars". The project of creating a black bourgeois oligarchy and

its related projects of a strong capitalism and a “clean” bourgeois state cannot be realised within the ANC; it can only be realised by breaking up the ANC (Lehulere, 2012:4). The formation of COPE after Polokwane and the EFF after Mangaung gives us a glimpse of this historical dynamic.

5.3.2.2. Polokwane, a shift to the Left?

Zuma decisively defeated the Mbeki faction at Polokwane and Gwede Mantashe, the ex-General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was elected as the General Secretary of the ANC. The Polokwane victory by the Zuma group meant that they had recaptured the ANC (Lehulere, 2017b:2). Mbeki was unceremoniously removed as President of the country and leading members of the Alliance partners were appointed to the Cabinet under a new Zuma presidency. Zuma’s supporters seized control of major levers of the state and “the SACP leadership became even more closely aligned with the ANC leadership than previously, claiming to be driving state policy in a progressive direction” which they thought would make it possible to combat the “triple enemies of inequality, poverty and unemployment” (Satgar & Southall, 2015:11).

Adam Habib (2013:131) argues that the post-Polokwane period is characterised by “a stalemate between unions and the corporate sector, where the interests of neither can prevail within the state without being constrained by the other”. While President Zuma has the habit of “promising everything to everyone”, to all stakeholders – business, labour, students, middle and upper middle-class citizens – what they want, the post-Polokwane period also saw a “a deepening shift to the left in economic terms”. According to Habib (2013:131) in the first period of the Zuma administration there was a significant shift to a neo-Keynesian economic agenda; there was a marked increase in social spending in the first three years through higher budget deficits and a more active industrial policy as well as more interventionist general economic policies and the state also engaged more robustly with the corporate sector and in particular with foreign investors as seen in the insistence that the Walmart takeover of Massmart in 2011 guarantee no job losses and skill transfers (Habib, 2013:129). While this may be true, Habib (2013:129) acknowledges that the shift to neo-Keynesianism was an international trend as a result of the 2007/8 economic crisis. Governments, especially in the

advanced European countries were forced to intervene to assist corporate meltdown through state assistance, as seen in the Lehman Brothers and other bailouts.

5.3.2.3 The fracture of the Polokwane bloc

The alliance of the various strata of the petty bourgeoisie was built on the “shifting sands of illusion, deception and opportunism” (Lehulere, 2012:3). As soon as the bloc won in Polokwane it was clear that the seeds of rupture were very much alive. It was however not the personality clashes, the hidden agendas or the lack of vision of Zuma (as we are led to believe), but rather the class configuration that underpinned the cohesion of the Mbeki group rule.

The Polokwane bloc as a ‘coalition of the disaffected’ quickly adapted to their conditions. As soon as Zuma assumed the presidency he came face to face with the power of monopoly capital, both global and local (Lehulere, 2012:4). Zuma and his group in government found that there was no room to maneuver and that they could not change policy in any significant way. The fusion of the global and local monopoly capital made its power even more formidable, and like the petty-bourgeoisie he represented, Zuma adapted to this power. We therefore, saw how as soon as Zuma ascended the throne rumour went around that the ‘class of 1996’ was back in power! (Lehulere, 2012:4).

The mission of the black petty-bourgeoisie, however, is to ‘eat’ – for this class production is a foreign concept. With no capacity for leadership (exemplified most graphically by ‘The Leader’ himself) this class turned to a noisy and fractious dismembering of the state, especially at the local level; the age of the tenderpreneur had arrived (Lehulere, 2012:4). Three main power blocs were apparently at war within the party: a group bent on personal accumulation associated with ANCYL leader Julius Malema who was fast falling out of favour, those of the centre-left following Kgalema Motlanthe who were intent on gaining influence on policy decisions and the President’s KwaZulu Natal regional allies (Saul & Bond, 2014:209).

The internal ANC split between pro-Zuma and anti-Zuma forces was apparent at the COSATU 2012 Conference as it was at the Mangaung electoral Conference of the ANC

in December of the same year. The NUM threatened to open a challenge to the General Secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi at the COSATU Congress while the Zuma faction at Mangaung practically “squash(ed)ing his opponent (then deputy president) Kgalema Motlanthe with three quarters of the vote (Saul & Bond, 2014:227). The road to Mangaung was both “farce and comedy” as Lehulere (2012:4) noted. The defeat of Motlanthe, Sexwale and Phosa at the Mangaung Conference of the ANC represented the defeat of the ‘left’ in the Tri-Partite Alliance.

Zuma came to power on the back of the left wing of the ANC, but came under pressure from the ruling class to put a halt to the leftward drift of the party. In this he was aided and abetted by the Communist Party. Had the SACP put itself at the head of the call for nationalisation then, the situation in the country could have been very different today. But the SACP leaders had no intention of moving in the direction of Socialism (Lehulere, 2012:4). Instead the party leaders started to attack the leadership of the Youth League. It also changed its constitution to allow its full-time leaders to become part of the Cabinet and act as a left cover for an openly capitalist government. After this, the SACP leaders led by Blade Nzimande broadened their campaign to attack the left wing in the trade union movement. This led to a split in the unions and a consequent weakening of the influence of the trade union movement in the ANC (Saul & Bond, 2014:228).

COSATU was severely weakened as its biggest union the NUM lost thousands of members in the mining sector. This weakness was apparent as seen in its failure to stop the rise of the multi-billionaire Cyril Ramaphosa to renewed power within the ANC (Saul & Bond, 2014:228). He was elected as the deputy president with more than three quarters of the vote. Big business expressed relief by the expulsion of Julius Malema from the ANC and celebrated the defeat of Tokyo Sexwale and Mathews Phosa by Ramaphosa (Saul & Bond, 2014:231). The ANC’s “talk-left-so-as-to-walk-right’ was clearly demonstrated at Mangaung as it endorsed the National Development Plan (NDP) which had been co-authored by Ramaphosa (Saul & Bond, 2014:231). The same NDP was endorsed by business and the DA. In the words of commentator Adam Habib (2013:130) “The ANC says it is committed to the notion of economic transformation. If this is true, how do you elect a billionaire as your deputy President? He has an admirable political record, but his track record on economic transformation is abysmal.

5.3.2.4 The Degeneration of the ANC

“Behind every great fortune lies a great crime” – Honore de Balzac

(Lehulere, 2017:1).

On the surface of things the struggle between President Zuma and Pravin Gordhan appeared to be an anti-corruption struggles against one individual and one family. The reality is that this struggle is about a contestation between a black middle class that has been blocked from accessing the commanding heights of the economy, and a white monopoly capitalist class that still exercises enormous power in South African society (Lehulere, 2017b:1).

The SASSA scandal, the near-bankruptcy of the State Owned Enterprises (SOE's) which have been looted and pillaged and the various shenanigans that have been exposed in the 'Gupta leaks' (approximately 100 000 or more emails have been leaked to the aMahbhungane media collective) is a reflection of how a once proud ANC had degenerated. Under Apartheid, its activists were associated with laying down their lives in defending and advancing the interests of the mass of the people – in particular the black working class (Lehulere, 2017b:1). Today, the cadre of the ANC is associated with stealing from the mass of people and corruption and theft of public resources is a deep and systemic one (Lehulere, 2017b:1).

While the corruption of the Zuma and Gupta alliance is clear for all to see, what is not so clear is that Pravin Gordhan and the Finance Ministers that came before him have presided over the growing impoverishment of the mass of black working class South Africans (Lehulere, 2017b:1). Under their watch, wealth has become more concentrated in South Africa, and has remained deeply racialised; the development of the black middle class has not moved beyond flashy clothes and flashy cars and there is really no serious black big bourgeoisie to speak off, except a couple of pin-up boys who are exceptions that prove the rule (Lehulere, 2017b:2).

South African neo-liberalism has laid the foundation for the development of a parasitic faction of black capital to emerge which utilizes the organs of government to leverage access to state resources, often on a corrupt basis. The most organised section of this black bourgeoisie was the 'Zupta' faction which used their leverage on state resources to advance their accumulation of wealth. President Zuma had created elements of a

shadow Bonapartist security state with a Zulu ethnic flavour that facilitated the growth of this kleptocratic faction (Jooma & Khan, 2017:2). The existence of the Bonapartist state facilitated the predatory relationship and led the Gupta's to believe that they could exercise political appointments to suit their business interests undermining all levels of political etiquette and ruling party processes, as they wished (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3).

Zuma and his faction had dressed up their corruption and looting in radical clothing, portraying their factional opponents as lackeys of white monopoly capital to which they allegedly opposed. Their project was presented as the "second phase of the transition of the National Democratic Revolution" (Lehulere, 2017b:3). Developments have exposed the Zuma faction's slogan of "radical economic transformation" for what it was: the creation of an enabling institutional and policy environment for the self-enrichment of Zuma's family, friends and cronies in the black elite. That is what lay behind the takeover of Treasury. The way has now been cleared for, in the words of the SACP second deputy general secretary, Solly Mapaila, "parasites and vultures to encircle it and loot it completely" (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3).

At the same time, the Zuma government was the *weakest link in the chain of the capitalist system* (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3). The party itself has been completely destabilised by years of crisis. With the main elements of the left wing pushed out, the party has now been fully taken over by careerists, "tenderpreneurs" and other parasitic elements (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3). The party of liberation was rotting from top to bottom. All its structures, from the leading bodies to the branch level, were torn apart by different local and national cliques and gangs fighting over the resources which the party has access to. The ANC's membership dropped from just over 1.2-million in 2012 to 769,000 in 2015. It got 62 percent of the vote in 1994; it increased to 68 percent under Mbeki in 1999 but was back to 62 percent in 2014 and to 54 percent in the local elections of 2016. The ANC lost control of three metropolitan municipalities; Nelson Mandela Bay, City of Tshwane and City of Johannesburg (Downing, 2017:2). The decline in ANC support was most significant in urban areas, with the ANC losing its outright majority in 4 of the country's 8 metropolitan municipalities for the first time since 1994. The loss of the votes of the urban working class is a very bad sign for the ANC (Downing, 2017:2).

5.3.3 The Nasrec Conference

In the build up to the 54th National Conference at Nasrec in December 2017 the party was caught up in an 'open' civil war between two camps which were aligned to two rival bourgeois factions. The Zuma-Gupta faction, who has grown fat on the looting of state resources, was desperately fighting for survival against the faction of the big bourgeois led by Cyril Ramaphosa. After the losses the ANC suffered in the municipal elections of 2016, the faction of Cyril Ramaphosa representing White Monopoly Capital (WMC) become bolder and saw the possibility of recapturing the ANC. The 18 months between mid-2016 and the end of 2017 is the story of a disintegrating Polokwane bloc, now stripped to its bare core of Zuma and his die-hards. According to Lehulere (2017b:2) the report of the Public Protector, published in October 2016, incomplete but vitally necessary, provided a line of march for the forces marshaled by WMC. From then on it was retreat after retreat for the petty bourgeoisie organized around the Zuma faction.

The ANC at its 54th National Conference in December 2017 was at its lowest point in its 105 year history. For a long time running into Nasrec WMC expected a victory by the pro-Zuma faction led by Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (NDZ) (Lehulere, 2017b:4). After a long campaign anchored on anti-corruption, WMC and its candidate sobered up and accepted that the only road to power was through the cesspool of corruption – a deal with David 'DD' Mabuza, one of the prime leaders of the 'Premier League' was the only salvation for WMC and its candidate Cyril Ramaphosa. In spite of the fact that he had the entire WMC, its resources and press behind him, Ramaphosa's victory was a marginal one (Johnson, 2019: 52). While polling figures indicated that Ramaphosa's victory should have been a landslide victory, "he won by a wafer-thin majority of 179 votes (Johnson, 2019:52).

The results were on a knife edge until the end, and ultimately were determined by the positioning of the Mpumalanga provincial delegation led by the provinces strongman, DD 'the cat' Mabuza, The result was that Ramaphosa was elected president of the ANC, with Mabuza as deputy. The ANC emerged from the conference deeply divided.

5.3.4 Ramaphoria, a 'New Dawn'?

The compromise between the two main factions at the Nasrec Conference has placed the Ramaphosa faction in the unenviable position where they had to adopt 'radical' policies of the Nkosazana faction, presiding over 'nationalisation of land without compensation', 'the nationalisation of the Reserve Bank' and other radical economic transformation policies (Lehulere, 2018:4). While Ramaphosa officially supports these radical policies his real role is to kill these policies as soon as possible, and to return the ANC to the period between Mafikeng and Polokwane (1997-2007).

