

“The historical weapon of national liberation can be only the *class struggle*.”—Leon Trotsky

Supplement

AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA



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For a United Front to FIGHT BACK Against the Pro-Imperialist GNU!

The SACP is hosting the Conference of the Left at a moment when the South African political terrain is fraught with contradictions and dangers. The need for the working class and left to come together in defensive struggles against the onslaught of white monopoly capital has never been more urgent. However, despite growing popular anger against the surging cost of living and worsening poverty, class struggle remains at an ebb. In the streets, pogromist/tribalist outfits such as March & March and Dudula are running rampant, egged on by the imperialists and racist white rulers. Right-wing forces such as AfriForum, the DA and ActionSA feel emboldened.

Meanwhile, the EFF's recent victory at the Constitutional Court creates an objective opening to push back, by putting Ramaphosa and the GNU in a precarious situation. But unless the left gets its act together to use this opening to organise real struggle, the ruling class *will* find a way to ride it out, re-doubling Operation Vulindlela and all that follows. The question for the left is, how do we break through the paralysis preventing such a struggle? How do we bridge the divisions among the oppressed and

unite the masses against their common enemies—the imperialists and their lackeys? Without revolutionary answers to these questions, we will never overcome our current weak and fragmented state.

You will not find such answers in the draft framework document put forward by the SACP for this Conference. It is a compilation of wishes and vague noble intentions that everyone invited—from the ANC and MK, to the far left—can generally agree with. What's absent is any path of struggle to defend the masses and improve their fighting position. This is no accident, because the number one requirement for such is *a clean break with the butchers of Marikana*. This is precisely the step that the SACP leadership fears taking. Those who want to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle must use the Conference of the Left to fight for this clean break. Such a fight will resonate with a growing sentiment among the SACP rank-and-file, who are gatvol with the ANC. This pressure is what's pushing the SACP leaders to contest the November local elections under their own banner, and to convene the Conference in the first place.

Unfortunately, much of the far left has instead opted for sectarian abstention. Completely ignoring

Break With the Butchers of Marikana!

the massive contradiction currently unfolding in the SACP, these groups prefer to stand on the sidelines and recount for the umpteenth time the many crimes of the SACP. How does this help to push forward a break with the ANC butchers and foster united defensive struggle, comrades? Not at all, nor does it do anything to expose and combat the SACP's class-collaborationist programme in the here and now. In fact, the abstention of SAFTU, Abahlali baseMjondolo and others makes it *easier* for the SACP leaders to channel the sentiment for unity into a new dead-end of "reconfiguring" the Tripartite Alliance. This amounts to yet again ceding leadership to the very nationalists and Stalinists who have led the working class and black liberation struggle to the current impasse.

This will not do, comrades! The choice is not between abstaining or tailing the SACP. We must take part in the Conference in order to fight for a different course than the one being offered. For those who like the sound of this, we offer for your consideration some points for a common struggle along these lines. Our input is aimed in particular at three groups: SACP militants, EFF militants, and the far left. For the Conference of the Left to have a progressive outcome, we think each must grapple in its own way with problems plaguing the whole left.

To SACP Militants

Many rank-and-file members are enthusiastic about finally taking the step to run candidates in the SACP's own name in this year's local government elections. This is seen as a long overdue move to take a stand against the ANC's wretched pro-imperialist course, breathe life back into the national-democratic revolution and defend the working class. Needless to say, the SACP itself has a major share of responsibility for the current appalling state of the liberation movement and the weakness of the workers movement.

But even if we leave that aside for the moment, the question remains: is the SACP's current pivot being carried out in a way that strengthens the anti-imperialist struggle?

Looked at from this point of view, even the most loyal SACP militant will notice that the Party leadership is conducting the electoral separation from the ANC in a way that does nothing to inspire the confidence of the working masses and the left. Look at how they have groveled to the ANC tops, pleading for a continuation of dual membership. Or the degrading lengths they've gone to in accommodating gutless careerists like Buti Manamela (who chose the perks of being a GNU minister over Party membership because the *ANC* forced the issue, not the SACP). The SACP tops emphasise over and over that their candidacy is *definitely not* directed against the ANC or the Alliance. Advanced workers and leftists look at this spectacle with disgust, rightly concluding that a vote to the SACP will just be used as leverage for the Party tops to get back into bed with the ANC in a reshuffled neoliberal coalition.

This is why breaking with the butchers of Marikana is necessary in order to unite the left in a struggle to defend ourselves against the GNU and their imperialist masters. Just look at the current standoff between the ANC-led coalition government in Jo'burg and city workers. Godongwana is blackmailing the city government, demanding that it rip up the wage settlement with SAMWU or face financial ruin (which feels to most residents like it's already here). The SACP has been silent on this, in order to avoid further antagonising the ANC. To unite and strengthen the left, the opposite is needed, i.e. to reject this blackmail. The defence of SAMWU workers ought to be combined with a fight to instead rip up the austerity imposed by the GNU. We must fight to repudiate the debt to the imperialist bloodsuckers, to whom Godongwana himself forks out *more than R1 billion every day* from the national budget. *This* is the kind of struggle that can unite the working class and communities in the city. How are the SACP and COSATU going to mobilise for such a struggle, unless there is a fight within those organisations for a clean break, now, from the ANC? This is a question that every SACP militant needs to think over.

