

**ALLIANCE PAPER: the alliance in the Western Cape**

(This paper provides an assessment of the alliance in the Western Cape - It raises issues/questions but intentionally does not provide the way forward)

**LONG LIVE THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS!  
LONG LIVE THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY!  
LONG LIVE THE CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS!  
LONG LIVE THE TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE!**

As early as May last year the ANC and Cosatu met to discuss the alliance. It was agreed that the ANC is the leader of the alliance and that "the alliance should be structured through all levels of the organisation i.e. on a national, regional and local level through mandated representatives".

In November 1990 the Tripartite Alliance Co-ordinating Committee came up with decisions on the structure and functioning of the alliance. Here it was decided:

- 1) The Alliance co-ordinating committee would comprise of the three Secretary-General plus six members of each organisation and that they would meet at least once every 2 months.
- 2) The Secretariat of the alliance would be made up of the Secretary-General plus one other person from each organisation. The secretariat would then appoint a secretary, and would meet every 2 weeks or as often as necessary.
- 3) The secretariat would identify the matters which are to be addressed by the alliance.
- 4) The structures of the alliance should exist not only at a national level, but also at a regional, local and departmental level.

We see that at both the May and November 1990 meeting it was stressed that the alliance has to exist at a regional and local level and the November meeting adds that there should be structures of the alliance at a Departmental level as well. The reasons for this are obvious, the alliance must be built on the ground through our struggles - it cannot exist in the air as a talk-shop for leadership.

We all know and understand the importance of the alliance and have committed ourselves to building the alliance in the Western Cape. It is in terms of the above decisions that we should begin our assessment of the alliance. In the Western Cape we have not seen evidence of the alliance at a local level or departmental level. There have been meetings at a regional level but there have been a number of weaknesses. There was an attempt to reproduce the structures set up at a national level in the region. There were meetings of the secretary and six others from each organisation. these became known as the 'seven-aside' meetings.

## WHAT WERE THE WEAKNESSES OF THE 'SEVEN-ASIDE':

1. It never had a proper functioning secretariat - the secretariat is supposed to meet more regularly than the 'seven-aside' to plan and co-ordinate the alliance. They were also supposed to plan the agenda of the 'seven-aside'. As stated in the report of the Tripartite Co-ordinating Committee above the secretariat "would identify the matters which are to be addressed at Alliance level".
2. The 'seven-aside' meetings were often not seven on each side because all the organisations in the alliance would bring fewer than seven people to each meeting. Often there would be different representatives to the meetings meaning that there was not a good degree of continuity.
3. Often there were no reports of these meetings given to the broader membership of the organisations of the alliance.
4. There was no concerted attempt to build the alliance at a local level.
5. The joint campaigns were not as successful as they could have been because of a lack of co-ordination and joint planning eg. the Signature Campaign for the Constituent Assembly and Interim Government.

## Why these weaknesses (looking especially at the ANC):

1. The Regional Executive Committee of the ANC is over extended especially because of crisis management. For this reason they have not appointed a specific group of people to be involved in the 'seven-aside' or a group of people who would concentrate their efforts on building the alliance. **This meant that the ANC WHO IS THE LEADER OF THE ALLIANCE DID NOT PROVIDE LEADERSHIP TO THE ALLIANCE.**
2. People did not always attend the 'seven-aside' meetings and often these meetings would have to be postponed because of poor attendance.
3. The secretariat, which was supposed to be the think tank of the alliance, never got off the ground, there was thus no day to day strategising with respect to the alliance.
4. None of the alliance partners had a clear programme that they brought into the alliance at the 'seven-aside' meetings. There was thus a lack of pre-planning. It also meant that the programme of action of the alliance was based on National initiatives and immediate campaigns and crisis management eg. in cases where violence broke out.

5. When there were delegations these were not sensitive to representing different sectors in the movement eg. one comrade who attended the meetings said that after cde Lucy Nyembe was no longer COSATU's regional secretary there were no women present in the COSATU delegations.

6. There was not always adequate direction from the national leadership on the programme to build the alliance.

7. There was no direction from the regional leadership to the branches on how to build the alliance.

8. The zonal structures are not functioning very well and in some areas are non-existent.

10. There were hardly any attempts to include a broader section of the membership. On one attempt when it was planned to have a more representative forum consisting of 30 people on each side, a COSATU comrade says, "only 5 people from the ANC REC came, most of them at lunch time and they left after lunch time". This account may be exaggerated but it does point out a problem. There is a need for membership of the alliance parties to interact and sit in joint forums where they can discuss issues - and direct the work happening in the alliance at a regional level - the alliance can't only be built from the top down.

11. It is difficult for branches to sustain a long relationship with other alliance partners as the 'seven-aside' did not develop structures in the different organisations which would facilitate communication at a local level.

12. The alliance was seen as a last resort to muster more support - this was often the case where one of the organisations was planning a march or other activity and they would turn to the other organisations at the last minute for support or assistance rather than include them in the planning of the campaign from the outset. The actions we embarked upon were more to attract attention from the media than to build organisation and the alliance.

13. Eventhough there was a joint response to many things such as the violence, a common understanding of what needed to be done in response was not developed.

14. There was not an adequate response to the attack of the presence of the SACP in the Alliance.

#### **WAY FORWARD:**

This is to be discussed in the commission but we should build into this process a discussion of what the alliance means to us and the objectives of the alliance and then sort out how the alliance should work in terms of those points.