The Ramaphosa victory thus opened up the fourth act in the sorry history of the ANC post-1994 (Lehulere, 2018:4). The Ramaphosa Regime represents the re-imposition of the hierarchical dominance of imperialism capitalism, and the economic defeat of its fractional enemies. Zuma himself was forced to resign as president of the country. Ramaphosa immediately removed some of the most offensive cabinet ministers and placed his own allies in strategic positions. The Cyril Ramaphosa faction is implementing an intensified neoliberal program as the only way to solve the questions of poverty, unemployment and inequality (Banda, 2018:2). This takes the form of vicious attack through amendments to the labour legislation (the right to strike), a new minimum wage (a dumbing down of current levels of wage determination), increased VAT and a general increase in the price of consumer goods across the board (Banda, 2018:2). The appointment of Tito Mboweni as Minister of Finance is confirmation of this. In his first budget speech he ignored the basic needs of the working class and managed to strategically increase taxes in most of the goods which are consumed by the majority ("sin taxes" of tobacco and alcohol and carbon tax on fuel) . In spite of a huge deficit Mboweni did not even touch on the question of increasing taxes for the rich. The budget speech was a 'privatisation choir' and the process of dismembering ESKOM and other SOE's is being prepared (Banda, 2018:3).

However, Ramaphosa's power is precarious in the ANC, and already contestation at provincial level poses danger to the unity and integrity of his rule. The two previous presidents were able to rapidly impose their authority on the ANC and neutralise or purge opponents. Ramaphosa is clearly unable to move as decisively. The Zuma network of allies is still active and powerful (Banda, 2018:4). As the various enquiries

and investigations unfold they may lead to a series of prosecutions in which many of them will be implicated. It can be expected that they will fight back as hard as possible. The prospect for Ramaphosa's success in his project of rebuilding state institutions, reducing corruption and returning to full scale neoliberal policies of the Mbeki era will depend on his ability to build a stable majority coalition around himself in the ANC. This will mean a 'tacit deal' of protecting key figures from prosecution and permitting continuing forms of primitive accumulation, a form of *managed corruption* (Banda, 2018:4).

5.3.5 Whither the ANC?

The fortune of the ANC as a political party has been steadily declining from one election to the next. In 2004 the ANC received 69.9% of the vote, in 2009 it got 65,9% and in 2014 it reduced to 62,15%. This trend continued in 2019, when the ANC received only 57,7% support in the elections (Appolis, 2019:2). The importance of this is that for the first time the support for the ANC in a national election fell below the 60% mark. Combined with this is the disturbing fact that in a country where the voting population is 35,8 million eligible voters, only 26,8 million registered to vote (WASP, 2019:1). This means that close to 9 million did not bother to register to vote and of these about 6 million are young people (WASP, 2019:2). According to the Independent Electoral Commission, less than 20% of eligible first-time voters registered to vote. And for the first time less than half of the voting population voted in the 2019 elections. The voter turnout was 17,6 million meaning that close to 9 million registered voters did not bother to vote. This shows that about 18 million eligible voters did not participate in the elections (Appolis, 2019:2).

The declining voter turn-out and declining support of the ANC point to a serious crisis of political representation for the South African ruling class. The political rule of the ANC is now based on the mandate of a minority. The 10 million votes for the ANC is a mere 28% of the total voting population (Appolis, 2019:2). The ANC's mandate to rule thus comes from a minority of 28% which raises the question of a crisis of legitimacy (Appolis, 2019:3). Added to this is the fact that the ANC lost support in all nine provinces, and in Gauteng they barely hung onto a majority receiving only 50,7% of the

provincial votes. In the urban centres it is apparent that the masses have lost confidence in the ANC and its policies (Appolis, 2019:3).

The declining support of the ANC is a class issue, as the ruling class today rule through the ANC government. The declining fortune of the ANC is deeply disturbing for the ruling class as it depends on capitalist governments to push through measures which facilitate capital accumulation. The more the masses reject the ANC as a ruling party the more the legitimacy of the ruling class is eroded giving rise to political uncertainty (Appolis, 2017:4). Things get worse as the ANC has deep factional issues (WASP, 2019:2). Since the Thabo Mbeki days, the ANC has been gripped by a power struggle between the supporters of white monopoly capital and those of the aspirant petty-bourgeoisie who sees the state as an instrument for self-enrichment through corrupt means (Appolis, 2017:3). This struggle has now taken on the form of the Ramaphosa/Magashule fight and is leading to further destabilization of the ruling party bringing in its wake further political uncertainty and instability. This will make implementing austerity measures in the face of the economic crisis far more difficult. The lack of confidence in the ANC on the part of the masses illustrates that its political authority to ensure acquiescence with more austerity measures is steadily eroding (Appolis, 2017:3). In 1994 the masses accepted the CODESA compromises and they half-heartedly acquiesced to the non-negotiable neoliberal policy of the Nelson Mandela Administration because they trusted the ANC, they had confidence in Nelson Mandela (Appolis, 2019:4). But today after 25 years the ANC's liberation capital is depleted and with it the confidence of the masses (Appolis, 2019:4).

5.3.6 COSATU in Crisis

The year 2015 was to have been a celebration of a key milestone, the 30th anniversary of COSATU as an independent, militant, democratic, socialist-orientated, transformative, revolutionary, internationalist and worker-controlled federation (Satgar & Southall, 2015:11). This however will go down in history as the year in which COSATU as champion of the working class in South Africa expelled its largest affiliate, NUMSA comprising 370 000 workers and its General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi who was its figurehead and popular public representative.

The growth of 'rightwing' dominance in COSATU was not just the act of ridding itself of its most radical critics, but was a process to "kill, the culture of vibrant democracy and worker control of unions and replace it with one of fear and authoritarianism which manifests through stagnation and growing bureaucratisation of trade unions" (Satgar & Southall, 2015:11). By the time of the 2015 COSATU Special Congress, the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU) had expelled 160 of its most effective and politically mature cadres from provincial, regional and branch leaderships, the NUM had dismissed a number of its leaders and many union members had left to join other unions like AMCU. The South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) was in turmoil as scores of worker leaders had been purged in the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Gauteng and teacher union South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) had disbanded its Eastern Cape structure and scores of leaders including its president had been purged (Satgar & Southall, 2015:12).

With the dismissal of NUMSA the largest union in COSATU was now the public sector union National Education Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) followed by the teachers union SADTU followed by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU). This is highly significant as it represents the changing character of the class composition of COSATU's membership. Zwelinzima Vavi argues that "these two sectors, the public and the private, have been affected differently by the first 20 years of our capitalist democracy" (Satgar & Southall, 2015: 13). While the industrial proletariat has been on the coal face of the brutal exploitative system where it has been "casualised and outsourced and wages have been mercilessly suppressed", public sector workers have been "spared the worst excesses of super exploitation" (Satgar & Southall, 2015: 13). COSATU is now dominated by public sector workers as this sector has been expanded while manufacturing has been severely reduced by the implementation of neoliberal policies. In real terms the conditions of public service and industrial workers are different with the former occupying 'aristocratic' labour conditions and the latter 'super-exploitative' ones.

Two opposing sides have emerged in COSATU; on the one hand those who are fighting to build a socialist, revolutionary and militant transformative and democratic worker-controlled trade union movement and those who have been won over to the side of neoliberalism. In essence "at play in post 1994 South Africa is the contest between

the forces of capitalist reaction and the forces of socialism, as the only solution to the crisis of humanity and development in South Africa and world” (Satgar & Southall, 2015:17). The attempt to tame the democratic worker movement is part of a broader agenda to “tame and blunt all instruments of popular power” and co-opts it to the capitalist agenda (Satgar & Southall, 2015: 17). The predatory elite are determined “to exercise control over all areas of society, to advance its narrow agenda of accumulation and control” (Satgar & Southall, 2015: 18).

The split in COSATU represents the demise of the once powerful trade union federation and more significantly the weakening of the Tripartite Alliance. The Tripartite Alliance would continue in name but “there was no doubt it would be a shadow of its former self” (Satgar & Southall, 2015:1). The divisions in COSATU have intensified with the crossing over of the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and other COSATU unions to the newly formed South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU). SAFTU officially represented seven hundred thousand (700 000) workers at its founding Launch Congress in April 2017. In the main workers are leaving the sweetheart unions of COSATU in droves and SAFTU aims to represent over a million workers (SAFTU, 2017:2).

5.3.7 SACP betrays the working class

Adam Habib (2013:208) has contended that the only viable chance for an alternative opposition party to emerge was from within the Tripartite Alliance; that the natural political home of the organised workers, the lower middle classes and the unemployed was COSATU and the SACP and that they “represent the best hope for a viable parliamentary opposition party”. Both COSATU and the SACP retain sufficient popular support as a result of their liberation credentials and COSATU “was the only institutional actor outside of the business sector, with the organisational and financial muscle to underwrite the development of a viable parliamentary opposition (Habib, 2013:2018). He however argues that there are significant obstacles to such a split in the Tripartite Alliance “the most significant being that it was opposed by both the leadership and membership of COSATU and the Communist Party” (Habib, 2013:208). The SACP has for a long time maintained that leaving the Alliance meant giving the elite classes, both black and white, free reign to determine ANC policy (Habib, 2013:208). Jeremy Cronin,

the deputy General Secretary of the SACP confirms that the reason for remaining in the Alliance is to prevent neoliberal tendencies from dominating the ANC. Habib (2013:209) correctly points out that it is wrong to assume that “policy influence occurs only via participation in internal forums” and that policy can easily be influenced by extra-institutional action. Both COSATU and the SACP concede that their participation in the Alliance has not prevented the slide into neoliberalism (Habib, 2013:209).

The SACP was an integral part of the Polokwane bloc’s victory in 2007 and “Both COSATU and the SACP were duly rewarded with significant Cabinet portfolios, including those of economic development, trade and industry and higher education” (Habib, 2013:209). This led to a situation where the leadership of the SACP has begun to play “the sycophantic role of defending Zuma and deflecting attention from the ascendant predatory elite” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:1). NUMSA and Zwelinzima Vavi have argued that the leadership of the SACP in order to protect their position as part of the Zuma inner circle turned on the ‘left’ in COSATU and the broader movement (NUMSA CC, 2013a:1). They presented Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu as the real tenderpreneurs and accused the leadership of NUMSA of “business unionism”. This rightwing shift in SACP policy was confirmed when they attacked the then Public Protector, Advocate Thuli Madonsela as a “counter-revolutionary” for her draft report on Nkandla. Anyone who criticised the Zuma regime, or exposed its personal enrichment and accumulation, faced the wrath of the SACP (NUMSA CC, 2013a:4). NUMSA (2013:2) accused the SACP of having led the attack on it and being responsible for the split in COSATU.

The SACP during its Augmented Central Committee meeting held on 28 -30 November 2013 issued a statement accusing the NUMSA leadership of a “regime change agenda”. This was in tandem with the accusation that Zwelinzima Vavi was working with opposition parties and plotting with foreign intelligence agencies (NUMSA CC, 2013a:1). While both NUMSA and Zwelinzima Vavi openly advocated regime change from a neoliberal capitalism to a socialist society, they vehemently denied working with capitalist forces and foreign agencies “We freely and openly admit that we do want a regime change... a change from the current regime of ‘Colonialism of a Special Type’ to a revolutionary-democratic regime as a transitional stepping stone to socialism” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:2). While the SACP claimed that NUMSA was expelled from

COSATU for violating the “one industry, one union” principle of COSATU, Blade Nzimande was more forthright when he said “there is a small, but lingering, phenomenon in the trade union movement that of wanting to deliberately cause strain and divide the labour movement from the SACP and the ANC. We must intensify ideological work to expose and defeat this phenomenon” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:2). NUMSA was clear that the real problem was that the “SACP leadership embedded itself in the capitalist state and in the process the SACP abandoned genuine struggles of the working class by defending neoliberal capitalism” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:3).