While taking this step appeals to many SACP militants, many are still paralysed by the argument that leaving the Alliance would abandon the liberation movement to the openly pro-white-monopoly-capital Ramaphosa-Mbalula clique. The main problem with this argument is also the main problem with the SACP's whole strategy: it is premised on accepting that the national liberation struggle must be led by nationalists (the ANC), and that the job of Communists is to keep this nationalist leadership on a left course. This is utterly false. The experience of ordinary SACP members, and millions of disillusioned workers, speaks to the fact that this strategy has been disastrous (and hasn't done anything to stop the nationalists from doing the imperialists' dirty work). To turn the situation around, revolutionaries must instead fight to



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rip leadership of the liberation struggle away from the nationalists and put it in the hands of the working class.

To EFF Militants

It is new that the EFF is collaborating so closely with the SACP, including in preparing this Conference. Many in the EFF are hopeful that the SACP's pivot can open up possibilities for united struggle to defend ourselves against the right-wing and imperialist onslaught. That would certainly be a good thing. However, it is quite striking that when it comes to one of the most prominent battles within the country to defend ourselves against Trump and US imperialism—fighting the racist judicial vendetta against Malema and the EFF—the SACP has maintained deafening silence. For the SACP leadership, this silence is logical. It is one more concession to avoid further straining their relationship with the ANC. But why is the EFF not pressing the SACP on this, at a time when Malema's case has polarised the whole country?

To understand this, we must keep in mind that the main factor determining the EFF leadership's course is the balance of forces *in parliament*—the struggle of the masses in the streets is a *subordinate* factor. The repression against the EFF has increased together with the onslaught on the oppressed black masses under the pro-imperialist GNU. While the EFF has fought back (although unevenly), its response is *not* centred on mobilising the working masses by linking the fight against repression to the fight against GNU austerity and imperialism. Instead, its strategy revolves around agitating for an alternative GNU in which the ANC ditches the DA and FF+ and ropes in the MK and EFF for a parliamentary majority. For the EFF leadership, the SACP's growing rift with the ANC is above all seen as a means of increasing the influence of the ANC faction represented by the likes of Panyaza Lesufi, which is seen as more likely to opt for a national coalition with the EFF and MK.

This strategy, offering up the EFF as a coalition-partner-in-waiting to the butchers of Marikana, is an obstacle to building anti-imperialist unity that undermines the EFF's own defence. While the prospect of an ANC-MK-EFF government may seem like a good way to counter the right wing, the price of such a coalition will be the EFF's Seven Cardinal Pillars. We mustn't forget how the EFF's own leaders completely abandoned them in the hope of forming such a coalition in June 2024.

In practice, the main way the EFF leadership currently pursues this strategy is by propping up ANC-led coalitions at the local and provincial level in Gauteng. This again means trampling on the EFF's own programme, while putting a straightjacket on the struggle to defend the needs of the masses, including EFF Ground Forces. Just look at the EFF leaders' silence in response to Godongwana's financial blackmail of the City of Jo'burg. Since they are looking to the likes of Gauteng premier Lesufi to shift the ANC onto a supposedly progressive course, the last thing they want to do right now is unleash a crisis in the province and the city by waging a fight to

defend SAMWU's wage deal and rip up the Treasury's austerity diktats.

Who benefits from the EFF leaders' clinging to their MMC and MEC posts in Gauteng? The lack of any coordinated struggle against these attacks only serves to entrench all the poisonous divisions among the oppressed: distrust between public sector unions and communities suffering from the collapse of water and other infrastructure; scapegoating of migrants for everything from unemployment to crime; etc. And it bolsters right-wing politicians like Helen Zille and Herman Mashaba, who are doubling down on their reactionary, pro-imperialist "solutions" to the problems that the ANC has utterly failed to tackle. Breaking these coalitions is absolutely necessary, to begin turning the tide against this right-wing resurgence. This is the way to really take advantage of the momentary destabilisation of the GNU and use the opening from the Phala Phala judgment to strengthen the anti-imperialist forces.

To the Far Left

For the most part, the far left has responded to the SACP's Conference of the Left with denunciation and boycott. There's been a flurry of articles complaining that the SACP takes no accountability for its many crimes committed in service of the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance and white monopoly capital—crimes which have been central to bringing about the current weakened and fragmented state of the working class and black liberation movement. This is absolutely true. However, it does not answer the most important question: *what is to be done?*

What is urgently necessary, *right now*, is to make use of the current crisis in the SACP and Alliance to draw the lessons from the betrayals and provide a course to advance the anti-imperialist struggle. To do this, we must start by recognising and seeking to *push forward* the progressive aspiration to break with the ANC. This aspiration has driven rank-and-file SACP members



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to call for the SACP to “go it alone” in elections for decades. Yet at the very moment when this demand is being carried out—causing a big rift with the ANC, notwithstanding the wishes of the SACP tops—many would-be revolutionaries are shutting their eyes to this contradiction, satisfying themselves with denunciations of all the SACP’s past crimes.