The SACP expressed its support for the ANC and the Zuma government every time the working class attacked its neoliberal policies. However once the SACP leadership had fallen out of favour with President Zuma and there were strong indications that ministers who are members of the SACP were in danger of being replaced in a cabinet reshuffle, they started insisting on the judicial commission of enquiry on state capture. NUMSA 10th Congress (2016:3) calls this ‘left’ swing in the politics of the SACP not a shift to a socialist politics but “entirely hypocritical and self-serving” (NUMSA 10th Congress, 2016:3). This swing right and left was clearly demonstrated in the support of the SACP for Cyril Ramaphosa for leadership of the ANC and for President of the country at the 54th Conference of the party. Not only had Cyril Ramaphosa not been a member of the SACP, he is one of the richest men in the country and a favourite of big business. The SACP was even preparing to stand candidates against the ANC in the 2019 elections if Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma won the leadership of the ANC. When Cyril Ramaphosa won the ANC presidency by a narrow margin and became president of the country, he nominated senior members of the SACP to Ministerial positions. Immediately all talk of the SACP fielding independent candidates in the 2019 elections has been stifled. The SACP is well ensconced in the Tripartite Alliance led by the ANC.

What is apparently clear is that the SACP is not a representative ‘vanguard’ of the working class but plays the role of a leftwing cover for the ANC. In that sense it ties the hands of the working class to that of the capitalist ANC and remains the greatest bulwark against an independent working class politics. As NUMSA 10th Congress (2016:2) correctly points out, the SACP is in fact an obstacle to the formation of an independent Workers’ Party in South Africa.

5.3.8 The Working Class fights back

The adoption of GEAR has resulted in an ongoing low-intensity class war waged by affected people, communities and organised labour. This prompted Nelson Mandela to say in 1995 “Let it be clear to all that the battle against the forces of anarchy and chaos has been joined” (Saul & Bond, 2014:171). Economic policy grievances have been exposed by civil society organisations in various fields: land reform, water, energy, housing, welfare, education, local government, environment, defence, policing, foreign affairs, labour, broadcasting, health, transport, public works, public services, justice, public enterprises and sports (Saul & Bond, 2014:172). Various Social Movements and Community Based Organisations were formed (mainly in the urban centres) to lead these struggles, like the Durban based Concerned Citizens Forum, the Anti-Privatisation Forum and the Landless People’s Movement. This gave birth to a new form of activism based according to Franco Barchiesi on “community self-management, construction of a grassroots discourse, direct action...at odds with the hierarchical organisational practices of the traditional left” (Saul & Bond, 2014:174).

Very importantly neither the ANC nor its Alliance partners were directly involved in any of these protest movements (sometimes local struggles were led by disillusioned SANCO members, part of the ruling Alliance). The ANC as the governing party was confronted by communities that acted on their own to satisfy their immediate needs. While people organised to make demands on ‘their’ liberation movement the cracks began to show and over time it became apparent that the penny had dropped and the ANC had been transformed into its opposite.

5.3.9 The Marikana Massacre, a turning point in the class struggle

According to Patrick Bond (2014:215) “when a ruling party in any African country sinks to the depths of allowing a police force to serve white-dominated multinational capital by killing dozens of black workers so as to end a brief strike, it represents an inflection point.” There is no doubt that the Marikana massacre is not only the greatest blight on the new ‘democratic’ South African state, but also a turning point in the class struggle. Beyond just the obvious human rights and labour-relations travesties, the incident represented a “decisive turning point in (SA;s) post-apartheid history” (Saul, 2014:244).

It unveiled the extreme depths of ruling class desperation, Lonmin's collaboration (through Ramaphosa) with the mining and police ministers, the brutality of state prosecutors who charged the victims with the crime, the alleged "sweetheart unionism" of the unpopular NUM and the fragility of the COSATU split between the Zuma/Ramaphosa loyalists and those like NUMSA with worker interests at heart (Saul, 2014:244).

The international capitalist crisis has brought in its wake a serious crisis of profitability. The physical demand for platinum declined in the face of the global economic crises, resulting in a significant drop in the platinum price. The pattern of response is that the bosses shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of the working class. Social and economic conditions of workers deteriorate and they are forced to fight to improve their living conditions. Company bosses and the capitalist class vigorously resist the demands of workers. This created conditions for a serious conflagration (Khan, 2019a:16).

The trouble in the mining sector has its roots in the ongoing disintegration of the NUM. The NUM is the biggest union and its leaders provide the labour federation, COSATU, the SACP and the ANC with many of their leaders. According to historian Charles Van Onselen, quoted in Izwe Labasabenzi (2013:1) "...this is the entire spinal column of the ANC alliance which is fragmenting." AMCU was founded in 2001 and has recruited tens of thousands of disgruntled NUM members. Over many years NUM has colluded with the mining bosses in different ways to prevent AMCU from organizing. In the case of the Lonmin strike they have been ready to call out the police and finger the strikers. So the massacre was the outcome of a bitter and drawn out rivalry precipitated by the NUM leadership.

The killing of striking workers expresses the intensification of the class struggle in this period of global capitalist crisis and political instability. The Marikana massacre reflects the shift of the ANC government towards higher levels of state repression, it confirms the comprador nature of black capital, it exposes the complicity of the post-Apartheid state in defence of monopoly capital, especially mining capital and most of all the collapse of the post-Apartheid social contract whereby the illusion was created that the working class can obtain the steady improvement in their conditions through

collaboration with the state and capital. The strike reflects the depth of disillusionment of the working class and the population as a whole with the leadership of the ANC and its alliance partners, the SACP and COSATU (Khan, 2019a:16).

5.4 Conclusion

The dissertation has outlined that the state-party-capital matrix that has been the engine room of South Africa since 1994 was informed by a strategic choice of the ANC that sees power as residing in existent institutional forms (the state), existent forms of political representation and participation (the party/elections) and with those that have existent ownership of capital (the capitalist class) (Mckinley, 2017:142). Practically this has translated into a macro-politics and governance that has turned away from serving the 'interests of the people' towards accession and incorporation into the framework of existent power (Mckinley, 2017:142). There was a natural convergence of interests between the ANC and corporate capital.

This approach was framed and grounded "in the centralising embrace of nationalism" (Mckinley, 2017:143). It is the nation and the national state that was said by the ANC to be "central to the implementation and realisation of the core tenets of the 'people's liberation'", but has instead realised the opposite (Mckinley, 2017:143). The march to capitalist 'modernity' was driven by the coming together of the modern nation state and capital (Mckinley, 2017:143). Nationalism is by its very nature symbiotic with capitalism, and ANC rule since 1994 stands as a stark confirmation of this. The ANC leadership has allowed itself to be lured by the "siren calls of power and money...to be seduced by the egoism and lifestyles of the capitalist elite" (Mckinley, 2017:144). The ANC has abandoned the "solidarity and generosity that informed the huge personal sacrifices for, and collective moral power of, the liberation struggle" (Mckinley, 2017:144).

The 1994 political settlement ensured that White Monopoly Capital and the White population in general preserved their grip on the economy through the property clauses in the constitution which at the same time legitimized the process of colonial dispossession (Jooma & Khan, 2017:2). But for some exceptional cases (Ramaphosa/Sexwale etc) the historic patterns of ownership are changing at a snail's pace, much to the frustration of the aspirant black capitalist and middle classes.

The 'Developmental State' agenda to realise the aims of the National Democratic Revolution, is a failure (Lehulere, 2018:3). It has not addressed the wealth disparities between the classes and segments of the population. The living standard of the black working class and poor has not changed but deteriorated, and they continue to bear the brunt of the burden of the structural crises of capitalism: high unemployment, growing poverty and big income disparities. There is a growing anger and rejection of the system and those who tolerate things do so because they benefit or in anticipation of benefiting (Jooma & Khan, 2017:3).

COSATU or at least its leading elements have succumbed to the neoliberal ethos and while officially trying to flood the ANC with a working class majority have failed to do so. It has tied the working class to the ANC bandwagon through the Tripartite Alliance. The SACP as the putative vanguard party of the working class has uncritically supported the policies of the ANC in government and in that way tied the hands of the working class to the capitalist neoliberal project. As a working class party its leaders serve as Capitalist Ministers in the bourgeois ANC government and has by and large sided with the Zuma clique in power and only began raising issues once it fell out of favour. The capitalist economic crisis and the capitalist trajectory of the ANC government supported by the COSATU and SACP leadership means that the struggle for socialism cannot be taken up by these forces.

This task has been shifted to those leftist groups outside the Tripartite Alliance who have as their goal the fight for a different and alternative society. There are a few initiatives on the left spectrum that claim to be embryonic party formations of a Workers' Party, like the EFF, DLF and WASP. The dissertation will address this question in the next chapter where it will be argued that the only serious initiative to build a revolutionary Workers' Party based in the mass of the working class is the Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) which has been crystallized by NUMSA. I will discuss the NUMSA Special National Congress Resolutions, the Constitution of the SRWP and the factors that make the SRWP the most significant development in the leftwing of South African politics since the advent of democracy.

CHAPTER 6 THE 'NUMSA MOMENT' AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS' PARTY (SRWP).

6.1 Introduction

South African capitalism is in a deep crisis as outlined in the previous chapter. While the economic and social crisis lies at the heart of the crisis of capitalism, it is at a political level that the crisis most sharply manifests itself. For the working class and poor of society the crisis is a deep crisis of *leadership of the proletariat*, as Leon Trotsky (1977:112) so aptly put it "Without a socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. It is now the turn of the proletariat, i.e., chiefly of its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership". In this chapter I will be discussing how the 'NUMSA Moment' and the forging of a revolutionary Workers' Party in the form of the SRWP is the most serious attempt at overcoming this crisis of leadership of the proletariat.

There have been various attempts to forge alternative leftwing political movements to the ANC/SACP/COSATU axis in post-apartheid South Africa. The most important organisations are the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This paper will briefly analyse each of these and explain why they do not represent a serious attempt to build a revolutionary Workers' Party in the country. I will then examine the 'NUMSA Moment' and the formation of the SRWP as an expression of that conscious historical force, the embryonic vanguard party of the working class.

The crisis of working class leadership has been particularly stark since the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Communism in 1989-91. This coincided with the advent of democracy in South Africa in the early 1990's. The collapse of the Socialist bloc influenced a capitalist solution to the South African question and exacerbated the quick and dramatic shift from a "socialist bias in the mass movement to the adoption of a capitalist program of development" (RMG, 2011:18). Since the formation of COSATU, NUMSA had been the most consistent fighter for an alternative socialist programme and developmental path in the trade union movement. When NUMSA raised the issue of the formation of a Workers' Party in the COSATU Congress

in 1993, this resolution did not get support and was defeated. NUMSA continued to wage a determined battle for COSATU to change tack and adopt revolutionary working class policies. It was NUMSA's contention that the NDR was off-track and the struggle for socialism had been betrayed. This was the real reason NUMSA was expelled from COSATU.

The 'NUMSA Moment' was thus a long time in the making, and it was at the Special National Congress (SNC) of NUMSA held in December 2013 that major decisions to break with support for the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance and adopt independent and revolutionary working class politics was taken. The 'NUMSA Moment' has grown into the formation of the SRWP which held a pre-Launch Conference of the party in December 2018 and brought together eleven hundred delegates from all corners of the country. This pre-Launch Conference gave a great impetus to the building of the party, which then went on to have its launch Congress of one thousand delegates from 4th to 6th April 2019. The party officially has over twelve thousand members (SRWP NWC, 2018a:3).

6.2 Left-wing Alternatives

In the analysis of political parties in chapter two I discussed the elements or characteristics that would allow a 'typology' of a party to be drawn up. The important elements I identified were the nature of the *formal* organisation of a party, the *programmatic* commitments of a party and the *strategy and behavioural norms* of a party. The ideological orientation of political parties is also a critical element, especially as we are dealing with leftwing political formations. While I will use these guidelines to analyse the alternative leftwing formations in the country, it must also be understood that parties do not fit into ready made models but have characteristics that combine different elements; they have mixed characteristics. This will allow an explanation of the contradictory nature of political parties.

6.2.1 The Democratic Left Front (DLF)

According to Mckinley (2015:2) the rapid adoption by the ANC of a neoliberal macro-economic policy framework profoundly reshaped not only the political economy of South

Africa but the more specific struggles of poor and working-class communities. The neoliberal policies of the government dramatically increased the costs of services and while the ANC/Tri-partite Alliance were involved in preparing the conditions for their own enrichment they failed to consider the plight and deteriorating conditions of the working class and poor. It was within this transitional context that a range of new community organisations and social movements surfaced. In almost all cases, they emerged in the very spaces opened up as a result of the failure of the tactical approaches and strategic visions of the main traditional forces of the left (for example, COSATU and the SACP) and "civic" structures like SANCO to offer any meaningful response to the changing conditions (McKinley, 2015:2).

According to Jansen (2011:1) the DLF has its origins in the formation of the Conference for a Democratic Left (CDL) in 2008. The CDL was envisaged by its pioneers as a political alternative to the ANC/SACP and this was in part as a result of some comrades like Vishwas Satgar and Mazibuko Jara being expelled from the SACP. Many others on the left were canvassed and invited to join the CDL (Jansen, 2011:1). This culminated in the formation of the DLF in 2011: "a broad front of over 100 social movements as well as civil society and community organizations." (Jara, 2013:121). The Democratic Left Front seeks not only to build a new set of politics in South Africa but also to provide a platform for the pursuit of a transformative project that will "challenge capitalist power, inequality, the failure of political leadership and other crises facing our country" (Jara, 2013:121). This front was to be a non-sectarian and non-authoritarian movement, preparing an alternative to the ANC/SACP/COSATU leadership. Mazibuko Jara is at pains to stress, though, that the DLF is not a new left political party. Although he acknowledges the importance of political parties, he asserts that the new left movement is not about narrow political party mobilisation but that it advocates new forms of political organisation that put people, not political parties, at the centre of political life (Jara, 2013:122). From the outset there were contesting views on the content of the political programme and character of the DLF. While the initiators of the front argued for the establishment of a political movement, an anti-authoritarian, anti-Leninist, anti-Stalinist democratic left politics where according to Jara (2013:122) "The underlying political programme of the DLF is to unite the left and fight for an eco-socialist South Africa"; while others like the RMG called for the DLF to be a United Front, a tactical unity, where the different political forces would unite around concrete struggles of the

working class and poor and this would lay the foundation for a bigger strategic unity in the future (Jansen, 2011:2). Once the decision was taken to establish the DLF as a political movement those proposing a UF walked out of the process.

The orientation of the DLF was not to organise the working class and its various strata, but to unite the Left which included various organisations like NGO's which are middle class organisations. Politically and ideologically the DLF was a 'front' representing different and often opposing points of view, and so there was no political or ideological coherence. The DLF was a quasi-political-party-cum-movement whose character remained ill-defined. While their leadership regarded this as a positive thing it was not, as it failed to posit a sustainable alternative to political parties. In the local elections of 2012 the DLF supported various community based organisations who had put up candidates. This was highly opportunistic as the support for these candidates was not based on a programmatic agreement (RMG, 2012:2). After this election, the DLF went through a whole series of further divisions and splits and the organisation hobbled on to finally disband in 2014 with the formation of the NUMSA inspired United Front. What is clear is that the DLF in terms of its structure and aims did not attempt to, nor could it, fulfill the role of a Workers' Party.

6.2.2 Workers and Socialist Party (WASP)

The Workers and Socialist Party was formed by the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), a small Trotskyist group linked to the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2). The DSM played a public role in the national Mineworker's strike of 2012 and participated as a leading political force in the Independent Strike Committee in Rustenburg. At a meeting on 15 December 2012 the DSM and representatives of a number of the mineworkers' strike committees founded the WASP (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2). The public launch of WASP took place on 21 March 2013 in Pretoria (Izwe Labasabenzi, 2013:2).

WASP was organised as an "umbrella-type" federation that could begin the work of drawing together forces that could lay the foundation of a mass party (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2). The founding meeting included representatives from independent workers' organisations, such as the mineworkers' independent strike

committees, community groups and social movements (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2). Other than the DSM and the mineworkers' national strike committee, which affiliated in March 2013, other significant forces organised under WASP's umbrella included the National Transport Movement (NTM) union, a significant split from the COSATU-affiliated South African Transport and Allied Workers Union, Moses Mayekiso, the first general secretary of NUMSA and an activist in South African civic movements and organisations of Johannesburg's street traders (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2). The umbrella structure of WASP meant that the affiliates of WASP would retain their separate organisational identities within the broader party structure (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2013:2).

The WASP was meant to be a Mass Workers Party (MWP) that was based on the support of the mineworkers in the platinum belt and across the country. WASP stood in the 2014 national elections and received a paltry eight thousand three hundred and thirty one (8331) votes (Khan, 2018:3). This was a huge set-back for the party as it failed to get a mass response in the working class, particularly from the mineworkers amongst whom the DSM had organised. The dismal electoral performance in the 2014 elections led to the DSM proposing the re-organisation of WASP as there were a number of important changes on the left of South African politics. These new factors were the emergence of the EFF with its radical left programme, the expulsion of NUMSA from COSATU and their resolution to form a Workers' Party and the consolidation of the AMCU in the mining sector who had broken up the strike committees and were violently opposed to WASP. In effect the DSM leadership decided to change the WASP from a MWP into a Leninist Party (WASP, 2015:4).

While WASP had based itself on the mine workers struggles in 2012, it was not organically linked to the class in its everyday life. This was demonstrated when the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) easily defeated and then excluded WASP from any presence on the mines. The mineworker base of WASP had by the time of the election of 2014 been badly whittled down, and this explains its weak showing in the election. The problem with WASP was its propensity for short-cuts, such as latching on to leading figures like Moses Mayekiso who had credible leftwing anti-Apartheid struggle credentials. Time had taken its toll and the Mayekiso of the 1990's had been badly compromised by his association with the ANC and the Congress of the

People (COPE). Just before the election in 2014, the Workers International Vanguard Party (WIVP) exposed Moses Mayekiso for being “involved in promoting the corrupt arms deal, flying to Sweden to promote the imperialist arms company SAAB (even if it has not been proved that he directly benefitted, the deal itself was corrupt); he was CEO of Sanco Investments that was involved in tenders with housing; he was a shareholder in Nexus Connexion that helped privatise the telecommunications network” (WIVP, 2014:1). WASP continued with Mayekiso as the political leader of the party and this surely affected its electoral performance.

While WASP articulates a socialist programme for South Africa and is ideologically a Marxist party, its influence in the broader class struggle is miniscule and like most small groups has largely a ‘sect’ existence (Khan, 2018:5). WASP has tried to recover by leading the Outsourcing Must Fall Movement and immersing itself in the activities of the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA). These processes are in an embryonic stage of development and do not represent a broad influence in the working class.

WASP as a Leninist Party is now pushing for the formation of a Mass Workers’ Party (MWP) through SAFTU (Izwe Labasebenzi, 2018:11). WASP it seems has little confidence in its ability to build its own party and continues to place at the forefront of its politics a tactic it has employed since leaving the ANC in 1996. A MWP is a broad based Workers’ Party founded on a common programme. The agreement between different working class formations, factory, community and student based organisations, is an agreement on a lowest common denominator, which makes a MWP a reformist organisation, like the Labour Party in Britain or Syriza in Greece (Khan, 2018:5). The politics in SAFTU is contested terrain, with NUMSA as the largest trade union in SAFTU, and many other smaller affiliates strongly anti-Party in their orientation. It seems highly unlikely that a small middle class based leftwing political formation like WASP will be able to have the political influence in SAFTU to pull off building a MWP (Khan, 2018:5).

6.2.3 The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)

The most serious and controversial of ostensible ‘leftwing’ organisations is the Economic Freedom Fighters who emerged from the loins of the ANC as a radical

critique of the policies of the ANC and represent what Julius Malema has called the biggest nightmare for the Zuma-ANC (ZANC) (Khan 2013:24). The EFF leadership operated as the ANCYL within the ANC for over a decade until their expulsion. If they had not been expelled and managed to reconcile themselves to the ANC leadership, there would not be an EFF today (Jansen, 2014:1). While their supporters and some political organisations like the '*In Defense of Marxism*' (IDoM) group regard the EFF as a radical middle class group who have moved decisively left, others see them as "a wily, conscious leadership group that has plotted their own political and socio-economic survival" (Jansen, 2014:2). The sceptics argue that the apparent shift to the left by Julius Malema and Floyd Shivambu was not prompted by the direct impact of the capitalist crisis on them, but rather "the curbing of their greed and outrageous behaviour by the Zuma leadership faction's own domination over the state's resources" (Jansen, 2014:2). Their radical utterances and working class sympathies only commenced with their marginalization within the ANC from 2011 onwards. It is only then that they invoked a radical interpretation of the Freedom Charter and started attacking white monopoly capital in the mining and agricultural industries (Jansen, 2014:3). Their middle class opportunism was illustrated by an incident when Julius Malema was leading a march to the Chamber of Mines and the JSE and in full militant youth league regalia during late October 2011 and was soon whisked off under police escort to the airport to board a chartered flight to Mauritius for a wedding of a rich comrade (Jansen, 2014:3).

The EFF is in its own terms a Marxist-Leninist-Fanonist organisation, an anti-Capitalist Party based on seven non-negotiable principles. Amongst these are the call for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy and the expropriation of land without compensation (Khan, 2013:25). A very strategic part of their campaign at the outset was their support for the mine workers at Marikana whose call for economic liberation in their lifetime, they fully endorsed and supported.

The program of the EFF is popular, pseudo-socialist and essentially reformist. It is based on a 'radical' interpretation of the Freedom Charter, to supposedly favour the working class (Jansen, 2014:2). From the time of their fall-out with the Zuma clique the EFF has been championing the cause of the unemployed youth, storming the platform of the ANC consultative conference to argue for the implementation of the demands of the Freedom Charter and after being expelled forming the EFF with revolutionary

sounding demands like the expropriation of land without compensation and the nationalisation of the banks and key industries and calling for free education and health care. While these proposals appear radical they do not represent a consistent fight for workers power and socialism (Khan, 2013:25). The call for the expropriation of land without compensation has attached to it “for equal redistribution in use“ (Khan, 2013:25). This call is for the creation of a rural black capitalist class and unfettered capitalist relations on the land (Khan, 2013:26). The call for the redistribution of land is a bourgeois democratic demand of the anti-colonial period and envisages the creation of a peasantry with access to land. What is clear in our context is that for all intents and purposes there does not exist a peasantry, long destroyed by the creation of a rural working class (Khan, 2013:12). So too nationalisation of the mines, banks and other strategic sectors of the economy is not necessarily a socialist program” (Khan, 2013:25). In the period of the Cold War many nationalist movements called for the ‘nationalisation’ of key industries and when they came to power they implemented this. This ‘nationalisation’ did not necessarily mean that it served the interests of the working class and poor (Khan, 2013:25). The central question related to ‘nationalisation’ is the question of the nature of state power and control over it (Khan, 2013:25). While they make reference to ‘free quality education and health care’, essentially bourgeois democratic demands, their programme is a *radical petty bourgeois* programme (Jansen, 2014:4).

The EFF makes no bones about their support for the country’s capitalist constitution and has the perspective of a non-revolutionary parliamentary road to power (Khan, 2013:4). This was clearly exposed when they entered into an agreement with the DA in the Metro Councils after the 2016 elections. It has since been alleged that these arrangements gave some of them access to tenders (Izwe Labasabenzi, 2018:1). The EFF has a multi-class approach to politics where the reference is not to the historical interests of the working class but to “all the people of South Africa” (Khan, 2013:26). The working class is presented as poor people in need of assistance (Khan, 2013:26).

The class character of the EFF is middle class. The middle class is caught between the two big classes in society, the bourgeois and proletariat. They vacillate between these two classes and are unable to have an independent political policy of their own. For this reason, the rebellion led by the EFF does not have an independent character and can

be exploited by the two major classes; it may become increasingly anti-capitalist but not socialist (Jansen, 2014:4). Their anti-capitalism is not aimed at destroying capitalism and their critical concerns are competition, being squeezed out of the market and the lack of credit held back by monopoly capital and its state (Jansen, 2014:5). The support base of the EFF is the unemployed youth. The black working class youth are faced with the crisis of high unemployment and survival, especially once they have left secondary school. Even if they have excelled academically to qualify for tertiary studies they are further frustrated by high university fees that are unaffordable. Subjectively youth have always aspired to and assert themselves as an autonomous factor in society propelled by “youth aspirations” while leading a parasitic and unproductive existence in society filled with impatience and envy of their established (black) middle-class adult counterparts. It is for this reason that the EFF has a special appeal to these most desperate sections of the working class and petty bourgeoisie (Jansen, 2014:5).