These denunciations reflect deep-going mistrust and anger that are completely legitimate. The SACP *has* played a key role in subordinating the black proletariat to its own butchers—at CODESA, Marikana and elsewhere. But how can this cycle of betrayals and defeats be broken? The answers given by the far left generally do not go beyond sterile abstractions. Most harmful of all, the answer typically given to the SACP’s treacherous subordination of the working class to nationalism, is to counterpose the national-democratic struggle to socialism.

What is most striking in the far left’s critiques is not so much what they say, but what they completely ignore. It seems to have totally escaped most of them: (1) that the SACP is in a major row with the ANC; and (2) that behind this is the tightening vice of US imperialism, resulting in ANC capitulations to the racist white rulers which even the SACP tops are unable to defend any longer. But these things cannot be ignored. They are precisely the issues that revolutionaries must put front-and-centre, if we are to have any hope of breaking the subordination of the working class to the nationalists.

The crushing weight of imperialism stifling every potential for national development, the dominance of white monopoly capital which even the upper layers of the black elites cannot escape—these are the main factors which the SACP tops point to in order to justify subordination of the working-class and liberation movement to nationalist leadership. To disregard this oppression and the national-democratic aspirations to which it gives rise, simply makes it easier for them to carry out this betrayal. This is the trap which much of the far left falls into, and their abstentionist approach to the Conference of the Left is another symptom. Instead of falling into this trap yet again, we think revolutionaries should work together to advance a class-struggle strategy and leadership for defensive struggles against white monopoly capital.

For an Anti-Imperialist United Front!

How can we do this? It would be worse than a waste of time to focus our efforts on trying to “correct” the draft framework document which the SACP has produced for this Conference. By its very nature, this document is a formless mush designed to be acceptable to the forces that kowtow to US imperialism (above all, acceptable to the ANC). As such, it cannot provide any road to actually mobilising for action against the attacks of the imperialists and GNU government. Instead, we think revolutionaries should use the Conference to fight for an *anti-imperialist united front*. Rather than asking participants to accept a common programme, this would be based on agreement to mobilise for joint action around concrete demands that correspond to

the most urgent needs for common defensive struggle (“March separately, strike together!”). To this end, we propose the following platform:

- 1) **Defend the left against state repression!** Hands off Julius Malema and the EFF—overturn the racist sentence and conviction! Scrap the PIE Act Amendments Bill! An injury to one is an injury to all!
- 2) **Defend unions against strike-breaking attacks!** Defend SAMWU’s wage deal against Godongwana’s blackmail! Scrap the LRA Amendments Bill, fight the jobs bloodbath! Fight to rip up GNU austerity and repudiate the debt to the imperialist bloodsuckers! For a public works programme to fix infrastructure, build affordable housing and tackle unemployment!
- 3) **Defend immigrants against pogromist attacks!** Mobilise to stop March & March and Dudula! To undercut the African-hating, tribalist demagogues and bridge the divide between foreign and South African workers, we must link this to a fight to defend and expand *everyone’s* access to health care, education and jobs. Nationalise private hospitals and schools! For swift and radical implementation of NHI! Fight to organise immigrant workers, casualised and other unorganised workers into the trade unions!
- 4) **Defend South Africa against US Imperialism!** Expel Brent Bozell III, close the Israeli embassy, and recall Roelf Meyer! Block all coal exports to Israel! Cancel all critical mineral supplies to the Pentagon War Machine! Down with US tariffs!

By waging a fight for this kind of united front at the Conference, revolutionaries will do much more to combat the reactionary influence of nationalist leadership than with hundreds of long-winded denunciations. By putting forward a concrete course of action, it will force the SACP, EFF and trade-union representatives to take a stance on the burning issues of the day. In this way, we can on the one hand build the broadest possible unity in a defensive struggle. On the other hand, we can use any vacillations and obstacles thrown up by the nationalists and Stalinists, to expose them as obstacles to defending ourselves against the GNU and imperialists. To those who like the sound of this, let’s work together by forming a class-struggle caucus and fighting for it at the Conference! ■

AMABOLSHEVIKI AMNYAMA 

Contact Us

Email: spartacist_sa@yahoo.com

WhatsApp: 079 171 5793

 **AmaBolsheviki Amnyama**

  **@AmaBolsheviki**

 **@amabolshevikiamnyama**



Spartacist
P.O. Box 61574, Marshalltown,
Johannesburg 2107
Voicemail: 088-130-1035

www.iclfi.org