The EFF has grown the most of all parties in the 2019 election, gaining 1.9 million votes and 10.9% of the total vote (Appolis, 2019:2). On the left there are differing interpretations of what this means. The group IDoM are of the opinion that the EFF are growing and its support reflects a shift to the left. Their slogan of “Our Land and Jobs now” and radical programme of nationalisation has drawn many students, the unemployed and even significant workers to them (Appolis, 2019:2). WASP on the other hand argues that the EFF has not grown substantially as its growth from the 2016 local government election has been only 2%. According to them the EFF has failed to inspire the youth to register and vote, and it remains a pro-capitalist in its orientation (Appolis, 2019:3).

The leadership of the EFF are a *de-classed* middle class grouping that lost out in the factional struggles within the ANC (Khan, 2013:26). Their radical rhetoric is aimed to forge a place for themselves in the ruling elite, representing in essence the aims and aspirations of a faction of the black bourgeoisie which is under tremendous economic strain (Khan, 2013:26). What is increasingly becoming clear is that the EFF leadership have their fingers in all sorts of shady financial deals, like the VBS scandal where both the President and Deputy President of the party are fingered (Khan, 2019a:3). Some like Khan (2013:24) initially regarded them as a Left Populist formation, while others argued that they are essentially a neo-fascist movement (Jansen, 2014:1). According to

Jansen (2014:1) the EFF's middle class roots and the support they have from the unemployed youth make them a perfect recipe for a future fascist movement: "The EFF has the makings of a fascist group and we should be wary of even flirting with them. Instead we should be exposing them to the masses and warn against their development" (Jansen, 2014:2). Through their commandist structure, their utterances, but mainly through their practice, the EFF has shifted from a Left Populist party to a Right Wing Populist party (Khan, 2019:2). While it is too early to characterise them as a fascist party, it is important to follow their development concretely and map their evolution to the right (Khan, 2019:2). What we can say with certainty is that the EFF is not a revolutionary party and does not fulfill the requirements of a Workers' Party.

6.3 The 'NUMSA Moment'

6.3.1 Introduction

In December 2013 the NUMSA Special National Congress (SNC) adopted three resolutions; to form a United Front in order to unite the day to day struggles of workers and communities, to call on COSATU to break its alliance with the ANC and SACP in the Tripartite Alliance to form a Workers' Party and create a 'Movement for Socialism' which would explore the modalities of such a Workers' Party through conducting an international study of other radical parties and their programmes in different countries. These resolutions resulted in the formation of a United Front in December 2014, and even though it has largely dwindled in support, there still remain pockets of this UF in different areas of the country. The COSATU leadership rejected the NUMSA call to break from the Tripartite Alliance and used a technicality to expel NUMSA from COSATU. They alleged that NUMSA had gone beyond its scope and was recruiting members from fellow COSATU unions. This was a ruse to get rid of the NUMSA nuisance, as many other affiliates had long ago crossed these barriers and nothing had been done about this (NUMSA CC, 2013a:4). In response NUMSA joined with thirty other unions in April 2017 to form the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), which had a membership of over seven hundred thousand workers and so became the second largest trade union federation in the country. The Movement for Socialism conducted various international symposia and meetings and this long drawn out process of theoretical and practical engagement finally culminated in the formation

of an interim National Core (NC) and the election of an interim National Working Committee (NWC) to run the day to day affairs of the embryonic party. In July 2018 the NWC began the process of 'surfacing' the party in all provinces and regions of the country (SRWP NWC, 2018a:3).

The 'NUMSA Moment' has grown into the formation of the SRWP which held a pre-Launch Conference of the party in December 2018 and brought together eleven hundred delegates from all corners of the country. This pre-Launch Conference gave a great impetus to the building of the party and currently the party officially has over twelve thousand members. The party held its Inaugural Congress from the 4th to the 6th of April 2019 in Johannesburg and elected a 'top five' leadership with a Central Committee of thirty members. The Party also participated in the 2019 national and provincial election (Khan, 2019a:1).

The SRWP is a new organisation that is in the process of being formed, and this brings with it many concomitant difficulties. Breaking politically from the Tripartite Alliance is a huge political step to take, and opposition to this has been widespread, as the NUMSA Central Committee (2013a:3) noted "The ANC/COSATU/SACP leadership are deeply antagonistic to this development and continue to foment division where they can." NUMSA having been part of the COSATU and the Tri-Partite Alliance for decades had to convince its own members that the ANC and the SACP leadership had betrayed the working class and it was time to take a different radical course to fix things. The SRWP is not merely another political party but is a Marxist-Leninist Party, whose philosophical and ideological basis is Marxist theory. Opposition to the SRWP comes not only from the ANC/SACP/COSATU ranks but also from the populist organisation, the EFF who feel threatened that their membership base in the unemployed youth may be attracted to the SRWP. Ostensible socialist formations like WASP, Keep Left, NGO structures and also various SAFTU affiliates have kept themselves outside the party as they are sceptical of the neo-Stalinist 'gate-keepers' of the SRWP. They reject the SRWP for their own political reasons; whether it is because of they see politics differently or support other political parties, or because they are economic, anti-political, syndicalist, anarchist or just anti-Party (Khan, 2019a:3).

In spite of this the SRWP has growing at a fast pace, with an audited membership of over twelve thousand (SRWP NWC, 2018a:3). The SRWP keeps attracting new layer of workers and the unemployed to its ranks and without doubt is today the largest leftwing organisation in the country.

6.3.2 Historical genesis

The crisis in COSATU has a long history that goes back to the very formation of the federation in 1985. COSATU was a product of a political compromise between the so-called populists, the ANC/SACP who promoted the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) and the 'Workerists-Syndicalists' in FOSATU, those who believed that the economic struggle at the 'point of production' was primary and would lead to socialism. The tensions between the populists and other working class based revolutionary formations was very apparent and in some cases resulted in divisions and splits, such as in the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA) which split over the adoption by COSATU of the Freedom Charter in 1987 (Khan, 2012:7). The negotiated settlement of the early 1990's and the resultant political democracy in 1994 buried the hatchet between the various political factions as they all sent representatives to the new democratic parliament. Beneath this apparent political unity lay deep class contradictions and divisions within COSATU. Twenty five years later, these class contradictions have come to the surface and divisions have widened. The Marikana massacre represents a qualitative break between the mine workers, their bosses and their union; more significantly it represents a break between them and the ANC which they had unconditionally supported since the dawn of democracy (Khan, 2012:8). The massacre and the subsequent mine and farm workers strike movement in the second half of 2012 brought the divisions in COSATU to a head.

As the largest and most radical trade union in COSATU, NUMSA was well aware of the contradictions that were emerging and at its Central Committee meeting of August 2013 warned that the developing crisis in COSATU could lead to its implosion as a federation "No one can pretend anymore that all is well in Cosatu. Cosatu is faced with a crisis whose size is such that if not properly resolved can destroy the federation. For the first time since 1994, Cosatu faces the real danger of imploding" (NUMSA CC, 2013a:2). The NUMSA National Office Bearers (NOB's) examined the international, continental

and local conditions that were responsible for the crisis and concluded that the divisions run extremely deep, “Numsa ... traced the sources and causes of the crisis in Cosatu to their logical origins: capitalism and the failure of the Alliance to pursue consistently a socialist oriented National Democratic Revolution (NDR)” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:3). Accordingly “There is a real rupture in the Alliance ... between the forces of socialism and the forces of neoliberal capitalism” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:3). The divisions were ideological and extremely difficult to resolve, if not impossible.

COSATU has historically seen itself as an internationalist anti-colonialist and anti-capitalist trade union federation. The crisis in COSATU was about whether or not COSATU would continue to be a socialist trade union federation or whether “it should simply become a yellow capitalist federation of the workers or a labour desk of the bourgeoisie” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:4). NUMSA’s task was to defend the revolutionary and socialist character of COSATU which “fights for the abolition of the world capitalist system” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:4). The question of support for the GEAR policy and the implementation of the Freedom Charter became the dividing line in COSATU, between those who opposed the struggle against capitalism and colonialism and those who had adapted themselves to a capitalist trajectory. NUMSA argued that the implementation of the demands of the Freedom Charter was the only way to end colonial economic domination and to destroy the power of monopoly capitalism in South Africa: “The People Shall Share in the Country’s Wealth! ... The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the Banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole...” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:6). In this NUMSA was supported by a range of trade unions, as well as by the suspended General Secretary of COSATU, Zwelinzima Vavi who unequivocally supported the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter.

While initially the victory of the Zuma group at Polokwane meant “some partial victories by defending the primacy of the ANC led alliance” things changed dramatically as “those deployed in government found themselves inevitably having to defend the capitalist trajectory and behaviour of the ANC government” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:8). According to NUMSA’s Central Committee the Polokwane gains had all but evaporated as “neither a ‘reconfigured alliance’ nor an Alliance Pact have materialised” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:8). Since the coming to power, Jacob Zuma had abandoned a pro-poor trajectory. This also applied to the leadership of the SACP, especially its General

Secretary who “effected several changes to its Constitution including allowing for the general secretary to take up a full time job and increasing the number of its deputy general secretaries” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:8).

This rightwing shift was cemented when the ANC at its Mangaung Conference in 2012 adopted the National Development Plan (NDP), a twenty year plan, which was not endorsed by the Tripartite Alliance partners, and which became “the ultimate ideological expression of the victory of the forces of neoliberal capitalism over the forces of socialism within the national liberation movement” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:8). The NDP did not depart fundamentally from the GEAR policy framework as it “neither attacks the monopoly capitalist and colonial foundations of the South African economy and society, nor does it offer any radical policy departures from GEAR” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:9). In many key areas the NDP facilitated the penetration of imperialism into South Africa and whittled down the gains won by the working class since 1994. The SACP finding itself embedded in government did not “reject and condemn the capitalist neoliberal NDP” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:9). According to NUMSA, the NDP is a mere rehash of the DA economic policy, and the ANC and the SACP have deliberately clouded the similarities between the ANC’s NDP outline and the DA policies.

The fight to change COSATU into a pro-capitalist bureaucracy was further amplified by the attempt to block the political report of the General Secretary at the 11th COSATU Congress. COSATU’s Socio-Economic Report “statistically and clearly proved that the NDR was long derailed and was not on track” (NUMSA CC, 2013a:10). Other issues that divided the Congress were the expulsion of the ANCYL leadership from the ANC and the dastardly role that the NUM as the biggest trade union affiliate played in the mining sector.

COSATU was thus a heavily contested space and the fight was between those who planned to reduce it to a labour desk of the ANC Government and those who wanted COSATU to remain loyal and faithful to its socialist traditions. NUMSA was expelled from COSATU in November 2014 ostensibly for extending its scope and not respecting the COSATU principle of ‘One Union One Federation’. However as demonstrated above the real reason was that NUMSA was treading a revolutionary socialist path while COSATU had been reduced to the labour desk of the ANC.

6.3.3 The NUMSA Special National Congress 2013 Resolutions

In the context of the fight against the rightwing shift in COSATU, NUMSA called a Special National Congress (SNC) from December 17th to 20th 2013 (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:1). The NUMSA SNC was necessary as the decisions of the 9th NUMSA Congress no longer sufficed to guide the organisation; the situation in the Alliance and in COSATU had changed so drastically that the leadership of NUMSA had to consult and get a new mandate from its membership. Democratic discussions were held in all 50 Locals and all 9 Regions of the union and delegates were all well aware of the issues at stake. The SNC was attended by 1,200 delegates representing three hundred and thirty eight thousand (338,000) metalworkers from 50 Locals throughout the provinces of South Africa (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:1). NUMSA was at the time the biggest union in South Africa and on the African continent (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:1). The President of NUMSA, Cedric Gina resigned from the union sighting differences with the new trajectory of the union. The media speculation that NUMSA as a union was doomed to split if not disintegrate as a result of this did not materialise. NUMSA was more united than ever (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:1).

While delegates were encouraged to have vigorous argument and robust debates there was absolute agreement on the key decisions the SNC arrived at (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:2). The SNC reiterated all the fundamental political and ideological positions of NUMSA. The crisis of capitalism, unemployment and deindustrialisation were not merely problems of the economy but had to do with the neoliberal policies of the ANC government which served the interests of white monopoly capital and imperialism. The abandonment of the Freedom Charter was confirmation of the rightwing shift of the ANC, which meant it was now ruling on behalf of the white ruling class and not in the interests of the working class and poor. Further evidence of this rightwing shift was the murder of the workers in Marikana and the brutal police attack on the farm workers in de Doorns. The adoption of the NDP at the ANC Mangaung Conference represented a further rightwing shift in policy of the ANC to protect the profit of the capitalist class: "It is a strategic plan that will benefit white monopoly capital, imperialism and the comprador black capitalist class, not us. In the order of priorities of the ANC, the NDP has replaced the Freedom Charter" (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:3). A militant, popular programme had been replaced by a neoliberal one.

COSATU it was argued was riddled with differences between those who supported the ANC/SACP and the NDP and those who recognised that this was a betrayal of the Freedom Charter and the struggle of the working class for its emancipation (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:3). The strategic position of COSATU unions since 1994 to urge their members to swell the ranks of the ANC and SACP, in order to ensure that they remained biased to working class interests, came under scrutiny and was rejected as, “swelling the ranks has merely resulted in delivering more working class victims, like lambs to the slaughter by the ANC’s bourgeois leadership” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6).

The SNC resolved that the Marikana massacre was a turning point in the social and political history of South Africa. They agreed to unconditionally support the workers of Marikana and called for “a full and impartial investigation of the causes of what happened in Marikana. This investigation, unlike the Farlam Commission, would look not only at who pulled the trigger or who gave instruction to murder the workers in Marikana, but would also investigate the root causes of the massacre such as the persistent migrant labour system and super exploitation of labour by capital in South Africa” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:5). The NUMSA delegates called for the immediate removal of the Commissioner of Police who they regarded as complicit in the attack on the workers. The support for the Marikana workers was not just a verbal pledge but “delegates and staff of NUMSA raised three hundred and fifty thousand rand for Marikana families” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:5).

The SNC examined the state of the Tripartite Alliance and came to the conclusion that it was dysfunctional and captured by rightwing forces. As a result of this there was now a political vacuum in the country as the Alliance did not any longer lead the struggles of the working class or poor “while there are protests everywhere and every day in the country, the Alliance is not an instrument in the hands of these struggling masses, nor does it provide leadership to these struggles, which are largely leaderless struggles” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6). The Alliance had become a mere tool for elections: “The Alliance operates only during election periods. It is used to rubber stamp neo-liberal policies of the ANC and not as a centre of power that debates policy issues and implementation” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6). The working class was being used by the ANC as ‘voting fodder’. The ANC had consistently refused to reconfigure the Alliance “into a strategic political centre” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6). This was how it protected its

monopoly on “issues of policy, deployments into government and programmes” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6). The SNC had to face the fact that there was no chance of winning back the Alliance and the SACP as “treatment of labour as a junior partner within the Alliance is not uniquely a South African phenomenon. In many post-colonial and post-revolutionary situations, liberation and revolutionary movements have turned on labour movements that fought alongside them, suppressed them, marginalised them, split them, robbed them of their independence or denied them any meaningful role in politics and policy-making” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6).

The SACP came under special scrutiny and criticism. Its leadership had become embedded in the state and was failing to act as the vanguard of the working class (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:6). The SNC had to face up to the fact that the “chance of winning it back onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). If it was going to wage a struggle against capitalism for its own emancipation “The working class needs a political organisation... For the struggle for socialism... (one that was)...committed in theory and practice to socialism” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). The SNC therefore resolved to “Call on Cosatu to break from the Alliance... The time for looking for an alternative has arrived. Establish a new United Front...that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s. The task of this front will be to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and to be an organisational weapon against neoliberalism” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). It also called on COSATU to “Explore establishment of a Movement for Socialism side by side with the establishment of the new United Front ...as the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). The Movement for Socialism would require a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism. NUMSA was ready to “commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties, including exploring different type of parties – from mass workers parties to vanguard parties” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). This study would look at the formation of socialist parties in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece and would include “examin(e)ing their programmes with the aim of identifying elements of what may constitute a revolutionary programme for the working class” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:7). This entire process would lead to the union convening a ‘Conference on

Socialism' by the time of the NUMSA National Executive Committee meeting in 2015. The SNC also did not exclude the possibility of such a political party taking advantage of "electoral opportunities" where they may exist.

The SNC also reflected on the Public Protector's report on the misuse of funds at Nkandla and called on President Zuma to resign from office: "The congress called on President Jacob Zuma to resign with immediate effect because of his administration's pursuit of neo-liberal policies such as the NDP, e-tolls, labour brokers, youth wage subsidy, and the track record of his administration which is steeped in corruption, patronage and nepotism" (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:9). This call was directly in opposition to those in COSATU who were protective of President Zuma. Their support for President Zuma and his policies had resulted in the total paralysis of COSATU.

To ensure that COSATU remained a revolutionary leader of working class struggles the SNC called for the convening of "a Cosatu Special National Congress... (which) can help us move out of the current crisis in the federation" (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:11). If this call was not heeded by the leadership and convened by the President then NUMSA "would invoke clause 3.3.2.2 of the federation's constitution. This clause states that the COSATU Central Executive Committee (CEC) can appoint a convenor for the Special National Congress. The SNC was ready to mobilise around a programme of action for a militant, united COSATU "We must continuously engage other affiliates of Cosatu, winning over those that are on the other side of the trenches" (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:11). If, however, COSATU was incapable of remaining united around a militant programme of action, NUMSA was ready to begin the process of forming a new federation.

The NUMSA SNC also reflected on the trade union's traditional support for the ANC in elections. Since 1994, NUMSA had invested resources and person-power towards ensuring an ANC victory in elections. With its history of broken promises and failure to implement its various manifesto commitments, and with the neoliberal policies it was implementing the Congress decided that "NUMSA as an organization will neither endorse nor support the ANC or any other political party in 2014" (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:13). While it was not endorsing any political party, the union however recognized the constitutional right of its members to vote. Officials and shop stewards who felt the need to campaign for the ANC or any political organization had to do this in their own

time and using their own resources. At the same time no NUMSA Office Bearer was allowed to hold any office bearer position in any political party. The SNC also decided that “Numsa will cease to pay into the Cosatu/Sacp political levy” (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:13). This meant that the millions directed at the ANC/SACP coffers would no longer be available to it, and that these funds would be used for the alternative political project as envisaged by the SNC.

6.3.4 NUMSA 10th National Congress, from the ‘NUMSA Moment’ to the building of a revolutionary Workers’ Party

The 10th National Congress of NUMSA took place in December 2016 and it was this Congress that confirmed the decisions of the SNC and elaborated on the path from the ‘NUMSA Moment’ to the building of a revolutionary organisation.

The 10th National Congress confirmed that NUMSA was a Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union movement which fights and opposes discrimination in all its forms, strives for the maximum unity of its members and the broader working class, encourages democratic worker leadership and organisation and is internationalist in that it strives for international working class unity (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:4). NUMSA believes that the working class should be fighting for a socialist society under the guiding slogan of the international working class to achieve a society of economic freedom: “From each according to their ability; to each according to their needs” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:4). For NUMSA, “Marxism-Leninism is the theory and practice of the revolutionary organisation of the working class for the sole purpose of destroying the capitalist system and replacing it with socialism (the dictatorship of the proletariat). As a Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union the important task was to understand the theory and practice of Marxism-Leninism and “the time has come for the working class in South Africa to have for themselves a political organ committed to a Socialist South Africa, both in theory and in practice” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:5).

The report reiterated its understanding of the nature of South African society as a ‘colonialism of a special type’ where race, class and the unfinished national question determine the social fabric of the society “The South African capitalist state did not emerge as a result of an internal popular anti-feudal revolution. From its birth through to

the present, South African capitalism has depended heavily on the imperialist centre...And it was within a colonial setting that the emerging South African capitalist class entrenched and extended the racially exclusive system” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:14).

The report then dealt with NUMSA’s assessment of the achievements of the SNC. While the rightwing of South African politics was celebrating the collapse of the ANC-led National Liberation Movement, this was a liberal view which did not clearly understand the dynamics of working class struggle and saw things purely from a bourgeois electoral perspective, “the reduction of the majority vote of the ANC is good for a ‘healthy democracy’” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:14). According to NUMSA, ironically the broad Left also concurred with the rightwing for different reasons. They saw the break with the ANC/SACP as workers breaking with the ‘Stalinist’ influence of the South African Communist Party, with its ‘flawed strategy of the National Democratic Revolution’” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:15). The left mobilized to take advantage of the ‘NUMSA Moment’ which “represents an open season for the plurality of all sorts of socialist and left ideologies” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:15). NUMSA was clear that it represented a Marxist-Leninist ideological perspective and regarded “the concrete and historical analysis of South African society as ‘colonialism of a special type’ founded primarily on white monopoly capitalist and imperialist super-exploitation of Black workers in general and African workers in particular” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:15). The strategic approach this implied was a “National Democratic Revolution (NDR) led by the working class, which culminates in the socialist transformation of society” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:15). There was also clear support for the full implementation of the Freedom Charter. While the Freedom Charter was clearly not a socialist document, once the working class “having organised itself as a ruling class, implements the Freedom Charter, such implementation will necessitate further measures that will ultimately lead to the socialist transformation of society” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:15).

The revolutionary path from the SNC was to be the establishment of a political party: “The first and pivotal task is to build a Marxist-Leninist political organ of the working class to provide leadership to the anti-Imperialist forces” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:22). This organ of the working class would provide leadership “in the formation and consolidation of other organs of the working class” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:22). The

next priority was to outline the strategy and tactics of the revolution and its programme, the Freedom Charter and articulate a specific alignment of class forces: “This alignment must be clearly articulated: principle enemies must be well-defined, allies must be identified and those that must be neutralised must be clearly known” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:22). The report was also unambiguous that a trade union was not a vanguard political organ. “Despite being Marxist-Leninist inspired, NUMSA remains a mass organ of the working class whose field of operation is objectively and primarily the point of production” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23). The political organ of the working class would be different. It would co-ordinate, consolidate and lead the struggles of the class, “consistently point the principal enemy, to raise the property question and to develop these various guerrilla struggles of the working class into a consistent political onslaught against the capitalist class” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23). The most important character of the “mass and vanguard political organ” is that it is “made up of cadre that are the most theoretically and ideologically advanced in Marxism-Leninism” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23). It should operate in various fronts of working class struggle “carrying a common message of revolution to the working class and the broader masses” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23).

An integral part of this process of building a party was an assessment of the Movement for Socialism and its ‘Literature Review and Study Tours from 2013 – 2016’, which was a study and interaction with new socialist currents or ‘new left currents’. These interactions were not just fact finding missions but were meant to ascertain “whether these currents are genuinely socialist or whether they are left nationalist or just Social Democrats” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23). Even where they were socialists “these currents are composed of a diversity of socialist thought, quite reminiscent of “the various strands of socialist thought mentioned in the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:23). Not unlike the broad left in South Africa “these movements...explicitly advocate the abandonment of neoliberalism, and are in some instances silent on the deeper questions of imperialism and capitalism” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:24). In the findings of the NUMSA study and tours “the forms of organisations that are now positioning themselves as “left movements” or “21st century socialists”, depart in crucial respects from the orthodox Marxist-Leninist position on the centrality and leadership role of the proletariat in the age of imperialism” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:24). These organisations are more ‘social movements’ which are reformist and

fighting for “redistribution of profits” rather than the “ownership of production” (NUMSA10th NC, 2016:24). The task now was to “fast track the Numsa Moment and move beyond the Numsa Moment towards the revolutionary organisation of the working class into their mass vanguard revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Workers Party” (NUMSA 10th NC, 2016:31).

6.4 The Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP)

6.4.1 The Party Constitution

The NUMSA 10th Congress resolution to fast-track the formation of a political party found expression in various workshops where an Interim National Core Group (NCG) to lead the process of building the party was formed. The Interim NCG elected a fifteen person committee to take charge of the day to day building of the party and formed an Interim National Working Committee (NWC). One of the first tasks of the NWC and NCG was the adoption of a draft Constitution of the Party in April 2018. This Constitution was adopted with amendments at the Inaugural Congress in April 2019.

The Constitution outlines the basic principles and policies of the party, its objectives, aims and methods of work, its membership and organizational structure and the rules of operation and it is in line with the aims and objectives of Marxist-Leninist Constitutions in other parts of the world (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:1). The preamble of the Constitution squarely locates the party within the world wide class struggle and the main struggle against Capitalism and Imperialism. The historical Colonial relations has put its stamp on the social relations in the country and it is impossible to resolve the national, gender, race and class question in South Africa and the rest of the post colonial world without simultaneously defeating capitalism and imperialism and establishing socialism (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:1).

Furthermore, the party registered as a political party in terms of the country’s constitutional requirements and such notice was posted in the government gazette of May/June 2018 and was accepted with no objections. The Socialist Revolutionary Workers Party (SRWP) registration with the IEC was finalized and the logo and colours of the party had been accepted (SRWP NWC, 2018a:1).

6.4.2 Foundational Principles and Philosophy

6.4.2.1 Philosophy

The Party is guided by the revolutionary teachings of Marxism-Leninism, and is based on the experience of socialists in Africa and the rest of the world. In that sense the party has learnt both from its own Colonial experience and the experience of other colonised societies. It has also learnt from Socialist parties in other countries. The Party “aims to apply, develop and live by the best Marxist-Leninist socialist traditions the world has developed” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:2). The Party is a socialist revolutionary workers political party guided by a Marxist-Leninist Socialist ideology and Marxist-Leninist Socialist socio-economic agenda for South Africa and the world. The party upholds the philosophy of Marxism as dialectical materialism. By this the party means that its primary struggle is to place the “interests of the producers of wealth – the working class and peasants – (as) the dominant classes” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:2). The Party’s main objective is to establish a Socialist South Africa. Such a South Africa “is one in which there is no oppression, discrimination and exploitation and is founded upon full social, economic, cultural and political equality” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:4). The Constitution advances a socialist philosophy, ideology and practices. It thus promotes full social, economic, cultural and political rights of all human beings. This means it fights for the equality between men and women, the protection of the rights of children, the protection of the environment and its natural resources, respect for and promotion of the many historical and different cultural values and traditions and practices (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:4). The Party is also a democratic party “based on socialist economic justice and full respect for all human rights, as espoused by Marxist-Leninist socialist philosophy and ideology” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:2).

6.4.2.2 Economic plan of development

In order to develop the country there is a need to restore full economic sovereignty of South Africa, and the “primary goal is to develop South Africa’s productive forces and capacity as quickly as possible, so as to be able to meet the material and cultural needs of all South Africans in general, and the working class and peasants in particular” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:7). For this to be achieved the party has to address the

central questions of ownership and control of all resources: “the Party shall restore to all South African the ownership and control of its land and natural resources and ensure that the use of land and exploitation of our natural resources benefits all South Africans, equitably” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:7). The Party aims to transform the South African economy and ensure its ownership and control by the South African people and promote rapid rural development. The Party thus stands for “economic justice, the equitable distribution of wealth so as to promote democracy, social development and full political equality among all our people and believes that only a Socialist South Africa can achieve this” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b: 7).

6.4.2.3 The Objectives and Values of the Party

These objectives are to be amplified by social objectives and values. The Party stands for a South Africa in which “the political, social, economic, cultural and political interests of the producers of wealth - the working class and peasants - are dominant in our society” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:5). The party aims to promote the all-rounded development of all its people and promote economic and social justice as well as peace in society and the world in general. The Party stands for social upliftment and improvements in the conditions of living which would include “the eradication of disease, illiteracy, ignorance, unemployment, hunger, and homelessness in order to enhance the quality of life of all South African people and democracy in our country and the world” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:5). The party also promotes a non-racial ethic and seeks therefore the eradication of the “inferior status of all black people and especially black women and black youth, in society” (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:5). The Party is not only a party of the urban centre and stands for the rapid and sustained development of all the rural areas as well, and for this to happen the party promotes the scientific and sustainable utilization of the land and all natural resources (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:5). The Party believes that all crime and all social vices, which undermine the value and quality of human life, are against its socialist values and principles.

6.4.3 The SRWP, Principles and Program

6.4.3.1 Introduction

The Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party (SRWP) was officially launched on the 4th to 6th April 2019 by over one thousand delegates representing branches from all the nine provinces in the country. The party has an official membership of over twelve thousand members and it is growing exponentially throughout the country (SRWP NWC, 2018a:3). For a new party this is highly significant and in terms of leftwing formations it has captured the significant political space and the imagination of the working class in barely one year.

In the following section I will deal with the characteristic features and role of the SRWP in the class struggle. As with the DLF, WASP and the EFF I will look at the nature of the *formal* organisation of the party, the *programmatic* commitments of the party and the *strategy and behavioural norms* of the party, which will allow me to develop a 'typology' of the SRWP and in this way answer the question whether or not it fulfills the requirements to be the embryonic Workers' Party in South Africa.

6.4.3.2 The Formal Organisation of a Party

As discussed in previous chapters the first core principle of the Leninist theory of the party is simply that it is necessary to build a revolutionary party (Molyneux, 2017:160). Marx and Engels were absolutely convinced that in order to build a socialist revolutionary current in the working class, the Workers' Party had to be politically and organizationally independent from all other parties and formations. The task of revolutionaries was to "establish an independent, secret and public organization of the workers' party...in which the attitude and interests of the proletariat will be discussed independently of bourgeois influences" (Marx & Engels, 1978:506). NUMSA through the Tri-Partite Alliance was ensconced for years in a multi-class organization, the ANC. The formation of the SRWP as a separate and distinct Workers' Party represents a qualitative break with the politics of the broad church of the ANC and Tri-Partite Alliance. The Manifesto of the SRWP confirms this: "*The party of the proletariat has to be ideologically, politically and organizationally independent of all other parties or formations*" (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:2). The formation of the SRWP represents a

fundamental break with multi-class and 'Popular Front' politics of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tri-Partite Alliance.

The reference to a revolutionary party means a party that is committed unequivocally to a socialist revolution, whose leadership and membership unambiguously accept revolution as their goal and by revolution we understand it to mean an actual mass uprising (Molyneux, 2017:160). The SRWP was formed to lead, prepare and unite the working class for the socialist revolution. This is the strategic aim of the party (SRWP Strategy and Tactics, 2019b:2). The SRWP is a Marxist-Leninist Party in all its features. It is politically and ideologically an independent working class party that aims to unite the working class through raising its political class consciousness in order to overthrow the ruling capitalist system. The SRWP is working class in its composition and make up and is orientated to preparing for class war; it is devoted to the study of Marxist theory, building of branches and units in working class areas and leading practically the struggles of workers and the poor.

The principles as outlined in the Manifesto and Election Manifesto of the SRWP unequivocally confirm that the party is a revolutionary party and not a parliamentary or reformist party: "*The party of the working class has to be a revolutionary party and not an electoral reformist one*" (SRWP Election Manifesto, 2019d:1). The task is not to ameliorate or improve conditions under capitalism but overthrow the capitalist class through a revolutionary process. Elections are seen as a 'tactic', so that the party may be able to speak to the working class whose eyes are on electoral process and parliament. Power according to the SRWP does not arise from the bourgeois parliament but is fought in the streets. This position is borne out by the fact that the SRWP had resolved at Congress that the elected leaders of the party will not go to parliament (SRWP Congress Resolution, 2019a:9). It was agreed that all parliamentary representatives would sign contracts with the party agreeing to follow the mandates of the Central Committee (CC), subject themselves to the immediate right of recall by the CC and earn no more than the salary of a skilled worker which will be determined scientifically by the party (SRWP Congress Resolutions, 2019a:9). This makes the SRWP different to all other political parties and it discourages all opportunists, careerists and tenderpreneurs.

The second core principle of a Leninist Party is the dialectical complement to the first: it is that the revolutionary party can only be built on the basis of establishing the closest possible relationship with the mass of the working class through participation in its day-to-day struggles (Molyneux, 2017:165). The guiding principle of the SRWP is that “*The party is to be built as a vanguard party in the ‘vanguard of the class’*” (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:3). It is not only the class programme of the party that is important but its class composition. The working class is a homogenous but multi-layered class. Various strata exist in the class and these layers represent more or less conscious and militant sectors in the class, different and distinct to other layers (Probsting, 2014:34). In the South African working class the industrial proletariat represented by three hundred and seventy thousand (370 000) metal workers is the core of the working class and organising this core not only as an economic force but politically, is a central task of the revolutionary party. While the “NUMSA Moment” represents the beginning of the conscious processes of this vanguard element, it is the organization of a political party in the form of the SRWP that is to build and develop a Communist cadre out of this strata. One of the first tasks in forging the party was the formation of the ‘Red Hundreds’; leading shop-stewards and militant workers were taken for political education and training in Marxism to local and international schools situated in Bela Bela in the Mpumalanga Province and to Sao Paulo in Brazil. As the ‘core’ members of the party it is hoped that this leading ‘vanguard’ element will take socialist ideas into the factories and work places and build branches and units in the industrial hubs and townships (SRWP slides, 2018c:3). Unlike the small socialist ‘sects’ which comprise largely middle class intellectuals and radicals, the SRWP is a working class party with a working class composition.

The SRWP is a party of the entire working class. This means that it will continue to involve itself in the struggles of other strata of the working class as it will also organize to lead other sectors of the oppressed and be the ‘tribune of the masses’; the leader of all the oppressed sectors in society. In this however it will give all its activities a clear class line (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:1). The SRWP will thus fight to lead each and every struggle of the working class (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:3). These struggles are not to be only strikes and lockouts by the union members but also issues that affect all strata of the working class and even other ‘oppressed’ sections of the population like woman and gender oppression, the fight for LGBTI rights, immigrant rights etc. The SRWP plans to

organize campaigns around its slogan of 'equality, land and work'; the fight against the racist capitalist society, the fight for the return and nationalization and collectivization of the land and the fight against unemployment remain the focus areas for the next five years for the party (SRWP Congress Resolutions, 2019a:7).

The party understands that if it is to become a repository of socialist thought and working class experience, it has to re-examine the history of South Africa and Africa from a materialist standpoint. It has thus embarked on a study of our history where there will be no holy cows to protect. The SRWP is an internationalist party committed to fighting for an internationalist perspective and forging links with fellow communists in Africa and throughout the world (SRWP Manifesto, 2019c:7).

6.4.3.3 The Programmatic Commitment of the Party

A fundamental element of the politics of the SRWP is the fight for theory: "Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement" (Lenin, 1977:108). The fight for theory and a programmatic commitment to the class struggle is critically important as NUMSA and its leading cadre come out of a long history in the SACP and had been caught up in the 'revisionist' and 'reformist' politics of the Tri-Partite Alliance. In fact NUMSA as a leftwing critical affiliate of COSATU had spent twenty five years as part of the Tri-partite Alliance and of necessity was partially blinkered in its appreciation of what was wrong with the politics of their organization. This problem is reflected in the NUMSA SNC resolutions which are pockmarked with references to the derailment of the NDR and its betrayal by the leadership of the ANC/SACP/COSATU (NUMSA SNC, 2013b:4). The break with the politics of the Tri-partite Alliance and the debunking of multi-class politics in favour of a revolutionary proletarian approach means that some core elements of theory such as the Internal Colonialism Theory, the National Democratic Revolution and the two stage theory of revolution will have to be critically addressed. The SRWP has ordered in its 'Strategy and Tactics' document a full scale study of the nature of South African society, explaining its development in materialist terms (SRWP, Strategy and Tactics, 2018b:1). How seriously this is undertaken in practice will determine whether the SRWP has qualitatively broken from the politics of nationalism and Stalinism.

A major shift politically to the left has been the adoption of a transitional program by the SRWP. The SRWP Election Manifesto (2019d:2) contains *transitional demands* which are a “bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution. This *bridge* should include a system of *transitional demands*, stemming from today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat” (Trotsky, 1977: 144). This is a significant departure from the classical Social Democratic and Stalinist “division of the program into two parts independent of each other: the *minimum program*, which limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society, and the *maximum program*, which promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future” (Trotsky, 1977:114). The adoption of a transitional programme does not mean that the confusion around the question of the implementation of the Freedom Charter, which is the classical minimum programme, does not still remain. What is developing is a more nuanced appreciation of the Freedom Charter with a discussion around the question of adopting a ‘Socialist Freedom Charter’ as the party programme (Khan, 2019:6).

The broader programmatic commitment of the party is to the socialist revolution and the political education, training and organization of the working class for the purpose of overthrowing the ruling class. There is absolutely no confusion on this matter with the education programme of the party directed to the study of the philosophy of dialectical materialism, the political economy of capitalism as a system in crisis and the strategy and tactics of revolutionary leadership combining and subordinating the struggle for reforms to those of revolution.

6.4.3.4 Strategy and Behavioral Norms of the Party

The strategic task for the working class is the overthrow of the ruling class through a revolution (SRWP, Strategy and Tactics, 2018b:2). The SRWP understands by “strategy” an outline of the fundamental goals of the party, while “tactics” refers to the means by which the class struggle is advanced according to local and temporary conditions (Khan, 2013:2). Strikes and protests are examples of tactics, while building the international vanguard party, making the socialist revolution by violently smashing the capitalist state, and creating the dictatorship of the proletariat are our strategic aims (Khan, 2013:2). In line with the Marxist position on the relationship between principle,

strategy and tactics the SRWP has applied the tactic of standing in the national bourgeois elections without losing sight of the central strategic goal which is the extra-parliamentary overthrow of capitalism. What the SRWP has understood is that while it applies Lenin's tactical flexibility, what characterised the Russian Bolshevik party was "not the flexibility that served (nor should it serve today) as the basic trait of Bolshevism but rather *granite hardness*" (Trotsky, 1974:141). It is the ability to uphold Marxist principles which will determine the future development of the SRWP as a revolutionary party.

At the same time every revolutionary party strives for the unity of theory and practice, or what has become known as revolutionary praxis. In all its practices the revolutionary party "upholds socialist democracy, revolutionary militancy and discipline" (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:8). It also insists on "loyalty and party discipline" in the execution of orders and instructions and applies this "from higher structures to lower structures, among leaders and members in all units of the Party" (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:9). The Party demands that all its members are devoted to the cause of socialism, and that they promote the fight for a socialist South Africa and a socialist world. Honesty and truthfulness, observance of socialist revolutionary morality, unpretentiousness and modesty in social and private life are vital and essential personal values of all Party members (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:14). Finally all party members must be vigilant and consistently "struggle against enemies of socialism, peace, and freedom of all nations" (SRWP Constitution, 2019b:9).

6.5 Conclusion: Critical Reflections

The formation of the SRWP has not been welcomed by all sectors of the organised working class. SAFTU held a Working Class Summit in the third quarter of 2018 and out of this formed a Working Class Summit Steering Committee that is pursuing the formation of a People's United Front and a broad based Mass Workers Party (MWP). This programme has largely been promoted by a small 'leftwing' but vocal section in SAFTU and is itself divided on what the way forward is.

The critics of the party argue that the party is a major distraction and has been formed "with no regard to history, context and working class experience" (Appolis, 2018:1). The

entire premise for the formation of the party is wrong as it is not based on an analysis of the present period, an assessment of the balance of class forces or an understanding of the state of the working class. The documents of the SRWP are symptomatic “of a formulaic approach to the question of the party” (Appolis, 2018:1). What these critics do not appreciate is as Bob Archer (2019:1) explains “the historical importance of the formation of the SRWP”. In a neoliberal capitalist environment where Marxism and Marxist politics has largely been on the fringes of society, we have “an embryo party which assembled over 1,000 activists in a pre-launch congress in December 2018, proclaims that its aim is to lead the fight of the working class against the bourgeoisie and their political allies, and proudly inscribes on its banner adherence to the revolutionary thought of Marx and Lenin” (Archer, 2019:3). This is the most significant development in post-Apartheid history of the South African working class.

What this left does not understand is that the leadership of NUMSA was amongst the first to grasp, “that a new stage had been reached in class relations in South Africa which demanded a political step forward involving the whole working class” (Archer, 2019:3). The process from the SNC resolutions to the formation of the SRWP has been a long drawn out one. The small leftwing groups who deal in small numbers and little trifles do not appreciate and grasp “the class dynamics and the difficulties involved in planned and systematic work to construct a political party of true revolutionary content” (Archer, 2019:4). They seek short-cuts and have no understanding that the SRWP represents a real regeneration of the socialist project after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990’s.

To imagine that all processes are ready made and complete, finished once and for all, is to be a utopian. The SRWP is a young political party and therefore an ‘imperfect’ political party in the process of formation. It is learning in the actual cauldron of battle how to engineer “the rebirth of the workers’ socialist movement”. This is a process of learning through experience in the actual class struggle. The party faces many difficulties and the building of the party will not be a straight path. The contradictory character of development was witnessed when the party had hardly begun the process of training a Communist cadre when it was saddled with the decision to stand in the 2019 elections. This had complicated things as the party had attracted hundreds of new

members who watered down the ideological bent and principles of the party and in some sense compromised it (Khan, 2019:2).

What the NUMSA Moment and the formation of the SRWP offers is an opportunity to join in the struggle to build the revolutionary party of the working class and help shape it. To fail to understand the momentous nature of this political development in working class history is a major error. The formation of the SRWP is the only serious attempt to overcome the crisis of leadership of the working class in the post-Apartheid period, and if this project fails it will be a major defeat for the working class in South Africa and internationally.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The dissertation is about the establishment of a Workers Party in South Africa. In trying to explain the formation of a 'new leftwing radical' party in the country today I had to provide a broad overview of the processes that made this possible. These processes include an analysis of the objective conditions, the economic base, which lays the foundation to understand the critical shifts in the country's social and political landscape. The principle argument in the dissertation is that the current crisis in South Africa, rooted in the contradictions of neoliberal capitalism and exacerbated by the global crisis of 2008, has created the conditions for the emergence of the SRWP which I have argued is the leading and only consistently revolutionary Marxist-Leninist formation in the country.

In the dissertation I have tried to demonstrate that the question of the establishment of a Workers Party in South Africa has been influenced by various factors. The dissertation set out to understand and explain the concept and theoretical basis of political parties, delving into the different theories and approaches to political parties and showing how political parties are different to other organizations. It also explained the meaning of politics and the significance of political parties and the functions of political parties and the different types of party structures. In identifying these salient elements or criteria that constitute a typology of political parties, the conclusion we reached was that Workers' Parties have a 'mixed character' evincing a number of characteristics that cut across these criteria.

Workers' Parties have their own history and have in the main been inspired and influenced by the development of Marxism. In the dissertation I traced this historical, ideological and political evolution from the First Communist International to the Russian Revolution and beyond. This is critical history in the leftwing movements as it has influenced revolutionary movements and struggles throughout the world. The dissertation dissected the different aspects which influence the formation of Workers' Parties; the difference between economic and political struggles, the question of class consciousness, reform and revolution and the importance of the political and ideological independence of the Workers' Party. I also examined the difference between the Mass Workers' Party and the Vanguard Party and explained the organizational principle of

democratic centralism. A critical element in this study was the development of Stalinism in the Soviet Union which influenced revolutionary movements and their political programmes internationally. Most importantly, the dissertation makes the case that in the epoch of Imperialism it is only a Leninist party that can make an authentic claim to be a Workers' Party. Such a party must have key organisational traits like democratic centralism, a politically conscious cadre etc., and programatically must be socialist, having as its objective the achievement of revolutionary change.

The dissertation is dedicated to proving that the SRWP is the only party in South Africa that meets the criteria of a Leninist Workers' Party. This proposition is elaborated on in detail and rests on three broad and overlapping arguments:

First that a number of identified parties and left formations, particularly the CPSA which was later refounded and renamed the SACP does not meet the criteria of a Marxist-Leninist Workers Party. This is because of its ideological capitulation to Stalinism with the adoption of the Black Republic thesis in 1928, and later the explicit adoption of a two stage theory of revolution and a minimum programme of struggle. Organisationally this capitulation to Stalinism meant a subordination of the socialist/communist movement to the nationalist politics of the ANC. This has been dealt with in some detail in the study and critique of the theory of 'Colonialism of a Special Type', the concept of National Liberation, the theory of National Democracy and the adoption of a minimum programme to reform capitalism, namely the Freedom Charter. This culminated in the negotiated settlement which appeared to contradict the previous 'revolutionary' programme, but as discussed in the dissertation was nothing more than an adaptation to current realities by a nationalist bourgeois leadership of the ANC. This was a betrayal of the interest of the working class and poor. The capitulation of the SACP to the nationalist politics of the ANC left the working class without a leadership and at a subjective level laid the foundation for an alternative politics. None of the other political formations and parties we have mentioned or dealt with fulfilled such a role.

Second, that the multi-faceted conditions of crisis in South Africa, a deep structural crisis in the economy has given rise to a deep social and political crisis in the society. The ruling ANC government has abandoned its historical role as a party of liberation and has become a party of big capital. So too has the SACP abandoned its leadership of the working class. This gave rise to spontaneous and largely isolated struggles of the

working class and poor which high-point (or low-point, depending on how you see it) was the Marikana massacre. This was a turning point in South African working class history exposing the true nature of capitalist relations and the bourgeois state. The history of class struggle since 1994 and especially since the neoliberal imposition of GEAR is essentially a struggle over the allocation of resources of society. The parasitic nature of the black bourgeois and its perfidious links to white monopoly capital has been exposed, as the new democratic dispensation has failed to fulfill its promise to liberate and emancipate the large majority of black people in the country. While racist laws have officially been expunged from the statute books, racism remains a central feature of South African society. The rotten deal of 1994 is unraveling, and at a political level it has meant the development of an alternative politics and a search for a new leadership of the working class and poor.

Thirdly, the 1994 political deal is unraveling and the working class is becoming conscious that its future can no longer be placed in the hands of the ANC/SACP/COSATU Tri-partite Alliance. The processes inaugurated by NUMSA, through its Special National Congress resolutions in 2013, has produced a set of revolutionary responses , politically and organisationally, including breaking from the ANC-led alliance, playing a leading role in the formation of a United Front, the South African Federation of Trade Unions and most importantly, launching of the Marxist-Leninist Party – the SRWP. The NUMSA SNC directly raised the question of the formation of a Workers’ Party and set this process into motion. It conducted international studies and hosted various discussion forums and workshops where the modalities were examined. The evolution of the ‘NUMSA Moment’ to the formation of the SRWP will in time be recognised at a subjective conscious level as the turning point in South African working class politics.

The dissertation examined other political alternative formations like the DLF/WASP/EFF and concluded that each in their own way did not fulfill the requirements for constituting a new and alternative Worker’s Party. It examined the Constitution of the SRWP and discussed its core principled orientation, its organizational form and its strategy and tactics and reached the conclusion that the SRWP is the only leftwing organization with the potential to develop into a mass based revolutionary Workers’ Party in the country.

While the 'dismal' performance of the SRWP in the 2019 elections has allowed many of its detractors to crow about its imminent demise, the fact that a revolutionary party based in the working class and independent of all bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties has been established is a huge development in South African politics. The 'new' and 'young' party, barely launched a month before the 2019 elections, took the political decision to stand in the election in order to bring the ideas of socialism into the public arena. It is for the first time since the 1980's that the question of socialism has surfaced in a significant way in public. What the elections have confirmed is the combination of two important factors in the working class: a deep seated disillusionment with the current political set up and parties, and an undeveloped 'bread and butter' political consciousness as reflected most starkly in the 'economism' of the NUMSA worker. This confirms the need for a political approach that puts forward a working class perspective independently of bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties.

The SRWP has established firm principles based on the philosophy and ideology of Marxism-Leninism and is using this as a guiding tool to settle the unresolved 'National Question' from a working class perspective. As a new and young party the real test for the SRWP will be its ability to establish deep roots in the South African working class and lead it in struggle. While it is a young party, the SRWP has begun a process to grow and become a leading leftist political organization of the working class, giving hope for a new socialist future to many who have been searching for an alternative to the SACP and the EFF. The formation of the SRWP is a historical turning point in working class history in South Africa. Such moments in history are rare, and if the working class fails to build this party into a real revolutionary one, it will take decades for such an opportunity to come again.

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